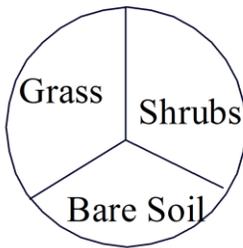




THE COVEY HEADQUARTERS

Volume 11 Issue 3 Fall 2012

This newsletter is aimed at cooperators and sports-people in Missouri to provide information on restoring quail. This is a joint effort of the Missouri Department of Conservation, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and University of Missouri Extension. If you would like to be removed from this mailing list or have suggestions for future articles please contact jeff.powelson@mdc.mo.gov or 816-232-6555 x122 or write to the address shown.



The name of this newsletter is taken from an old concept....that a quail covey operates from a headquarters (shrubby cover). If the rest of the covey's habitat needs are nearby, a covey should be present. We are encouraging landowners to manage their quail habitat according to this concept. Use **shrubs** as the cornerstone for your quail management efforts. Manage for a **diverse grass, broadleaf weed and legume mixture and provide bare ground** with row crops, food plots or light disking **right next to** the shrubby area.

Conduct Quail Covey Counts in October

Want to know how many coveys your farm has? Survey your calling fall coveys the last three weeks in October. Unlike the familiar "bobwhite," the covey call is a clear, loud whistle vocalized as "koi-lee" Covey counts can help you estimate how many quail hatched and survived the summer, giving you an idea of what hunting season might be like. Counting covey whistles is challenging because they are brief—typically lasting only 30 seconds—and they occur about 25 minutes before daybreak.



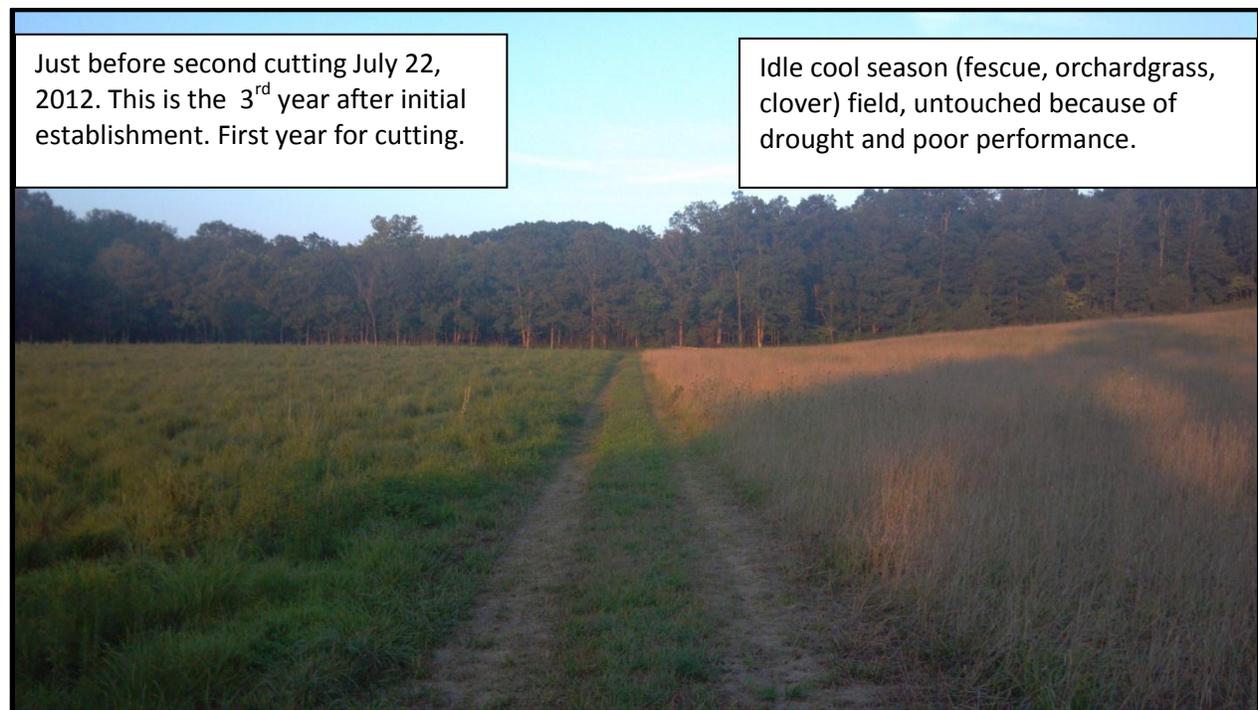
To conduct a successful count, use maps and aerial photos of your farm to establish listening stations. The average maximum distance a quail whistle can be heard is about 500 meters (547 yards), so space listening stations about 1,100 yards apart. This will help you avoid counting the same covey more than once. If trees or topography limit your ability to hear quail whistling 547 yards away, you can place listening stations closer together and still avoid double counting. With a 547-yard listening radius, you are theoretically hearing quail in a 194-acre circle around you. To maximize your listening distance, locate stations on ridgetops.

