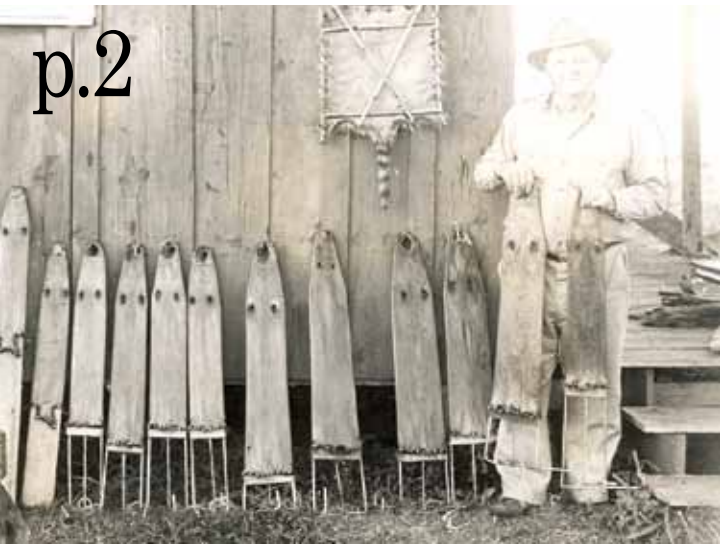
Winter 2015

Louisiana Wildlife Insider



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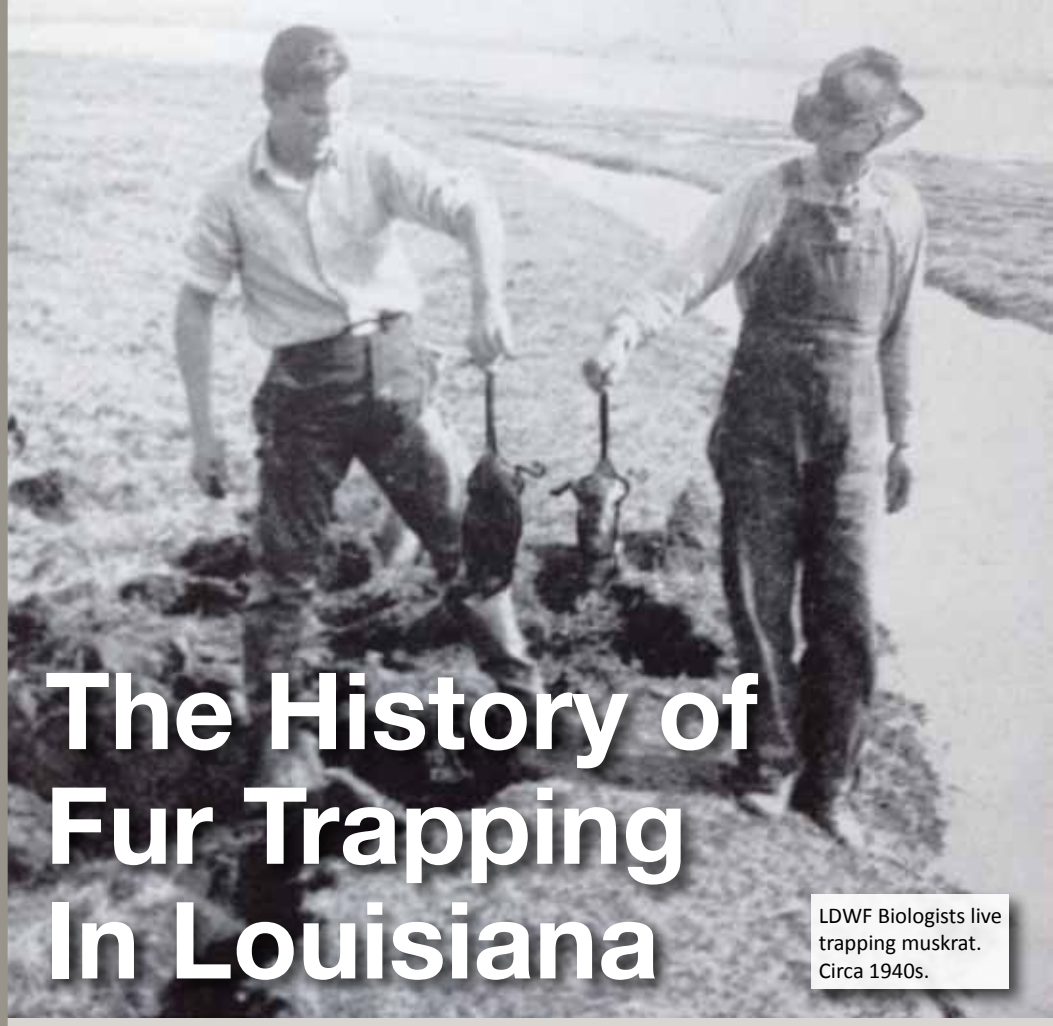
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The month of February is the normal culmination in Louisiana of our fall hunting season, although squirrel and rabbit can be hunted until the end of the month and of course there is always the spring squirrel season (May 2-24). We encourage you to take time and relax, sit in your easy chair and enjoy the "Louisiana Wildlife Insider," reliving those crisp weather deer hunts, those waterfowl shadows cast against a predawn sky, and bird dogs pointing timberdoodles in wet, musty bottoms.

In this issue of the "Insider" we cover a wide range of topics. There is a new tool now available in Louisiana to combat feral hogs - aerial gunning. Biologist Jimmy Ernst highlights some success that he and others have been involved in with the East Gulf Coastal Plain Prescribed Burn Initiative offered by LDWF. Benton Elementary school students are now the world champions of the National Archery in the Schools Program. Fur trapping has had a long and interesting history in Louisiana and, as you will learn, is still an important part of our culture. Clear Creek WMA has much to offer the Louisiana sportsman, as WMA biologist supervisor Wendell Smith informs us in his Featured WMA article. This issue also offers information on habitat management, conservation partnerships and of course our featured biologists.

We hope that you will enjoy this issue of the "Insider" as you ponder the success of the recent hunting season and begin preparation for next year's memories. Begin planning now to enjoy next fall's hunting seasons even more by mentoring a newcomer to our sport; invite a friend or a youth to begin developing memories for a lifetime of enjoyment.

Sincerely,
Jeffrey P. Duguay, Ph.D.
Editor



The History of Fur Trapping In Louisiana

LDWF Biologists live trapping muskrat. Circa 1940s.

BY JENNIFER HOGUE MANUEL, LDWF Biologist Supervisor

Furbearers are the group of wild animals traditionally trapped for their fur. In Louisiana, the following animals are classified as furbearers: bobcat, otter, mink, muskrat, beaver, red fox, grey fox, raccoon, opossum, skunk, and nutria. With the exception of the non-native nutria, all of these species have long been an important part of the Louisiana subsistence culture. Native peoples, such as the Attakapas, utilized furbearers for food, clothing, medicine, perfume and shelter. Early French settlers relied on these animals as a source of income to support the growing colonization efforts. Today, trapping is an important wildlife management tool, provides a way for people to connect with their heritage, is a challenging outdoor activity, and promotes a sense of self-reliance. However, trapping is not without controversy, and biologists, interest groups, and the industry must face the challenges head-on to preserve the art of trapping.

Prior to the 17th century, fur harvest was largely for subsistence as a necessary item for warmth. As the courtly fashion of the royal houses across Europe became more elaborate, fur was harvested to be worn by kings. It wasn't until the middle part of the 17th century that the widespread demand for fur truly began. Beaver fur felt hats were growing in popularity across Europe. Court fashion in many countries of the time mandated hats to be worn at court, and the style and extravagance of the hat indicated a person's status in society. Because of this, demand for beaver fur grew far beyond the supply. European beaver populations had already been in decline by the 16th century because of habitat loss. The demand for their pelts put further pressure on their populations as they began to be hunted at an alarming rate, resulting in their extirpation throughout much of Europe. This decline in local beaver and the ever growing demand for fur felt drove early European settlers to explore other sources for fur.

Early settlers in North America noted the abundance of the North American beaver and began sending pelts back to Europe as an important source of early income for the colonies. Colonists relied heavily on the Native Americans to trap the fur animals in exchange for tools, cookware, weapons, sugar and alcohol. In 1627, Cardinal Richelieu established

the Company of New France to facilitate settlement of what is now eastern Canada. French settlers established trade routes throughout modern day Canada, the upper mid-west and Pacific Northwest sections of the United States. The English established the Hudson Bay Company in 1670 and over the next century grew to dominate the fur market. During the Seven Years War, the English succeeded in overtaking the French in the northern fur market, and English settlements expanded west and south along France's old trade routes to meet the growing demand for beaver pelts.

