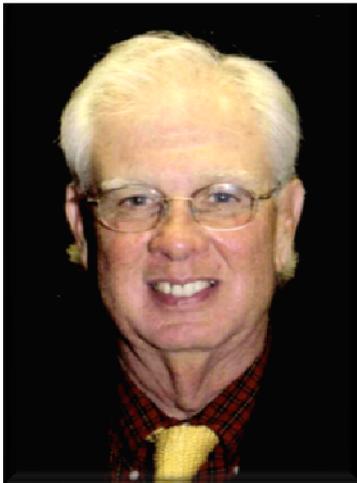




MOBCI HABITAT NEWS

A Publication of the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative AUGUST 17, 2012

93-7; What Does That Mean?



In a recent Audubon Magazine article there was an article about Tom Smith, a Missouri rancher business man, and his commitment to a prairie restoration project for which, in the beginning, he didn't know a lot about. The project he was committing to would require a real investment of his time, and even putting his business on the line. It was easy to see, in his part of the state, the Greater Prairie Chickens had all but disappeared from the grasslands in his area. However, the question to Tom was, could best management practices on his farm and ranch business be of a benefit to disappearing natural grasslands prairies, and associated wildlife at the same time? His experience was life changing, and now he is, what I would call, an environmental evangelist. So what does his story have to do with the 93-7 odds?

Most of us are involved with at least one, and many of us, several environmental and wildlife organizations that know exactly what those numbers mean in Missouri. However, most of our citizens do not. 93% of the Missouri lands are privately owned, and 7% are public land being owned and managed by Federal, State, or other county, city political sub-divisions. Organizations like Missouri's Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI) and all of our other game, non-game organizations are fortunate to have great relations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and especially having the best in the Nation conservation agency in the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). However, the other 93% is where the really awesome story is located. The authors of this story are Missouri's ranchers, farmers, foresters, and other passionate, and committed citizens; those providing the resources necessary to be able to properly manage, care for, and restore our State's natural resources.

Since I have been a member of several wildlife organizations, I have continued to meet many committed private land owners. On our MoBCI steering committee we have a couple of members that are wonderful examples of private land management. Dr. Wayne Morton, and yes, he is a very humble guy, and would have preferred I didn't refer to him as Dr., is well known in environmental circles. Personally, Dr. Morton has had a tremendous impact on grasslands restoration by committing significant physical and fiscal resources to restoration programs. Also, Frank Oberle, who one day began to see a vision of his land, as a natural prairie grassland, and has been a restoration visionary ever since. His land management project did not only change *him*, but lots, and lots of people around him. He is a dynamo. Both of these individuals took a leap of faith

and worked with conservation partners to assist them in their personal dreams to restore their native grasslands. These partnerships included financial assistance from the Missouri Department of Conservation through their landowner cost-share programs, funding from the USFWS through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program which focuses on native habitats for migratory birds and endangered species, and through the Grassland Reserve Program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service to conserve the lands for future generations.

I recently attended the “Ozark Summit” held at Missouri State University in Springfield, Mo. There were a couple of private land owners that were guest speakers about their farms, and how they managed their lands, and significantly succeeded in a land restoration program. One of the guest speakers was Connie Johnson, from near Galena, Mo. She shared her story of how, over time, they restored their long time family farm, and how now they operate a successful sustainable tree farm. Connie is a fellow member with me in the local Springfield Plateau Master Naturalist Chapter. We are fortunate to have such a loyal, committed private land manager of woodland resources in our chapter.

Another member of our local Master Naturalist Chapter is Dr. Bob Kipfer who is now retired from the Cox Hospital system where he was a top level management guru, as well as a superb doctor of medicine. He and his wife now own a farm south of Ozark, Mo. where Bull Creek pretty much runs right through the center of their land. Over the past few years the Kipfer’s have been working with different MDC specialist to restore bottom land, riparian corridor, and forested land on their property. He isn’t really retired, he is just redirected. One of the great things is how he has given local Master Naturalists opportunities to come and share in some of the restoration projects. The last bit of information I am pleased to share with you is a recent announcement from our local Springfield News-Leader. “Larry and Nancy O’Reilly, who are working to return their land along the river to its natural state, donated the permanent conservation easement to Ozark Greenways.” The family has been working to restore this land along the James River for several years, and it will give significant protection to some 3.5 miles of the river corridor. Yes, this is the O’Reilly family associated with the well-known auto parts business. Different members of the O’Reilly family have been active in environmental initiatives in our community for some time. And yes, the O’Reilly’s also worked cooperatively with the likes of MDC, USFWS, and NRCS on the same types of programs as Dr. Morton and Frank Oberle to help them realize their dream to protect and conserve Missouri’s ecological treasures.

There are big stories, and small stories about our many private land owners who, through their commitment to best land management practices, are helping to save, and restore our natural resources across the State. And, yes that didn’t even include the story about Mr. Leo Dry, and the history of Pioneer Forest’s sustainable forestry practices. All of these people are “Heroes, and unknown Heroes” to all of the citizens in Missouri.

In closing, this thought comes to my mind. There is no more powerful information around for caring, and saving our lands than the story of how some of our citizens are doing it through thoughtful, knowledgeable best land management practices. There are many environmental organizations in our State that hold meetings, summits, etc. throughout the year. They are great to attend, and frequently, like ours, have land owners as guest presenters. However, I believe it is



time, somehow, some way, that we come together, and have a “Private Lands Best Management Practices Summit”, with an agenda that only has private land owners sharing their stories. I believe such a conference could deliver a very, very powerful message. What do you believe?

*By Charles Burwick, Chair
MoBCI Steering Committee*

The Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI) Grant Program; Celebrating A Decade of Bird Conservation Actions

By Gene Gardner (MoBCI Secretary 2007-2012)



Cause for Celebration!