Permanently mark your listening stations so you can use them every year. During the last three weeks of October, listen on calm, clear mornings, starting 45 minutes before sunrise. Listen until about 10 minutes before sunrise. When a covey calls, estimate its location and mark it on the map, or fix the location in your mind. Often multiple calls will be heard from the same covey location—be conservative and count this as one covey. Listen for other coveys to call back in response. For best results, be consistent in the way you collect data. Remember to keep track of all the data and keep it on file for year-to-year comparison. This will help you evaluate how well your management is working. [Click here](#) for a data sheet to keep track of your counts.

Natives to the Rescue! Mike Gaskins, Private Land Conservationist, Eminence, MO

“Native warm season grass hay, what’s that? No, it aint that ole wild grass hay from that way back grown up field we haven’t managed in years that folks talk about.”

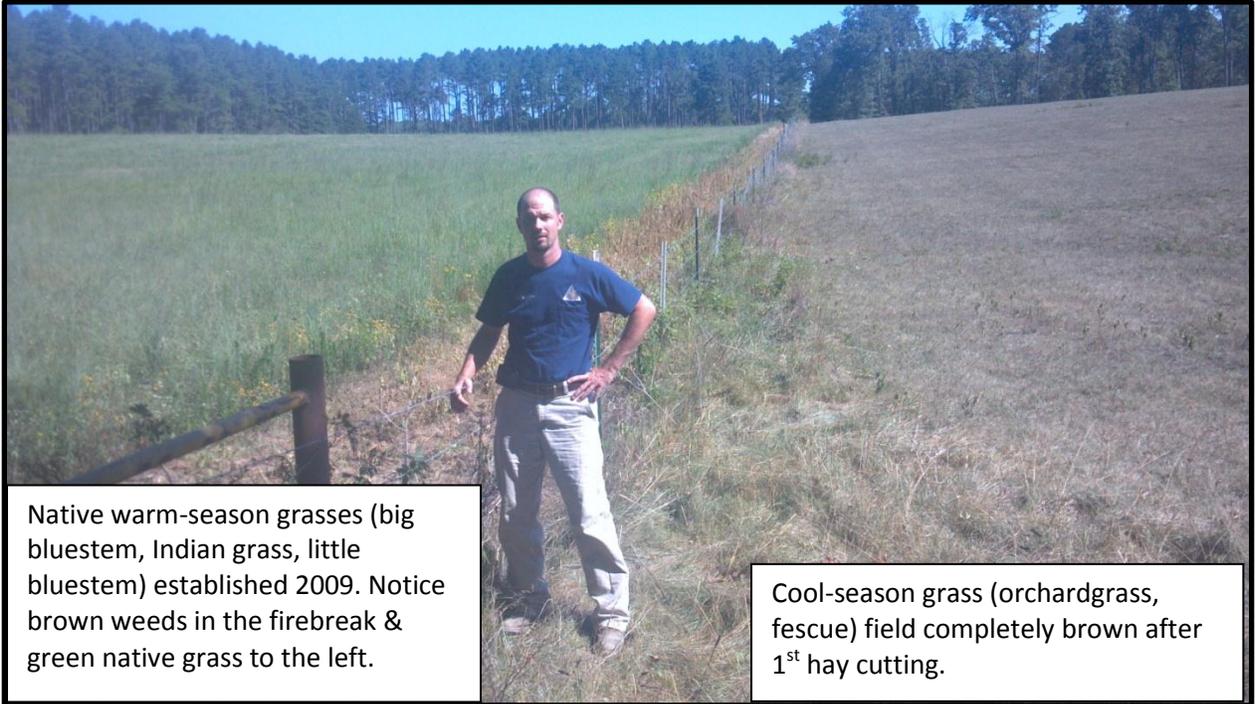
I don’t know how often I get asked that question, but bringing credibility to native warm season grass (NWSG) as a legitimate, high quality forage and superior producer has been slow going till this year. Many seem to feel that grasses from elsewhere are always better, but my NWSG hay has stood the test of horse owners who require only the best for their horses. This is the first year for cutting my NWSG (OZ70 Big bluestem, Ozark & Aldous Little bluestem) field, and with a snicker, I can say the timing of this year’s drought hasn’t been the best. First year’s cutting is never peak production, but the quality was certainly there. And the second cutting, *YES, I said second cutting last week*, was sold nearly right out of the back of the bailer. My customer who is a barrel racer, traveling all over for events, says his horses just love it and have found very little difference between the NWSG bales and alfalfa. Coming out to pick up the hay last week, he said, “my goodness Mike, this has got to be one of the only green fields in the county”.