Louisiana did not become a force in the international fur market until more than a century later. This was largely because of the lower quality of the beaver fur in the southern United States, trade agreements with France's northern colonies that stated all beaver pelts belonged to them, and mismanagement of the Louisiana colony throughout much of the colonial period. After Pierre La Moyne d'Iberville founded Louisiana in 1699, he soon realized that transportation was critical to success in the fur market and saw that the Mississippi River could serve that function. In 1705, the first commercial shipment of fur came down the Mississippi River to the New Orleans area for export to Europe, 13 years before the city of New Orleans was founded. The shipment contained bear and deer hides. Not long after the city of New Orleans was established, the city of St. Louis, which would go on to become the fur capital of America, was founded as a location for fur to be bought, sold and processed. Dried pelts were loaded on barges and floated down to New Orleans where they were be stored and shipped. This successful enterprise lasted until the late 19th century when the railroads took the fur business from St. Louis and New Orleans and moved it to New York, which was becoming an epicenter for fashion and international trade.

An artesian well at a trapping camp on Marsh Island. Trapping was a family affair with parents moving the whole family to their camps during the trapping season.

Toward the end of the 19th century, trapping in Louisiana was growing in part because of the decline of the North American beaver population and the developing demand for alligator leather. Trappers in Louisiana also targeted mink, raccoon, opossum and otter, which were becoming increasingly popular. As alligator harvest increased, the marsh was burned to provide better access. The burning changed the landscape and vegetation. Muskrat benefited from the changes, resulting in a population boom in Louisiana. By 1910, muskrats had taken over large swathes of marsh causing "eat-outs," or large areas denuded of vegetation. Trappers began to harvest muskrat and sell them along with other furs. As soon as the muskrat pelts arrived in New York, they quickly became the cornerstone of the American fur market, and enterprising trappers and dealers in Louisiana benefitted from the demand. Trapping license sales in the 1920s topped 20,000, reflecting the number of people hoping to cash in on the muskrat demand. By the 1940s, the annual harvest of muskrat in Louisiana was approaching 9 million with an estimated value of over $10 million. As fashion changed, mink came into popularity during the Great Depression and commanded as much as $15 a pelt. At this time, Louisiana was producing nearly 65 percent of all North American fur. This was more than what was being harvested in all of Canada, and the fur was worth more than the yearly value of gold and silver from Alaska.

The sharp increases in fur harvest prompted government officials to enact Louisiana's first trapping regulations. In 1912, a season was set for the harvest of mink, otter, muskrat and raccoon; the season ran from Nov. 1 to Feb. 1. At this time bobcats, skunks and opossum could be taken year-round. The same year, another law passed requiring a trapping license; however, no system was put in place for issuing the licenses until 1914 when the price was set at $2.

Nutria were first introduced into Louisiana in the 1930s by several different entrepreneurs, land owners and biologists. Some believed they could be farmed for fur, others wanted the opportunity to trap them in the wild, and some believed nutria could control invasive aquatic plants. Either way, nutria escaped or were released and

LEFT: An ancient engraving published in The Fur Animals of Louisiana, an LDWF publication from 1931. It depicts Captain Simars de Belleisle during his time as a captive with the Attakapas Natives in the Galveston Bay area.
RIGHT: Statue of Pierre LeMoyne d'Iberville wearing a beaver pelt three corner hat popular in the colonial period. Statue is located in Ottawa, Canada.

THE FUR TAKE IN LOUISIANA

1913 to 1929

Season	Muskrat	Opossum	Raccoon	Mink
1913-14	4,284,000	178,000	401,000	105,000
1914-15	5,000,000	180,000	420,000	112,000
1915-16	3,500,420	193,640	532,480	114,620
1916-17	2,125,000	228,921	678,821	122,480
1917-18	1,387,220	140,125	220,110	85,440
1918-19	2,963,110	152,800	258,200	79,975
1919-20	4,073,200	224,100	252,800	98,700
1920-21	4,990,000	144,708	176,751	72,946
1921-22	6,000,000	113,385	131,041	40,573
1922-23	10,000,000	154,972	109,030	34,607
1923-24	7,000,000	160,000	120,000	50,000
1924-25	6,236,165	287,180	145,810	84,201
1925-26	3,613,765	198,490	128,516	51,447
1926-27	3,036,749	356,184	127,882	43,896
1927-28	2,858,834	339,210	103,544	67,284
1928-29	5,105,374	518,295	153,914	99,844
1929-30	6,269,556	309,363	105,381	69,680

Muskrat harvest during the early years of Louisiana's fur industry compared to the other important species trapped during this period.

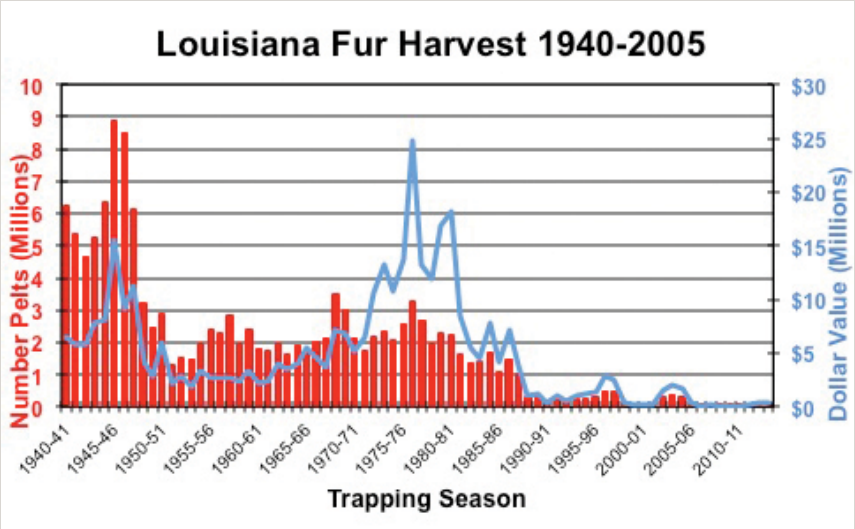
soon established breeding populations in the Louisiana marshes. In the 1940s, after they became established in the wild, nutria began appearing in the fur harvest records in small numbers. In 1961, muskrat made up 53.6 percent of the total fur harvested in Louisiana, and nutria made up 39.9 percent. In 1962, nutria harvest overtook muskrat by comprising 53.1 percent of the harvested fur with muskrat falling to 36.8 percent. From 1962 forward, nutria became the backbone of the Louisiana fur market. In the 1970s, demand for wild Louisiana fur began to drop with Louisiana only producing about 20 percent of the fur market Much of the decline was due to increased mink ranching overseas.

In the early 1980s, the bottom fell out of the fur market, due to the fall of the Soviet Union, changes in fashion, and a strong animal rights movement, which had been growing throughout the 20th century as the American people became more urbanized. Animal rights activists condemned trapping as cruel, and a general misunderstanding of the process and need for trapping caused trapping to be thought of as unnecessary in the eyes of the general public. Efforts to ban trapping across the United States were rampant, and in some states, such as Massachusetts, the efforts were successful. Ad campaigns depicting graphic images of animals in jawed foothold traps, which were already outlawed in most places, including Louisiana, misinformed the public and swayed them to vote against trapping. Many trappers, buyers and dealers across North America were forced out of the business. Even the once dominant Hudson Bay Company, which had been in the fur trade business for over 300 years, sold its fur business in 1987. Furbearer populations began to grow, and some species such as raccoon, beaver and coyote lost value in the eyes of the public, being viewed as pests. In Louisiana, trappers and dealers fell victim to falling fur prices, and many left the business choosing not to pass it on to their children. As a result, muskrat and the invasive nutria populations rebounded causing extensive marsh damage in many coastal habitats across the state.

By the start of the 21st century, the once strong Louisiana fur market was a mere shadow of the multi-million dollar business that it once was. In 2000, there were 871 trapping licenses sold in Louisiana, compared to the approximately 20,000 licenses sold each season in the 1920s. The following season saw the start of the Coastwide Nutria Control Program (CNCP); which is a cooperative effort enacted by the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) and administered by the USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) and LDWF as a means of controlling the growing nutria population. This is done by paying an incentive to nutria trappers. The CNCP requires participants to purchase a trapping license, which caused the sale of licenses to increase to approximately 1,500 the following season. Currently, the number of licenses sold has surpassed 2,800 and has been steadily climbing due to small increases in prices of pelts and outreach and education efforts. The Louisiana Fur Council in conjunction with the Louisiana Trappers and Alligator Hunters Association and LDWF have coordinated trapping classes held during December 2014 and January 2015 to educate and provide the public an opportunity to learn about ethical trapping as a commercial or recreational endeavor.