This year marks a decade of grant funding provided by our Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI) partnership, something all of us are proud of! More than \$1.3 million have been awarded for projects, which brought in an additional \$2.9 million in partner matching funds, for a grand total of \$4.3 million put towards “on-the-ground” bird conservation actions (see Table 1 below)! Our award-winning MoBCI partnership of 62 members serves as a significant conduit in providing financial support to partnerships that work diligently to carry out on-the-ground bird habitat projects throughout private and public lands in Missouri. Conservation actions that are eligible for support include projects that protect, enhance or restore priority bird habitats. All projects are habitat-based, but some surveying and monitoring can be a small (<10%) component of a project, in fact, some component of bird monitoring is a follow-up to every project conducted. MoBCI grant projects must also be relevant to the goals and objectives of one or more of the major, national and international bird conservation initiatives, including the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plans applicable to Missouri, North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative. In addition, more credits are given to projects that conserve priority habitats for priority bird species identified in any of the Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA’s) or approved species/habitat restoration plans. For specific information on priority Missouri habitats see the MoBCI web site at www.mobci.org or visit the Missouri Department of Conservation’s Comprehensive Wildlife Strategy, “Conservation Opportunity Area” web site at <http://mdc.mo.gov/landwater-care/priority-focus-areas/conservation-opportunity-areas>. A map of Missouri’s Important Bird Areas can be found at <http://mo.audubon.org/important-bird-areas-5>.



MoBCI projects benefit an amazing array of species, such as grassland/glade/woodland birds, forest birds, and many wetland birds. An acceptable MoBCI project benefits one or more high priority bird species, involves habitat and ecosystem level planning and management, and creates collaborations between partners with shared goals and objectives.



Our Future MoBCI Grants Program Risks Reductions in Federal Funding Availability

Funding for the MoBCI grant program is at risk every year; because the source of MoBCI grant funds is Congressional appropriations to the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (SWG) Program, which literally requires an “act” of Congress to fund each year. In the 10-year history of MoBCI grants, the SWG program has combined funding contributed by the Missouri Department of Conservation (administrator of SWG; \$1,301,909), matching project funds from dozens of conservation partners (\$2,869,521; see Chart 1 below), and more than \$116,000 contributed directly from Partners for Fish & Wildlife/U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the National Wild Turkey Federation, and private donations. The SWG Program was reduced to \$61.8 million nationally for Federal FY11 (a 32% reduction from FY10, which was the highest appropriation ever) and \$61.4 for FY12. Missouri received just over \$931,000 in FY11 and almost \$946,000 in FY12, an adequate amount to ensure full funding for the MoBCI grant program. The MDC considers MoBCI grants a high priority partnership initiative that is habitat-driven and in recent years (beginning in 2009) has repeatedly allocated \$100,000 annually to the grant program. There continues to be a war in Washington, DC, focused on enacting some very drastic reductions in federal grant expenditures and the fires of budget controversy are being fanned by the upcoming Presidential election. In this war, adequate funding for fish and wildlife conservation for Federal FY13 is likely to be a casualty! The full House Appropriations Committee approved its FY13 spending bill in early July, 2012. Unfortunately, proposed is a 50% cut to SWG funding (or \$30.7 million nationally); that could mean Missouri would only receive about \$450,000 (half as much as the two previous years). These reductions could spell similar reductions in funding available for the MoBCI grants program.

Already MoBCI is only able to fund 68% on average of the amount of grant funding needed (i.e., requested) by partners for habitat management, any further reductions in funding will further limit our ability to conduct habitat work. Allowing our habitats to “over grow,” or possibly become infested with exotic species due to lack of management actions, will just cost much more to remedy down the road with management actions. Start thinking about what a 50% cut to our MoBCI grant program would mean to our organization’s ability to put bird habitat on-the-ground! If you are like me and believe funding for fish and wildlife management work in our country is



important, then let your Senator and Representative know you are unhappy about reduced funding for bird conservation projects that benefit all fish and wildlife.



Year	Number Projects Requested	Funding Requested	Number Projects Approved	MoBCI Grant Funds Issued	Funded Projects Match
2004	20	\$ 292,014	16	\$ 249,788	\$ 353,989
2005	19	\$ 259,417	12	\$ 151,788	\$ 339,494
2006	11	\$ 165,842	7	\$ 114,000	\$ 203,386
2007	16	\$ 233,931	9	\$ 142,100	\$ 266,958
2008	12	\$ 170,483	8	\$ 126,933	\$ 207,726
2009	8	\$ 119,000	7	\$ 115,500	\$ 194,000
2010	17	\$ 259,650	8	\$ 102,300	\$ 278,970
2011	12	\$ 198,762	8	\$ 106,000	\$ 190,996
2012	11	\$ 182,587	6	\$ 98,500	\$ 151,800
2013	8	\$ 150,000	8	\$ 95,000	\$ 798,595
TOTAL	134	\$ 2,031,686	89	\$ 1,301,909	\$ 2,985,914

Table 1. Annual MoBCI Grant Program awards from FY2004 – FY2013.



