



Wild Know-How

Fall 2020

A Private Lands Newsletter from the Division of Wildlife

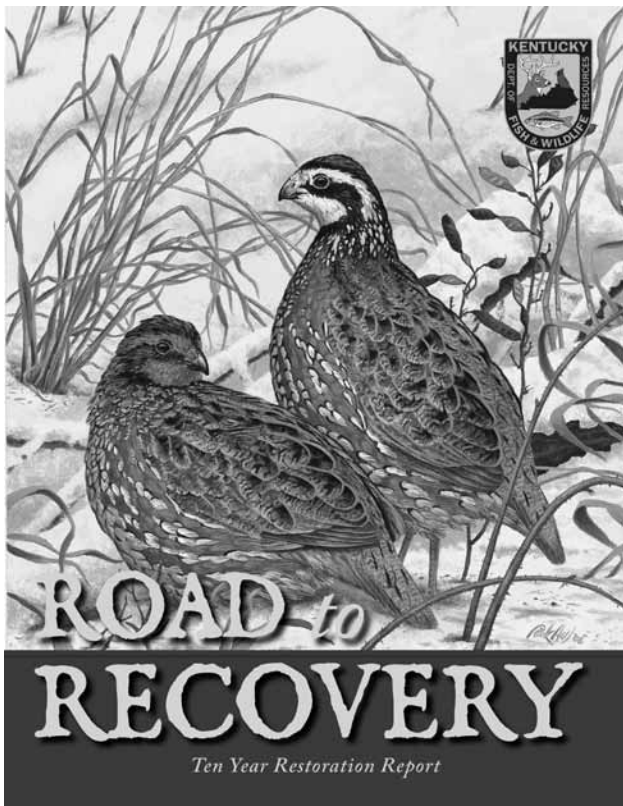
Final Quail Plan Released

Cody M. Rhoden
Small Game Biologist, KDFWR

The statewide comprehensive plan to recover the northern bobwhite in Kentucky has ended. In 2008, Small Game Program Coordinator John Morgan and Small Game Program Biologist Ben Robinson created a first-of-its-kind document in the *Road to Recovery* to address the precipitously declining quail popula-

tion in the state. The initial document laid out, in great detail, the steps required to restore Kentucky's cherished gamebird. Over the following 5 years, great strides were made in the effort to restore quail in the state. *The Road to Recovery Benchmark Report* detailed the accomplishments of the first 5 years of the original plan. The next and last 5 years of the plan have also seen its fair share of successes along with some failures as well.

The final plan, titled *Road to Recovery Ten Year Restoration Report* was completed in the summer of 2020. This document seeks to capstone the plan and attempts to report on all of the successes and failures of the entire 10-year restoration plan. The final plan installment reports on every goal and strategy sought in the original *Road to Recovery*. This attempt at full accountability of all the goals outlined 10 years ago is unique to many state plans for



KENTUCKY
QUAIL
PROJECT



FALL CHECKLIST

September

- Order tree and shrub seedlings.
- Spray herbicide to kill fescue.
- Sow clover and cool season grasses.
- Prepare firebreaks and seed to winter wheat.

October - November

- Leave a portion of crops standing all winter for wildlife.
- Leave food plots fallow for two years (minimum).
- Plan for next year's projects.
- Do not fall-plow crop fields.
- Order catalogs for seedlings, shrubs, or seed for spring.
- Flood moist soil management units.

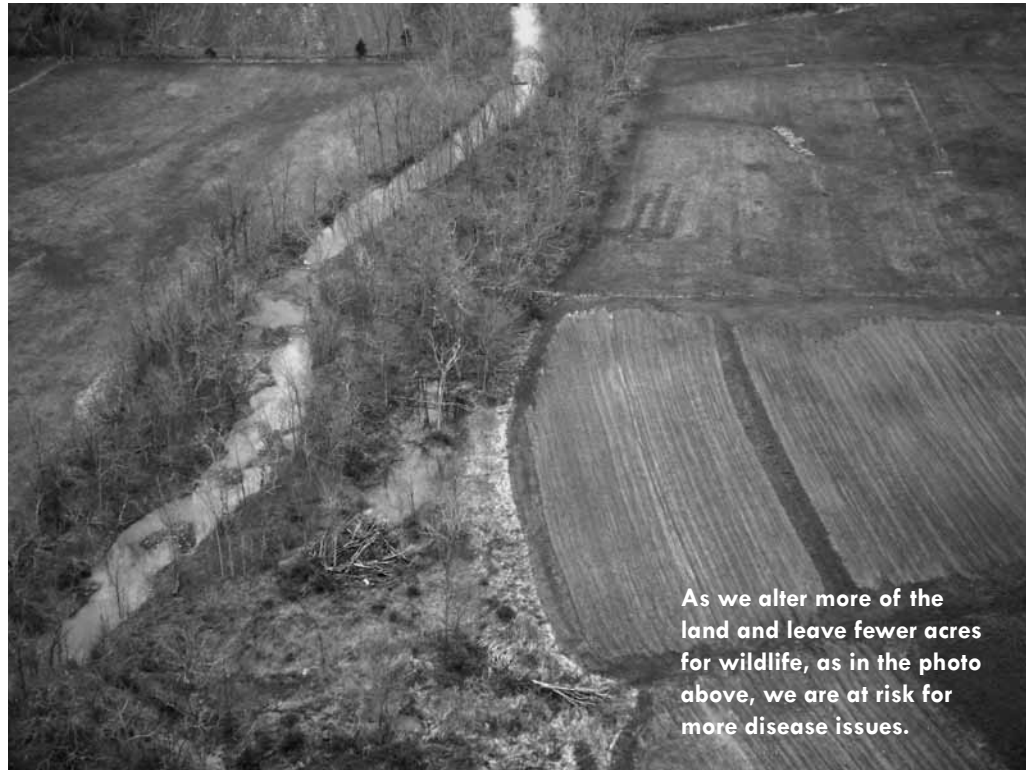
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Wildlife and Disease

Dr. Christine Casey
Wildlife Veterinarian, KDFWR

Wildlife diseases were once viewed by wildlife managers as a normal process and limited interventions were implemented to manage diseases among wild animals. However, in the past several decades noticeable shifts in the dynamics of common diseases and the discovery of newly emerging diseases have caused managers to rethink this approach. These changes in the epidemiology of wildlife diseases are the result of multiple factors and complex interactions between the host, pathogen, and environment. However, one of the most significant changes and contributing factors are human activities that alter the landscape.

Human activities lead to increased interactions between humans, domestic animals, and wildlife which have dramatically altered natural disease dynamics. For example, there is an extensive list of diseases that have been introduced to new places around the world due to the movement of humans, animals, and goods. One example is the introduction of White Nose Syndrome in the United States which had devastating impacts on native bat populations. On the other side of the spectrum, the United States has served as a source for the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease, a fatal neurologic disease of deer, to foreign countries. The list goes on and on, with Covid-19 being the most recent addition as a likely spillover event from Asian wildlife to humans. The lesson being, extreme caution should be used when moving people and animals around to mini-



As we alter more of the land and leave fewer acres for wildlife, as in the photo above, we are at risk for more disease issues.

mize the risk of unintentionally introducing any pathogens they may be harboring. For this very reason the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources has restricted the movement of various species (both carcasses and live animals) to limit the spread of rabies, chronic wasting disease, and rabbit hemorrhagic disease to name a few.

Minimizing disease risk on the landscape starts at the local level where an individual can have the most impact. A few activities landowners in Kentucky may practice to minimize this disease risk are:

- 1.Reduce activities that artificially increase animal densities
- 2.Limit access of wildlife to food sources, such as pet food or seed
- 3.Limit interactions between domestic animals and wildlife
- 4.Protect yourself and pets from in-

sects such as ticks and mosquitoes

- 5.Reduce insect habitat immediately around your home by maintaining yards and removing leaf litter and debris

If you observe sick or dead wildlife contact your local biologist and have a conversation about whether further investigation is warranted. Naturally, some level of disease is to be expected, however, being vigilant and notifying authorities regarding abnormal behavior or die-offs in wildlife is important and contributes greatly to disease surveillance efforts. Active public participation and support is vital for protecting this valuable public resource. Any steps you, as a private landowner, are willing to take to help us work toward this goal is greatly appreciated. For more information on wildlife diseases please visit our website at fw.ky.gov/disease.

Funding Conservation

Ben Robinson
Assistant Director, KDFWR

Imagine a world void of wild game: lands once plentiful with deer, elk, turkey, quail, and waterfowl now barren. Passionate outdoor enthusiasts like you and me would consider this to be our worst nightmare. Thankfully, efforts by similar groups have ensured that this nightmare will never become a reality.

Step back just nine decades into the 1930's when the nation found itself in the midst of the Great Depression. The economy was severely struggling, and for most American households, money was tight. In addition, wildlife populations were experiencing severe declines. A lack of attention to wildlife resources, coupled with unregulated hunting and a lack of funding to address these issues created the perfect storm for the virtual elimination of our cherished wildlife.

During the midst of these uncertain times, a group of visionaries saw an opportunity to generate a secure funding source that would ultimately be considered one of the most successful pieces of conservation legislation ever to be enacted. The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, also known as the Pittman-Robertson Act, created a mechanism for hunters to fund conservation efforts. The Pittman-Robertson Act imposes an 11 percent excise tax on the sale of firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment. Manufacturers, producers, and importers of these items pay the excise tax with the understanding that these funds

are earmarked specifically to help fund state wildlife agency conservation efforts. Today, every time someone purchases a firearm, ammunition, or archery equipment, they can take pride in knowing that they've played a role in supporting conservation across this great nation.

In order for legislation like the Pittman-Robertson Act to be the most beneficial, hunters and state agency supporters play a pivotal role through the sale of state hunting licenses. The benefits of purchasing your hunting license may seem obvious, but did you know that every Kentucky hunting license sold acts as a lever to increase our state's share of the Pittman-Robertson Act fund? Historically, Kentucky's share of the Pittman-Robertson revenue is approximately \$10,000,000.00 annually, all of which is used to benefit wildlife and their habitats, hunter education and recreational shooting sports. Our state receives this

federal funding based on its hunting license sales and total land area. Since Kentucky's land area probably won't be changing anytime soon, increasing the number of hunting licenses sold is an important factor in the calculation. For every federal dollar received, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) must match with \$0.25 in non-federal funding. This match comes from the sale of



hunting and fishing licenses.

It is important to note that a similar funding model is in place for fisheries management; the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act, also known as the Dingell-Johnson Act.

Kentucky has reaped the benefits of the user pay/user benefit model for many decades. If you've ever enjoyed watching wildlife, stepped foot on one of our many public Wildlife Management Areas, sighted in a rifle at one of our public shooting ranges, pursued bobwhite quail, white-tailed deer, elk, eastern wild turkey, or waterfowl, thank those who have supported the Pittman-Robertson Act over the years.

It is important that we find ways to engage those who may not be passionate about hunting, but care deeply about other parts of the great outdoors: bird watching, hiking, paddling, and camping to name a few. We must unite to protect our great traditions and generate new funding sources so that future generations can find the joy that we have experienced being close to nature.

Take pride in knowing that each time you purchase a hunting or fishing license, buy ammunition or archery equipment, or a new firearm for the grandchild, you are ensuring a bright future for wildlife conservation.



Keeping Kentucky's Hunting Heritage Alive

Becky Wallen
Conservation Educator, KDFWR

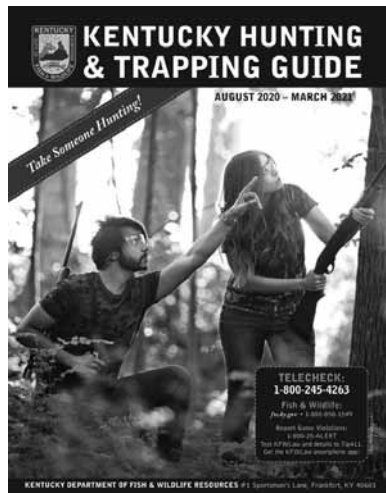
Take a moment to reflect on your first hunt. What species were you targeting? Was it the spring or the fall? Did you hold the grip on a bow or adjust the sling on a firearm? How old were you? And probably the most memorable, who were you with?

For some of us, the answer to the last question includes a dedicated family relative or close friend. Unfortunately, fewer and fewer people have grown up with someone close to them who hunts. Without mentors, less and less Kentuckians are participating in hunting. Since the 1980s, Kentucky has seen a steady decline in the number of hunters. Lower participation means less support for Kentucky's natural resources. Today's sportsmen and women must come together to ensure that Kentucky's world-class fish and wildlife populations endure for future generations. Being an active participant in this initiative involves current hunters mentoring new hunters and passing on the hunting heritage.

Answer The Call

There are many ways that a current hunter can get involved in mentoring. Check-in with the people you are around the most. People that you know from work, school, church, or the gym probably have an interest in hunting

but do not have anyone to mentor them. Become a volunteer hunter education instructor for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. Hunter education is often the first step for those interested in hunting, and it is required to be a legal hunter in Kentucky. These courses wouldn't be possible without knowledgeable and driven volunteer instructors. You can find out how to become a volunteer instructor at fw.ky.gov/education.



Don't know a youth to mentor? Mentoring is not just for youth. With approximately three generations that have grown up without knowing someone who hunts, there are plenty of adults looking for mentors. Through surveys, it has been identified that one of the top barriers for an adult new hunter is that they don't have anyone to go with. Don't worry that you will have to give up the buck you have had your eye on all spring. The most common motivation for a new hunter in Kentucky is to become self-sufficient and to be able to harvest wild game meat on their own. They would likely be more than happy to help lower the doe population on your farm.

This fall season, we encourage you to pass on your knowledge about hunting and your passion for conservation. Mentoring can and should involve providing tips and information digitally,



WINTER CHECKLIST

December

- ___ Check for wildlife use of your habitat improvement projects.
- ___ Check fences to keep livestock out of woodlands.
- ___ Hinge-cut cedars and/or create brush piles.
- ___ Plant tree and shrub seedlings.
- ___ Conduct timber stand improvements.

January

- ___ Contact a wildlife biologist to discuss upcoming planting season.
- ___ Take soil samples to determine soil nutrient needs.
- ___ Prepare firebreaks for upcoming prescribed burns.
- ___ Order seeds for spring planting.

February

- ___ Mow Korean lespedeza or clover fields to encourage new growth.
- ___ Burn or mow fescue sod in preparation for converting to other cover types.
- ___ Disk fields in preparation for renovation to clover and grass.
- ___ Erect, clean, or repair nest boxes; check predator guards.
- ___ Install nesting platforms for geese.

as well as in the field. If today's hunters answer the call and become a mentor, they ensure a future for tomorrow's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats. To learn more about becoming a mentor contact your local Hunter Training Officer or call the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources at 1-800-858-1549.

“Plan,” continued

species restoration, and one the Small Game Program deemed of the highest importance.

So how did we do over the last decade? The short answer is: We learned A LOT! The statewide quail population continues to decline overall; however, we observed stabilized to increasing populations of bobwhite on our Quail

Focus Areas in which we implemented high quality open-lands management. Many of the strategies we implemented over the years worked well in our site-specific goals. Some of our most informative shortfalls came from a decrease in funding and a waning of support for the initiative. In hindsight, our funding estimate for the plan was about ½ as much as we would have needed and about 3 times as much as we actually

raised. Another enlightening experience was the fact that we did little to nothing to change the statewide trend of bobwhite over the years of the plan. How could this be?

Although we observed positive results on areas in which we implemented targeted management, we did not touch enough acres to result in a larger statewide response. With this in mind moving forward, private landowners in the Commonwealth are poised to serve a more important role than ever! There are roughly 5 million acres of privately owned pasture and hayland in the state. These acres are in the best position for small changes, resulting in more marginal habitat across the entire state. These small changes could simply take the form of mowing less on idle areas, allowing fence rows to grow up and get bushy, or more comprehensive changes such as planting natives for cattle forage or in buffers around rowcrop operations. If we have learned one lesson from our attempt to reverse the declining trend of bobwhite in the state, it is that we need a lot more marginal habitat (old fields, weeds, and briars) across the land for bobwhite and many other declining grassland birds to attempt a statewide recovery.

The Small Game Program has already started to take what we have learned from the plan and apply it to private property in Kentucky. Working with cattle and hay producers, we have planted over 200 acres of native warm-season grass in Madison and Green counties. These grasses are better for quail and cattle than the non-native fescue currently occupying most of the cattle and hay land in the state.

For more information on what you can do to continue the efforts to restore quail and grassland songbirds in Kentucky, please contact the Small Game Program at (502) 892-4521, cody.rhoden@ky.gov, or visit fw.ky.gov and search quail.

KENTUCKY
4BOB
Promoting Wildlife

KENTUCKY QUAIL PROJECT

THE
Kentucky
QUAIL
PLATE

Visit your County Clerk and pick up a Kentucky quail plate.
Drive home your support for habitat restoration!



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PRIVATE LANDS BIOLOGISTS