Today, there is still much opposition to harvesting fur. However, as sustainability becomes more important to the public and as some species are becoming viewed as a nuisance, there may be some renewed interest in trapping. The world's economy is also in a constant state of change with the demand for fur changing along with it. For many years, high-end fashion designers refused to showcase real fur on their runways because of the concern of how the public would react. This past year, some designers

A trapper displays his steel stretchers used to clean and dry nutria pelts for the market. The process and types of stretchers are still used today.



This graph depicts total number of pelts harvested in Louisiana represented by the red bars and total value to the dealers represented by the blue line.

have begun to feature fur once again, promoting it as a textile that is sustainable, renewable and biodegradable, as opposed to synthetic textiles including faux fur. This can be done in large part because fur bearers are now monitored and managed by state and federal agencies, and trapping practices are regulated to ensure animals are trapped in an ethical manner. In Louisiana, the coastal marshes have suffered because of an overabundance of nutria, and groups such as Righteous Fur have promoted nutria fur as eco-friendly and ethical. Campaigns such as this may help improve the image of fur in the eyes of the public.

The fur industry in North America has a long and storied history, closely tied to the history of the native people, the colonization of America, and the history of Louisiana. Its continued existence is dependent upon improving the broad appeal of the fur industry by promoting ethically sourced furs and educating the public about ethical trapping and its importance in managing furbearer populations.

LOUISIANA WILDLIFE LICENSE PLATES

Your purchase of a wildlife license plate helps fund wildlife management and research

Any citizen of Louisiana can purchase a wildlife license plate when registering their vehicle, or if you have already registered your vehicle and would like to order a wildlife license plate go online to: *https://expresslane.dps.louisiana.gov/SpecialPlatesPublic/SpecialPlates1.aspx*

This boundary line through a cypress/tupelo bottom is being maintained by the Weyerhaeuser Company. Without this painted line, there is no evidence of property ownership change in this area. (Cody Cedotal)

Boundary Line Maintenance

Money Well Spent

BY CODY CEDOTAL, Farm Bill/Grants Coordinator

No matter your investment, it is a good idea to protect it and encourage growth by minimizing risk and reducing input and maintenance costs. There are several things that can be done to grow, maintain and protect forestland. Maintaining forest health with frequent thinning improves tree growth and can reduce the risk of insect damage and storm damage. Permanent fire lanes and low fuel loads can reduce losses should wildfire occur. Liability insurance can provide security for property owners. Boundary line maintenance is another activity that serves to minimize risk and decrease maintenance costs.

The 2003 revision to the criminal trespass law (LA RS 14:63) has served to strengthen the rights of property owners in Louisiana. Prior to this legislation, the burden was on landowners to legally post their property in order to prosecute individuals for trespassing. Posting regulations varied by parish. With the passage of this law, individuals can now be prosecuted for trespassing if they did not receive permission from the landowner(s) to be on the property. Landowners are no longer required to legally post their property with signs and/or painted trees to be protected by law, with some exceptions. For more information, visit the following link: *http://law.justia.com/codes/louisiana/2011/rs/title14/rs14-63*.

Although these actions are clearly positive for all private landowners, they may also be responsible for some complacency on the part of many. Boundary line maintenance remains an important activity for landowners. Well-marked boundary lines can deter intentional trespass as well as to prevent accidental trespass due to confusion over property line location. For these reasons LDWF programs such as the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) still require posting of boundary lines. Accidental timber theft can also be avoided if boundary lines are clearly marked. In some cases logging contractors are unable to dif-

Two New Wildlife Faculty Join LSU School of Renewable Natural Resources

Kevin Rigleman

Assistant Professor

Kevin grew up in North Dakota, walking the prairies for sharptail grouse, pulling in walleye from the Missouri River, and shooting ducks over potholes with his parents. He picked up a passion for waterfowl from his father, a longtime waterfowl biologist with Ducks Unlimited, and never looked back. Kevin did his first-year coursework at the University of Minnesota and then finished his degree at Cornell University, earning a degree in 2007 in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. He then started a Ph.D. program at the University of California - Davis, working with both breeding and wintering waterfowl in the Central Valley. Kevin finished his doctorate in 2012 and took a one-year postdoc position in Delaware studying black ducks before finally migrating south to LSU this past summer.

Kevin took over the faculty position formerly held by Frank Rohwer (now president of Delta Waterfowl) in August, and his research focuses on waterfowl ecology and management, especially in Louisiana. Kevin is currently developing local projects to study white-fronted goose diets, fulvous whistling-duck nesting ecology, and the impact of the Deepwater Horizon spill on scaup populations. He also is doing some work on the breeding grounds, assessing how the booming oil and gas development in the prairies is affecting the fall flight of waterfowl. Kevin teaches courses in wildlife management, behavioral ecology and (of course) waterfowl biology, and is a faculty advisor for the Ducks Unlimited Tiger Chapter at LSU. Kevin has happily adopted local core principles of good food, bourbon and LSU sports, and looks forward to an exciting career in Louisiana.

ferentiate between properties, especially if stand characteristics are similar and no lines are marked beforehand. Whether contractors are working on your property or your neighbor's, problems can be avoided with a little prior planning and proper boundary line maintenance. Timber management activities such as inventory, timber marking, and prescribed burning can be made easier with clearly marked boundary lines in place. Well-marked boundary lines are a requirement of many cost-share programs and other assistance programs, including the Forest Stewardship Program.

In many instances, the boundary lines have already been marked in some way. This is common and should only be done by licensed surveyors when establishing a line. Sometimes these marks have not been maintained over the years or the lines have been lost due to storm damage or other changes. If this is the case on your property and there is absolutely no evidence of a marked property line, then another survey will be necessary to correctly establish the line. Depending on conditions, surveying can be quite expensive. This is another good reason to maintain present boundary lines. It is quite common for boundary lines to be designated with old fences that were operational many years ago. It is important to remember that old fences are just that, "old" and they deteriorate over time.

The best way to maintain boundary lines is to designate trees to be painted and/or use signs. Ideally, a right-of-way on or very near the boundary line is a good idea. This can provide access to maintain the line as well as serve as a permanent fire break for wildfire protection. This may not be feasible depending on stand characteristics and ground conditions. In such cases, a painted line may be the only option. It is good to select trees that are within 5 to 10 feet of the actual line. Hardwood species, especially oaks, make better long term marker trees than do pines. Trees should be marked or blazed using a thick, oil-based paint of a visible color for long term designation. Paints specifically for boundary line maintenance are available from many suppliers. It is best to scrape all loose bark from the area to be painted to make paint application easier and last longer. On larger trees, it is common to use three to five marks on each tree. There are usually one to two marks on opposite sides of the tree to indicate line direction. When facing the direction of the line, there is usually an additional mark placed on the left or right side of the tree to indicate which side the actual property line is on. On smaller trees (8 inches in diameter or less), one mark may be used to simply indicate the line is nearby. Stand characteristics such as understory density will dictate the effective distance between each marked tree. In open stands, a 200-300-foot interval may suffice. This interval may be reduced to 75-100 feet in areas with thick vegetation. As a rule of thumb, it is best to have lines marked frequently enough so that a marker tree is visible no matter where someone may cross the property line. Painted trees can be supplemented with signs to increase visibility and effectiveness.

Boundary line maintenance is an activity that can be carried out as time permits by landowners themselves or other individuals involved with the property. Some landowners allow/require hunting clubs or other lessees to maintain boundaries as part of the lease agreement. Many consultants and other contractors offer boundary line maintenance services to property owners. Rates vary depending on site conditions, marking requirements and the size of the job. However, an average price may fall somewhere between $150 to $250 per mile of boundary including labor and paint. This cost estimate is relatively small considering properly marked boundary lines should only need remarking once every six to eight years. Factor in all of the prior mentioned benefits of boundary line maintenance, and in my opinion it is money well-spent.

**This article was previously published in the Forest Stewardship Newsletter – Spring/Summer 2010*

Bret Collier

Assistant Professor

Bret grew up on a Simmental cattle ranch cutting corn, beans and hay and hunting squirrel, deer and pheasant in the fence lines and woodlots of east-central Illinois. He did his undergraduate at Eastern Illinois University, his Master's research at Oklahoma State University, and received his doctoral degree from the University of Arkansas while in the U.S. Geological Survey's Arkansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Unit at the University of Arkansas. Before coming to LSU in March 2014, Bret was a research scientist at the Institute of Renewable Natural Resources at Texas A&M University where he had worked since 2004. Bret's area of expertise is wildlife population dynamics, primarily focused on upland and migratory game birds (turkeys, doves and quail), white-tailed deer and feral hogs although he does work on threatened and endangered birds and amphibians.