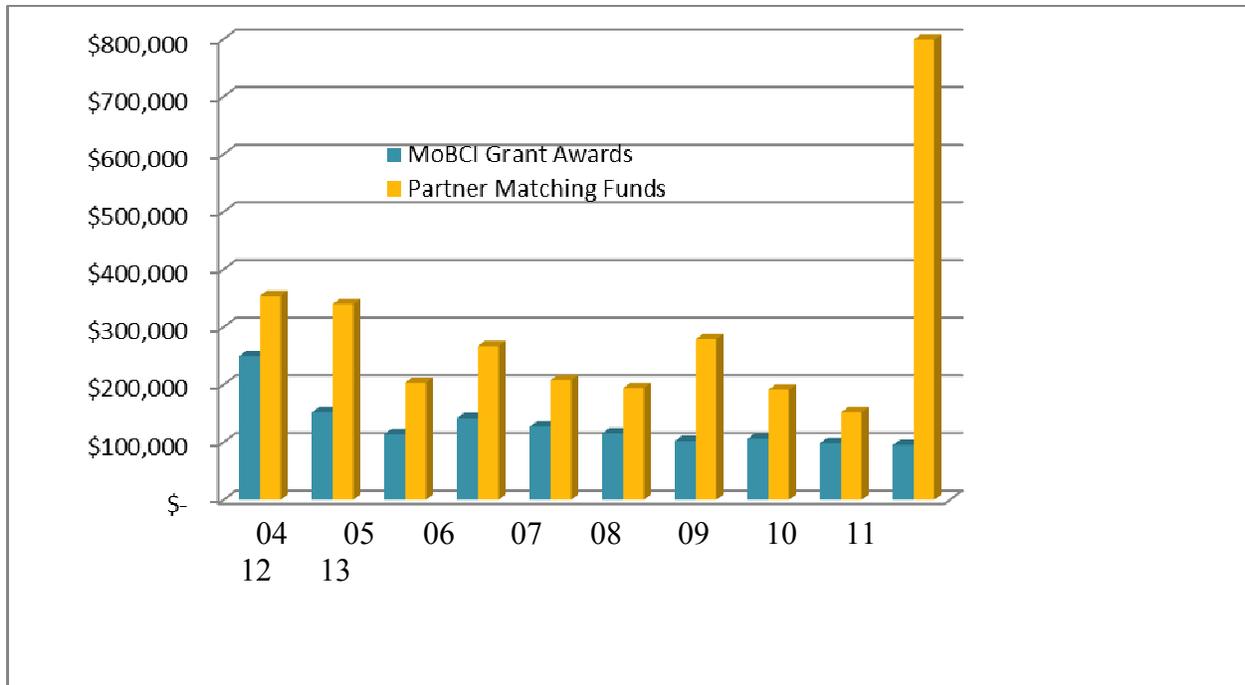


Chart 1. Partnership Matching Funds and MoBCI Grant Funds from FY2004 - FY2013.

Summary of MoBCI Conservation Projects Awarded for Next Year

Once again, the 2013 grant cycle was a competitive one, with 8 grant proposals submitted for consideration (\$150,000 in funding requested; see Table 1 above). The demand for funding for on-the-ground management of our natural communities is always a great need and not getting adequate funding just delays habitat management projects, costs more down-the-road, and has a negative impact on our ability to manage fish and wildlife. However, once again, our bird conservation partnership pulled through this year to fund the highest priority habitat work. The MoBCI Steering Committee approved some funding for all eight project proposals received this year (projects described below) – providing \$95,000 in awards. This year also brought a new record in matching funds, a total of \$798,595 (as indicated in Chart 1 above), which put more than twice the amount of habitat work on-the-ground than any other year in the decade of MoBCI. This alone is a good reason to celebrate our accomplishments! This record year, there are some very good habitat projects that will benefit a variety of priority bird species and a lot of other fish and wildlife species. If you have any questions about the MoBCI grant program they may be directed to Charles Burwick (MoBCI Chair; burwick.charles@gmail.com), or to Kelly Srigley Werner (Chair MoBCI Grants Committee; kelly_srigleywerner@fws.gov), or to Gene Gardner (MoBCI Secretary; gene.gardner@mdc.mo.gov).

Locust Creek Wetland Restoration Project at Pershing State Park

MoBCI Grant \$20,000: Matching Funds \$643,287

Partnering Organizations: Missouri Department of Natural Resources (lead), Audubon Society of Missouri, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Missouri Department of Conservation.

The Lower Grand River Conservation Opportunity Area (COA), which encompasses Pershing State Park, has significant value to priority wetland birds and songbirds, both as a migration



stopover site and breeding site. This COA also provides grassland bird habitat and riparian woodlands for arboreal nesting species. During migration, the COA supports large concentrations of waterfowl, a diversity of shorebird species, and large numbers of migrant species. The mission of Pershing State Park is to preserve outstanding examples of Missouri's landscapes and to interpret these values to the public; efforts are ongoing to promote stream stabilization and reduce sedimentation and to restore bottomland forest and wet prairie natural communities. The recent acquisition of the Zell Tract (which MoBCI contributed funding to), added 1,440 floodplain acres to Pershing State Park. The Natural Resources Conservation Service dedicated significant resources towards the conversion of these former agricultural lands to wetland habitat via the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), which will expand the floodplain and complement the native wet bottomland prairie, emergent marsh, and bottomland forest at Pershing State Park. Funding from this MoBCI grant will be used to complement on-the-ground implementation work described in the WRP restoration plan within the newly acquired West Unit of the Zell tract (approximately 310 acres). Restoration activities include plantings of native wet prairie seed, prairie hay, and cordgrass plugs, the establishment of firelines to allow for prescribed burns, and control of invasive species. This significant wetland restoration project will further the objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and the Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plan for restoration of habitat that benefits waterfowl and priority species of migratory avifauna.

Savanna Restoration, Prairie Reconstruction, and Prairie Restoration in the Golden Grasslands Conservation Opportunity Area

MoBCI Grant \$20,000: Matching Funds \$30,033

Partnering Organizations: Missouri Prairie Foundation (lead), Audubon Society of Missouri, Partners for Fish & Wildlife/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wild Turkey Federation, Missouri Department of Conservation, and private landowners.

The Missouri Prairie Foundation (MPF) has received MoBCI grants in the past, all of which have been used to improve prairie habitat for priority bird species in key areas of the state. As in the past, this project will help continue and expand the work of MPF for the benefit of prairie birds and a host of other native prairie species. Funds will be used to restore and reconstruct prairie and savanna communities within the Golden Grasslands Conservation Opportunity Area (COA), providing habitat for grassland birds, one of the most threatened suite of bird species in North America. Though largely converted to agricultural production, southwestern Missouri possesses some of the last remaining prairies in Missouri today. Revitalizing prairies and savannas to their maximum biological diversity will allow for positive landscape-scale impacts on grassland birds and other native wildlife. Properties in the Golden Grasslands COA and the Golden Grasslands Important Bird Area include both high quality prairie and degraded and/or converted prairie and savanna communities; revitalization of these tracts within a larger grassland landscape is in accordance with the Partners in Flight Grassland Bird Conservation Model. The Missouri Prairie Foundation has an excellent prairie management track record. By leveraging matching funds from a variety of sources, the MPF has been a very effective force to accomplish significant benefits for grassland birds and other prairie wildlife.



