# FARMERS & WILDLIFE

**ENHANCING WILDLIFE ON PRIVATE LANDS**

January 1998 Volume 4, Issue 1


## THINGS TO DO:

**January**

- ✓ Recycle a used Christmas tree into a fish habitat
- ✓ Recycle a used Christmas tree into an upland brush pile
- ✓ Properly place a used Christmas tree to slow gully erosion
- ✓ Chip your Christmas tree into yard mulch

February

- ✓ Write thank you notes to landowners
- ✓ Get involved in legislative issues
- ✓ Watch for winter turkey flocks to split up
- ✓ Get your boat ready for spring fishing

March

- ✓ Buy tick repellent
- ✓ Plan a spring trip to Bass Pro Shop
- ✓ Burn CRP early if you want more forbs
- ✓ Clean out your freezer in anticipation of crappie spawning

April

- ✓ Clean out purple martin houses
- ✓ Morels! Morels! Morels!
- ✓ Plant sunflowers for early dove hunting
- ✓ Try using a "puppy in distress" call for coyotes

# Improving Your CRP for Wildlife

Lands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) as a result of the 1985 Farm Bill have certainly added to the habitat available to Kansas wildlife. But looking back over the last 10 years, biologists realize that the CRP didn't turn out to be near as much of a boost for wildlife as was once hoped. What went wrong and how can re-enrolled CRP lands be improved for wildlife?

Almost all of the Conservation Reserve lands in Kansas were originally seeded to a mixture of several native, warm-season grasses such as big and little bluestem, sideoats grama, but a critical link was left out of the original seedings. Broadleaved plants, because of their excellent seed production and a growth form that's ideal for young birds, are very important components of our most productive CRP's. Wildlife benefits have fallen short of what they could have been due to the absence of broadleaved plants.

Another factor that played into the less-than-ideal performance of the original CRP plantings was a lack of adequate management. The native grasses that composed our CRP plantings have a tendency to build up excessive ground litter over time in an ungrazed situation. When too much litter is present on the ground, the cover provided by these grasses becomes almost unusable for all but our largest species of wildlife. Young wildlife, such as pheasant chicks, find these dense mats of grass litter to be virtually impassible barriers to movement. The recommended solution to this problem is fire. An occasional controlled burn can open up the grass stand, creating abundant pathways that wildlife can use while, at the same time, improving the vigor of the grasses. But many western Kansas landowners were unfamiliar with controlled burning or just afraid of using fire. As a result, many CRP stands became much too thick for most wildlife to use.

Fortunately, management options available for Conservation Reserve, including strip discing, controlled burning and interseeding of forbs and legumes, make it easy to improve CRP for wildlife.

**Strip Discing:** Up to 15 percent of a CRP field can be strip disced under CRP guidelines. A light discing on a few strips in your CRP temporarily sets back the warm-season grasses and will create disturbed areas that foster increased growth of beneficial broadleaved plants like annual sunflower and pigweed. These strips will provide ideal brood

continued on page 2

habitat where young birds can forage for insects without the dense obstructions that litter build-up often creates in grass areas. For best results, strip discing should be done in February or early March before significant greenup occurs. It need not be done every year as the effect of the discing will last for two to three years before the warm-season grasses take over again.

**Burning:** To be most productive, the warm-season grasses used in CRP should be burned every three to five years. The strip discing option can be used to create fireguards such that burning an existing CRP field becomes easy and safe. By first mowing and then strip discing around the periphery of the field in February or March, an excellent fire break is created. When weather conditions permit, preferably in mid- to late March, this area can be burned using standard controlled burning techniques. Generally, winds should be light and steady from one direction such that smoke and the headfire will be directed safely. Be sure and notify your rural fire department on the day you plan to burn. A few Kansas counties require more advanced notice and a burning permit.

By setting a backfire inside the disced firebreak on the downwind side of the field, a wide, blackened area is created. Once that is done, additional fire can be set inside the firebreak around the periphery of the field, eventually reaching the upwind side where a headfire can be set to complete the burn. The headfire, driven by the wind, quickly burns the remainder of the CRP patch and burns out once it meets the backfire that is slowly advancing upwind. To create greater diversity, a fireguard can be disced around half the field, that half burned, and other half left unburned. One to three years later the second half can be burned. In this way some unburned and some recently-burned habitat is always present providing both nesting and brood-rearing needs in the same field.

