

Your Side of the Fence

A bi-annual guide to help landowners gain in-depth information from experienced biologists in all corners of the state.



About 97 percent of Oklahoma is privately owned. However, wildlife in the state belongs to all residents. The future of wildlife does not depend solely on wildlife managers, but also on wildlife enthusiasts, anglers, hunters and landowners.

The Wildlife Department acknowledges the importance of landowner involvement in successful habitat and wildlife management, with number of private lands assistance programs to prove it. Such programs are administered through the Fisheries Division, Wildlife Division and the Wildlife Diversity Program, which manages species that are not hunted or fished, species of con-

servation concern and those that are threatened or endangered.

The Department encourages partnerships with landowners and other agencies alike to help increase and enhance wildlife resources and habitat for scientific, recreational, aesthetic and economic benefits for present and future generations to come.

A comprehensive list of assistance programs can be found online at wildlifedepartment.com on the Wildlife and Land Management page. More in-depth information can be found in this issue of "Your Side of the Fence" and in another issue coming in the July/August issue.

Oklahoma Department of Wildlife

Conservation Mission Statement:

Managing Oklahoma's wildlife resources and habitat to provide scientific, educational, aesthetic, economic, and recreational benefits for present and future generations of hunters, anglers, and others who appreciate wildlife.

ODWC Landowner Assistance Programs: Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP); Technical Assistance Program

Doug Schoeling (405) 590-2584
RosaLee Walker (918) 297-0153

Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP)

Erik Bartholomew (405) 396-2503
Oklahoma Wildscape Certification Program
Melynda Hickman (405) 990-4977
Streams Management
NE Region-Jim Burroughs (918) 683-1031
SE Region-Don Groom (918) 297-0153
W Region-Buck Ray (405) 990-7029

Farm Pond Technical Assistance; Farm Pond Fish Stocking Program

NW Region-Chas Patterson (580) 474-2668
SW Region-Larry Cofer (580) 529-2795
NE Region-Josh Johnston (918) 346-3220
EC Region-Jim Burroughs (918) 683-1031
SE Region-Don Groom (918) 297-0153
SC Region-Matt Mauck (580) 924-4087
C Region-Keith Thomas (405) 325-7288

ODWC Contacts

Wildlife Division (405) 521-2739
Fisheries Division (405) 521-3721
Law Enforcement (405) 521-3719
Operation Game Thief 1-800-522-8039
Information & Education (405) 521-3855
License Section (405) 521-3852
Website wildlifedepartment.com

"Your Side of the Fence" is published twice annually for those enrolled in the ODWC's landowner assistance programs. Articles may be reprinted with permission from the editors:

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Benefits of a Dry Wetland

By Rachel Bradley

The word "wetland" is often a misnomer. When preparing to restore, enhance or create a wetland on your land, you must have a plan. Keep in mind, wetlands are not always wet, something that can maximize beneficial habitat for wildlife.

According to Alan Stacey, wetland habitat biologist for the Wildlife Department, "The most beneficial wetlands for migratory birds, and many other species of wildlife, are those that go through at least one wet-to-dry cycle throughout each growing season."

Many landowners seek the Department's assistance in restoring, enhancing and creating new wetlands. This process, no matter how experienced the professionals or the technology being used, must be guided by a solid plan. The term "enhancement" is often applied when a landowner seeks to maximize values of an existing wetland. This might entail developing a reliable water source to seasonally flood an existing wetland, or maximizing shallow water areas for shorebirds or dabbling ducks. Some people look to start from scratch and build something that has wetland functions and values, thus creating a wetland on a site that was never historically wet. Lastly, some landowners who have previously restored, enhanced or created a new wetland will enlist the Wildlife Department to teach them how to manage a wetland.

One of the initial, and quite beneficial, steps to be taken when looking to restore, enhance or create a new wetland is to obtain a topographical survey of the site.

"Topography surveys are a foundational tool to consider when restoring most wetlands," Stacey said. "They basically outline critical information needed for biologists and engineers to make decisions regarding hydrology restoration and help give a picture of the area affected."

Landowners are also encouraged to consider the type of soil present.

Defining Wetlands

Ephemeral Wetlands – lasting a short time, typically seasonal due to the amount of rainfall.

Marsh – an area of low-lying land that is flooded in wet seasons and typically remains mostly waterlogged.

Slough – wetland formed when flooding occurs and a wide area is cut off from the main stem of a river.

Swamp – a forested wetland usually associated with an adjacent river or lake.

Playa Lakes – round, ephemeral ground hollows in the Southern High Plains of the United States, including West Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado and Kansas. They fill with water mostly after spring rainstorms, but less frequently in the fall. Almost all playa lakes go through regular, annual, wet-to-dry cycles. Playas can be freshwater or saltwater.

Flood Plain – broad area adjacent to a stream or river that is periodically flooded from overbank flooding during high rainfall events.

STEVE WEBBER



Most wetlands in Oklahoma are very dynamic in nature, and are not always wet.