Bret's research over the past decade has focused on wildlife ecology and management of game species, with most of his efforts leaning toward estimating population size and relating wildlife movements to habitat selection. He has a variety of active projects, including research on the ecology and management of wild turkeys in Texas, Arizona, South Carolina, Louisiana and Georgia, research evaluating harvest dynamics of white-winged doves, woodcock and white-tailed deer ecology and management in Louisiana, and a long-term project on white-tailed deer movement ecology, breeding dynamics and harvest management in South Carolina.

Bret teaches courses in wildlife management techniques and wildlife population dynamics and has an active study abroad program where he takes LSU students to Swaziland to study African wildlife each August. In his spare time, Bret spends a lot of time with his wife Reagan and daughter Kennedy, trains upland hunting dogs, hunts woodcock, ruffed grouse, pheasants, ducks and white-tailed deer, and watches way too much Oklahoma State University football.

Managing Edge Habitats for Migratory Land Birds

BY DAN O'MALLEY, LDWF Biologist

Prairie Warbler

Photo by Dominic Sherony, Wikimedia Commons

Participation in birding has been steadily increasing, yet many species of birds are experiencing population declines. Wildlife biologists and foresters have been managing habitat for migratory nongame landbirds (often referred to as songbirds) on public land for years. Similarly, private land managers may desire to manage habitat for nongame landbirds, providing the dual benefits of high quality habitat for birds and enhancing recreational opportunities for the growing bird community.

One commonly held misconception is that birds always prefer interior forest habitats. Although forest interiors are very important for many species of nesting birds and are used year-round by both resident and migratory birds, birds often prefer edge habitats for foraging. Edges become sunlit early in the day when birds are most actively foraging. This sunlight creates warmer conditions than are found in the forest, which increases the activity of insects - a main food source for most migratory landbirds. Edge habitats also have a higher density of vegetation than the forest interior, which supports a higher density of insects than might be found in the more open areas under the forest canopy. Lastly, there are typically more fruit-bearing trees and shrubs in sunny habitats like edges than in the forest interior. Fruit is a critical component of the diet of migrating birds, providing them with calories needed to complete their migration.

Another benefit of forest edges is that they are easily accessible by the birding public and are typically abundant on properties managed for public access. Roadsides, campgrounds, parking areas and lawns surrounding maintenance and research facilities all provide forest edges. Prime bird habitat may also be created by allowing the understory to develop underneath shade trees in landscaped areas, creating small "islands" with a high edge to interior ratio. Because of the availability of insects and fruit and because of the ease of public access, forest edges are prime areas to implement habitat enhancements for migratory landbirds.

Canada warbler is uncommon during migration in Louisiana and is generally sought after by birders. This species is among many other species of primarily insectivorous migratory birds that may be found foraging in giant ragweed during migration.

Photo by William H. Majoros, Wikimedia Commons

Assuming desirable vegetative structure is already in place (i.e. vegetation occurs in various strata or heights), the main habitat improvements that can be made involve providing food and water. Birds are drawn to the sound of running water, and water features with running water are extremely effective at concentrating birds. Popular water feature designs include a water mister or dripping faucet set over a bird bath on the ground. Water features should be placed near vegetative cover to provide refuge for drinking and bathing birds.

The most well-known method of supplementing the diet of wild birds is by maintaining seed feeders. This is an effective method, but can be expensive and labor intensive. The prime periods for feeding migrating birds are late March through mid-May and September through October. The two most effective seed types are black oil sunflower seed and white millet. Red milo and seed blends that include red milo should be avoided since this seed is not preferred by wild birds and frequently comprises the bulk of commercial bird seed mixes.

Although feeders tend to concentrate birds for easier viewing, they also make birds more susceptible to disease and predation. Planting vegetation upon which birds forage is often less expensive and labor intensive than maintaining seed feeders and can attract a wider array of species. The list of native plants

that produce fruit consumed by birds is exhaustive, and no wonder - birds provide an effective and reliable means of seed dispersal. In fact, many plants are wholly dependent on birds or other animals for colonization of new areas.

Enhancing habitat for migratory landbirds is a great way to assist with the management of declining species. Migration is an extremely stressful period in the life cycles of birds, and populations experience high rates of mortality during migration. While the primary threats to most species occur on breeding or wintering grounds, providing high quality habitat at migratory stopover sites can help bolster populations. Managing for the conservation of landbirds will not only benefit the birds and birders of today, but will also ensure these colorful and dynamic components of our natural heritage are preserved for future generations.

Photo by Simon Pierre Barrette, Wikimedia Commons

ABOVE: Chestnut-sided Warbler
LEFT: It is not uncommon for migratory landbirds, like this gray catbird encountered during spring migration, to have stained plumage from consuming red mulberry fruit.

Popular Plants for Migratory Land Birds

These highlighted plants are only a few of the most popular plants for migratory land birds

Photo by Paul Wray, Iowa State University (*forestryimages.org*)

Red Mulberry (*Morus rubra*): This is the most effective plant for attracting migratory landbirds in spring. Mulberries produce an abundance of fruit, and the ripening of its fruit coincides with the peak of landbird migration through Louisiana in mid-April. Many of the large, colorful songbirds such as buntings, orioles, tanagers and grosbeaks consume this fruit.

Photo by T. Davis Sydnor, Ohio State University (*forestryimages.org*)

Roughleaf Dogwood (*Cornus drummondii*): This is the premier plant for attracting migratory landbirds in early fall. Its fruit is consumed by many species that are otherwise primarily insectivorous, including flycatchers and vireos. This fruit ripens in mid-August through September.

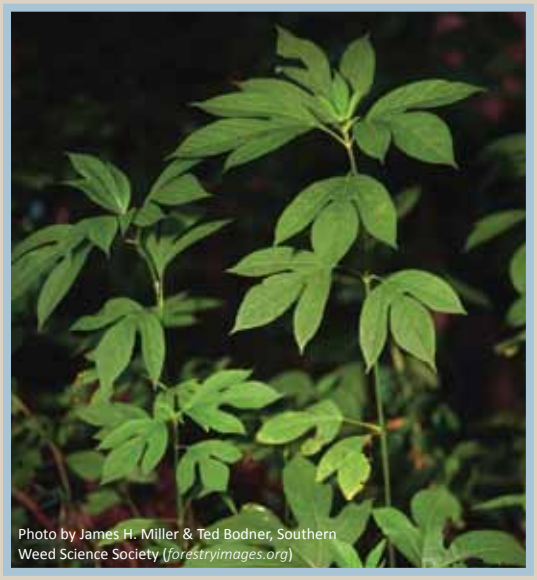


Photo by James H. Miller & Ted Bodner, Southern Weed Science Society (*forestryimages.org*)

Giant Ragweed (*Ambrosia trifida*): This weedy native does not produce fruit that is favored by migratory birds, but supports a high density of insects in the fall. It is not uncommon to find birds that are typically associated with the forest canopy taking advantage of the abundance of insects available in stands of ragweed.

LDWF Approves New Tool for Combating Feral Hogs

BY MELISSA COLLINS, LDWF Wildlife Biologist & Permits Coordinator

You've seen it before (or heard the exasperating stories told by a friend)…acres of crops, green pastures, regenerating forests, food plots, hayfields, coastal marshes, levees, or even your favorite fishing spot along the banks of a stream metamorphosed overnight into muck. The culprit? You guessed it - the feral hog.

The damage associated with feral hogs is immense both financially and ecologically. In the United States, the rooting and wallowing behavior of feral hogs causes an estimated 1.5 billion dollars annually in damages and control costs. Agricultural and ecological damages are vast, and those most often reported consist of the destruction of agricultural crops such as soybeans, corn, rice and tuberous plants, depredation of domestic livestock such as lambs and calves, and the taking of wildlife such as fawns, amphibians, reptiles and ground-nesting birds/eggs. Interspecific competition between feral hogs and native Louisiana wildlife for essential resources, such as hard mast, can lead to decreases in native wildlife populations including game species such as white-tailed deer. Feral hogs predate on alligator nests, muskrat mounds and coastal prairie vegetation. Heavy use of hard mast and seedlings by feral hogs may hinder forest regeneration. Stream bank destruction significantly reduces water quality and bank integrity. Diseases such as brucellosis, trichinosis, pseudorabies and leptospirosis (which causes white-tailed deer to abort fawns) have deleterious or even fatal effects on wildlife, domestic livestock and even humans. Compounding the problem is the invasive feral hog's high reproductive rate. In fact, it is estimated that 75 percent of the feral hog population must be harvested annually to maintain a static population. These factors prompted the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) to offer landowners additional options to deal with Louisiana's hog problem.

