

A Note from the Editor



REBECCA JONES

I usually write these fall Editor's Notes during the hot, "dog days" of summer. Summer is a great time to evaluate wildlife habitat because plants are growing and easier to identify. Forbs, flowers,

grasses and trees are all taking every opportunity to gather sunlight and water in order to accomplish the growth they need. As these plants grow, other denizens of our wildlife community take advantage of this busiest season. These animals are our pollinators.

Technically, any animal that transmits pollen or helps plants to reproduce could be considered a pollinator. Bats, bees, beetles, birds, butterflies, moths, wasps and even small mammals can serve in this role. However, when most of us think of pollinators, we think of bees, butterflies and wasps.

Pollinators are critical to our survival on the planet because they help in the reproduction of many of the plants we eat. The plants they pollinate produce fruits, nuts and vegetables along with vegetable oils, plant fibers and other raw materials used in our daily lives. Estimates are that somewhere between 75 to 95 percent of the plants on Earth require help from animal pollinators. Unfortunately, many pollinators, especially bees, butterflies and wasps, are in rapid decline. Reasons for the decline include the use of chemicals, loss of habitat, increasing spread of disease in our rapidly moving society and other factors not fully understood.

Many organizations and groups are working to address the decline of pollinators. In recent years, the work NCWRC technical assistance biologists do to improve wildlife habitat has become recognized for providing benefits to pollinators. Much of the same habitat management that benefits bobwhite quail, wild turkeys, songbirds and other wildlife can also help our bees, butterflies, moths and wasps. Quality wildlife habitat often results in quality pollinator habitat. We have even added wildflowers and lower grass densities to many of the prescriptions thereby improving the areas even more for pollinators while also providing for the needs of traditional wildlife species. Management for many high-priority wildlife species goes hand in hand with management for pollinators, and this is a win-win for everyone in North Carolina.

Mark A. Jones

WILDLIFE RESEARCH PROGRAM SUPERVISOR
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THE Upland GAZETTE

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND HABITAT MANAGEMENT



JOHN ISENHOUR/NCWRC

Alex Vanderheyden with his first deer, a buck harvested on Perkins Game Land.

Game Lands Provide Hunting Opportunities to a Growing State

By John Isenhour, technical assistance biologist,
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission

I have certainly been blessed to be able to hunt on private lands throughout my life. My family has struggled over the years but has been able to hold on to our homeplace in Cabarrus County. In addition, the generosity of friends allows me access to private tracts in Montgomery, Randolph and Stanly counties. I hate to admit it, but easy access to private tracts has made me a bit of a fair-weather hunter.

Even worse, while I do occasionally hunt public lands, I seldom think about how critical North Carolina's game lands system is to those hunters who do not have access to private tracts. This past November, I got two pleasant reminders regarding the importance of the game lands system and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) staff who work daily to manage existing parcels and add acreage to the system.

November 23, 2019 found me working a deer check station at a Davidson County deer processor with staff from the NCWRC Land and Water Access Division. Team Leader Greg Queen and Temporary Wildlife Technician April Boggs had volunteered to step

outside their normal work activities at the Troy Depot to assist with this check station. With temperatures hovering around 50 degrees, and over an inch of rain falling throughout the day, the woods were not overrun with hunters. It was a pretty slow day with only 11 samples collected from deer for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) testing. Two of these deer caught NCWRC staff's attention; not due to injuries, odd growths or enormous antlers, but because of the stories of the hunters who harvested the young bucks.

Liam Duggan's arrival at the processor brought a couple of grins as he stepped out of his late-model sedan and popped the trunk. Over the years, we have seen deer loaded in trunks, back seats and even front seats, but "non-traditional" deer transport still raises an eyebrow or two. As Greg helped Liam unload the tarp-wrapped deer from the trunk, the excitement quickly shifted from how the deer arrived at the processor to the story of the successful hunt. We came to find out, this was not only his first deer since moving to Charlotte from Boston, this was the first deer he had ever harvested. This milestone ratcheted up the celebratory mood as we weighed, aged and got antler measurements from the 1 ½-year-old, 3-point buck.

Liam has been deer hunting for two years, with much of his education coming through online research. He was drawn to the sport as an outdoor activity to participate in when fishing slows down in the fall and winter. "The difficulty and challenge of trying to get everything just right is also very exciting to me," he added.

During the 2018 season, Liam hunted the Uwharrie National Forest about 10 times seeing a few deer, but unable to get a clean shot. For 2019, he was selected to hunt Second Creek Game Lands as part of the NCWRC permit hunt program. These draw hunts are designed to limit hunting pressure on selected properties across the state, thereby providing a quality hunting experience. Liam decided to apply for the Second Creek hunt because it was close to his home, and he wanted to try a different setting.