Heimbeaugh Hill Glade Restoration Project

MoBCI Grant \$17,000; Matching Funds \$17,000; Private Donation \$1,800

Partnering Organizations: Missouri Department of Natural Resources (lead), Columbia Audubon Society, and Missouri Department of Conservation.

The restored glades and woodlands at Ha Ha Tonka State Park possess characteristics desirable to priority bird species. Heimbeaugh Hill was recently added to the Ha Ha Tonka Oak Woodland Natural Area. Restoration of habitats this area, like this glade restoration on the Heimbeaugh Hill unit, will benefit migratory songbirds as well as other species that depend on grass-forb structure for their breeding cycles. Habitat improvement projects on the 38 acre Heimbeaugh Hill glade began in 1994 and this grant will fund more cedar removal, expansion of firelines to include larger landscape management of this area and the surrounding woodlands. Heimbeaugh Hill is among the largest balds in the park and it is the last of the balds in the park needing to be fully restored. Restoration of the Heimbeaugh Hill glade identified in this project will result in a larger, more contiguous tract of habitat for priority grassland-shrubland birds. The MoBCI Steering Committee would also like to recognize the generous donation of \$1,800 made possible by Jane Fitzgerald; it was a stipulation of the gift that these funds be used for glade restoration.

River Hills Forest Habitat Project

MoBCI Grant \$15,000; Matching Funds \$15,000

Partnering Organizations: Missouri Grouse Chapter of Quail & Upland Wildlife Forever (lead), National Wild Turkey Federation, Enterprise Leasing, Partners for Fish & Wildlife/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Missouri Department of Conservation.

The River Hills Project area includes portions of Callaway, Montgomery and Warren counties in central Missouri. A partnership was formed in 2000 to regenerate oak/hickory forest habitat in these three counties that focused on encouraging landowners to conduct management practices that promote young oak/hickory forest regeneration. Cost-share assistance is provided to private landowners to implement practices that improve young forest habitat, including woodland improvement and edge enhancement. Dense young forest and edge habitat benefits local birds (e.g., ruffed grouse, northern bobwhite quail), but many other priority birds benefit as well. Private landowners control the majority of forestland in Missouri, so it is essential that they participate in wildlife management activities that will improve habitats and populations of wildlife species. A habitat evaluation project has been conducted and the data is currently being analyzed to assess the success of the project activities since 2000.

Savanna and Open Woodland Restoration in Northeast Missouri and Southeast Iowa

MoBCI Grant \$10,000; Matching Funds \$10,000

Partnering Organizations: National Wild Turkey Federation (lead), Partners for Fish & Wildlife/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Missouri Department of Conservation.

The Tallgrass Prairie Bird Conservation Region (BCR) in northern and western Missouri and the Central Hardwoods BCR in southern and eastern Missouri was once a broad and dynamic oak-dominated savanna. Given continuous threats to this landscape, management to expand priority



bird habitat on Missouri's private landscape is imperative. MoBCI is providing funds for the partners to work directly with private landowners in the Missouri portion of the focus area and provide cost-share incentives for habitat management on private lands. The NWTF and its project partners, including MDC Private Lands Conservationists, will work to implement planning and cost share reimbursement for habitat enhancement practices that favor the restoration and maintenance of savanna and open woodland habitat types in Missouri. Several high priority bird species will benefit from oak savanna and open woodlands management. This project is also expected to be a catalyst for additional bi-state, landscape scale initiatives involving multiple agency and organizational partners in Missouri and Iowa.

Prairie Restoration and Grassland Management to Improve Habitat for the Greater Prairie-Chicken and other Declining Grassland Bird Species

MoBCI Grant \$10,000: Matching Funds \$10,000

Partnering Organizations: The Nature Conservancy Missouri Chapter (lead), Wildlife Conservation Society, National Wild Turkey Federation, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Blank Park Zoo, The Nature Conservancy in Iowa, Iowa State University, and Missouri Department of Conservation.

Funding is intended to improve the structural diversity of potential nesting and brood-rearing habitat for greater prairie-chickens and other declining grassland dependent bird species. The Nature Conservancy (TNC), through partnerships with private landowners and other conservation organizations, is working to restore a tallgrass prairie landscape and provide critical corridors for grassland species within the 70,000-acre Grand River Grasslands (GRG) Conservation Opportunity Area of northwest Missouri and southwest Iowa. TNC has recently partnered with several organizations to restore more than 2,400 acres of tallgrass prairie at Dunn Ranch and Pawnee Prairie. Also, TNC has recently worked with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Blank Park Zoo, IA, to evaluate more than 63,000 acres in the GRG for its suitability as nesting and brood-rearing habitat for greater prairie-chickens. This grant provides funding to manage and improve the structural and biological diversity of the tallgrass prairie at Dunn Ranch as habitat for the greater prairie-chicken and other priority grassland birds.

Upper Moniteau Creek/Tipton Upland Plain Grassland Quail Focus Area Partnership

MoBCI Grant \$2,000: Matching Funds \$2,000

Partnering Organizations: Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation (lead), Moreau Valley Quail Forever Chapter, and Missouri Department of Conservation.