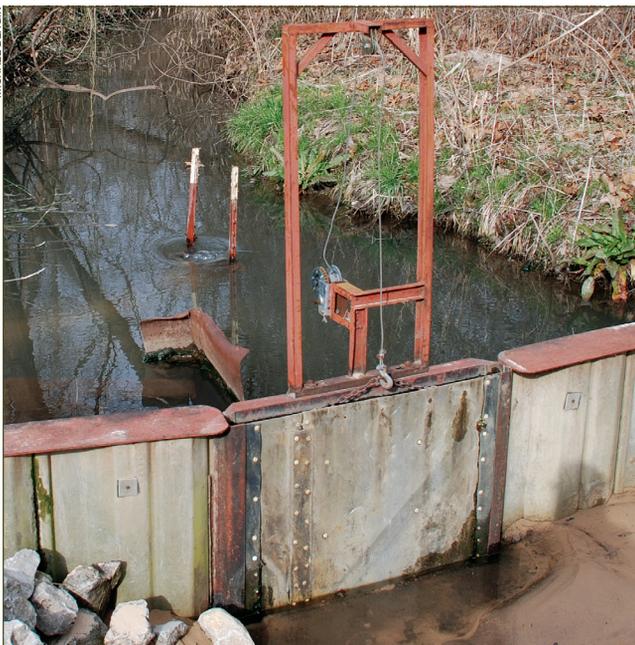
“Oftentimes, soils can give an accurate picture of the size and area of a formerly drained or altered wetland,” Stacey said. Particularly, in creating wetlands, evaluating soil texture can play an important role. Some soil textures do not have the capability to hold, or pond, surface water.”

Most wetlands in Oklahoma are very dynamic in nature. As previously stated, those that go through one or more wet-to-dry cycle each year are particularly beneficial to several species of migratory birds and resident wildlife species.

“These types of wetlands often have the potential to produce a variety of early successional foods and plants that germinate

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MICHAEL BERGIN



A weir gate along Stevens Spring at the Love Valley WMA. Upstream from the gate, you can see where water is pulled downward into an intricate system of underground pipes that allows Wildlife Department personnel to manipulate flooding over certain grounds that stand to benefit waterfowl and other birds at different times throughout the year.

The Evolutionary Performance of Wetlands

By Micah Holmes



WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM

Micah Holmes, information and education supervisor for the Wildlife Department, prepares to leave the field after a successful hunt in Lincoln Co.

A pine ridge has its charms. An open prairie has a subtle kind of beauty, and deep, dark timber has a grandeur that can rival any cathedral. But give me a wetland any day.

A slough, marsh, swamp, pothole – whatever you call it – the best wetlands share one thing in common: they are always changing. Always in a state of flux, wetlands can’t make up their mind between a wet or dry state. Like teenagers trying to find themselves, they go from rock-hard dirt, to a tangle of verdant weeds, to acres of open water. The good ones don’t play by the rules, either. They’re wet when we think they should be dry, and they have cracks in the ground when we want them to hold water. This rebellious spirit makes it tough on managers and hunters, but it breeds a fertility and abundance unmatched by any other ecosystem.

Water is the wild card. A big rain in the early spring can radically change the plant community in late fall. When a wetland misses a series of thundershowers in a season, it’s nature’s way of hitting ctrl-alt-del and creating a blank canvas just waiting for the next rains. We note these cycles by the month or even a year, but most wetlands have been in this seesaw state for centuries.

Sometimes the deck is stacked for the duck hunter: The rains come when they should, and the wetlands grow an all-natural duck smorgasbord. And the water level is just right – not too high, not too low. When this happens, there is no better place to be on a mid-winter morning. Find an oak tree, some cattails or even tumbleweed, and sit back and watch the show.

MARK HOWERY



Sandhill cranes during sunset at Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge.

MICHAEL BERGIN



Love Valley wildlife technician David Banta uses water control to open pipelines and flood areas of the WMA for waterfowl and other birds.

during the dry growing period,” Stacey said. “For example, barnyard grass and annual smartweed are two of several great plants that produce seed relished by waterfowl and other migrant birds. Barnyard grass and annual smartweed are not true aquatic plants, nor are they plants found in upland areas. They are considered “moist soil” plants, which thrive under the conditions described.”

These natural fluctuations wetlands experience, and the benefits to wildlife, are truly amazing. They attract a wide array of diverse species for all to see. So, make it a goal to include a dry cycle in your wetland if you have the management capability to do so. Remember, most wetlands in Oklahoma are not always wet.

Oklahoma landowners can get assistance from the Wildlife Department and cooperating agencies in restoring, enhancing and creating wetlands in several ways listed below.

State WHIP Program

Under the state Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program, landowners enter a 10-year contract with the Wildlife Department for approved projects to develop, preserve, restore and manage wildlife habitat on private lands. In exchange for the landowners’ 10-year agreement, the Department shares part of the cost of habitat improvement work and provides technical assistance.