The morning of Nov. 23, Liam was set up in a ground blind on the edge of a cut corn field in Rowan County. As the morning progressed, the deer stepped out of a creek bottom tangle of briars and saplings to feed on corn that was missed by the combine. After watching the deer for several minutes, a well-placed rifle shot ensured this animal would have a special place in Liam's memory.

With data collection complete, I had a few additional questions for the successful hunter. What were the challenges he faced finding a place to hunt and were game lands important to him? As we talked, it became apparent that Liam probably would not be a hunter if it were not for public lands. "I was never able to find any private land to hunt on. My girlfriend's dad has a private tract he has permission to hunt on, but our schedules never allowed me to hunt there with him." He went on to say, "It's cool to know you always have public lands ready to go, no permissions or door knocking necessary."

A bit later, Alex Vanderheyden's arrival at the processor seemed a bit more typical. Driving a slightly older pick-up truck, sporting

a full red beard and wearing an orange ballcap, Alex looked right at home in rural Davidson County. However, within a few syllables, it was evident that he may not be from "round here." In fact, Alex moved to North Carolina from southeastern Wisconsin in early 2016. He had started deer hunting a couple years before leaving Wisconsin, but short gun seasons, limited access to private lands and heavy hunting pressure hampered his attempts to harvest a deer in his home state.

"You thought you found a nice spot, and then when the sun came up, all you see is spots of blaze orange," Alex said.

As with Duggan, this was also not only Alex's first North Carolina deer, but his first deer period. Once this fact came to light, the excitement level ratcheted up once again!

As with many other North Carolina hunters, Alex had little success finding private lands to hunt. "A co-worker of mine has some private land I hunted on once last year, but it is about an hour and a half away from my home, and the property was not easily accessible" he said. Since moving to North Carolina, he has hunted waterfowl once at Kerr Scott Game Land and pursued deer at Alcoa Game Land a few times. However, Alex has hunted Perkins Game Land multiple times over the last three years.

"I started going there mostly because it's the closest game land to my house," Alex said. "I never had an opportunity to take a shot.



JOHN ISENHOUR/NCWRC

Cody Moore, April Boggs and Greg Queen, "The Troy Crew", take a break from managing one of the game lands under their responsibility.

I've seen lots of tracks and a few deer tails as they were running away from me through the trees."

Alex did not get discouraged and rolled with the public land punches. "I had meticulously scouted and planned my hunt," he said. "But some things didn't go exactly as planned that morning. There were four other hunters that beat me to the game land and were unloading as I was pulling up!" Having just driven from Greensboro, Alex was not about to let this ruin his morning in the field. He thought through his scouting and past experience on

Perkins and quickly came up with a Plan B. Persistence paid off as he harvested his first deer, a six-point buck, at 7:20 that morning.

So, you would think that the two hunters who harvested their first deer, on public lands no less, would have been the most excited folks at the processor that day, but I don't think they were. Greg and April both shared in the success of the harvest, taking photos, sharing congratulations and reliving the hunt with the hunters. Anyone who knows Greg, knows he is outgoing and has "never met a stranger," but these two gentlemen harvesting their first deer on "his" Game Lands took it to another level. His years of experience and work on both Perkins and Second Creek gave him a unique insight into both these hunts.

"Did you walk in from White Road or Graham Road?" he asked. "We have always seen deer in that long narrow field by the creek. You picked a great spot for the conditions this morning! Brother, there is a real good funnel down by the river, you might want to scout it for your next hunt. You might even get a shot at a feral pig." It certainly brightened a dreary day to see Greg "break out of his shell" and share his excitement with these successful hunters.

Being the recently hired temporary technician, April was familiar with the two tracts of land, but not as familiar as Greg. While her excitement did not erupt quite as much as Greg's, it was evident by the smile on her face and her words of congratulations. Even

though she was "stuck" outside on a cold rainy Saturday, there was probably nowhere she would have rather been. She was part of a successful hunt. Her work on a tractor or carrying a drip torch paid off by allowing a couple fellow North Carolinians the chance to successfully harvest their first deer on public lands. The experience of seeing these hunters benefit from her labor will no doubt guide her career as she was recently promoted to NCWRC District 5 assistant fisheries biologist.