**Interseeding:** Interseeding of forbs and legumes in your CRP grass stand is a one-time practice that can also help diversify the planting to make it more valuable for wildlife. In order to accomplish this, burn off the CRP field, preferable in mid- to late March. This removes the heavy litter that would otherwise hinder the interseeding process. As soon as possible (before April 10), a grass drill can be used to seed a mixture of forbs and legumes into the burned area and disced strips. Interseeding need not cover the entire CRP field. Interseeding in alternating strips should be adequate to diversify the cover in the CRP. Preferred species for interseeding in Kansas CRP would include grazer alfalfa, white or yellow sweetclover, and a light component of native plants, preferably including maximilian sunflower, purple prairieclover, and bundleflower or partridge pea.

If you're interested in strip discing or interseeding in your CRP, you will need to contact your local office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service to set up a Wildlife Management Plan. For further advise or information, contact the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

Randy Rodgers,
Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

> "Management options available for Conservation Reserve, include strip discing, controlled burning and interseeding of forbs and legumes."

# Extra Payment Available for Habitat Development of Walk-In Hunting Areas

The Department of Wildlife & Parks' Walk-In Hunting Access Program (WIHA) is in its second successful year with total acres in the program increasing from 180,000 to 330,000 and birds being more plentiful. However, plans to further improve the program include additional incentives for habitat improvements on WIHA land.

WIHA cooperators can gain additional payment for adding strip discing on CRP or food plots on any enrolled land. Payment rates are tentatively set at $12.50 per acre for strip discing and $25 for food plots. Also, a $1 / acre premium for tall standing wheat stubble is available.

Strip discing involves lightly discing (3 inches or less in depth) with the intent to disturb the soil and allow the growth of broadleaved plants without permanently eliminating the grass. Effects of the discing may be visible for two to three years before the grass takes over. Discing needs to be completed in February after harvest.

For more information about these practices, contact your nearest Wildlife & Parks Office.


- For many wildlife species, unfrozen water sources are necessary. Do not forget to consider water as a necessary part of habitat requirements even in winter.
- Properly functioning riparian systems utilize vegetation, landform or large woody debris to dissipate stream energy thereby reducing erosion and improving water quality. That is difficult to accomplish when streambanks are overgrazed or fields are cropped to the stream edge.

# EPA and Registrant Reach Agreement to Phase Out Use of Rid-a-Bird Pesticide Used to Control Certain Birds

The registrant of Rid-A-Bird Perch 1100 Solution pesticide, Rid-A-Bird Inc., has reached an agreement with EPA to voluntarily cancel all use of this product by March 1, 1999, and to recall any leftover stocks from distributors and users by December 1, 1999. Rid-A-Bird (active ingredient, fenthion) is registered as a restricted use pesticide to control starlings, English sparrows and pigeons which land or roost in and around buildings and on structures. Without control, such nuisance birds which congregate in large numbers can threaten public health and safety through bird-related industrial accidents and the spread of disease. EPA's concerns are based on evidence that Rid-A-Bird is posing significant risks of poisoning to protected predatory birds, some of which are threatened or endangered, which feed on the birds poisoned by the pesticide. EPA also requested the company to make some label changes which should further mitigate the potential risk of the pesticide to non-target and endangered species during the phase-out. The registrant will make the label changes by May 1, 1998. The changes include a prohibition against use in starling roosting areas. This action builds upon the use restrictions imposed by the Agency in 1990. Later this month, Rid-A-Bird Inc., of Wilton, Iowa, is expected to submit an application for 3-chloro-4-methyl benzenamine (better known as CPT) to determine whether it can be used in controlling nuisance birds. As part of the agreement, the Agency will expedite its review of CPT applications for an experimental use permit and registration in two and four months, respectively.

# The Endangered Species Act: Crucial for Wetland Protection

Although Congress first passed a version of it in 1996, the Endangered Species Act as we know it was signed into law in 1973. The status for many species has changed from declining to stable or improving because of the protection those species have received under the Act. Preventing the extinction of 99 percent of listed species has been perhaps the greatest success story of the Act. Significant amendments were enacted in 1978, 1982 and 1988, while the overall framework of the 1973 Act has remained essentially unchanged. The funding levels in the present Act, which does not expire, were authorized through Fiscal Year 1992.

What is considered by many to be the most serious attempt at reauthorization in years is currently taking place in both Houses of Congress. Two bipartisan bills (S. 1180 and H.R. 2351), both titled "Endangered Species Recovery Act of 1997," have been introduced. The administration, having provided technical assistance on both bills, is encouraged with the efforts to reauthorize the Endangered Species Act, and stands ready to assist as the legislative process moves forward.

"The status for many species has changed from declining to stable or improving because of the protection those species have received under the Act."

## Questions & Answers

**Q.** What does the Wildlife Bundle from Kansas Forest Service contain this year?

**A.** 5 Bur Oak, 25 Eastern Red Cedar, 25 American Plum, 25 Fragrant Sumac, 25 Golden Current, and 25 Manchurian Crab. Cost is $62.25.