A common landscape feature of this Focus Area is the dominate monoculture of invasive cool season grasses (i.e., tall fescue) and smooth brome used for grazing and haying (49% of the landscape). However, a number of grassland landowners are taking advantage of assistance programs that provide good livestock forage, while improving habitat for quail and grassland birds. Such conservation practices have also contributed to a significant improvement in water quality in the upper Moniteau Creek watershed. The major emphasis of this project is to find opportunities to provide more diverse, healthy grasslands and further improve water quality. Cost share and incentive funding for private landowners will continue to encourage grazers, recreational landowners, and agricultural production landowners to improve habitat on their pasture and haying



lands, and riparian areas for grassland birds. Funds will “piggy-back” onto existing programs (i.e., Farm Bill Programs) to make them more appealing to landowners within the Focus Area. This project will increase diverse grassland and savanna habitat and provide more habitats to a myriad of bird species while improving water quality. Grassland conversions to native, diverse stands and increased shrubby cover development are also two major recommendations laid out in the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative. Additionally, many other aquatic species, including the endangered Topeka shiner, will also benefit from enhanced water quality provided by the improved grassland conditions within the Focus Area.

St. Francois Mountains Glade and Woodland Restoration Project

MoBCI Grant \$1,000: Matching Funds \$1,000: Private Donation \$4,000

Partnering Organizations: Missouri Department of Natural Resources (lead), Ozark Trail Association, U.S. Forest Service, The City of Ironton, Sherwood Forest Camp, and Missouri Department of Conservation.

The St. Francois Mountains Natural Area lies at the heart of the St. Francois Knobs Conservation Opportunity Area and the Upper St. Francis Watershed Important Bird Area identified by Audubon. Work will focus on igneous glade and woodland restoration activities within the 7,028 acre St. Francois Mountains Natural Area, including portions of Taum Sauk Mountain and Johnson’s Shut-Ins State Parks, and Ketcherside Mountain Conservation Area. AmeriCorps crews and or appropriate contractors will rehabilitate and construct fire lines critically needed for conducting prescribed burns. Rehabilitating or constructing hiking trails (including the Ozark Trail) will serve a dual purpose as fire lines and provide access for other management activities (e.g., feral hog eradication) into more remote, rugged areas. Crews will also conduct prescribed burns of igneous glades and woodlands, thin woody undergrowth, and remove invasive woody species. This project will benefit important breeding habitat for a number of Partners in Flight (PIF) priority neotropical migrants, as well as habitat for resident PIF priority birds, and a host of other wildlife. The MoBCI Steering Committee would like to express our appreciation for the generous donation of \$4,000 from the Cathleen Creley Memorial Fund, made possible through coordination with the St. Louis Audubon Society.



The Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative works with the Missouri Teaming with Wildlife Coalition to secure adequate funding for forest, fish & wildlife conservation.



Missouri Grouse Chapter of Quail Unlimited is Making a Big Difference

Over the past 7 years (2005-2011) the Mo Grouse Chapter has received \$103,992.62 in grants from MoBCI. These funds have been used by 42 landowners in the MO River Hills COA creating a variety of habitat for mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. While the ruffed grouse is our main focus, the improvement in quality of timber and habitat has also helped woodcock, turkey, deer, rabbits, quail, and many species of songbirds. The funding provided has been used for timber and woodland management practices including 1,729 acres of Timber Stand Improvement (TSI), 53 acres of forest openings, and 18.6 acres of edge feathering. While these practices may seem expensive at \$57.43/acre, the benefits have been greater than anyone anticipated. This forest habitat work has not only created improved habitat it has educated landowners about the need for timber and habitat management. Adjoining landowners often request advice and funding for projects on their land once they see the benefits on their neighbors property. Through MoBCI, MDC cost share, EQIP, and WHIP over \$250,000 has been spent on habitat projects in the River Hills COA in the last 10 years and several landowners have completed projects without cost share funding. Once landowners see the benefits of improving the quality of their forest AND have more deer, turkey and other wildlife it is really for them to decide if they want improve their forest habitat.

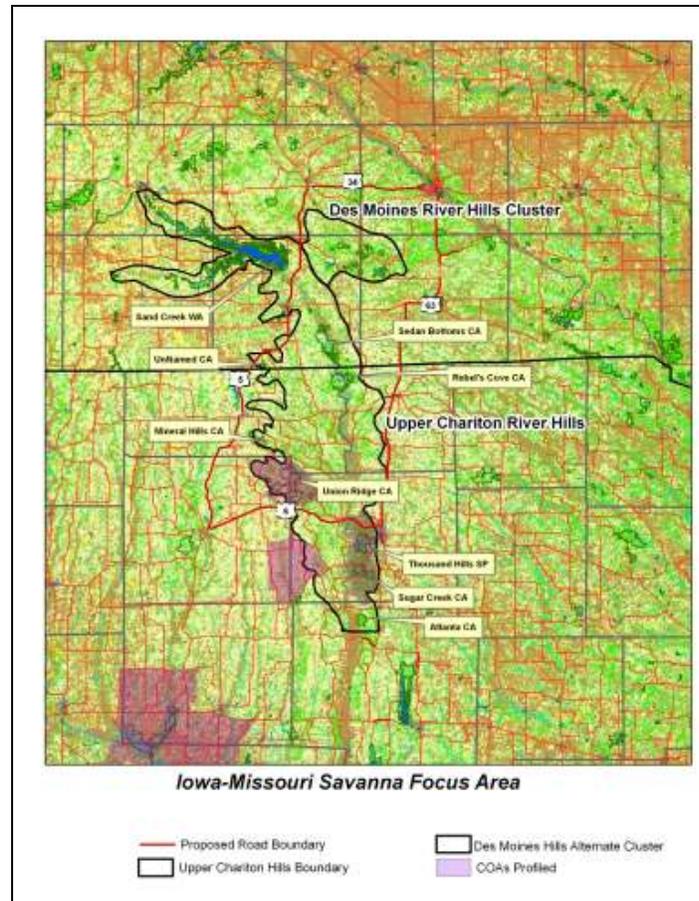
Tom Westhoff, Chairman, Mo Grouse Chapter of QUWF

Cost Share Project in Northeast Missouri Making Significant Progress!