Sometimes we get so wrapped up in our own world that we don't see what is important to others. As I work with private landowners, I certainly get tunnel vision hoping the next phone call or e-mail will be that key landowner wanting to manage their property for migratory songbirds or perhaps a threatened species - something for the "greater good of our wildlife resources." While I still look forward to my next private land site visit, that rainy November check station allowed me a chance to reflect on a few truths I may overlook from time to time. Having private land to hunt should not be taken for granted. In our rapidly growing state, not every hunter is "from around here." Celebrating the harvest, not just on social media, is a vital part of the hunt. The wildlife resources of North Carolina belong to all our residents. And finally, North Carolina's game lands, and the staff who care for these assets, are critical to promoting the hunting heritage of our state. 🍄

The Field of Dreams' Hope of Bobwhite Management

By James A. Martin, PhD, Director Gamebird and Managed Ecosystem Lab, University of Georgia

With technical input from John. M. Yeiser, PhD, University of Georgia

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As a child of the 1980s, the movie "Field of Dreams" was a cult classic. What 9-year-old country boy doesn't enjoy a movie about baseball, cornfields and magical spirits? Thirty years later, a few quotes of the movie still permeate our parlance, "If you build it, he [they] will come," "Go the distance," and of course "Is this Heaven? No, it's Iowa."

These sentiments have a lot to do with restoring bobwhite populations. As you are aware from reading *The Upland Gazette* over the years, and probably from watching it before your own eyes, bobwhite populations have declined dramatically since the mid-1900s. This kid of the 1980s, growing up in Person County, witnessed the tail-end of huntable bobwhite populations. I remember vividly my grandfather's last wild quail hunt. My grandfather, uncle Buck, and cousin Wayne hunted all day and didn't find a single covey. Because it was an obvious trend of the time, they all retired their bird dogs.

A keen interest in quail still was burning within me as I sometimes flushed coveys in

clear-cuts roaming the countryside on my Suzuki 125 enough so that I went on to get a PhD studying bobwhites and now run a research lab dedicated to understanding them in hopes we can facilitate a comeback. I am fortunate to work on places with huntable numbers of wild quail and to be able to witness the necessary measures that create these successes.

"If you build it, they will come." However, what is "it," and will they (quail) always come? The way we achieve any measurable bobwhite population is by building habitat—the "it." This wasn't always the case. My grandfather grew up hunting birds in Sanford around cotton fields when "building" habitat was unheard of. Quail habitat was intrinsic to the landscape, a byproduct of farming, forestry and no urban sprawl. Today, we have to build habitat in a very painstaking and dedicated fashion.

But what is habitat? Habitat is a word thrown around a lot in wildlife circles, and in my experience it is often misunderstood. Habitat is the "resources and conditions

necessary in a given area that produce occupancy—including survival and reproduction—by a given organism," as defined by Hall et al., 1997. Resources include things like food and cover, whereas conditions can be the climate of an area. If these resources and conditions are present in sufficient quantity, then an animal can occupy an area long enough to survive and reproduce. So, if you see a male bobwhite on the road, is that road technically habitat? No. Use of an area does not define it as habitat. If so, a coffee shop is all I need to survive and reproduce!

The understanding of this definition is important for effective bobwhite management. Installing a single field border that has the appropriate vegetation composition and structure may look like bobwhite habitat but actually may not be. It will only be habitat if there are other resources and conditions in the surrounding landscape because a single field border is not sufficient for bobwhite survival and reproduction. This would be the equivalent of Kevin Costner's character only putting first base in that cornfield.



JOHN YEISER



JESSICA MOHLMAN

Above: Quail habitat was once a byproduct of typical farming and forestry practices, but today quail management requires purposeful effort. Disturbances such as burning, disking and herbicide use are needed to manage succession and provide the grasses and forbs required to meet the habitat needs of bobwhite quail. Left: A male bobwhite perches while searching for a mate.

Shoeless Joe Jackson would have never appeared for that—that isn't building "it."

Researchers from the University of Tennessee and North Carolina State University had a great article in the *Spring 2020 The Upland Gazette* about managing early successional vegetation. They described an important process of creating parts of bobwhite habitat (creating early successional plant communities), but those parts must sum to enough of those resources and conditions for bobwhites to occupy, survive and reproduce.

The question becomes, how much is enough? Well, you have to "go the distance." Being honest, this is a very tough thing to measure. But let's go back in time to North Carolina in the 1950s. Bobwhites were common, if not locally abundant, almost anywhere east of the Appalachian Mountains. We could have taken an aerial photo and circled any random place of 10,000 acres at that time and found 10 percent or more of the landscape would have contained bobwhite resources and conditions. It was bobwhite habitat.