The most recently offered option allows for aerial control of feral hogs. The framework for a new no cost, non-transferrable Aerial Feral Hog Control (AFHC) permit has been developed. This permit authorizes individuals, partnerships or corporations to utilize a helicopter to locate, pursue, take, harass or kill feral hogs on private properties exceeding 1,000 acres. Permit holders must obtain the landowner's consent for aerial control of feral hogs via the Landowner's Authorization (LOA) form provided by LDWF. A group of landowners, or an association on behalf of such landowners, may submit a single LOA to meet the minimum acreage requirements. Landowners with a valid LOA can allow an AFHC permit holder to appoint subagents to act as gunners or observers during permit activities, provided the landowner or the landowner's authorized agent has completed a Landowner's Authorization to Appoint Subagents (LAAS) form. With landowner consent, the AFHC permit will allow for an effective method of animal control on private property. Applicants are required to provide LDWF with:

1. a completed application
2. a signed hold harmless waiver
3. a Landowner's Authorization form
4. a Landowner's Authorization to Appoint Subagents form, if applicable.

All gunners/observers must also successfully complete a four hour safety training held by the permit holder prior to AFHC permitted activities; the training allows for participation up to 90 days.

a. application for renewal (and renewal report) must be submitted to LDWF no later than 45 days prior to expiration
b. AFHC permits are valid for a calendar year and expire Dec. 31

Persons interested in the Aerial Feral Hog Control rules and regulations may visit LDWF's website at:
http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/document/37881-noi-widlife/noi_-_aerial_feral_hog_control_-_july_2014.pdf

In addition to the new Aerial Feral Hog Control permit, LDWF continues to offer a no cost Nighttime Feral Hog Control (NFHC) permit to individuals, private property landowners and leaseholders (farm or hunting leases) interested in controlling feral hogs at night during the hunting season (Sept. 1 - Feb. 28). Persons interested in this permit may view the rules and procedures for application on LDWF's website at:
http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/permit/rules-and-procedures-nighttime-feral-hog-hunting-permits-private-property

Feral hogs are considered outlaw quadrupeds by LDWF and may be controlled (on the ground) on private property, day or night, from March 1 - Aug. 31 without a permit by persons with a valid hunting license and landowner permission.

Contact Melissa Collins with any questions related to feral hog permits at (225) 763-8584 or mcollins@wlf.la.gov

Louisiana's World Champs

On July 9, 2014, in Madison, Wisconson, a group of students from Benton Elementary in Bossier Parish were crowned World Champions at the annual NASP (National Archery in the Schools Program) World Tournament.

BY ROBERT STROEDE, LDWF Wildlife Educator & ALAS Coordinator

Benton Elementary Coach, Perry Norcross, not only coaches the Benton Archery team, but he also infuses the NASP curriculum into his Physical Education classes. Of all the students that receive the NASP curriculum as part of their school day, coach Norcross had the difficult task of whittling it down to 48 students for his competitive teams that travel to the ALAS (Archery in Louisiana Schools Program) State Tournament. Not any easy task, with hundreds of kids at the school having caught the "archery bug" since he started teaching the NASP curriculum just three years ago.

Once he had his competitive teams together, the pressure only increased. Coach Norcross' two competitive teams practiced not only in school, but also held after school practices to improve their skills. On March 1, 2014 the Benton teams traveled to the ALAS State Tournament in Alexandria, La. At the state tournament Benton showed they were ready for action, with the Benton Elementary teams finishing with the top two team scores in the elementary division. Because of their first place finish, Benton Elementary received an automatic bid to the National Tournament in Louisville, Ky., in May. The NASP National Tournament is the world's largest archery tournament, with 10,443 students comprising 665 teams from 39 states competing in this past year's tournament. After what Coach Norcross might tell you was a "bit of an off day" for his archers, Benton placed 8th in the NASP National Tournament, the highest finish ever for a Louisiana team. Although placing 8th at the national tournament was respectable, Coach Norcross and his archers knew they could shoot better than that, they just needed the chance to prove it. Luckily, they would get that chance. Thanks to their finish at nationals, Benton Elementary was invited to compete in the NASP World Tournament to be held that July.

It was decision time. A trip to Wisconsin was going to be tough. It was going to cost even more to get to Wisconsin than it did for the trip to Kentucky, and it was summer. Kids and teachers alike look forward to their summer break, but if they were going to the world tournament in July that meant practice. The students practiced four to six hours per week during their summer vacation and when they weren't practicing they were raising money to make the trip possible.

In early July the team, their coaches and parents made the 1,200 mile trip to compete in the NASP World Tournament. Those minor hiccups that affected the team at nationals were absent from their world performance. The team pulled together and shot like they knew they could, increasing their score from nationals by 66 points and outscoring the second place team by 32 points. This earned them 1st place in the Elementary School Division of the tournament. It truly was a dominating performance by some of the most unsuspecting competitors one would ever meet. A group of kids just doing what was fun, participating in a sport that has already changed their lives forever, before their 11th birthday.

A total of 2,425 student archers from 198 schools, 28 states, two Canadian Provinces, and South Africa participated in this tournament.

Benton Elementary is a member of the Archery in Louisiana Schools (ALAS) program which teaches NASP (National Archery in the Schools Program) to students as part of their in-school curriculum. All schools in the State of Louisiana are eligible to have the ALAS program. The ALAS program is facilitated and funded by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

If you are interested in finding out more about ALAS or getting involved, contact Robert Stroede:
Phone: (318)484-2276
Email: rstroede@wlf.la.gov

Or visit us at:
Website: *www.wlf.la.gov*
(Search ALAS)
Facebook: ALAS-Archery in Louisiana Schools
Twitter: @ARCHERYLAS

Conservation Partnership

Why it Matters: *Wildlife Need Large Landscapes; It Takes a Lot of People to Manage Ecosystems*

BY GREGG ELLIOTT, GCPO LCC Communications and Outreach Specialist (K. Gregg Consulting - Memphis, TN)
MIKE WOOD, LDWF Director of Inland Fisheries

Editor's Note: *The following is the third in a series of articles that will address efforts to enhance conservation on a large-scale, commonly referred to as "landscape level conservation".*

The high tech community likes to talk about the "business ecosystem," but they can't hold a candle to the real thing -- the kind made of blood, rock, sinew and chlorophyll - where people and organizations work in symbiotic partnerships playing important roles in the living systems of which we are all a part.

MANAGING FISHERIES BEYOND THE WATER'S EDGE

How do fisheries managers, whose job it is to benefit fish and other aquatic species, manage a lake? By focusing on the activity that takes place within the watershed. Many issues that affect Louisiana's waterways - siltation, the spread of invasive weeds, degraded habitat for fish - can really only be solved by attacking the source of the problem, which is often land-based.

For these reasons, Mike Wood, LDWF's Director of Inland Fisheries, sees a need for change in the way many fisheries managers have traditionally done their jobs. "Many of our guys inherited a short-sighted understanding of what they do. We really emphasize now that you can't manage the lake without managing the watershed. We are also hammering home the message that a fisheries manager not only collects samples and field data, but also has to be a thinker." Most problems that we see are not simply a one-cause and one-effect relationship.

WHY DOES OUR LAKE STAY MUDDY?

"For example, a recent issue," Wood continues, "concerns options for managing problems in False River, a Mississippi River oxbow lake in Point Coupee Parish." Once a very productive sport fish lake, False River water quality is impaired due to shoreline development and channelization in the watershed. After years of frustration, the public finally demanded action, asking "Why does our lake stay muddy?"

Initial recommendations for a waterbody drawdown became a highly charged issue. False River is in relatively close proximity to Baton Rouge and has high use for angling and water sports. With its highly developed residential shoreline added to the mix, opportunities for user conflict are

Sediment Plume

almost endless. Recommendations that included lowered water levels in this environment were unavoidably flammable.

A natural water level regime with high water in the spring and low water in the fall is important to a healthy fish population. Wood sums it up succinctly, "High water makes great spawning substrate available to fish. Low water makes the spawning substrate great." Though water fluctuation is one of a fisheries manager's best tools, it's not effective if the real problem is upstream.

"It's critical that we look beyond the shoreline for the real cause of a lake's symptoms. We also need to address those problems at the source. Yet that's not easy for a water manager; we have limited authority for management beyond water, and it can be difficult to engage landowners and interest groups."

