

**“Fire,” continued**

feet of any woodland or brush land between the hours of 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. There are two windows during the year that this applies: Spring Forest Fire Hazard Season: Feb. 15 - April 30; Fall Forest Fire Hazard Season: Oct. 1 - Dec. 15. The objective of this law is to protect citizens and property from out of control wildfire. However, these are also the times of the year that the use of fire is most effective. Additionally, burning during the evening hours can potentially create unnecessary additional risk to practitioners and exacerbate smoke impacts that could otherwise be mitigated during the day.

One of the high priority goals of the Council is to work to enact a Legislative Resolution recognizing the importance of prescribed fire as a management tool and, with the proper training, allow both landowners and professionals to conduct controlled burns during fire season. This would include the development and implementation of two tracks of state training standards, one for private landowners and one for agency, organization, and private industry professionals (Kentucky Certified Burn Boss).

Private landowners who wish to burn on their own land would be required to take an 8 hour training course, administered by the Council. This

would not only provide the landowner with practical knowledge of how to safely conduct a controlled burn on their property, but they would also be afforded a liability protection for negligence.

The Kentucky Certified Burn Boss track would require a higher level of training and experience, and would grant liability protection up to willful and malicious intent. A controlled burn plan meeting state standards would be required for all burns, both private and professional.

The development of this legislation could have a dramatic positive effect for grassland and woodland habitats across Kentucky. In addition, this would pave the way for increased capacity to conduct burns and create a safer environment in which they are conducted.

The Kentucky Prescribed Fire Council welcomes private landowners! If you are interested in learning more about fire management options on your land, please visit our website [www.kyfire.org](http://www.kyfire.org).



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Wild Know-How  
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# Wild Know-How

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Spring 2015

A Private Lands Newsletter from the Division of Wildlife



Controlled fire is a beneficial management tool. Ben Robinson photo



KENTUCKY  
QUAIL  
PROJECT



**SPRING CHECKLIST**

**March - Mid April**

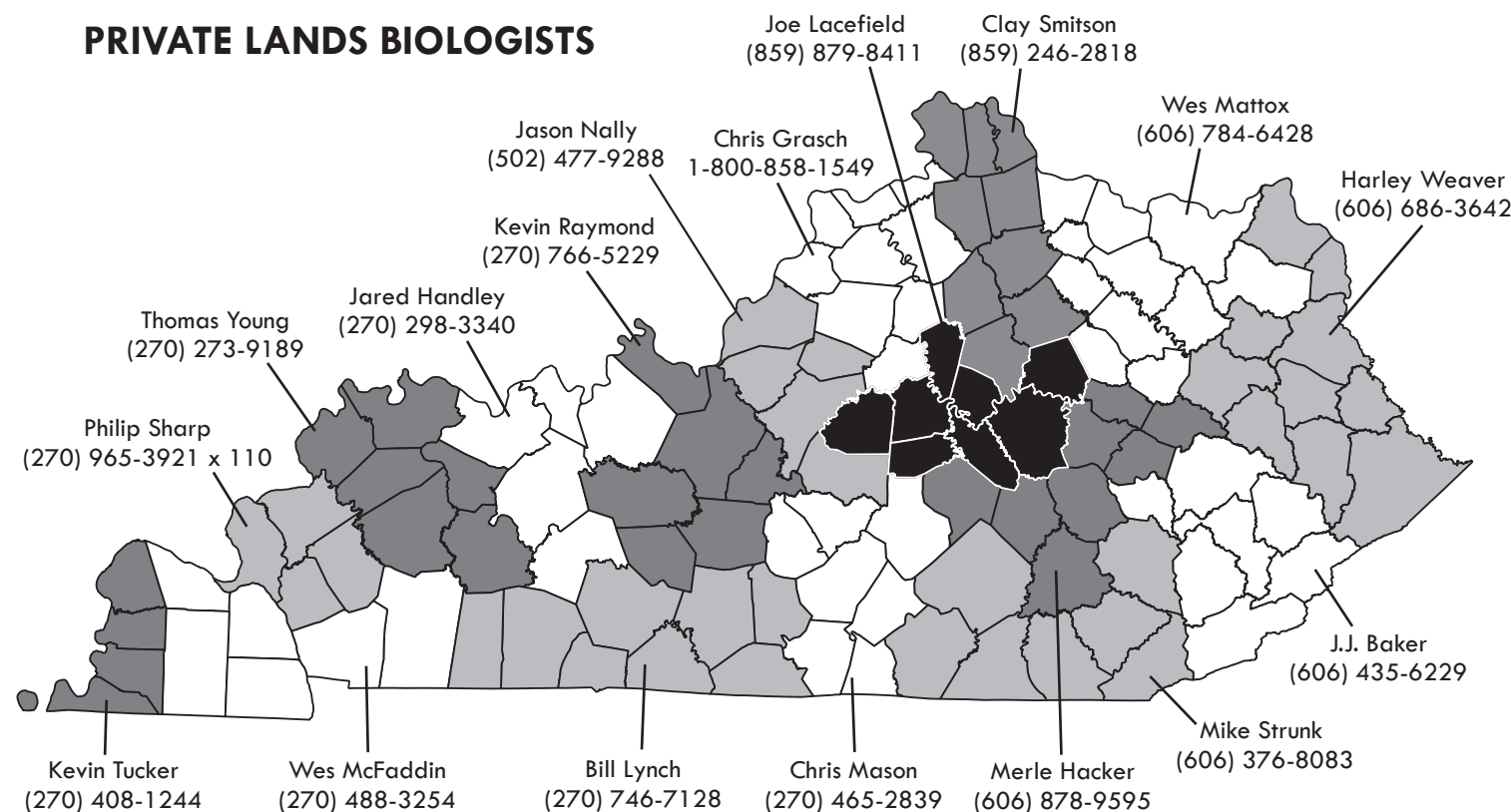
- Prescribe burn in preparation to eradicate fescue.
- Strip disk to promote bare ground and new forb growth.
- Sow clover or lespedeza.
- Sow cool season grasses.
- Apply lime and fertilizer per soil test to wildlife food plots.