Some of those same conditions and resources still exist. There are hedgerows, weedy fields and clear-cuts around today but typically not enough within an area accessible to bobwhites to constitute bobwhite habitat. So, how much is enough? This is a current line of our research and debate in science. But here is an example from some of our current research. Let us assume we are using whole-field CRP (U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Program) to create early successional patches filled with native grasses and forbs. The density of quail in or immediately around a single CRP field will be conditional on the total amount of CRP in the surrounding landscape. For example, if we have 1,400 acres of CRP within just over a 1-mile radius (about 60 percent of a 2,400-acre landscape), there will be about 0.15 breeding males per acre in that landscape or 15 males per 100 acres. Is that Iowa? No, it would be heaven! However, if we only have 350 acres of CRP within a 2-mile radius (5 percent of a 7,000-acre landscape), there will only be

four males per 100 acres. Is that heaven? No, it is the current state of affairs for most bobwhite populations.

Many readers of this article with an interest in bobwhites don't own 1,400 acres. Landscape-scale bobwhite restoration is possible, but (except in rare cases) it must be accomplished by a coordinating agency and financial incentives to help private landowners work together to affect enough land to "build it" and "go the distance." A landowner with 100 acres must think about the landscape 1 to 2 miles around their property, and if everyone did that, success can be attained. Think about your property as one piece of a larger puzzle that needs to be put together. Every piece doesn't have to have the perfect conditions for bobwhites, but a lot of the puzzle should be filled with those conditions. If so, my bird dog, Zane, will think to himself before I turn him loose on a cool December morning, "This is heaven." 🐾

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has trained professionals to help you develop bobwhite or other wildlife habitat. Contacts for those biologists can be found on page 68.



The Red Meat Allergy

What if you could no longer eat venison from last year's buck?

By Clint Barden, technical assistance biologist, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission

I'm sorry to tell you this, but you can no longer consume any red meat."

How would you like to hear those words come out of your doctor's mouth? For a growing number of people, this is their new reality. Alpha-gal syndrome, commonly referred to as "the red meat allergy," can create a sensitivity to any red meat product. Researchers are still working to prove how the syndrome is spread, but it looks very likely to be a tick-borne disease.

Alpha-gal syndrome (AGS) is an emerging human health concern. People suffering from this syndrome develop a sensitivity to the Alpha-gal carbohydrate, which is found in small amounts in non-primate mammalian products. This includes the obvious sources of muscle meat, organ meat and milk, but Alpha-gal can also be found in gelatin and some vaccines or medicines. Even patients with a heart valve condition may be impacted because pig heart valves sometimes used for human valve replacement contain the carbohydrate. The developed sensitivity causes an allergic reaction with symptoms such as: rash, hives, difficulty breathing, loss of blood pressure, dizziness, fainting, nausea and/or severe stomach pain.

Diagnosing AGS is often difficult because the allergic reaction may be delayed three to eight hours after consuming the meal that triggers the reaction, whereas many allergic reactions to food happen much faster. To further complicate the situation, the symptoms vary from person to person and may not occur after each exposure. AGS can be confirmed by

examining a blood sample for the IgE molecule, which is an antibody produced when the Alpha-gal carbohydrate is recognized as a "threat" within your body. While some AGS patients seem to have a permanent sensitivity to products containing red meat,

but evidence suggests a correlation between this syndrome and ticks. It is believed that ticks bite animals containing the Alpha-gal carbohydrate and then bite humans, which in turn creates the sensitivity to the Alpha-gal molecule. AGS diagnoses are increasing,

and the Southeast seems to be a hot spot for AGS cases in the United States. The lone star tick is frequently associated with AGS, and the Southeast is the primary range of this tick species. The primary host for the lone star tick is the white-tailed deer. Simply put, people living in areas with a high deer density may be more likely to contract AGS.

Anyone who looks forward to deer, rabbit or squirrel season each year should have Alpha-gal syndrome on their radar. Researchers still have much to learn about AGS, but it is a real and present threat to human health. Appropriate steps to prevent tick bites should be taken. If you contract the syndrome, grilled backstraps could be off the menu indefinitely. Even something as simple as gummy worms could trigger the reaction due to the gelatin content. Fortunately, those suffering from AGS do have options for wild-harvested protein in the form

of game birds, fish and shellfish. Many people, however, would be very disappointed if they could no longer enjoy meals prepared with meat from mammals. Please be diligent about tick bite prevention when you head afield...your favorite meal might just depend on it! 🐾

What can you do?

Bite prevention! Using sprays containing "DEET" can help prevent ticks from attaching. Tucking pant legs into your socks can also help you spot ticks before they attach.