I stopped by to visit a landowner last week to check in on a woodland project that he was doing and got to looking at a NWSG planting that he did on his own back in April 2012. In 2009, with great skepticism, he converted a fescue/CSG field to NWSG with the Missouri Dept. of Conservation Landowner Assistance Program, to give the native thing a try on my recommendation. Of course, I was touting all the benefits to wildlife, and to the producer if used correctly, but throughout the first year he frantically kept calling me out to the farm asking if I was sure things were going well. I would point to the little 2 inch tall grass plants and say your fine. “If you say so Mike”, with a doubting laugh”. A few years later, he was bailing more high quality hay than he thought he could even get his cutter through.

This same producer called me last week, “Mike, you’ve got to get over here and see this”. “What’s wrong”, I asked. “Its not what’s wrong Mike, it’s that the NWSG field I planted back in April is the only, I mean, the only other green field on the farm. I thought for sure the drought was gonna do it in.”

July 2012



Native warm-season grasses (big bluestem, Indian grass, little bluestem) established 2009. Notice brown weeds in the firebreak & green native grass to the left.

Cool-season grass (orchardgrass, fescue) field completely brown after 1st hay cutting.

Native warm-season grasses are well adapted to Missouri's climate and support a variety of wildlife. In addition, native warm-season grasses can provide excellent forage for livestock during the summer months when cool-season grasses are dormant. Native grasses are attractive to wildlife species, because they evolved with it over the last 10,000 years. Native warm-season grasses are especially important this year because the insects so important to broods of birds, whether they be quail, turkey or meadowlark, are only found in any number where there is still green vegetation.

Recent research at the University of Tennessee has demonstrated that cattle do well on native warm-season grasses during the summer months, commonly posting gains of between 1.5 and 2.0 pounds per day on steers. Bred heifers typically gain between 1.0 and 1.5 pounds daily on these grasses. Blends of big bluestem and indiagrass provide better daily gains, but switchgrass and Eastern gamagrass can support heavier stocking rates.

Programs through your local Soil and Water Conservation District, USDA and the Department of Conservation can help defray much of the expenses of converting portions of your pasture or hayland to native grasses.

Go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZQXF6Sq3o> for videos which provide basic instructions for establishing native grasses.



Big bluestem and Indian grass established in April 2012. Good site preparation and good first year growth during the severe 2012 drought.

The History of Quail and Farming as I Remember It.

Danny Parker, Sikeston, MO

I would like to start by giving a little information about myself. My father is one half of Parker Brothers Farms. We farm cotton, corn, soybeans, and wheat, in Scott and New Madrid Counties. I manage the seed, fertilizer, and spraying operations for Parker Bros. Farms. I also farm a little bit of ground myself. I am in my late 30's now and have been an avid hunter as long as I can remember.

When I was 10 I had a very close friend of my family (Tommy Plunk) introduce me to quail hunting and I was immediately hooked. I can remember going most weekends with him. The hunts were never about the number of quail harvested. They were always about watching the dogs work those birds. His dogs were very good (he had a pointer and an English Setter). It always seemed like most of the places my family farmed always had quail on them. From the time I was 10 to 15 some of those Saturdays I spent hunting were some of the best times of my life. Sadly the man that introduced me to quail hunting passed away when I was 16. I had dogs of my own but it was never the same after that.

A couple years before he passed we were starting to notice a decline in the number of quail we were seeing. At the time I did not really know or understand what the reason was for the quail disappearing. Looking back, I am sure that farmers had to farm more of the land they had to make a living. What I mean by that is in the beginning there were programs that would allow farmers to lay out certain percentages of marginal ground and still pay them some money to leave this land out of production.

These programs expired around the same time quail numbers were at their highest. Once the layout programs expired the idled acres went back into production, which was not anybody's fault, but consequently the quail habitats had disappeared. From 1990 to mid-2000's you could not find anyone that quail hunted in this area. I had long since given up trying to hunt quail between the dwindling numbers and getting busier every year with farming.

In 2005 things began to change for the better. My family was introduced to a new program called the Conservation Security Program which we enrolled most of our farming operation into. This ten year program administered through the Natural Resources Conservation Service provided our farming operation a yearly payment that for the most part allowed for idle strips and standing crop around the edges of fields. Our local Private Land Conservationist advertised other new programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program and the Idle Lands Program which has enticed other landowners, including some that we farm for, to enroll their farm and convert it into quail habitat. It is amazing being out in the fields working and hearing quail whistling back and forth to each other again!

I am sure the numbers are not where they were 25 years ago but I feel with these programs moving forward things look very positive. There are several farms I could take you to and we would have a good chance of seeing quail. That is what these programs should be about, helping farmers and promote wildlife at the same time. I have not yet got back in to trying to hunt quail, but with young kids of my own I am proud that I have the option in the future.

SPECIAL QUAIL HUNTS SET FOR COVER PRAIRIE C.A. AND DAVIDSON-PARIS W.A.

The Missouri Department of Conservation is accepting applications for special quail hunts on the Dan and Maureen Cover Prairie Conservation Area and the Carrick W. Davidson-Robert G Paris Wildlife Area.

Permits for the hunts will be issued by lottery. Applicants may apply for only one of the areas. Successful applications will be given a one day permit to hunt on the area selected, during the assigned time period. There will be 18 hunts on the Cover Prairie C.A. and 8 hunts on the Davidson-Paris W.A. Each successful applicant will be allowed to take three other hunters. Each party will be allowed to take a total of four quail.

To apply for these special hunts, contact: Missouri Department of Conservation, Special Quail Hunts, 551 Joe Jones Blvd, West Plains, MO 65775 or call 417-256-7161. All applicants must include the area on which they wish to hunt, the applicant's name, permanent mailing address, phone number and names of no more than three additional hunters who will be in the hunting party. No person's name shall be listed on more than two permits. Applications will be accepted from September 1 to September 30. Successful applicants will be notified by mail by October 15.

Fall Covey Headquarter Calendar

September

If rains return, begin burning native grass plantings to encourage wildflowers and set back thick grass. Till firebreaks and new food plot areas prior to the onset of winter weather. Seed wheat, barley or rye into tilled firebreaks or food plots. Spray brome and fescue – eliminate these grasses from shrub thickets, fencelines and field edges.

October

Prepare areas for edge feathering by spraying brome and fescue where trees will drop. Conduct quail covey counts this month. Disk your CRP acres this month to promote broadleaf plants. Spray native warm-season grasses for invading brome and fescue after a killing frost. Prepare ground for spring shrub plantings.

November

Dormant seed CRP grasses and wildflowers starting Nov. 15th. Begin edge feathering operations and continue through March – build new homes for quail! Order your covey headquarter shrubs from the MDC nursery through May. Blackberry, shrub dogwoods, wild plum, and false indigo bush are best for quail.

Did You Know???

Over the past five years the Missouri Department of Conservation has conducted an experimental greater prairie-chicken translocation project to determine if reintroduction is an effective part of ongoing recovery efforts. Below are results from nest monitoring on selected sites in west-central Missouri over the past four years.

Fate of 67 nests monitored 2009 - 2012

Area	# 2009 Nests	# 2009 Successful	# 2010 Nests	# 2010 Successful	# 2011 Nests	# 2011 Successful	# 2012 Nests	# 2012 Successful
Wah'Kon-Tah	4	3	6	5	22	15	11	9
Taberville	4	2	4	3	8	5	6	6
Walker	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Shelton	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Totals	8	5	10	8	31	21	18	16

During 2009, apparent nest success among translocated females was comparable to that reported by studies of resident birds. Apparent nest success from 2010 - 2012 was higher than that expected among native GPC. Fewer nests were monitored during 2012 than in 2011 because fewer females were translocated during 2012 (44) than in 2011 (60).

Managing habitats for bobwhite quail – planning for success

Evaluating your properties potential for bobwhite quail and developing a wildlife management plan is one of the keys to success, whether you have been managing for bobwhites for years or are fairly new to implementing management practices on your property.

Educational resources are available that can assist you in the process, among them is MU Extension Publication MP 902, Missouri bobwhite quail habitat appraisal guide.