The 2012 theme for the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI) Conference is the importance of private lands to the outcome of efforts designed to improve habitat conditions for ALL birds here and elsewhere. With 93% of Missouri in private ownership, we are obviously a private land state so the importance of how that vast majority gets managed will determine success or failure. The MoBCI grants program has been, and continues to be, an important instrument in getting private lands initiatives on their feet. Since its' inception 10 years ago, the MoBCI grant program has contributed to the Missouri River Hills (MRH) initiative aimed at creating important early successional forested habitats in a central Missouri focus area. The long term goal of this effort is to create suitable habitat for the recovery of the ruffed grouse. However, as is usually the case, the habitat created by the passionate efforts of those focused on grouse will benefit many other species as well. Over the last 10 years, the MRH project has risen to be considered one of the top 3 most active Conservation Opportunity Areas in the state and has improved thousands of private land acres within that landscape. The success of the MRH project is thanks largely to the diligent efforts of the individual foresters, biologists, and conservation volunteers promoting the project and finding the money to pay for it. However, the MoBCI grants program can also take a bow for providing the initial foundational funding creating a match pool to sustain the effort. This same successful formula was followed in the creation of the northeast Missouri and southeast Iowa savanna and open oak woodland initiative. On the Missouri side, the effort is focused in Adair, Sullivan, Putnam, and Schuyler Counties and was initiated back in 2009. The National Wild Turkey Federation was primarily interested in this landscape because, when the project was



initiated, we were in the throes of a significant turkey decline in a region of the state that historically contained some of the state's healthiest turkey populations. Although the decline was primarily a result of unparalleled and untimely rainfall (twice the average annual rainfall for the region falling during the nesting season) we wanted to set the table for a rebound by focusing on habitat improvement initiatives. Weather wise, the pendulum obviously seems to have swung sharply in the opposite direction lately. However, then as now, improving habitat conditions is always a safe bet to influence positive change and, with the help of the MoBCI grants program, we have been busy making that happen!



In 2008, the NWTf state board adopted Missouri specific goals outlined in the North American Wild Turkey Management Plan (NAWTMP) to guide super fund dollar allocation.

<http://www.nwtf.org/NAWTMP/states/missouri.html>. These goals ensure that the dollars raised at banquets are spent on the best projects to achieve mission delivery across the state addressing conservation and hunting heritage deliverables. Primary conservation goals are to increase the use of prescribed fire, increase forest management activities, and increase the establishment of native warm season grass (NWSG). These practices are all pivotal in providing key nesting and brood rearing habitats for ground nesting birds widely excepted as the most significant limiting factor for successful reproduction.





TSI and prescribed burning combine to provide ideal nesting and brood rearing vegetative structure critical for maximizing reproductive potential for a variety of bird species.

Since it is not practical to use an opportunistic shotgun approach when implementing conservation related projects, especially when precious dollars are limited, the best strategy is to use a focused approach. Identifying key landscapes and combining efforts and dollars with other interested partners gains the biggest bang for the buck. The northeast Missouri and southeast Iowa project encapsulates this concept by targeting dollars in a region that captures the Thousand Hills and Union Ridge Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs) in northeast Missouri and the Southern Iowa Oak Savanna Alliance (SIOSA) landscapes. The primary function of this initiative is to provide cost share money prioritizing practices designed to restore open woodland and savanna conditions on private lands throughout the focus area. Since 2009, MoBCI grant funds have been matched 4:1 by other partners including: USFWS Partners dollars, Audubon Society of Missouri, NWTf, and Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) Habitat Challenge Grant dollars. The \$119,500 was used to augment the existing MDC cost share program in the participating counties to pay for timber stand improvement (TSI), prescribed burning, and NWSG establishment. The MDC Private Lands Conservationists and Forester work with interested landowners to develop management plans, line up contractors, and approve completed projects.

To date, this initiative has impacted 39 landowners and achieved 417 acres of prescribed burning, 595 acres of TSI, and 34 acres of NWSG establishment on private land. The 27 open woodland units restored by this project through TSI thinning and burning average 17 acres in size and are scattered throughout the focus area. As previously stated, the vegetative structure of these units provides ideal nesting and brood rearing habitat. Although it is impossible to accurately measure the actual influence of these units in additional birds produced, it is probably safe to assume that their impact goes far beyond the actual acres improved.

We intend to continue this project as well as several similar projects occurring in west central, central, and southwest Missouri with plans to implement work in additional focus areas. However, expanded effort requires expanded funding and collaborative efforts are more important than ever as some funding pools decrease or completely dry up, especially government sources like MoBCI. Government funding originates from we the tax payer and as our elected officials battle over what to cut to keep us from imploding, conservation programs usually wind up taking a disproportionate hit. Therefore, we, as the 62 conservation organizations and agencies comprising MoBCI, need to



be vocal in our support of federal conservation program funding as well as individually supporting alternative sources. Conservation costs money and that funding doesn't fall from the sky. Actively put your money where your mouth is and help us all more effectively implement positive change.

John D. Burk (Senior Regional Biologist for the National Wild Turkey Federation & Member of the MoBCI Steering Committee)

MoBCI Plays a Part in The Missouri/Mississippi Confluence Restoration Partnership- An effort that is being recognized nationally as an example of how to move conservation into the 21st century.



(Photo by Glen Chambers)

The Missouri/Mississippi Confluence Restoration Partnership has been chosen as one of 51 river projects (1/state and U.S. territories) for President Obama's America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative and the Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar's America's Great Outdoors Rivers Initiative. Healthy rivers/floodplains are part of the vision for AGO because rivers offer close to home recreation, provide important habitat and migration corridors for fish and wildlife, and connect communities to natural places. I had the opportunity to participate in a Conference to celebrate these national river projects at the end of

April in Washington D.C. and was pleased and honored to have Secretary Salazar tell me he would like to see the great work that has been accomplished in the Confluence and would like to visit!! We will try to get him to our great state of Missouri this fall around the time of peak waterfowl migration.