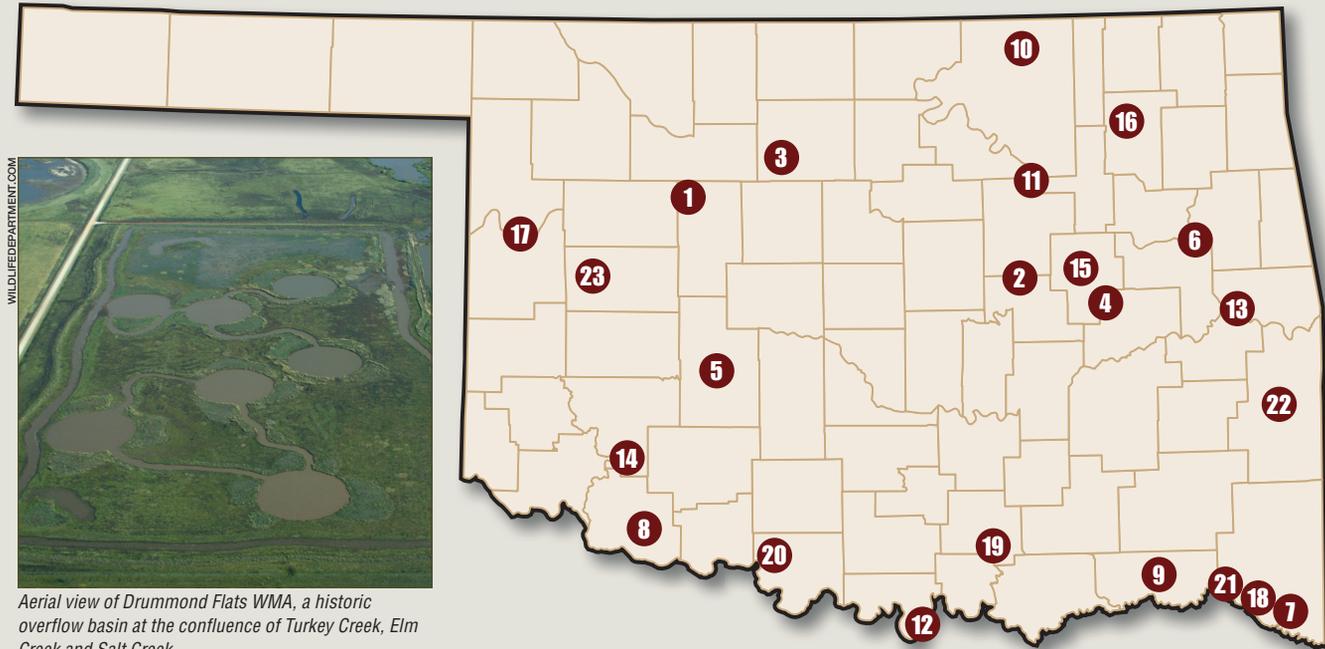
Eligibility: Any Oklahoma landowner is eligible to apply, regardless of property size.

How to Enroll: Eligible landowners may call Doug Schoeling, private lands biologist, at (405) 590-2584 or download an application online at <http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/wildlifemgmt/wildlifehabitat.htm>. **Applications will be accepted Jan. 1 - May 1, 2014**, and must include a map of the property.

Don't have a private wetland? Visit a public wetland area.

The Wildlife Department manages numerous wetland development units (WDUs) and waterfowl refuge portions (WRPs) on various wildlife management areas (WMAs) throughout the state. These areas are managed to provide habitat and refuge resources to waterfowl and migratory birds. However, they also benefit diverse species such as amphibians and other wildlife diversity, or nongame species.

Refer to the map below for various public wetland areas.



Aerial view of Drummond Flats WMA, a historic overflow basin at the confluence of Turkey Creek, Elm Creek and Salt Creek.

1 Canton Lake

- Canton WRP
- Canton WDU

2 Deep Fork WMA

- Harold Stuart Marsh Refuge
- Swift Bottoms WDU

3 Drummond Flats WMA

4 Eufaula WMA

- Deep Fork WDU

5 Fort Cobb WMA

- Walnut Slough WDU

6 Fort Gibson WMA

- Fort Gibson WRP

7 Grassy Slough WMA

- Grassy Slough WDU

8 Hackberry Flat WMA

9 Hugo WMA

- Hugo/Kiamichi River WDU
- Hugo (Lyndol Fry) WRP

10 Hulah WMA

- Sawyer WDU
- Whippoorwill WDU

11 Keystone WMA

- Boston Pool WDU
- Buckeye Creek WDU
- Cottonwood Creek WDU

12 Love Valley WMA

- Stevens Springs WDU

13 McClellan-Kerr WMA

- Billy Creek WDU
- Chouteau WDU
- Webbers Falls WRP
- Vann's Lake Refuge

14 Mountain Park WMA

- Mountain Park WDU

15 Okmulgee WMA

- Okmulgee East WDU
- Okmulgee West WDU

16 Oologah WMA

- Overcup Bottoms WDU
- Upper Verdigris WDU

17 Packsaddle WMA

- South Canadian WDU

18 Red Slough WMA

- Red Slough WDU
- Red Slough WRP

19 Texoma/Washita Arm WMA

- Washita Arm WDU

20 Waurika WMA

- Beaver Creek North WDU
- Beaver Creek South WDU

- Walker Creek WDU

21 Whitegrass Flats WMA

22 Wister WMA

- Coal Creek WDU
- Fourche Maline WDU
- Wister WRP

23 Washita NWR

To review the biannual Wetland Status Report, visit wildlifedepartment.com.

Only the original copy of the application is accepted. Although many species will benefit from this program, the applicant's objectives must address one or more of the following primary target species: fish, deer, turkey, pheasant, dove, quail, prairie chickens or waterfowl.

Contact: Doug Schoeling, private lands biologist for the Wildlife Department, at (405) 590-2584 for additional information or an application. A biologist will then arrange to make an on-site evaluation of the property.

Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)

As a voluntary program, the WRP offers landowners the opportunity to protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their property. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial support for long-term wetland restoration efforts.

Eligibility: Wetlands farmed under natural conditions; farmed wetlands; prior converted cropland; farmed wetland pasture; certain lands that have the potential to become a wetland as a result of flooding; rangeland, pasture, or forest production lands where the hydrology has been significantly degraded and can be restored; riparian areas which link protected wetlands; lands adjacent to protected wetlands that contribute significantly to wetland functions and values; and wetlands previously restored under a local, state, or federal program that need long-term protection.

Enrollment Options

- **Permanent Easement:** A conservation easement in perpetuity. USDA pays 100 percent of the easement value and up to 100 percent of the restoration costs.

- **30-Year Easement:** An easement that expires after 30 years. USDA pays up to 75 percent of the easement value and up to 75 percent of the restoration costs.
- **Restoration Cost-Share Agreement:** An agreement to restore or enhance the wetland functions and values without placing an easement on the enrolled acres. USDA pays up to 75 percent of the restoration costs.
- **30-Year Contract:** A 30-year contract option is only available on tribal lands. USDA pays up to 75 percent of the restoration costs.

Contact: Contact your local NRCS office. A list of all NRCS offices by county can be found at nrcs.usda.gov.

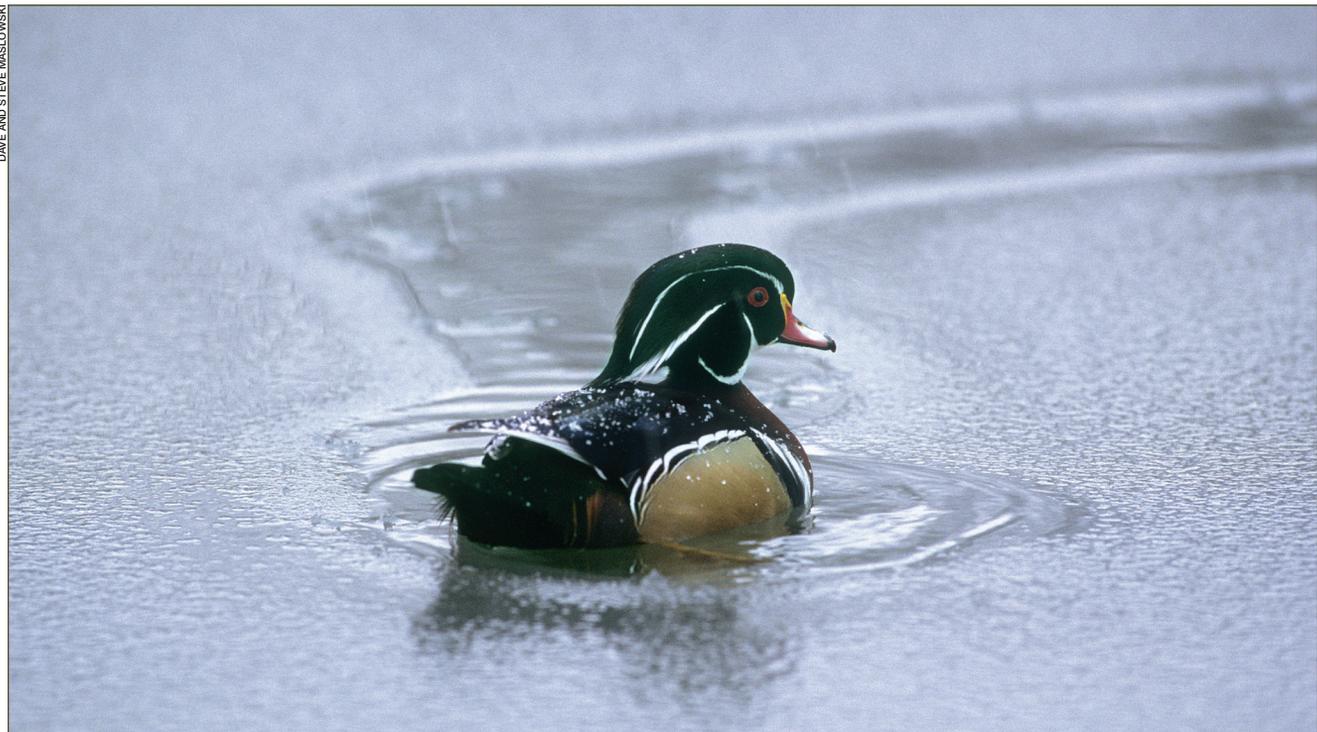
Partners for Fish and Wildlife

This program is for Oklahoma landowners interested in alternative wetland management opportunities. It is a cooperative effort among ODWC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the OSU Cooperative Extension Service to conserve, enhance and restore wetland habitat through technical and financial assistance.

Eligibility: Any Oklahoma landowner interested in alternative wetland management opportunities.

How to Enroll: Contact one of the cooperating agencies to receive details on getting involved in alternative wetland conservation.

Contact: For an application or additional information, contact ODWC's Wildlife Division at (405) 521-2739 or the USFWS Tulsa office at (918) 581-7458. ■



DAVE AND STEVE MASLOWSKI

Enhancing Farm Pond Fish Attraction

By Ty Harper, fisheries biologist

It takes a lot of work to try to maintain the best farm pond in the county. There are many ways to improve a farm pond, but first, you must improve the habitat. Some farm ponds have too much habitat, or aquatic vegetation, making it hard to fish. Other ponds do not have enough habitat. When ponds do not have enough habitat, it is hard to maintain a strong prey fish population. If prey fish cannot find good hiding places, it is easier for predator fish to feed. By increasing habitat to provide more hiding places in your pond, you also might increase the anglers' chances of getting a catch.

First, managers need to determine how much fish habitat is readily available in the pond. Next is the fun part. Take your family and friends fishing to determine the pond's population levels. It is important to keep good records of

the number, type of fish, size and condition of each fish that is caught. This is an important step because it can tell managers if there is a need to increase the prey population or decrease the predator population. This can be accomplished by adding fish into the pond or removing some of the predator fish, such as black bass.

There are a number of ways to create additional habitat as needed. Typically, natural habitat is the best option. However, some ponds are unable to produce such vegetation due to a number of different reasons, one being turbidity. If sunlight is unable to penetrate deep enough into the water, then the plants are unable to establish and provide that much needed prey fish habitat.

If natural vegetation is not able to establish, you can create artificial habitat. Plastic kelp is one way that artificial habitat can be accomplished. This type of habitat can be installed fairly easily into your pond, and also congregate the fish for a more successful angling experience. ■

How To Construct Plasti-kelp Fish Attractors

Materials Needed: Solo cups, ready-mix concrete such as Sakrete or Quikrete, cable ties, 9-gauge utility wire and safety/utility fence. The orange fencing usually found around construction sites, also available in green, from suppliers such as a farm and ranch store or a home repair store.

Directions:

1: Cut the fencing into 12 to 15 single strips using the rows of holes as guidelines to cut.



2: Tie the strips together on one end using cable ties.

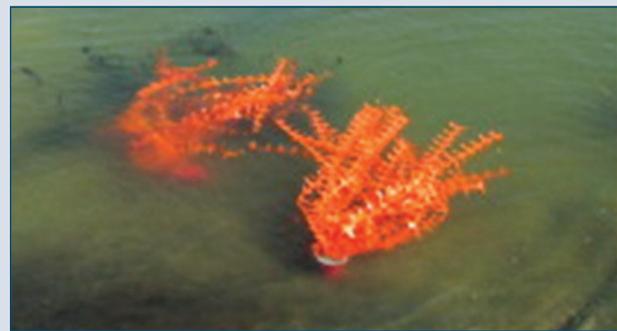
3: Fill the solo cups with the concrete mix. Cut the wire about 8 inches long and bend it in half. Then, insert the wire into the solo cup and let it dry. After the concrete mix is dry, use a cable tie to attach the tied end of the fencing to the wire loop in the cup.



4: Be sure to consider water level fluctuation when placing habitat.



5: Lastly, throw them into three to five feet of water in a bunch or in a row. For deeper water, cut the fencing lengthwise to desired length and use a bigger container for the anchor such as a plastic coffee can.



6: For questions regarding pond management, contact the appropriate Wildlife Department division using the guide on page 12.

Photos by Ty Harper

Winter Weather Effects on Quail

By Scott Cox, upland game bird biologist

Annual weather patterns have a significant effect on wild-life, especially on bobwhite quail. Late winter and early spring are the most critical months for quail reproduction. Weather patterns can factor into quails' life cycles, among many other factors, which can help determine reproduction success or the lack thereof. Some weather patterns can be beneficial to quail, and some can be quite detrimental to their survival, especially during the winter months.

Severe winters can help control certain parasites, disease vectors and predators; however, this also can be detrimental to survival going into spring months. Spring and summer weather can affect quail reproduction, leading to what we call "boom" or "bust" years. Cool, wet summers are preferred over hot, dry summers for nesting, reproduction and brood survival. Cool temperatures with increased moisture provide better nesting conditions, succulent green vegetation, increased nesting

habitat growth and better insect production. Also, quail will nest later during the summer and into early fall with adequate amounts of precipitation and temperatures below 100 degrees. Extremely hot and dry conditions can cause quail to shut down reproduction in midsummer to conserve energy and increase chances of survival.

On average, quail reproduction will begin to taper off in September or October. Birds will begin moving, and coveys begin to reform. During this time, called the "fall shuffle," quail will mingle with different coveys, some moving several miles. After the fall shuffle, coveys will normally stay together in order to avoid or escape predation. Covey sizes can decrease due to predation, weather, or hunting. Then, quail might combine with other coveys because it is important for thermal regulation and survival. Food sources are not usually limited during this time of the year. Therefore, early snowfall or ice storms are not as detrimental to the birds unless there is accumulation on the ground for an extended period.

The quail diet consists of insects, grasses, forbs and seeds.



Cool summer temperatures with increased moisture provide better nesting conditions, succulent green vegetation, increased nesting habitat growth and better insect production.

STEVE WEBBER



Coveys begin to reform around September or October when reproduction begins to taper off.

Insects are important during the spring, summer and fall because they are high in protein. They help provide the birds with moisture and minerals for reproduction. Also important are fruits

of native shrubs and trees such as oaks (acorns), sumacs, hackberries, plums, black locusts, wild rose and blackberries. Quail prefer seeds such as ragweed, croton, sunflower, bundleflower, dropseed, paspalum, bee plant and queen's delight. These birds are opportunistic feeders in search of high-quality food. Food availability, timing and weather each determines what quail feed on and where. Due to quail having a high metabolism rate, they must feed several times throughout the day. Feeding has to be more efficient in winter months because the days are shorter. Bobwhites locate most of their food on the ground or from the layer of leaves and stems on the soil surface. In order for them to find seeds, they must be in plain sight on bare ground, or in sparse litter that can be easily moved.

Weather, predators and hunting in the winter months all help determine how quail will feed, roost and spend energy. Around mid to late-January, food starts to become scarce. Typically, this is when temperatures in Oklahoma are the coldest. Thermal regulation becomes critical as well. Snow and ice can be very detrimental if on the ground for extended periods. Grasses are then thinner, trees are bare, and the north wind can be quite bitter. Some snows during this time of the year can drift, causing some feeding areas to become inaccessible. These conditions cause the birds to exert more energy, as they must seek food in larger areas, thus making them more vulnerable to predation. ■

Annual cycle of social and reproductive behavior of bobwhite quail.



Preparation for a Successful Prescribed Burn

By Eddie Wilson

Prescribed burning is a very effective and cost-efficient land management tool landowners can use to assist in accomplishing their individual management goals. No matter what season you determine is best for your burn (dormant or growing season), being prepared is the most important aspect of conducting a successful prescribed burn. Knowing and understanding Oklahoma law is your responsibility as a landowner and is one of the first steps in conducting a prescribed burn. You are responsible for your fire. Here is a summary of some important steps that should be accomplished prior to conducting a prescribed burn.

Burn Plan

- Prepare a written burn plan for your chosen burn site. Burn plans should be prepared well in advance of the actual burn date. This step is critical to burn success, and should be well thought-out. Local conservation agencies, including the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC), can offer assistance in burn plan preparation. Oklahoma State University provides annual burn workshops and a number of publications to assist landowners with burn plans and prescribed burns.

Burn Notification

- Notify all adjoining landowners within 60 days prior to burning.
- Provide a Prescribed Burning Notification Plan to local fire departments within 60 days prior to burning.
- Notify the local fire departments within 48 hours of actually conducting the burn.



JEREMIAH ZURENDA

Being prepared is the most important aspect of conducting a successful prescribed burn. The type of clothing worn during a burn is often heavy and hot, be sure to stay hydrated to avoid the risk of heat stress.

- Oklahoma law requires anyone burning within a designated Forest Protection Area to provide a Prescribed Burning Notification Plan to the nearest Oklahoma Forestry Services Office and then notify the office of the burn at least four hours prior.

For more detailed information regarding prescribed burn laws and notification requirements, contact the Oklahoma Forestry Services in Oklahoma City by phone at (405) 522-6158. Prescribed fire information can be found online at <http://www.forestry.ok.gov/rxfire>.

Site preparation is another very important step. There are several different things to think about when it comes to site preparation. In developing your burn plan, you should indicate what type of fireguard is to be used. The most common fireguard is bare mineral soil, which provides a road for you to drive, but also provides a good barrier to help contain your burn. Be sure to remove or relocate anything that might cause a fire to jump your fireguard. Some things to consider removing or relocating are eastern red cedars or dead standing trees. Preparation is key to a successful burn.