FISHERIES PROGRAMS THAT WORK ON LAND

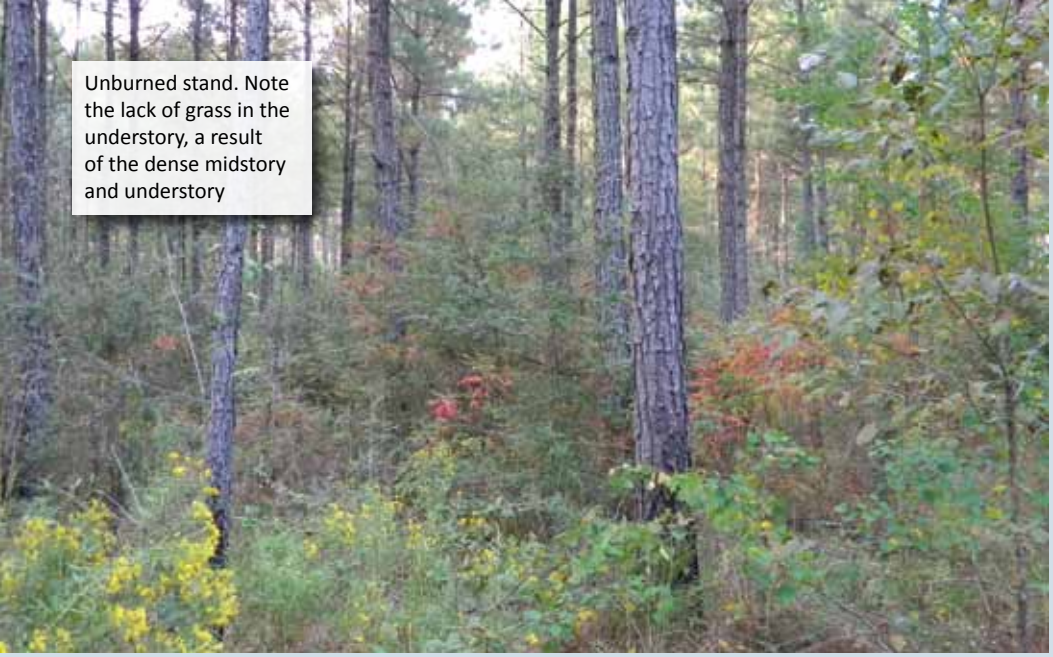
"But it's important to have partnerships with the people you serve," Wood continues. "We're working now with property owners in the watershed to encourage erosion management practices, such as fencing cattle out of creeks and planting riparian vegetation using the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). It's just as critical to convey a sense of responsibility for the lake to those in the watershed as it is to shoreline property owners. A really good management plan to explain the problems and necessary solutions is one of the best ways I know to generate support. Everybody wants a healthy lake. We already have a boatload of volunteers who want to help protect their lake. They're ready to help with tasks such as spawning bed development and artificial reef construction."

Opportunities for partnering on a landscape scale to manage the watershed include other agencies such as Louisiana's Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Environmental Quality, the NRCS and even our Parish Police Juries. "This kind of management is far from what we used to do," says Wood. "We'd fool ourselves into thinking that typical lake management techniques were the answer to habitat problems. That's just silly. False River is a good example of that too. We stocked Florida bass and implemented some pretty restrictive regulations in 1991 in an effort to produce trophy size fish. Needless to say, it didn't work. Our efforts were off the mark."

Approaching complex problems with silver bullet solutions doesn't work in the long run. Wood says, "Misapplication of even the best management tools is one of the most common pitfalls of old school logic. The False River drawdown mentioned above is a great example. The prospects of limited access and reduced aesthetic value are sure to generate tremendous controversy in any high use, multi-purpose waterbody. After the hullabaloo and then inconvenience of the low water, people would have good reason to expect positive results. When expected benefits aren't realized, people turn against the practice as well as the practitioners. Watershed management sounds complex because it is."

Partnerships with landowners and volunteer groups ultimately translate into a constituency ready to call their state or federal representatives in order to protect their lake. Undoubtedly, the more involved people are the better educated they become about the issues too. Wood is certain when he concludes, "But results speak." It takes a healthy watershed to grow fish!

RIGHT: False River Watershed.
BELOW: False River Shoreline.



Unburned stand. Note the lack of grass in the understory, a result of the dense midstory and understory

Open, grassy understory created by prescribed burning.

Prescribed Burning

A Success Story

BY JIMMY ERNST, LDWF Private Lands Biologist

When Pat Scarle purchased timberland in St. Helena parish in 1996 he wasn't thinking much about quail. He purchased a few hundred acres of a 12-year-old stand of loblolly pine that had recently been thinned. The surrounding landscape consisted of pine plantations and agriculture, which is typical for this part of the parish. Although quail were relatively common in this part of the state in the late 1970s and early 1980s, changes in land use and some forest management practices have resulted in reduced quail populations in the parish as well as the entire southeast.

Four years ago Pat saw an article about the East Gulf Coastal Plain Prescribed Burn Initiative (EGCP PBI) offered by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) and decided to make the call. This program allows LDWF to fund prescribed burning on private land that meets specific requirements with regards to location and habitat conditions. Approved forest stands are burned by private contractors/consultants at minimal cost to the landowner. The landowner is only responsible for installing the necessary fire lines to complete the burn. The EGCP PBI improves wildlife habitat and introduces landowners to the benefits of prescribed burning. After a visit from the local Private Lands biologist and completion of the necessary application and ranking forms, 165 acres of Pat's property was selected for burning in the 2010/2011 burn season.

Habitat Management Plan development was the next step in the process for the tract. Consultation between Pat and the Private Lands biologist led to the development of a Habitat Management Plan recommending a dormant season fire to reduce fuel loads and improve wildlife habitat for white-tailed deer and Eastern wild turkey on the tract. This plan was implemented in March 2011 when a contracted Certified Prescribed Burn Manager along with the LDWF Private Lands biologist conducted the first prescribed burn on the tract since Pat's acquisition. Benefits of the prescribed fire were soon evident. The burn killed most of the yaupon and other woody species that had become established in the understory and midstory. Woody species began to be replaced with grasses and forbs, improving habitat for quail, turkey and other grassland birds as well as increasing deer browse. Pat was pleased with the results of the burn so much that he started burning smaller portions of the tract on his own over the next few years. Existing roads that transected the property facilitated these burns. Approximately half of the tract has been burned twice and the result is greatly improved habitat when compared to stands that have not been burned or only burned once.

A few months ago Pat phoned to say, "I just called to let you know that the burning is working. I now have two coveys of quail on the place and couldn't be happier." He went on to tell me he hears them every morning whistling back and forth, one covey northwest of the house and one southeast. Prior to burning, he had never heard quail on the property, which is evidence that the burning is working.

For more information on the EGCP Prescribed Burning Initiative contact the LDWF Hammond Office (985) 543-4777 or Cody Cedotal 225-765-2354; ccedotal@wlf.la.gov

LDWF Participating in Large-scale Woodcock Migration Study

LEFT: Woodcock fitted with a PTT. BELOW: All woodcock require a USGS leg band.

LDWF biologists are participating in cutting-edge research in which American woodcock are outfitted with satellite transmitters (PTTs). These solar-powered PTTs are small enough to fit on a woodcock's back during migration and powerful enough to transmit multiple locations to the ARGOS satellite network.

The location data from this project will be used to document timing of migration initiation, rate of migration, stopover length, routes taken, and final destination for both spring and fall migration. These data can then be used to identify priority areas to focus habitat management and conservation efforts for woodcock along migration routes.

This research is being conducted by USGS Arkansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, USGS Minnesota Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, and the USFWS. In addition to LDWF, other cooperators providing assistance and funding are the Ruffed Grouse Society and American Woodcock Society (RGS and AWS), Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, The Glassen Foundation, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the University of Arkansas, and Woodcock Limited.

Photos below show woodcock being aged and sexed by examining the wing: primaries (outer three feathers) for sex (female in this case) and secondaries (feathers further in on the wing) for age (adult bird in this case).

For more information and to follow the American woodcock migration live, go to: http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/woodcockmigration

For more information on American woodcock life history, go to: http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/american-woodcock-2

Clear Creek Wildlife Management Area

BY WENDELL SMITH,
LDWF WMA Biologist Supervisor

The Office of Wildlife of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) currently manages over 1.1 million acres in its Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Program. The WMA Program's mission is to provide wise stewardship of the state's wildlife and habitats, to maintain biodiversity including plant and animal species of special concern, and to provide outdoor opportunities for present and future generations to engender a greater appreciation of the natural environment. Habitats within these lands harbor and help conserve a multitude of endangered species, species of concern, and the more common game species. Recreational opportunities range from hunting and fishing, to canoeing, hiking, camping, bird watching and berry picking. The habitats found on WMAs include upland pine/hardwood, cypress tupelo, pine savanna, bottomland hardwood, brackish marsh, and the list goes on with many globally rare habitat types and plant communities as well. Each issue of the Louisiana Wildlife Insider will feature a different WMA highlighting the WMA's history, unique features and recreational opportunities.