Missouri Congressional leaders and Governor Jay Nixon received the announcement from the Secretary's Office that the Confluence represents some of the best examples of moving river/floodplain restoration forward, connecting people to our river systems, and providing recreational opportunities. Our partnership (consisting of nearly 40 partners **plus MoBCI**) has a slightly different twist than the other projects chosen in that our partnership is mostly focused on habitat restoration efforts and protection (through conservation easements) with voluntary landowners, but our broader vision is to focus on *voluntary* wetland restoration/enhancement and protection, public land acquisition through willing sellers, policy issues that could negatively impact the Confluence floodplain, and educate and reach out to others to get people connected to the outdoors ---with that in mind, since 2004:

★ We have restored and protected through the partnership and the wonderful dedication of our private landowners just over 7,000 acres of wetland habitat in the Confluence. **MoBCI** helped get



this effort started through the grants program which provided funds to restore wetland prairie on a host of privately owned duck clubs in the St. Charles, Pike and Lincoln County areas to restore wet prairie habitats along the fringes of emergent marshes – we called the restoration effort, which ran for two years **“Wetlands, Wildlife, and YOU!”**.



(Dan Crigler, USFWS)

These plantings are providing important migratory habitat for ducks, geese, swans, songbirds, large wading birds, marsh birds etc. (prairie cord-grass planting pictured, left);

★ We have purchased from willing sellers lands now in public ownership, through the efforts of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, including USFWS Cora Island part of Big Muddy NFWR. Additional acquisition acres for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources Edward

"Ted" and Pat Jones Confluence State Park, and of course the completed Missouri Department of Conservation's Columbia bottoms;

★ We have an educational center for public use for education and getting people, especially children, outdoors with the efforts of Missouri Audubon who built Missouri Audubon's Audubon Center at Riverlands;

★ We have policy issues that have been hard fought by many of the landowners who own property in the confluence regarding TIF financing in floodplains;



(Dale Humburg, Ducks Unlimited)

★ We have the Hunting Heritage Protection Act, spear-headed by the National Rifle Association and Great Rivers Habitat Alliance to protect the right of citizens to hunt and limit the use of TIF financing to promote development within the 100-year floodplain;

★ We have dedicated, wonderful landowners who have the desire to protect a very special part of Missouri's conservation heritage in the Confluence;

★ We also have the Audubon Society of Missouri (ASM) who helped monitor bird response this spring on lands restored through various programs, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and North America Wetlands Conservation Act funds,



Missouri Department of Conservation Cost-Share funds, Farm Service Agency Conservation Reserve Program (CP-23 practice), Natural Resources Conservation Service Wetland Reserve Program, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., conservation easement program.

With the funds ASM provided, they were able to support voluntary birding efforts in key restoration areas to determine how our efforts are benefitting migratory birds, and observed least bitterns, willow flycatcher, black-necked stilt, Mississippi kite, and white-rumped and spotted sandpipers this is just another angle of the partnership and great example of how **MoBCI contributes to the overall efforts of all-bird conservation in the Confluence**. This is a time to celebrate the work we have done and of which **MoBCI** has been a huge part --our conservation community along with private landowners of the Confluence Area are a shining example of a Conservation Partnership -- we don't see each other in the hall every day, don't talk to one another often enough, but the bullets above tell our story and now we are sharing it with the Nation.

The Department of Interior (DOI) will leverage resources to support river initiatives in every state, including ours for the Confluence. For more information about America's Great Outdoors Initiative, please visit the website: <http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/> and for more about the AGO Rivers Initiative, visit <http://www.doi.gov/Americas-Great-Outdoors-Highlighted-River-Projects.cfm>.

FYI: Governor Nixon chose two projects last year as part of America's Great Outdoors projects: Rehabilitation of the Gateway Arch and improving Missouri's Ozark Trail system. Because river conservation was an overwhelming theme in many of DOI's listening sessions held in 2011 (which some members of MoBCI were a part of), the Secretary wanted to highlight rivers as a theme for America's Great Outdoors.

Kelly Srigley Werner
USFWS, State Private Lands Coordinator



BUY DUCK STAMPS....PUT YOUR STAMP ON CONSERVATION
You can buy Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp) (Federal Duck Stamps) from the following vendors:

- **United States Postal Service: 1-800-STAMP-24 (1-800-782-6724)**
- **Online: The Postal Store, once at the website enter search text "duck stamps" in upper right hand corner.**
- **Select Postal Office Locations: Find a Post Office near you.**



- **Amplex Corporation (the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Distributor) Phone: 1-800-852-4897 or www.duckstamp.com**
- **Duck stamps can also be purchased at most major sporting goods stores that sell hunting and fishing licenses or at a local National Wildlife Refuge.**

Federal Duck Stamps are a vital tool for wetland conservation. Ninety-eight cents out of every dollar generated by the sales of Federal Duck Stamps goes directly to purchase or lease wetland habitat for protection in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Understandably, the Federal Duck Stamp Program has been called one of the most successful conservation programs ever initiated and is a highly effective way to conserve America's natural resources.

Birds in Trouble Globally, but Cooperative Conservation Approach Getting Results En Español <http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/120709.html>



Yellow-eared Parrots by Fundación ProAves

The ABC approach employs two key principals: partnership with in-country conservation groups and a focus on protecting key sites and bird species in most peril.

The results are measureable and significant. Since 1999, ABC has partnered with 20 organizations in ten countries to create a network of 44 bird reserves, most of whom are part of a new, Latin American Bird Reserve Network. The reserves protect over 40 percent of the rarest bird species in the Americas—39 out of 96 species that are

found only at one last location on Earth. Additionally, ABC and partners have expanded conservation efforts to include imperiled species that inhabit only a few remaining sites, and already, 16 percent (30 of 189 species) are receiving protection.

The reserves are especially attractive to tourists, not only for the spectacular rare birds and other wildlife that can be seen, but also because funds raised through tourism go directly to the local organization to support conservation of those species and their habitats. ABC has called this effort Conservation Birding, and created an interactive website, www.conservationbirding.org that has been designed specifically to help visitors plan birding trips to help conservation. The site presents detailed information on the reserves and ecolodges established by the conservation groups. A Google Earth component adds another dimension by presenting suggested routes, photographs of lodges and birds, and videos of rare and interesting species.