Tick checks! Each day you go into the woods, fields, or even just your lawn, you should perform a self-check for ticks. Remove attached ticks as soon as possible with tweezers. Be aware that tick activity isn't just limited to warm weather.

Let those 'possums live! Apart from being an all-around cool critter, the Virginia opossum has been estimated to eat as many as 5,000 ticks per season!

Prescribed burning! In addition to being a great habitat management tool, a recent study has shown prescribed burning to reduce tick abundance.

Donate! If you find yourself unable to consume venison but still love to hunt, several options exist to donate hunter-harvested deer. Meat processors can coordinate with non-profit organizations to turn your deer into burgers and distribute to those in need.

cdc.gov/ticks/alpha-gal/index.html

[Information obtained from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services]

others have been able to resume eating red meat within four to five years. This may be a state of remission, so they must exercise extreme care with tick bite prevention to prevent the sensitivity from returning.

At this time, researchers cannot prove Alpha-gal syndrome is a tick-borne disease,



CONSERVATION CHRONICLES

LUKE LOLLIES/NCWRC

Land Management Is a Lifestyle Carrying the Torch for Future Generations

By Luke Lollies, technical assistance biologist, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission

Jack Cooper has been actively managing his Edgecombe County property for over 30 years in hopes of seeing Northern bobwhite quail populations increase.

Since the late 1980s, landowner Jack Cooper of Edgecombe County has been managing his property for wildlife. Cooper focuses his management on Northern bobwhite quail, and his farm also serves as an escape from the city where he shares his love for the outdoors with family, friends and sometimes just good old tractor seat time to soak up the fresh air. To help offset the burden of expenses for owning and managing land, Cooper utilizes cost share programs, produces timber revenue, leases for hunting opportunity and has enrolled in property tax deferment programs. Finding strategic partners and methods is vital to becoming a good steward of the land.

Paying for It All

There are many ways to offset management costs that landowners often don't understand. You can easily drown in a sea of acronyms when learning about these programs. CRP, EQIP, PUV, WCLP and scores of other acronyms exist and can confound landowners and even professionals. It is imperative to involve a professional to provide quality technical assistance and to serve as a liaison to help you navigate this list of programs. Good advice can turn a nightmare into a real opportunity to benefit you as the landowner.

The best way to help the landowner is for us as biologists to meet and find out what program(s) best fit a landowner's personal

objectives. Cooper has implemented some of these programs. To establish longleaf, he has utilized programs offered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Partners Program and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

Edgecombe County reaches the northern historic range of longleaf, and Cooper houses a young stand that could be showcased in a wildlife magazine with its plant composition, diversity and structure. He has used CREP to establish early successional plant communities (grasses, forbs and shrubs that are often described as "weedy looking") along field edges. He uses the State of North Carolina's program called Present Use Value (PUV) for property tax deferment. After all, the reality of managing habitat, keeping up with property maintenance, and paying taxes isn't cheap. With reduced property tax costs, Cooper can utilize more of his resources for on-the-ground management.

Management Overview

On Cooper's property, you can see farmland in crop rotation, fallow fields (early successional plant communities), longleaf pine, loblolly pine, bottomland hardwoods and mixed pine-hardwood stands. Although the management focus of the property is quail, the deer, turkey and songbirds commonly seen on the property are enough



LUKE LOLLIES/NCWRG

to make any outdoors enthusiast stare in awe. With quail population numbers on the decline for so many years, the upland bird hunters are a dying generation.

Cooper, being in his 80s, came up experiencing great quail hunting opportunity on the coast. Whether it be his years of trials and tribulations or just simply his nature, Cooper has a quality in a land manager that few possess—patience. Patience in that he

Whether it be his years of trials and tribulations or just simply his nature, Cooper has a quality in a land manager that few possess—patience. Patience in that he understands when working with habitat, there is not always a “silver bullet”...

understands when working with habitat, there is not always a “silver bullet,” and it doesn’t always happen at the speed we would like to see it. Cooper shares a love for the processes and an appreciation for trial and error.

I have assisted several dozen landowners, and Cooper understands the process more than most. I believe his patience, knowing there is no guarantee of instant results, is the reason behind much of his management success. As a long-distance landowner managing a large tract of land, it is crucial to surround yourself with a team of resources. Scott Kiser has been Cooper’s primary advisor and right-hand manager for eight years. Kiser’s ability to coordinate and implement the vision for the property into an on-the-ground reality is critical to the land management successes of this farm. Cooper does a great job of utilizing the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and the North Carolina Forest Service for questions, guidance and services.