Clear Creek Wildlife Management Area consists of approximately 48,500 acres located in southwestern Vernon Parish, 20 miles west of Leesville. This WMA is owned by Hancock Timber which provides LDWF with a free lease. This allows the public to utilize the area for recreational opportunities while the property owner maintains the forest management rights. In return for the free lease, LDWF provides in-kind service to Hancock Timber, such as road grading and mowing, in order to offset the loss of revenue to the landowner.

The topography consists of gently sloping hills interspersed with small creek bottoms with occasional hardwood flats. Much of Clear Creek WMA is managed as a monoculture loblolly/slash pine plantation on a 30-year rotation. In areas not in pine plantations, the forest is composed of longleaf, slash, loblolly and shortleaf pine along with red oak, blackjack oak and post oak. Creek bottoms are comprised of water oak, willow oak, white oak, beech, sweetgum and magnolia. Soils are generally low in fertility with acidic characteristics commonly found in upland pine habitats.

Game species available for hunting are deer, squirrel, rabbit, turkey, quail, dove and woodcock. The hunting seasons on the WMA are generally the same as that of the surrounding parish seasons, except for deer and turkey hunting seasons which are shorter in duration. Sportsmen from all over the state come to hunt Clear Creek WMA, but those people who live in southwest Louisiana utilize the area more frequently. Clear Creek WMA has a primitive camping area, located off highway 464, which is heavily used by the public in October and November; portable toilets are available during the high use weekends.

Furbearing animals such as raccoon, mink, beaver, bobcat, coyote and otter are present on Clear Creek WMA in moderate numbers. Trapping is an important tool for controlling these animals to keep them in balance with nature. Licensed trappers are allowed on the area during the state trapping season and permitted through the self-clearing permit process.

The white-tailed deer population on the WMA is moderate to high. Historical deer harvest data suggest that Clear Creek exhibits a sustained annual harvest of more than 300 animals. The deer management employed on Clear Creek WMA, affords the hunter the best chance of harvesting a deer. This management technique requires constant data monitoring to assure herd health and prevent damage to the habitat.

The diversity of habitat on Clear Creek WMA supports a high deer population. The fertility of the soils in this area of the state is poor, which has a major impact on the size of individual animals. Adult males average about 135 pounds and females about 100 pounds. Doe/Fawn ratios are high, which indicates good reproduction. The rut occurs in late September through November in southwest Louisiana with the peak activity occurring in the last two weeks of October to the second week of November. Deer hunting seasons on Clear Creek WMA are designed to put deer hunters in the woods during the peak pre-rutting period. The firearms season opens up on the last Saturday of October with an either-sex weekend hunt with mandatory deer checking. Important data such as age, weight, lactation and antler development are measured during this time, which allows managers to make sound biological decisions concerning the management of white-tailed deer on Clear Creek. College students routinely volunteer to help during this weekend in order to gain out-of-the-classroom wildlife experience.

A Limited Use Area is available for wheelchair bound physically challenged hunters, and consists of four hunting blinds, providing an opportunity for a quality hunt. Food plots (less than an acre) are planted at each location during the late summer season to attract game to the shooting area. While

Hunting blind for physically challenged hunters.

the blinds are used primarily by deer hunters, they are available for use during the turkey season too. To reserve a blind call the Lake Charles Fields Office at (337) 491-2575.

The turkey population on Clear Creek WMA is moderate. At present, the habitat is suitable for turkey and the area is showing an increase in the number of birds. Timber management practices greatly influence the turkey population. Food plots are planted annually for turkey with millet, wheat or chufa. Clear Creek WMA has two special lottery turkey hunts as well as a short turkey hunting season open to the general public in the spring. Squirrel hunting success is marginal on this WMA, but approximately 200 hunter days are expended each year in pursuit of this popular quarry. The habitat types represented on Clear Creek WMA support both gray and fox squirrels. Since most of the area is planted in pine plantations, squirrel populations are considered low due to the limited habitat.

The population of swamp and cottontail rabbits on the WMA is high, and until recently, few hunters devoted much time in the pursuit of rabbits. Rabbit hunting is becoming more popular on the WMA since the Department opened a special rabbit season allowing the use of beagles. Recent clear-cuts provide good rabbit habitat. Rabbit hunting with dogs on this WMA will likely become more popular in the future.

Clear Creek WMA offers other outdoor activities for non-consumptive users such as bird watching, scouting, sightseeing, hiking, photography and primitive camping. Since the area is rural, non-consumptive use is low. However, LDWF recognizes the growing need to provide the public with places to enjoy outdoor experiences, and Clear Creek WMA and other areas within the WMA system fill this niche. Neotropical birds, including indigo bunting, Henslow's sparrow, prothonotary warbler and rose-breasted grosbeak are some of the many avian visitors and/or residents on Clear Creek which avid birders seek out for viewing.

For more information concerning Clear Creek Wildlife Management Area call the Lake Charles Field Office at (337) 491-2575 or visit our website at www.wlf.la.gov.

RIGHT: McNeese University students assisting at deer check station.

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Kathleen Nichols

Kathleen Nichols has been volunteering with LDWF aquatic education programs for at least 10 years. Currently, she is involved with WETSHOP (a program to help teachers educate their students about wetlands), Becoming an Outdoors Woman, Native Fish in the Classroom, National Hunting and Fishing Day and the Fishing Day Camp. Kathleen has also volunteered for Louisiana Black Bear Teacher Workshops, Upland Wetlands Workshops and Aquatic Wild/Wonders of Wetlands Workshops.

When asked why she volunteers, Kathleen offered, "Aside from the fact that I enjoy outdoor activities, I think it is important for Louisianans to know about the state in which they live. The programs and workshops developed by the LDWF are exceptional in teaching about the flora and fauna, as well as environmental issues affecting Louisiana. I strongly believe that if people become involved through participating in these programs, then they take ownership and become passionate about protecting their state. I am fortunate to be able to be a part of these programs and I feel like I am making a difference. Even though I have been volunteering for many years, I am still having amazing experiences and gaining knowledge at each one of these programs or events."

Kathleen is an outstanding volunteer and a tremendous help to the LDWF Education Program. Fortunately, there are many other volunteers like Kathleen who give of their time to share their knowledge and passion for the outdoors with others. If you would like to become a volunteer in the LDWF Hunter Education or Aquatic Education Programs, please contact Fred Kimmel at 225-765-2355 or fkimmel@wlf.la.gov.

FEATURED BIOLOGISTS

Larry Reynolds

Waterfowl Program Manager

In 1981, after two years at American River Junior College in Sacramento, Calif., Larry directed his educational efforts toward becoming a waterfowl biologist with large-scale research, monitoring and management responsibilities focused on conserving that continental resource, especially for hunters. Teaching himself to hunt ducks in the northern Central Valley of California had ignited a passion for waterfowl and wetlands that he couldn't ignore. After two more years in junior college, Larry transferred to the University of California at Davis and earned a B.S. degree in Wildlife Biology. In 1986 Larry went to Texas A&M University to pursue a Master's Degree. In Texas, Larry worked to develop waterfowl habitat in coal-mine reclamation areas. Incorporating Larry's findings into reclamation planning and maintenance resulted in better habitat for waterfowl and other wetland birds, while lowering costs for mine operators.

In 1989, Larry moved to Baton Rouge, La., to start a Ph.D. program in Wildlife Ecology and pursue a Master's Degree in Applied Statistics at LSU. During his tenure at LSU, Larry was a valued statistical consultant on numerous research projects, studied population ecology of lesser scaup, and worked nearly three full years as a contract wildlife biologist for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on various waterfowl projects. After leaving LSU and conducting two years of diving-duck research, Larry went to work for Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) in 1999 to help design, implement and report on scientific studies to evaluate coastal restoration projects. Given his knowledge of waterfowl science and management, he was assigned to represent LDNR on the Management Board of the Gulf Coast Joint Venture of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) for over five years. That experience was invaluable when the NAWMP Coordinator position became available at the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), and he joined the LDWF Waterfowl Section in 2005. In 2008, Larry took over as the Waterfowl Program Manager.