*“Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land.”*

— Aldo Leopold

**PRIVATE LANDS BIOLOGISTS**



Partially funded with federal aid through Pittman-Robertson funds.

## Promoting Prescribed Fire in Kentucky

By Shelly Morris, Chairman of the Kentucky Prescribed Fire Council

Thousands of acres of grassland and woodland habitat in Kentucky have been negatively impacted by decades of fire exclusion. The Kentucky Prescribed Fire Council is a collective of researchers, land managers, educators, and others who acknowledge the beneficial use of prescribed fire as a land management tool and use fire to meet resource management objectives. The mission

of the Council is to promote the understanding and enhance collaboration for the use of ecologically-based prescribed fire in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Although a good deal of fire management does occur in Kentucky, it is far from reaching full potential. Per the Kentucky Revised Statute KRS 149.400, during fire hazard season, it is illegal to burn anything within 150

**Continued on page 5**

Help fund bobwhite restoration by purchasing the quail license plate. You can follow our progress at [facebook.com/KentuckyQuail](https://facebook.com/KentuckyQuail)

Kentucky UNBRIDLED SPIRIT  
4BOB  
Promoting Wildlife  
KY

## Dealing with Sick or Injured Wildlife

By Iga Stasiak, Wildlife Veterinarian

From veggie loving rabbits to porch dwelling racoons and skunks, wildlife encounters are common in areas of Kentucky. Attracted to opportunities for food, water, and shelter, these animals often make their home in our gardens or attics, sometimes undeterred. While many people appreciate seeing free-ranging wildlife, wild animals can carry disease and in some cases may transmit disease to humans.

Disease can be contracted through the bite of an infected animal, contact with animal excrements, or through the bite of infected insects such as mosquitos or ticks. Hunters may be exposed through the handling and skinning of infected animal carcasses.

Many species are capable of transmitting rabies including foxes, skunks, racoons, and bats. Infection can occur through the bite of an infected animal, and in some cases through cuts in the skin or exposure to saliva.

Deer and other warm-blooded animals can carry ticks which can transmit disease, causing mild flu-like illness to more severe symptoms. Raccoons and skunks can transmit gastrointestinal parasites and rodents can carry harmful bacteria that can be spread through contaminated urine or droppings, causing vomiting, diarrhea, or chills.

While these risks are real, you don't have to fear the wildlife in your backyard and there are some simple measures you can take to prevent disease transmission.

- Avoid handling wildlife, particularly any animals that appear sick. If you encounter a sick animal, contact the KDFWR or your local wildlife rehabilitator.
- Wear gloves when handling or skinning wild animals, wash all knives and work areas thoroughly with soap and water, and safely dispose of animal carcasses.
- Avoid contact with wild animals that are behaving abnormally, have lost their fear of humans, are approachable or otherwise acting sick.
- Rabies should be suspected when an animal is found to be exhibiting unusual behavior. Symptoms could include friendliness or loss of fear of humans, aimless wandering, or appearance in the daytime for species that are normally active at night such as skunks or bats. Use caution when approaching a suspected rabid animal as they can be aggressive.
- Whenever handling any dead animal,

wear gloves and handle the animal with a plastic bag that can be turned inside out and avoid skin contact.

- When hiking in wooded or especially brushy areas, use insect repellents, wear long-sleeve shirts or tuck your pant legs into your socks, and check yourself frequently for ticks.
- Avoid feeding wildlife as it can lead to animals losing their fear of humans, and allows animals to congregate, which encourages disease transmission. Keep your garbage secured in a container that cannot be opened to avoid attracting foraging bears and other animals looking for an easy meal.
- Ensure your pets are vaccinated for rabies.

While the disease risks posed by wildlife should be taken seriously, they should not prevent you from enjoying the outdoors. With proper hygiene and a little caution, we can live to reap the benefits of living with the wildlife that share our space.



Contact KDFWR with questions about sick wildlife. Adrienne Yancy photo



Boy Scouts help build a brush pile at Peabody WMA. Ben Robinson photo

## Creating Better Woody Cover for Wildlife

By Eric Williams, Wildlife Biologist

Escape cover can oftentimes be a limiting factor for bobwhite quail populations in many landscapes. The ability of quail to avoid predators is greatly enhanced with the availability of woody cover.

As part of the ongoing bobwhite habitat management efforts at Peabody Wildlife Management Area (WMA), employees of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources targeted a 200-acre tract on the Sinclair Unit in Muhlenberg County for brush pile construction.

This area provided little escape cover for grassland animals. Bobwhite used the area in summer for breeding, but the department's radio telemetry project showed it received little use during winter. The winter months are often a time of movement for bobwhite as they search for ever-decreasing food

sources, and good escape cover is a must for proper habitat management.

To remedy this situation, employees decided to construct strategically located brush piles. With the help of some enthusiastic Boy Scouts, nearly 100 brush piles were built over the summer.

This area is frequently exposed to controlled fires. To increase the likelihood of bobwhite use, brush piles were located adjacent to fire breaks running in a grid pattern through the area. Bobwhites often use these breaks as travel corridors and feeding areas.

So that brush piles did not need to be completely rebuilt after every burn, employees came up with a design with a permanent base.

Brush piles were constructed with a base of concrete blocks and cattle panels or metal tubular farm gates. Each pile consisted of three 52-inch

x 16-foot panels with 16 blocks for support.

Once the blocks and panels were in place, large limbs and brush were placed in the center of the panels. Next, limbs were set cut-end down into the open squares of the panel and stood erect. Cut limbs were used to fill in the open areas without making the pile too dense.

The idea for these brush piles is to mimic a standing shrub plot with thick cover at the base. This gives quail open areas to run into the pile as well as gaps in the upper story that will allow them to fly into cover. Each pile stands 5-10 feet tall. Piles were spaced approximately 50 yards apart to maximize

the escape cover.

Brush piles can use a considerable amount of woody material to construct. You can acquire this material from limb trimmings, timber stand improvement projects, edge feathering activities and by gathering discarded Christmas trees. Burning for habitat improvement will consume the woody stems of this brush pile unless great care is taken, but the permanent base should survive and provide a great start for refurbishing when needed.

If you find that your grasslands are in need of some woody escape cover, consider building a few of these brush piles to enhance your habitat. Both hunters and department employees have observed bobwhites and rabbits using this cover on Peabody WMA. So if you want more wildlife, try adding some piles to your grassland habitat as well.

## A New Technique for Managing Grasslands

By Ben Robinson  
Small Game Biologist

Getting rid of cool season grasses like fescue and planting native warm season grasses (NWSG) has become a common habitat management recommendation from department wildlife biologists for more than a decade. Many landowners heeded that advice and established lush fields of big bluestem, indian, and switchgrass.

Fast forward 5 or 10 years and pay a visit to these same fields and the results may surprise you. When left alone with no management, these

NWSG fields can quickly become too thick, providing little benefit to ground dwelling wildlife like bobwhite quail and grassland songbirds.

An ideal management technique for thick NWSG grass fields would include the frequent use of controlled fire followed by the use of a disk to break up the ground and inhibit root growth. However, many landowners are not interested in attempting a controlled burn while others don't own the equipment required to disk.

Recognizing this management problem, department biologists sought out a new solution that landowners could easily and affordably implement – the use of herbicide to thin NWSG. Herbicides have dramatically improved over the past decades, proving to be less toxic and more targeted toward specific plant groups like grasses or broadleaf plants. Applying these chemicals on thick grasses can dramatically improve the wildlife value. Once herbicide is applied, some of the grasses will die, creating a much thinner stand which is beneficial to ground dwelling wildlife.

Three different herbicides were tested at several different test sites across the state; round-up, arsenal, and sahara. Both round-up and arsenal proved to be the best at thinning grass, leaving



Spraying herbicide can make open areas more valuable to wildlife. Ben Robinson photo

## SPRING & SUMMER CHECKLIST

### April - May

- Begin preparation of dove fields.
- Plant tree and shrub seedlings.
- Spray herbicide to eradicate fescue.
- Conduct timber stand improvements and create brush piles.
- Establish wildlife mineral licks.

### May - June

- Plant annual grain food plots/dove fields (do not plant in same location as last year).
- Sow warm season grasses and wildflowers.
- Hinge-cut cedar trees for living brush piles.

### July - August

- Create wildlife waterholes when the soil is dry enough.
- Perform exotic/invasive species removal.
- Mark trees for Timber Stand Improvement.
- Manipulate dove fields for season opener.
- Plant winter wheat in late August.

behind ample bare ground with a mix of overhead cover needed for critters like bobwhite to thrive.

For more information on applying herbicide to your thick native grass fields, contact your local private lands biologist by calling 1-800-858-1549. They will be happy to discuss different herbicide options, application rates, and other management strategies to make your property a wildlife Mecca.