The percentage of Cooper’s property containing fallow fields is higher than on any other privately-owned property that I have seen in northeastern North Carolina. These early successional plant communities require a “setback” to keep the natural succession of trees from growing up and to encourage the grass, forb, and shrub components to remain. This is done with disking, prescribed burning and selective herbicide applications. This disturbance encourages the growth of annual and perennial forbs and native warm season grasses.



This farm field was left fallow to provide plant diversity and structure utilized by many wildlife species. Fields like this have become increasingly rare in the southeastern United States over the last 30–40 years.

LUKE LOLLIES/NCWR

Historically, Cooper has conducted 200-plus acres of prescribed burning each year but only with a focus on the dormant season. Dormant season burning is the most common type used in North Carolina and runs from fall to roughly green up in the spring when leaves begin to pop out on the trees. However, in August 2019, he experimented with his first growing season prescribed burn with intentions of hardwood control and to increase species diversity.

Growing season prescribed burning (spring through late summer) provides better hardwood control as well as increases plant species diversity. Historically, burning that occurred naturally on the landscape was during the growing season. The results of this 2019 burn were successful, and he is planning to do a few more areas in 2020. Additionally, one of Cooper's favorite areas on the farm is a stand of monster 40-year-old, 20-plus inch diameter at breast height (DBH) loblolly pines. These trees have been thinned down in density to allow plenty of light for the understory to be lush and green with early successional plant communities. Cooper is able to take all of this effort and share these experiences with a likeminded group of friends.

The Gang

One commonality that I have seen time and time again with landowners who have successful management is that they often have a circle of likeminded people trying to work toward similar goals. Cooper works together with three of his friends, who also own

property in northeastern North Carolina, to share his same passion for quail habitat management and upland game hunting. They hunt together, bounce ideas and even help each other burn from time to time. Most of them have many years of experience hunting birds and managing land under their belts, and you can't help but want to just soak up every minute as they talk about successes, failures and recollection of "the good old days."

While they fully understand that habitat is the key and do a phenomenal job at making that the priority, they also purchase quail to release on the landscape. This provides them with more hunting opportunity, time to watch the dogs work and allows them to gather with friends and family. This allows them to share a glimpse of the hobbies they treasure, to cherish time spent together and experience what it might have been like 60 years ago on a quail hunt. We can only hope that their children and grandchildren will continue this legacy.

Passing the Torch

We can all learn something from Cooper. If you are currently a landowner or manager and have a passion for upland birds or other wildlife species, you too can make a difference. Take the opportunity and surround yourself with the professionals, friends and family to carry that torch so the next generation can enjoy the same experiences that we are so blessed to experience today. Men like Jack Cooper won't be here to carry that light forever. 🦋

The Intolerable Act of Patience

By Benjy Strobe, SEFA/CURE management biologist, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

In this day and age of instant gratifications and overnight delivery, the old adage “patience is a virtue” is lost on many of us. But, the human dimension of patience is critical in the realm of habitat management.” It is great that you decided to start or continue managing habitat on your property, but please know that in most cases it may take months or even years to get the results you envision. Some things are easier said than done.

Patience is required for working with contractors of all varieties. Some are quick to give estimates, but you may never see them again. Others don't show up at all or show up with little notice. Once you do have a contractor lined up, you must wait on their schedule and for the weather to cooperate. Sometimes, it's like being on the wrong side of the bathroom door.

Prescribed fire is one tool that usually has immediate results that last a couple of years. However, all the events required beforehand may require more time and energy to complete than the actual burn. Is the burn plan completed? Does the weather forecast and burn plan agree? Did you get a burn permit? What kind of firebreaks do you need, and who can install them? Are the firebreaks good to go on the day of the burn? Do you have enough tools and help to get the burn completed? Does the actual weather match the forecast? Who brought the matches?

Mechanical methods such as disking, shearing and chopping, and thinning are like fire in that results are immediate and last for a while. Chemical methods may show results in a few days, weeks or a season. Like fire, having a good management plan and understanding it is crucial to maximizing results.

Timber sales often require much time. Once a timber buyer is found, the standard contract gives them a year to get it cut. Thus, having a forestry consultant or getting a buyer lined up before you want timber cut will help reduce the time needed to complete a project. Most logging crews don't have chippers, so that may increase the time needed to get a crew if you need chipping done on site. If you have a small tract, get all the trees removed that you don't want as you probably won't find another logger willing to move in and take leftovers.



BENJY STROBE/NCWRC



BENJY STROBE/NCWRC

Timber harvesting and prescribed fire are management tools that require a lot of time, effort and patience to properly plan and implement.