Larry's primary duties include flying aerial waterfowl surveys to monitor waterfowl populations, integrating habitat development and management projects to meet conservation objectives of the NAWMP while providing waterfowl hunting opportunities, and representing Louisiana on the Mississippi Flyway Council Technical Committee, which works with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to set waterfowl hunting regulations. Larry has worked cooperatively with Texas and the USFWS to develop a range-wide breeding population survey for mottled ducks and has directed three formal hunter-opinion surveys in the last five years to generate hunter-preference data for use in hunting-regulation and policy decisions, such as the recent change from two to three waterfowl-hunting zones. Larry supervises two biologists with excellent field skills who handle duck banding, wetland project design and construction, shorebird and vegetation surveys, wetland habitat management, private land consultation, and research projects. Together, the Waterfowl Section attempts to provide the best wetland habitat and waterfowl management possible to benefit Mississippi Flyway waterfowl and Louisiana waterfowl hunters.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT CALENDAR OF EVENTS

	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY
GENERAL	Dormant season prescribe burn.** Invasive plant control. Take soil samples for food plot preparation.		Growing season prescribe burn, invasive plant control, soil tests, prune and fertilize fruit/mast trees.	Apply herbicide to longleaf stands if necessary, growing season prescribe burn, invasive plant control, fertilize native vegetation.	Plant warm-season food plots*, perform maintenance of fire breaks, growing season prescribe burn, invasive plant control.
DOVES					
DEER	Collect harvest data.	Post-season camera survey before antlers are cast.*** Turn in DMAP records to LDWF.		Browse survey. Work on summer food plots. Fertilize natural deer browse.	
DUCKS/ MOIST-SOIL UNITS		Install new wood duck boxes and clean out existing boxes. Early draw down for moist soil units.	Begin slowly drawing down moist soil units monitor wood duck nest boxes.	Moist-soil plant management/disturbance.	
HOGS	Trap hogs****		Trap hogs		
QUAIL	Prescribe burn/fallow disk.			As needed prescribe burn woody brush areas/avoid mowing-burning all potential nesting areas (2 yr. old native grass areas).	
RABBITS	As needed prescribe burn/disk/mow transition zones.			Escape cover can be created any time during the year as needed.	
SONGBIRDS		Install new bird houses and clean out existing boxes.	Regularly clean bird feeders to reduce disease transfer, prevent nonnative, invasive birds from utilizing bird houses.		
SQUIRRELS					
TURKEY	Prescribe burn/fallow disk/mow for poult habitat.		Listen to gobbling activity prior to hunting season fallow disk/mow for poult habitat growing season burning.	Plant chufa. Growing season burning as needed to improve thick woody brush areas - avoid mowing potential nesting areas.	
WOODCOCK	Future diurnal habitat can be created any time during the year as needed using clearcuts, shelterwood, group selection.				

*always remember that planting food plots is secondary to natural habitat management; food plots benefit several species including deer, turkeys, quail, and non-game species.
**prescribed burning is beneficial to several species including turkey and quail by providing more open habitat for easy movement through the landscape, grasses and forbs for nesting, food,
***pre-season camera survey more informative/important than post-season camera survey by visualizing buck:doe and doe:fawn ratios and aiding in harvest decisions.
****increase hog trapping effort prior to increases in food availability

Steven Pearson

Biologist Supervisor

Steven received his B.S. degree from the Richard Stockton College of NJ where he majored in Environmental Studies and minored in mathematics. Steven returned to school in 2007 at Drexel University where he received a Ph.D. in Environmental Science in 2013. The title of Steven's dissertation is "The Potential for Competition Between the Red-bellied Turtle (*Pseudemys rubriventris*) and the Red-eared Slider Turtle (*Trachemys scripta elegans*)." During the course of his dissertation, Steven studied wild populations of turtles and performed mesocosm experiments with juvenile turtles.

After completing his Bachelor's degree, Steven spent four years working with endangered and threatened species including harpy eagles (*Harpia harpyja*) in Panama, the Santa Cruz Island fox (*Urocyon littoralis*) on the Channel Islands in California, the Pierson milk vetch (*Astragalus magdalenae*) in California, and leatherback sea turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*) in Costa Rica. All of these positions provided him with new perspectives on wildlife protection and management.

Steven's current position as a biologist supervisor enables him to utilize the skills he has developed in previous positions as well as to develop new tools to analyze complex ecological issues. Steven works on varied projects that revolve around monitoring impacts to Louisiana wildlife by industrial activities. Steven works with state trustees to develop and implement field studies that can be used to determine short-term and long term-impacts from anthropogenic (human-caused) activities. Steven is currently working with the Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinators Office (LOSCO) to develop an assessment protocol which will be used to assess natural resource damages after an oil spill occurs. Steven's work has allowed him to travel across the state and has helped him gain an appreciation for the diverse environments found throughout Louisiana.

A focus of Steven's has been working with collaborators Will Selman at Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge and biologists from the department's Marine Fisheries Program to study the abundance and distribution of diamondback terrapins (*Malaclemys terrapin*) throughout Louisiana's coastal regions. This work is instrumental in determining the status of terrapin populations in Louisiana.

Steven says that living and working in Louisiana has been a great experience for him. Steven enjoys many cultural aspects of Louisiana life including the music, festivals and cuisine.

JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Growing season prescribe burn. Invasive plant control.		Invasive plant control. Bushog/mow roads, fields.	Mast survey. Plant cool-season food plots.* Invasive plant control.	Invasive plant control.		Dormant season prescribe burn.** Invasive plant control.
Plant brown-top millet for first season dove fields.		Manipulate dove fields for hunting plant brown-top millet for second season dove fields.				
Provide mineral supplements.		Apply for DMAP.	Pre-season camera survey.*** Begin deer stand repairs and prep for hunting season	Pre-season camera survey.***	Collect harvest data.	
Moist-soil plant management/disturbance.		Begin partial flooding for teal, begin duck blind repairs and prep for hunting season.	Manipulate moist soil if needed; mow, disc, burn, plow, herbicide.	Start main flooding of moist soil units.		
	Trap hogs****			Trap hogs		
				Fallow disk borders 50 - 100' wide around fall deer plots to improve summer quail nesting-feeding habitat.		
Escape cover can be created any time during the year as needed.				Disk near cover to improve feeding habitat.		
Regularly clean bird feeders to reduce disease transfer, prevent nonnative, invasive birds from utilizing bird houses.					Install new bird houses and clean out existing boxes.	
			Take a youth hunting during special WMA youth squirrel hunts.	Install squirrel nest boxes.		
Plant chufa.				Plant clover for spring plots.		
Future diurnal habitat can be created any time durin the year as needed using clearcuts, shelterwood, group selection.				Bushhog to a height of 12-18 inches and/or burn openings managed for nocturnal habitat.		

and summer bedding cover for deer, etc.

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HABITAT IS THE POINT

BY CODY CEDOTAL, Farm Bill Grants Coordinator

Photos A and B illustrate distinct differences in habitat quality for wild turkey broods. Soon after hatching, poults require a significant amount of protein in their diet for growth and development. The poults survivability chances increase the sooner they are able to take flight, as the ability to fly provides them increased safety from predators. Thus, poults feeding in areas where they have ready access to high protein levels grow faster, are able to fly sooner, and are therefore less susceptible to predators than poults feeding in areas with less protein. The primary source of protein for poults is insects. Many areas that appear to be overgrown or unsightly to humans provide excellent foraging habitat for both poults and adult turkeys. Native plant diversity is high and vertical structure is improved in overgrown areas, attracting numerous insects and providing greater seed production. Roadsides, rights-of-way, small fields, thinned timber stands, and other openings often provide this type of habitat because of the increased amount of sunlight reaching the ground, if the vegetation is properly managed. Hens routinely nest nearby and bring their broods to these areas to feed. This type of habitat also provides escape cover from the many predators out for a quick and easy meal.

So, which photo illustrates better quality brood habitat for turkeys? If you selected B, you are correct. Landowners and managers can employ a few simple modifications to normal activities to improve habitat for turkeys and reduce maintenance costs at the same time. In areas dominated by bahia and other sod-forming grasses, fallow discing and possibly herbicide treatment will be necessary to disrupt the dense grass layer and stimulate growth of native grasses and wildflowers. One of the most important and easiest modifications that can be made is to delay mowing in these areas as long as possible. Many of us already implement this practice during spring to minimize nest destruction. However, we need to also consider the quality of habitat that poults will find once they hatch. On most sites, cutting only one time in the fall is all that is required to maintain these areas in an open condition and provide quality habitat. Keep in mind, when it comes to turkeys and many other species, overgrown and unsightly to us is quality habitat for them.

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Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
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Permit No.

EXTEND YOUR HUNTING PASSION...

This public document was published at an average cost of $. Approximately 4,000 copies of this document were published at an average printing cost of $. The total cost of all printing of this document averages $. This document was published for Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 70808, by State Printing, to provide information on the Office of Wildlife. This material was printed in accordance with the standards for printing by state agencies established pursuant to R.S. 43:31. Printing of this material was purchased in accordance with the provisions of Title 43 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes.