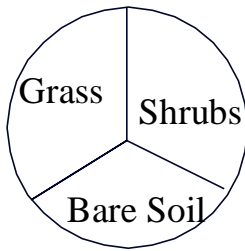




# THE COVEY HEADQUARTERS

Volume 18 Issue 1 Spring 2019

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, go to [http://mdc.mo.gov/user\\_mailman\\_register](http://mdc.mo.gov/user_mailman_register) to unsubscribe. If you have suggestions for future articles, please contact [jeff.powelson@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:jeff.powelson@mdc.mo.gov)



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.

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## **Find Places for Outdoor fun with new MDC “MO Outdoors” app**

Finding places to discover nature and enjoy outdoor activities in Missouri has just gotten easier. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) now offers its new, free mobile app – MO Outdoors. MO Outdoors users can quickly and easily find MDC outdoor offerings based on the types of outdoor activities they want close to home, work, or even while traveling.

MO Outdoors can help users find MDC conservation areas, fishing accesses, hiking trails, shooting ranges, and nature centers around the state based on their desired types of outdoor activities including birdwatching, camping, fishing, hiking, hunting, or shooting. Users can also mark “favorite” locations to quickly find them in future searches.

MO Outdoors also connects users to area regulations and season information, hours of operation, images, area closings, and interactive maps of area boundaries and features. The map function also

displays features such as parking lots, boat ramps, and wildlife viewing areas, and allows users to easily navigate to the features using their device's GPS. Users can also download maps for offline use.

**MO Outdoors and MDC's other free apps – MO Hunting, MO Fishing, and MO Con Mag – are available for download through Google Play for Android devices or the App Store for Apple devices.**

## Food Plot Seeding Rates

Food is seldom a limiting factor to having bobwhites on your farm. Make sure you have adequate herbaceous cover (diverse grasses, legumes, wildflowers and weeds for nesting, feeding, brood-rearing and roosting), and shrubby cover before planting food plots.

Species	Broadcast seeding rate (lbs./acre)	Planting Time
Grain or Forage Sorghum	16 lbs.	May – early June
Corn	15 lbs.	April – early May
Millets	20 lbs.	April – June
Buckwheat	40 lbs.	May – June
Soybeans	45 lbs.	April – May
Oats	50 lbs.	Fall – early spring
Wheat	50 lbs.	September – early November
Sunflowers	8 lbs.	April – early June
“Bobwhite” trailing soybeans	8 lbs.	April – May

- **Rates can be reduced 50% for planting or drilling, except for soybeans, which can be reduced to 34-40 pounds/acre.**

**Fertilize grain plots according to soil test. In the absence of a test, consider adding 150 pounds of 12-12-12 fertilizer per quarter acre of food plot**

## MDC updates MO Hunting app with new layout, improved functions

*Users will need to update MO Hunting prior to spring turkey hunting for proper telechecking.*

Turkey hunters, deer hunters, and others who use the Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) free MO Hunting app will need to perform a simple update to get the latest layout, features, and functions.

**The MO Hunting update includes improved telecheck functions for turkey and deer harvests. MDC advises users to update MO Hunting prior to spring turkey hunting for proper telechecking. MO Hunting users with Android devices can update it through the Google Play app. Those using Apple devices can update MO Hunting through the App Store.**

The update includes a new look and feel, a streamlined telecheck process, new menu and profile options, the ability to hide expired permits, the ability to view managed-deer-hunt preference points, links to MDC's managed hunt online application process, and a link to a MO Hunting "Help" webpage -- viewable directly from the MO Hunting app and online at [mdc.mo.gov/contact-engage/mobile-apps/mo-hunting/mo-hunting-help](http://mdc.mo.gov/contact-engage/mobile-apps/mo-hunting/mo-hunting-help).

According to MDC, many of the enhancements for the MO Hunting update came from user feedback.

“We work with volunteers from the public to test our new apps and give feedback on our updates,” said MDC IT Project Manager Cassey Kuester. “We also encourage ongoing user feedback about our apps. Many of our enhancements come from that user feedback and we greatly appreciate it.”

MDC welcomes feedback from users of its apps -- MO Hunting, MO Outdoors, MO Fishing, and MO Con Mag – at [mdc.mo.gov/contact-engage/mobile-apps/comment-apps](https://mdc.mo.gov/contact-engage/mobile-apps/comment-apps).