Wildlife Management Resources for Burning Information

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (Technical and financial assistance, upland updates)
wildlifedepartment.com

The Noble Foundation (Technical assistance, plant identification guides)
noble.org

Natural Resource Conservation Service (Technical and financial assistance, prescribed burn planning)
nrns.usda.gov

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (Technical assistance)
oces.okstate.edu

The Nature Conservancy
nature.org

National Wild Turkey Federation
nwtf.org

Quail Forever
quailforever.org

Tall Timbers Research Station
talltimbers.org

Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch
quailresearch.org

National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
bringbackbobwhites.org

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
agriflifeextension.tamu.edu

Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute
ckwri.tamuk.edu

K-State Research and Extension
ksre.k-state.edu

Texas Tech University
ttu.edu

Farm Service Agency
fsa.usda.gov

Once the burn plans, burn notifications, and site preparation are complete, it is time to acquire and/or prepare the burn equipment. When it comes to equipment, the first order is protecting yourself. Proper clothing is essential for the safety of everyone participating in a prescribed burn. At a minimum, all participants should be equipped with these clothing items:

Protective Clothing

- A long-sleeve shirt that is made of heavy 100 percent cotton, wool, or a fire-resistant fabric such as NOMEX.
- Long pants that are made of heavy 100 percent cotton, wool or NOMEX.
- Gloves that are 100 percent leather and chrome-tanned, NOT oil-tanned.
- A helmet to protect you from brush and falling debris.
- Goggles or a helmet with a face shield for eye protection and heat protection.
- A bandana made of 100 percent cotton, to clean your goggles or put over your face to protect from dust or heat. NOMEX face protectors can be purchased to protect your face and ears from heat. Note: Bandanas should be kept dry to avoid steam burns if exposed to extreme heat.

Since the type of clothing worn during a burn is often heavy and hot, be sure to stay hydrated to avoid the risk of heat stress. Having equipment available to monitor weather conditions

before, during, and after the burn is critical. Temperature, relative humidity and wind speed are all going to affect fire intensity. Weather can be monitored with any of the following devices.

Weather Monitoring Equipment

- Fire weather kits.

Fire weather kits are one of the most reliable ways to collect weather data. A kit should include a logbook, sling psychrometer, slide rule and wind meter.

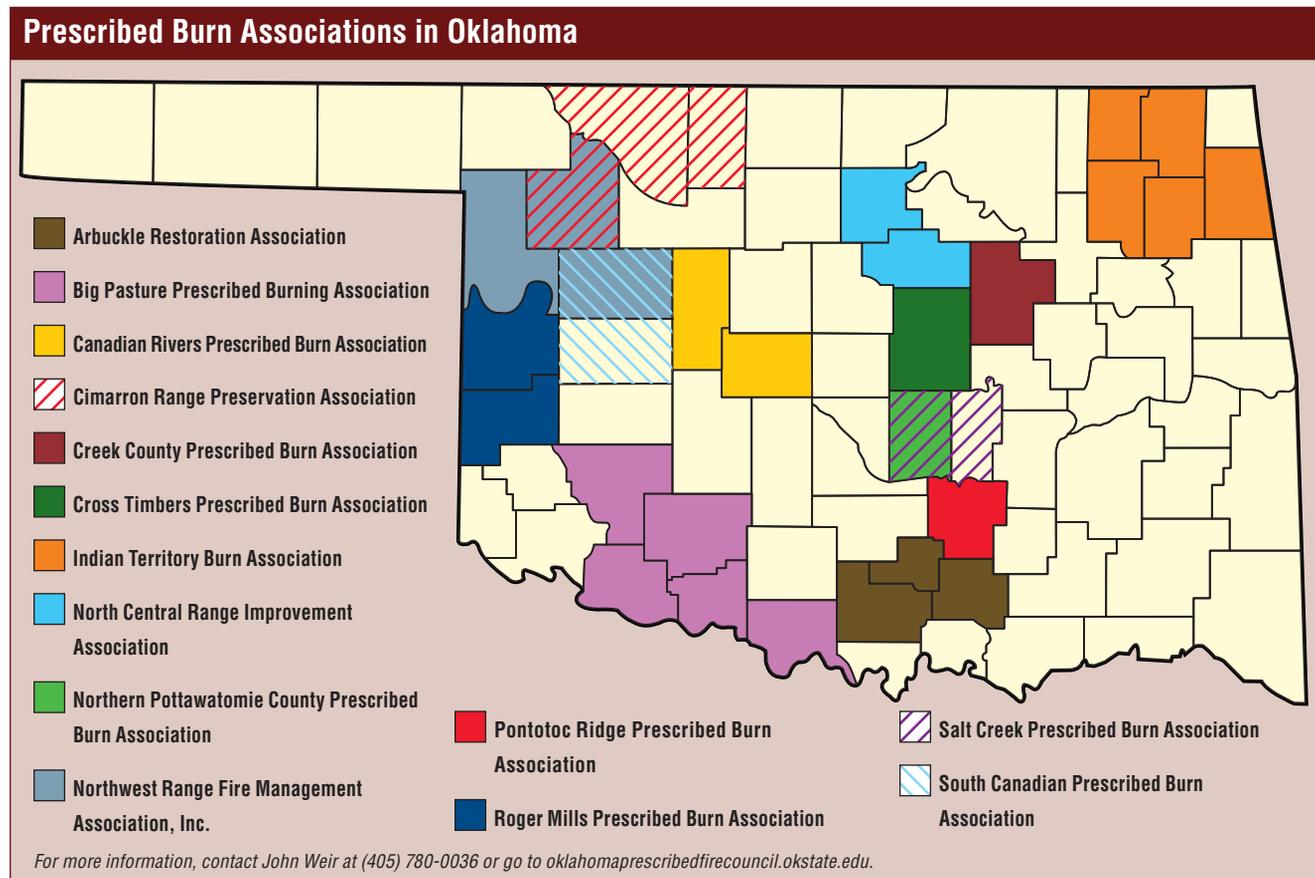
- Pocket weather station.