Plantings of native grasses and forbs or pollinator habitat may take a year to get a good stand, assuming competition control was effective, enough rains fell and seed was planted appropriately. Taking the time to learn your soil types and their attributes is a good place to start before choosing the natives types to be planted. You could potentially lose a year if you put the wrong seed in the right spot. The flip side of that equation is, will what you plant take over a site?

Tree and shrub plantings are another management technique that require years to produce results. Longleaf pine seedlings can spend up to five years in the grass stage. Most shrubs, fruit and mast trees take a few years to a long time before they produce.

Working with cost-share programs requires more patience than anything listed above. Several state, federal and non-governmental agencies provide cost-share opportunities, and all the agencies have different

rules, different deadlines and different ranking criteria. It is understandably frustrating to many folks trying to keep track of who, what, where and when. Multiple people and agencies may be involved with providing guidance on one tract, which hopefully doesn't lead to too many cooks in the kitchen.

Having a good plan in place and knowing when management practices need to get done can help reduce stress levels. Having lots of patience and doing things at the right time should help you achieve positive results. As always, feel free to reach out to your local NCWRC technical assistance biologist to assist you with your planning needs. Professional assistance can make a huge difference in helping you achieve positive land management results. 🍄

Commission experts listed on page 68 can be contacted for assistance.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING ABOUT **HUNTING**

but don't know any hunters?

Then Getting Started Outdoors (GSO) Hunting Workshops are for you!

Come learn about the basics of hunting including:

- Hunting skills
- Equipment and strategies
- Wild game processing and cooking

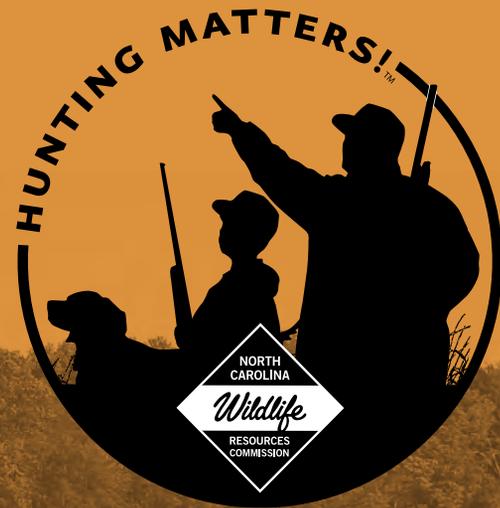
What are GSOs?

Hunting Workshops meant to address informational barriers to participation for those who are interested in hunting, but don't know how to get started.

GSO's are designed to teach new-to-hunting individuals how to hunt via a multi-faceted hunting-related skills and strategies experience.

GSO participant requirements:

- Individuals that have never hunted or have very minimal hunting experience and lack social support for hunting (i.e., hunting family members and friends).
- Not for existing hunters, or family members of existing hunters, where experience and social support for hunting already exists.



For more information about GSOs, contact Walter "Deet" James, the Commission's R3 Hunting Specialist at **919-707-0059** or walter.james@ncwildlife.org.

Quail Forever and the North Carolina Woods for Wildlife Conservation Initiative

By Jacob Comer, Farm Bill biologist, and Dr. Jessica McGuire, Working Lands for Wildlife bobwhite coordinator, Quail Forever

North Carolina is a state of great diversity from the Appalachian Mountains to the eastern swamps. Of great importance to many North Carolinians is the historic longleaf pine ecosystem. The longleaf pine range in North Carolina is not only significant in the state, but is also part of a larger landscape of longleaf pine which historically extended from southeast Virginia, down the Atlantic coast, to the eastern portion of Texas. From the tar and pitch that were produced in years past, to the wildlife that are dependent on these fire-maintained ecosystems, the longleaf pine has proved its importance in the South. However, only a small percentage of historic longleaf pine remains.

Longleaf pine savannahs face threats from agricultural expansion, population growth and lack of proper management. Longleaf pine has been replaced by other commercial tree species that are much less resilient to fire, leading to fire suppression. This shift has resulted in the loss of fire-maintained ecosystems in the Southeast that many iconic wildlife species are dependent upon, such as bobwhite quail and the red-cockaded woodpecker.

After many years of longleaf conversion to loblolly pine, habitat fragmentation and the reduction of fire-maintained ecosystems, these and many other wildlife species have declined in numbers and are only memories to some individuals. In order to protect our natural resources, we need to build more partnerships, work harder and think outside the box. To help restore these fire-maintained habitats, a newly formed conservation effort known as the North Carolina Woods for Wildlife Conservation Initiative was created with a wide array of funding and support from federal and state agencies as well as non-profit organizations.

The North Carolina Woods for Wildlife Conservation Initiative strives to engage woodland owners in forest management and certification, enhance habitat for species of conservation concern and promote the conservation of imperiled habitats including longleaf and bottomland hardwood forests. This initiative includes a collaborative group of partners consisting of:

- American Forest Foundation
- Fort Bragg Army Base
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
- National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf)
- North Carolina Audubon Society
- N.C. Forest Service (NCFS)
- N.C. State University Extension
- N.C. Tree Farm Program
- N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission (NCWRC)
- Quail Forever (QF)
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)



Through this partnership, focus is placed on woodland owners in a 14-county region in southeastern North Carolina. These counties were identified to be of highest priority using the Southern Wildlife at Risk report and project partners input. This initiative was perfect for Quail Forever field staff to get their boots on the ground in North Carolina. Since starting in August 2019, QF Biologist Jake Comer has completed almost 100 site visits on well over 5,000 acres.

QF Farm Bill biologists assist landowners in developing sound management plans much like technical assistance biologists from the NCWRC. QF biologists work closely with biologists and foresters in partner agencies such as NCWRC, NCFS, USFWS and NWTf to help landowners develop quality wildlife habitat. QF biologists are located in United States Department of Agriculture NRCS service centers and work closely with NRCS staff to help landowners navigate Farm Bill cost share opportunities.

Through Farm Bill programs, landowners across the nation can apply for technical and financial assistance to implement in a wide variety of conservation practices. Some of these include prescribed burning, vegetation management and native vegetation establishment, and all are important for encouraging quail populations in



KAREN DAVIS/BLADEN SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

the longleaf pine ecosystem. Every fiscal year, a certain amount of money from the Farm Bill is allocated specifically for landowners participating in wildlife habitat enhancements. Contracts through Farm Bill programs can cover a substantial portion of habitat management costs.

Quail Forever

Since 2005, Quail Forever has been dedicated to upland habitat conservation efforts throughout the range of quail in the United States. QF is dedicated to the conservation of quail, pheasants and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public awareness, education and land management policies and programs. Nationwide, QF has completed over 15,000 habitat projects, and with its affiliate organization Pheasants Forever, more than 17 million acres of wildlife habitat has been improved. QF has more than 16,000 members and 170 chapters across the country. The good news is that QF chapters have been forming at a rapid pace in the Southeast, and North Carolina is seeing this growth as well.

North Carolina is estimated to have 5,000 quail hunters. Groups of these hunters have formed the Southeast North Carolina Chapter

in Jacksonville, the Broad River Chapter in Charlotte, the Beaver Pond Chapter in Snow Camp, and the Neuse River Chapter in Raleigh. The goal is to get as many of those members as possible engaged in upland conservation and management efforts. Chapter members are dedicated to bringing the whistle back across the landscape and often have committees dedicated to various habitat conservation projects.

QF's grassroots fundraising model provides chapters with the ability to locally use 100 percent of money raised from banquets and other efforts. QF chapters generally focus efforts on advocacy, habitat enhancement and youth education. Chapters collaborate on public land projects, mentor hunters and hosts youth and adult education events. It is QF's hope to grow this model throughout the Southeast. QF staff coordinate with partners on workshops and field days in addition to technical assistance. QF looks forward to working with North Carolinians to develop high-quality wildlife habitat for quail and associated species.

To find a QF biologist or a chapter, or to learn more about Quail Forever, please visit quailforever.org. Jake Comer can be reached at jcomer@quailforever.com or 910-247-3458. 🦋

PRIVATE LANDS STAFF DIRECTORY

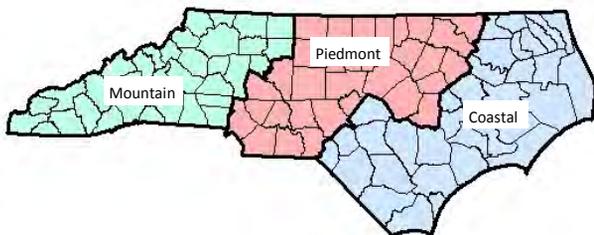


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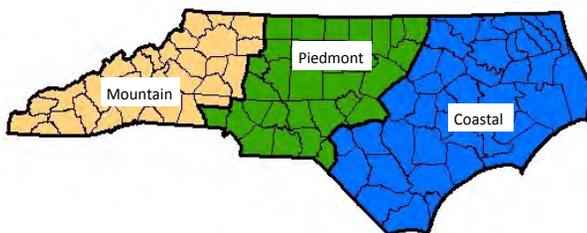
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NC Wildlife Commission Private Lands Regions



NC Wildlife Commission Wildlife Habitat Program Areas



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