MO Hunting, MO Outdoors, MO Fishing, and MO Con Mag – are available for download through Google Play for Android devices or the App Store for Apple devices. Get more information at [mdc.mo.gov/contact-engage/mobile-apps](https://mdc.mo.gov/contact-engage/mobile-apps).

Hunters can also buy permits through MDC’s MO Hunting app, or from permit vendors around the state and online at [mdc.mo.gov/buypermits](https://mdc.mo.gov/buypermits).

## **Spring Covey Headquarters Calendar**

### **April**

Listen for male Bobwhite whistle calls on calm clear mornings.

Spray brome and fescue underneath shrubby areas with Fusilade, Select, or Poast (check label before buying).

Burn fescue and brome to severely stunt grass, then light disk or interseed legumes.

Do not burn native warm-season grass now unless utilizing for forage or trying to eliminate brome or fescue.

Order your covey headquarter shrubs from the MDC nursery before the end of the month.

Till and fertilize food plots.

### **May**

Quail and other grassland birds are on the nest – resist mowing your road ditches and odd areas.

Conduct breeding bird surveys the last week of May thru June.

Seed food plots now for best results.

Clip weeds in newly planted warm season grasses to a height of 4-6 inches.

Listen for quail whistle calls on clear calm mornings.

Last recommended date to plant seedling shrubs is June 1.

## **Did You Know???**

Quail require different habitat types at different times of the year. Nesting habitat is needed from April into September. Preferred nesting grasses include little bluestem, sideoats grama, and broomsedge.

Once the chicks hatch, quail broods need a diverse grass, wildflower, weed, and legume bugging area with plenty of bare ground to maneuver through. Finally, shrubby cover is important not only for protection from predators and extreme cold, but also in the summer for loafing and shade. A well-developed shrubby headquarter will be several degrees cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter than the surrounding habitat. Good quail managers ensure all habitat types are adjacent to one another. Do you have all these habitat types in close proximity on your farm?

## **Quail Forever Biologists Help Farmers and Ranchers Across Southern Missouri Improve Operations and Add Wildlife Habitat**

Pheasants Forever, Quail Forever, and its partners are pleased to announce the expansion of the Missouri Farm Bill Biologist Partnership with the hiring of four biologists in Missouri. The biologists –Erin Forsythe, Rachel Settle, Colby Sharp, and Haley Lockard – are already hard at work helping farmers and ranchers make their operations more sustainable, profitable, and better for wildlife.

These positions are part of a collaborative partnership between Pheasants Forever, Inc. and Quail Forever, the Missouri Department of Conservation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to increase technical assistance capacity for advancing the implementation of the Working Lands for Wildlife program (WLFW). The purpose of the WLFW program is to support voluntary conservation projects in priority working landscapes to benefit target species including the bobwhite quail.

Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever biologists possess the knowledge of federal, state, and local programs to assist landowners in finding the right program to meet their personal habitat and land use goals. Since 2012, Missouri Farm Bill Biologists have put over 150,000 acres of high-quality wildlife habitat on the ground with Missouri landowners. Many of those acres are on working lands.

"We can have great wildlife habitat on our working lands," stated Casey Bergthold, Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever's state coordinator in Missouri, "and at the same time help farmers and ranchers be more profitable and grow their operations. Many times, they just need someone who can help them develop a plan and who knows how to make it economically feasible. This is what our Farm Bill Biologists do."

#### **Farm Bill Biologist Partnership Hires:**

**Erin Forsythe** - Farm Bill Biologist in Carthage, Missouri serving Barton, Dade, Jasper and Lawrence counties. Forsythe is a recent graduate from the University of Missouri with a BS in both Animal and Plant Sciences. She has been working for the Natural Resources Conservation Services as a Soil Conservationist Technician and enjoys working in the conservation field. Erin is excited to get to know her territories and the Quail Forever team. To find out more about managing for wildlife on working lands, contact Erin at [eforsythe@quailforever.org](mailto:eforsythe@quailforever.org) or (573) 881-7593.

**Rachel Settle** - Farm Bill Biologist in Ste. Genevieve, Missouri serving Ste. Genevieve, St. Francois, and Madison counties. Rachel grew up in Fredericktown, Missouri and enjoys hunting, fishing, and kayaking. She has a B.S. in wildlife biology and a M.S. in biology, both from Missouri State University. Rachel began her career as a graduate intern with the Missouri Department of Conservation and as a Fisheries Specialist for the Department's southwest region where she provided technical assistance to private landowners regarding pond and fisheries management. As a wildlife biologist for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Settle implemented wildlife and habitat management plans for Big Cypress Wildlife Management Area. Some of her duties included conducting prescribed burns to promote healthy wildlife habitat and monitoring populations of game, non-game, and endangered species. For more information about improving and conserving wildlife habitat on working lands, contact Rachel at [rsettle@quailforever.org](mailto:rsettle@quailforever.org) or (573) 701-4624.

**Colby Sharp** - Farm Bill Biologist in Houston, Missouri serving Howell, Texas, and Wright counties. Colby is an avid outdoorsman who grew up where the pine hills meet the Mississippi flyway on a performance quarter horse ranch in Bastrop, Louisiana. Sharp received his B.S. in Forestry with a concentration on wildlife habitat management and an M.S. in Biology with research on avian communities in bottomland hardwood forests from Louisiana Tech University. Colby is looking forward to applying his forestry and ornithology knowledge to assist landowners with wildlife habitat work on their property. Sharp can be reached at [csharp@quailforever.org](mailto:csharp@quailforever.org) or at (318) 614-4731.

**Haley Lockard** - Farm Bill Biologist covering Clark, Lewis, Knox, and Scotland counties. Haley grew up exploring her grandfather's farm in West Central Missouri. Her passion for wildlife, hunting, and the mountains lead her West where she received her B.S in Wildlife Biology from the University of Montana. Lockard's wildlife career started with the Missouri Department of Conservation working with the forestry division and coordinating wildlife disease sampling for the Deer Program. Haley joined the Quail Forever Team in 2017 as the first farm bill biologist in Oklahoma where she worked with producers in Northwest Oklahoma on improving rangelands to benefit the lesser prairie chicken and other upland species. Haley is very excited to return to her home state and help the landowners and partner organizations in Northeast Missouri strengthen their wildlife management efforts. If you would like to know more about

grazing native forages and how that benefits wildlife, contact Haley at [hlockard@quailforever.org](mailto:hlockard@quailforever.org) or (816) 868-7607.

## **Did you know???**

Prescribed burning is one of the most valuable and effective tools available to manipulate wildlife habitat. Conducting prescribed burns can be challenging due to many variables including equipment and personnel availability and the weather. Another challenge facing prescribe fire contractors or landowners is obtaining insurance coverage. Missouri is currently classified as having undefined or uncertain liability. This means that the amount of exposure (liability) will be determined on a case by case basis in a court of law. As a result, many (or most) insurance companies are not willing to insure prescribe burn practitioners in Missouri. Considering that nearly every natural community in Missouri benefits from fire, this is a very real problem.

Fortunately, there is a proposed solution. House Bill 978 was introduced during this legislative session. If passed the bill would define the liability associated with conducting a prescribed burn. For contractors or landowners that have the proper training, and have and follow a written burn plan, the bill would provide protection from the amount of liability that could be incurred. This would allow contractors the ability to purchase insurance and would make Missouri's "environment" much more conducive for conducting prescribed burns. This would be great opportunity for you to discuss your thoughts on the legislation with your local elected officials.

## **MRAP provides outdoor recreational opportunities for youth and small game enthusiasts on private land**

As we edge closer to warmer weather and spring turkey season, keep in mind the many Missouri Outdoor Recreational Access Program (MRAP) areas open for public use across the state. Last year, MDC added its first youth properties to the program. These areas offer walk-in hunting and fishing opportunities for kids under the age of 16 throughout all legal seasons year-round. MRAP now features seven youth properties, achieving a primary program goal by providing hunting areas with less competition and hunting pressure. To date, over 1600 acres have been enrolled under the youth access type and we hope to continue adding more for many years to come.

In addition to providing opportunities for youth to connect with the outdoors, MRAP also features properties restricted solely to hunters pursuing small game and turkey. These areas are open for hunting quail, turkey and other designated small game throughout all legal seasons. At present, there are 12 properties enrolled under this access type, totaling nearly 3000 acres of land available to hunters. So, whether your interest is fishing, turkey hunting or taking your son or daughter out for their first hunting trip, MRAP



For more information, visit the Missouri Department of Conservation's MRAP webpage at [www.mdc.mo.gov/mrap](http://www.mdc.mo.gov/mrap) There you can find maps of enrolled properties, public access options, rules and procedures, and enrollment information for landowners. MDC anticipates expanding outdoor recreation

opportunities by adding several new properties to the program this spring. Check out the MRAP webpage in April to find new properties that may be added in your area!

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## SW Missouri Quail Project Update for 2014 through 2018 Kyle Hedges, Wildlife Management Biologist and Frank Loncarich, Wildlife Management Biologist

Our five-year research project has come to a close. We have collared and tracked over 1400 birds throughout this project. As a reminder, we began this study to research nesting success and adult quail survival on traditionally managed areas (managed primarily with foodplots, grass and shrub strips) vs. grasslands (managed primarily with fire and grazing). We added sites along the way, ending with six study sites. The data remained fairly consistent over the five years, with a couple exceptions. Overall, nesting on large grasslands was superior every year, as compared to more traditionally managed areas. Large grassland is a key distinction here, as Shelton Prairie, which is a small grassland, did not always realize the nesting success that the larger grasslands maintained. Adult survival was also superior on large grasslands, compared to traditionally managed areas.

**Nesting:** Below is the nesting information from all five years. As a reminder, the traditional managed sites were: Bois D’arc, Talbot, and Shawnee Trail. Bois D’arc wasn’t added until 2017. The grassland managed sites were Stony Point Prairie, Shelton Prairie and Wah’Kon-tah. WKT was added in 2015.

	Total Nests Incubated	Hatched	% Success
Bois D’arc – 2017-2018	33	6	18%
Robert E. Talbot	104	32	31%
Shawnee Trail	66	22	33%
Shelton Prairie	78	25	32%
Stony Point Prairie	148	65	44%
Wah’Kon Tah Prairie – 2015-2018	89	38	43%

Most midwest Biologist have historically considered 35% nest success to be average. It appears that our traditionally managed sites fall fairly close to this assumed average. Our large grasslands exhibit over 10% higher nest success than our traditional sites.

MU summer brood technicians found superior brood survival on these large grasslands as well, when compared to traditional areas. Lastly, MU had a winter technician the last two years, tracking over winter survival. Again, the large grasslands fared better than traditionally managed sites. All of this combined for large grasslands experiencing superior nesting, superior brood survival, and higher adult survival, as compared to traditionally managed areas. This all strongly points to the fact that large grasslands are likely our best path forward for quail management into the future, especially on public lands across the state.

## Free Private Land Care DVD

The Missouri Department of Conservation has a limited supply of *Private Land Care* DVD's. This DVD includes information on how to improve wildlife habitat on your land. Topics include light disking/herbicide spraying, how to plant food plots, important plants for quail, quail habitat components, broadcast sprayer/seeder calibration, covey headquarter shrub planting, eradicating fescue and sericea lespedeza, building an ephemeral pool, and edge feathering. If you would like this free DVD, please send an email to [publications.staff@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:publications.staff@mdc.mo.gov)



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## **New Rabbit Publication Now Available**

A new publication for new hunters, *Basic Hunting for Common Missouri Game Species – Rabbit* is a free, 12-page, color booklet introducing entry level hunters to the basics of rabbit hunting, including rabbit biology, preparing for the hunt, hunting strategies, and cleaning and cooking rabbit. This publication follows last fall's *Basic Hunting for Common Missouri Game Species – Squirrel*. These publications can serve as teaching guides for new hunters or as refreshers for experienced hunters returning to the field. If you have questions or would like to order quantities of this publication, please e-mail [publications.staff@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:publications.staff@mdc.mo.gov)

## Quail-Friendly Plants of the Midwest

Check out MU Extension's, *Quail-Friendly Plants of the Midwest*. This guide is designed to help landowners identify quail-friendly plants so they can evaluate how habitat is responding to their management efforts. It includes over 50 grass, wildflower, and woody species that quail use for food and cover. The guide is located at the following web address -

<http://extension.missouri.edu/explore/miscpubs/mp0903.htm>

### Did You Know???

Anyone planning to conduct a prescribed burn should have the training to do it safely. Contact your local Missouri Department of Conservation or Natural Resources Conservation Service office to learn more about workshops and professional assistance to help you learn the safe way to conduct a prescribed burn. Several Soil and Water Conservation District offices may have burn equipment for rent. Drip torches, rakes, flappers, water units, and many other items may be available for you to conduct a burn safely.

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