Pocket weather stations, such as a Kestrel, are a simple way to collect weather data. They should be checked for accuracy prior to the burn date.

- Cell phones.

Smart phones can be used to collect weather data from the Internet but should not be the only source for weather data collection available, as cell phones are not a reliable source for communication.

A logbook should be used for every burn. It should include the name of the burn unit, the date, the start time of the fire, and the weather conditions. Weather conditions should be collected and recorded hourly throughout the day. Be sure all instruments are properly calibrated and that you understand how to efficiently use the weather data collection device you



choose to use. Spare batteries should be available if you choose an electronic device.

Communication should be conducted with radios. All personnel should be equipped with a handheld radio. If possible, vehicles should also be equipped with mobile radios, as they are generally more powerful than a handheld and can be used to relay messages from handhelds. Spare handheld radios and batteries should be available.

Now, here is the information on fire ignition and suppression equipment. This equipment must be in good working order at all times, otherwise things can go bad fast. Most of this equipment involves gasoline-powered motors. All motors should be serviced and in good working order prior to burning. Air filters, oil filters, fuel filters, batteries and pull cords for starting should all be checked and replaced if needed. Vehicles should be serviced and inspected prior to burning. Make sure the tires are in good shape on all of the equipment. The following is a list of equipment used to conduct prescribed burns on western Oklahoma Wildlife Management Areas and some of the things checked prior to conducting prescribed burns.

Fire Ignition and Suppression Equipment

- Handheld drip torches.

Torches are stored dry with the spouts inside the torch. Prior to burning, torches are inspected for obvious problems. The seals, air vent, wick and spout must be checked. Torches are filled with a 1:1 fresh unleaded gasoline/diesel mix, checked for leaks, tested, then sealed with the spouts placed inside the torch, and stored in an upright position.

- Power drip torch.

Torches are stored dry. Prior to filling, the fuel filter, wiring, fuel pump, valves, hoses and wick are inspected. The torch is mounted on the ATV, filled with a 1:1 unleaded gasoline/diesel mix and tested.

- ATV and UTV.

Fully serviced; check battery, tires; equip with matches or lighters, a handheld drip torch, backpack sprayer, fire extinguisher, fence pliers, tire sealant and tire plugs. UTVs should be equipped with a tool kit, shovel, rake, additional oil/fuel, drip torch fuel and drinking water.

- Chainsaw.

Fully serviced and inspected; the chain and a spare chain are sharpened. Fresh fuel mix and oil is available.

- Leaf blower.

Fully serviced and inspected, fresh fuel mix is available.

- 2" Gasoline-powered fill pump with hoses.

Fully serviced and inspected; hoses and hose ends are inspected and in good working order.

- Reserve water supply tanks.

Tanks are stored dry. Tanks are inspected and cleaned if necessary. Some supply tanks will accumulate algae if they are not stored completely dry. Algae will plug spray nozzles and cause big problems. Make sure reserve water storage tanks are completely clean of any debris before filling them.

- Pumper trucks.

Fully serviced and inspected; inspect tires, battery, the spare tire, equip with good tool kits including fence pliers, a fire extinguisher, rakes, shovels, flappers, matches or lighters, a drip torch, additional fuel for skid unit and ATV/UTV, drip torch fuel, extra motor oil and fuel for small engines, a weather kit, drinking water and whatever else you think you may need!

- Skid unit on pumper trucks and UTVs.

Fully serviced; inspect fuel tanks, fuel lines, all hoses, valves, and pipe fittings for leaks; battery and all electrical connections; check the water tank and make sure it is clean of debris; fill the tank with water and flush all of the hoses prior to installing spray nozzles; have spare spray nozzles available.

- Backpack pumps.

Inspect and test to make sure they are in working order.

There is no such thing as being over prepared when conducting prescribed burns. Knowing the law, careful planning, proper pre-burn notification, a well-thought-out burn plan, and equipment in good working condition will go a long way toward making any burn a successful burn. Be prepared. For additional information on prescribed burns, contact Oklahoma Forestry Services, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service, NRCS or the Wildlife Department. ■



Being prepared is the most important aspect of conducting a successful prescribed burn.