<http://extension.missouri.edu/p/MP902>

A DVD has also been developed that provides landowners with information on conducting the appraisal of their property to identify suitable habitat for quail. A supply of DVD's is available and ordering information can be found at <http://extension.missouri.edu/p/DVD16>

Here are a few tips when using the quail habitat appraisal guide -

- Use the appraisal guide to assist you in determining the level of quail management you wish to conduct, determined by the number of coveys you wish to produce.
- For planning purposes, use an aerial photo to arbitrarily determine the size and shape of “conceptual home ranges” for quail on your property. A home range can be circular or square, crossing fields and habitat types.
- The conceptual home range can vary in size and be from 15 and 80 acres.
- The goal is to manage the habitat within each home range so that it will support one covey by providing all the habitat requirements in proportion within each home range that you have identified.
- Get out in the field and conduct a thorough examination of area to determine the limiting factors related to nesting, brood-rearing, and protective cover, foods and habitat arrangement.
- The appraisal tool will help you identify the limiting factors on your property that need to be addressed.
- The optimal time to conduct a habitat appraisal is between May and August, but an appraisal can be conducted any time of year.
- Conduct the appraisal each year, and develop a plan to help monitor the success of your efforts.

Upland Game Bird Regulations

Bird season is right around the corner. Time for you and your bird dog in shape and brush up on the regulations -

Permit and Other Requirements

All game bird hunters, except turkey hunters, must have a Missouri small game permit, unless exempt. Turkey hunters must have a permit for the fall or spring turkey season.

[Click here](#) for season and bag limit information. The sunrise/sunset table can help you make sure you don't hunt before or after legal start/end times.



Hunters Younger Than 16

Resident and nonresident hunters age 15 and younger do not need to purchase permits to hunt doves, rails, snipe, teal and woodcock in Missouri. However, they must either be in the immediate presence of a properly licensed adult hunter or have in their possession a valid Hunter Education Certificate Card while hunting.

Early Migratory Birds

Migratory birds include dove, rail, snipe, teal and woodcock. Hunters will need the following:

- A Missouri small game permit, unless exempt
- A Missouri Migratory Bird Hunting Permit, if 16 years of age and older

To hunt teal, hunters 16 years of age and older also will need a federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp.

Additional information, including seasons, limits, shot requirements, bird identification and federal regulations summary is available in the [Migratory Bird Digest](#) which is updated each July.

Dove-Hunting Areas

Hunters can pursue doves on 100 different conservation areas, including 2,800 acres of managed dove areas located in 800 fields. [Click here](#) for locations of managed dove fields by conservation area. Each public area may have regulations that are slightly different from statewide regulations, and many areas require advanced reservations for hunting. Hunters are encouraged to check field conditions before the season opens September 1, or contact the [regional offices](#) for current conditions.

Pheasant and Quail Areas and Info

Pheasant hunting is allowed in certain counties. Please see the [Summary of Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations](#), which is available on the web in February and at permit vendors in March.

Quail Emphasis Areas

If you're looking for new places to pursue quail, check out the [Department's Quail Emphasis Areas](#). These are located throughout the state, and recently the Department has ramped-up quail habitat-improvement efforts on them.

Youth-Only Quail and Pheasant Seasons

To provide more opportunities for hunters ages 6 through 15, the Conservation Commission has established youth-only quail and pheasant seasons. Both seasons take place October 27-28, 2012. Youths who are not hunter education certified must hunt in the immediate presence of a properly licensed and hunter-ed certified adult. Adults may assist youths, BUT THE ADULT MAY NOT HUNT quail or pheasant. The quail season takes place statewide. The pheasant season will be held in the north zone only. The north zone is defined as north of Interstate 70 and also in the portion of St. Charles County south of Interstate 70. Check the [permits and regulations page](#) for more details.

Mark Your Calendar

Prescribed Burn Workshop – October 3, 2012 from 6:30 to 9:00PM at the Warren County Extension Center in Warrenton. If the rains return, a demonstration burn is scheduled for October 6th (details provided during October 3rd workshop) Register by calling Lia Heppermann at 636-583-2303, ext. 115.

Did You Know???

The fall shuffle is the annual breakup of broods into coveys and the movement of birds to fall/winter habitats from the brood rearing areas. The fall shuffle occurs in mid-September thru early October in Missouri. During this time, adults will join young-of-the-year birds from at least one brood to form coveys that average 11-12 birds. Fall crop harvest will also cause some coveys to shift to new areas. These coveys will seek out areas with good shrubby cover which provides thermal and escape cover during the winter months. If you always have birds in the spring and summer, then they suddenly disappear in September, make sure you have adequate shrubby cover to hold them throughout the year.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
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 NRCS Natural Resources
Conservation Service

The Covey Headquarters Newsletter
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