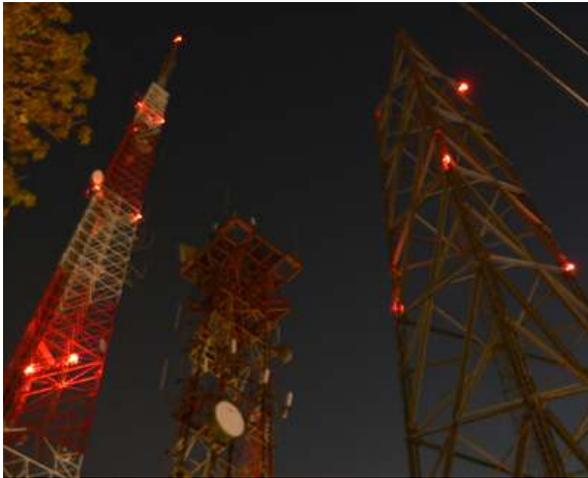
To further global endangered species conservation, ABC also helped found the Alliance for Zero Extinction, a joint international initiative of 80 biodiversity conservation organizations that aims to prevent species extinctions by identifying and safeguarding key sites, each of which is the last remaining refuge for one or more Endangered or Critically Endangered species. AZE's goal is to create a frontline of defense against extinction by protecting as many of these sites as possible.

To date, AZE has identified 587 sites worldwide that are the last refuges for 920 of the world's most highly threatened species; 200 of these are bird species, with 96 of those in Latin America and the Caribbean. Examples include the Blue-billed Curassow, Royal Cinclodes, Marvelous Spatuletail, and Santa Marta Parakeet in Latin America, and the Whooping Crane and a number of Hawaiian bird species such as the Palila and Maui Parrotbill in the United States. The Latin American Bird Reserve Network reflects the implementation by ABC and its partners of AZE principles to save these species.

Study Identifies Tower Lighting Solutions that Reduce Bird Mortality

<http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/120613a.html>

Wednesday, June 13, 2012



A new study by the Federal Aviation Administration has identified ways to reduce bird mortality at communication towers throughout the United States without compromising airplane safety.

Previous studies concluded that large numbers of migratory birds are killed when they become attracted to the steady-burning or slowly pulsing (i.e., non-flashing) lights on communication towers that alert pilots to the tower's presence. "Past research has comprehensively documented the phenomenon of migrating birds confusing certain nighttime tower lighting with stars. The

birds become trapped in a corridor or cone of light and either collide with the structure or circle repeatedly until they drop exhausted to the ground, where they then become easy targets for predators. This new FAA study offers a solution to reduce that mortality, and as such, provides a major step forward for the conservation of our declining songbirds," said Darin Schroeder, Vice President for Conservation Advocacy for American Bird Conservancy.

Based on the results of this research, the FAA proposes to make specific changes to the obstruction lighting standards, including a proposal to omit or flash steady-burning red lights from several obstruction lighting configurations. There are more than 100,000 towers that are lighted in the U.S. Some of these towers can reach 1,700 ft. or more in height. A recent study estimated that seven million birds are killed each year in tower collisions, the majority night-migrating songbirds.



Government Sued Over Failure to Disclose Information on Wind Industry

<http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/120626.html>

Tuesday, June 26, 2012



In a lawsuit filed June 27 in Washington D.C. District Court, American Bird Conservancy has accused the federal government of suppressing information about wind energy projects and their potential negative impact on America's wildlife.

ABC charges that two Interior Department (DOI) agencies flagrantly violated the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) by failing to comply with statutory deadlines for disclosure of information, and by failing to provide their correspondence with wind developers and other information related to potential impacts on birds and bats, and bird and bat deaths at controversial wind developments in 10 states.

"It's ridiculous that Americans have to sue in order to find out what their government is saying to wind companies about our wildlife—a public trust," said Kelly Fuller, Wind Campaign Coordinator for ABC. "ABC is concerned that many of these projects have the potential to take a devastating toll on songbirds, majestic eagles, and threatened and endangered species," she added.

Links to Other American Bird Conservatory Stories (On-Line Only)

Crucial Bird Conservation Programs Cut by 50 Percent by House

<http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/120622.html> (Friday, June 22, 2012)

In a move attacked by bird conservation groups as one of the most regressive wildlife appropriations ever, crucial conservation programs were slashed by 50% of FY 2012 funding levels in a funding bill approved by the House Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee for Fiscal Year 2013. The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act - a major source of funding for conservation programs that benefit migratory birds - was also cut in half.

First-ever Report Shows Changes in Canada's Bird Populations

<http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/stories/120706.html> (Friday, July 06, 2012)

The first national report on the state of Canada's birds finds that, since 1970, the nation's bird population has dropped by 12 percent and that some groups of birds have decreased by more than 40 percent and some species by more than 90 percent. A similar report is produced every year by



the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with input from American Bird Conservancy and over 20 other organizations, titled "State of the Birds," which covers the United States.

Maui Parrotbill Getting Help on the Ground and From the Air

<http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/stories/120629.html> (Friday, June 29, 2012)

While several new and promising efforts to protect the Maui Parrotbill, a critically endangered Hawaiian honeycreeper, are underway on the ground in Hawai'i, a new benefactor for the bird has emerged -- Hawaiian Airlines.

New Reserve Protects Critical Area for Rare Bird in Bolivia

<http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/120628.html> (Thursday, June 28, 2012)

The rare Tucuman Parrot will benefit from protections afforded by a new reserve established by Asociacion Armonia in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The 44-acre Tucuman Parrot Reserve protects the largest Podocarpus conifer trees in the area, which are critically important as nesting sites for the parrot. The new reserve is adjacent to the Quirusillas Municipal Reserve, effectively extending the area under protection.



Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*), the focus bird for the 2012 Governor's Proclamation, annually migrates 12,400 miles between Missouri and South America. It is a flagship species for full life-cycle bird conservation.



Illustration by George Maleski