**Q.** How do I purchase a Wildlife Bundle or Songbird Bundle?

**A.** Fill out the order form available from the K-State Research and Extension office in your county. Most species of bare root trees and shrubs are available at $25.75 for 50.

**Q.** How do I keep deer and rabbits from eating my new plantings?

**A.** It's not an easy task but consider repellents such as Tree Guard®, Deer Away®, Gustafson 42-S®, Hinder®, or Miller's Hot Sauce®. For long-term, consider exclusion fences or sport hunting to keep populations tolerable.

# Pheasant Initiative Update

> "K-State Research and Extension involvement in a large scale assessment will provide a great partnership."

Thirty-three center pivots (102 corners) in Pawnee County have been accepted for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) sign up. These areas will be included as demonstration sites for managing center pivot irrigation corners for permanent cover. Survey routes have been established to monitor population change.

• Wheat stubble height management has been included for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) incentive payments in two priority areas, High Plains Project (Sherman, Cheyenne and Thomas counties) and the Wet Walnut Creek Project (Ness, Rush and Barton counties). Incentive payment is for $3 per acre for stubble height left at 15 inches or more. In the High Plains Project this incentive also includes leaving of a non-sprayed area around perimeter of wheat fields.

• Arrangements are being made to present the pheasant initiative to the Kansas University Endowment Association Agriculture and Mineral Committee at their fall meeting. Working through those responsible for managing KU endowed property, habitat considerations could be implemented.

• District biologists are working with the Natural Resourses Conservation Service / Farm Services Agency (NRCS / FSA) planning committees to assist in getting wildlife management practices and concerns included in farm bill programs. This involvement resulted in center pivot corner considerations for CRP and stubble height management for EQIP.

• Wheat stubble height posters were prepared and distributed through Pheasants Forever and Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks (KDWP) personnel. A news clip video with the wheat stubble height message was distributed to eight television stations in western Kansas. Greater than 15 inches and 10 times more use than 10 inches.

• Plans have been submitted and preparations are underway for demonstration areas on public lands.

• K-State Research and Extension has expressed interest in working with KDWP to assess wheat stubble management in relation to production agriculture. K-State Research and Extension involvement in a large scale assessment will provide a great partnership.

• An increase planning effort for greater cooperation between NRCS and KDWP will be implemented, and recommendations presented at a joint meeting between NRCS and KDWP in October will be determined. The state Conservation Commission will be included in this planning process.

• Production of information and education materials will continue. It is critical that the pheasant habitat message be presented to the public.

• Plans are moving forward for implementation of the pilot area initiative. Thomas, Sheridan, Gove and Logan counties appear to be the area of interest. Getting this pilot project off the ground is high priority.

• Emphasis is being placed on implementation of provisions provided for in the continuous sign up of the CRP program. This program offers great opportunity for wildlife habitat considerations.

## Landowner Survey

To date, 151 landowners responded out of the 355 mailed surveys. The Department was concerned about the effects of the program for people living on WIHA properties; the proximity of the residences to WIHA property; the necessity of safety zone signs; adequate posting of boundary signs; neighbor comments; hunting activities of lessees; hunting access prior to WIHA; hunting pressure before and after WIHA; adequate patrolling; adequate parking; trash; property damage; and overall satisfaction of the program. Landowners who enrolled and those who did not re-enroll were surveyed.

The Department was encouraged by the amount of responses that were received in such a short period of time. Good working relationships have been established between the biologists and contract landowners. Approximately 66 percent of the landowners continue to hunt, which was also encouraging. The survey indicated that public access was available prior to the WIHA program, but was uncontrolled hunting. The patrolling of these properties by law enforcement division is very important; 86 percent of the landowners indicated that it is vitally important that the properties are patrolled. The overall satisfaction was 91.4 percent, which is very good.

## Walk-In Hunting Area (WIHA) Information

This survey was distributed through the mail and included 37 questions. The sample is considered very good with 1,600 respondents out of 2,400 users producing a 66 percent return rate. Some key survey results include: 96 percent hunted during the 1996–97 season; 90 percent hunted on a WIHA area; an average of five WIHA areas were hunted; an average of three members in a hunting party were present during each hunt; an average of seven days were used to hunt WIHA areas during the season; November and December were the preferred months for hunting; an average of 20 days were used to hunt at various areas in Kansas; the preferred species for hunting is pheasant and quail, along with deer and migratory birds; and 53 percent compare hunting on WIHA areas as the same for hunting on private land. The survey did not indicate that the non-resident hunters and 25 percent of hunters who did not have a place to hunt before WIHA were taking advantage of the program. A goal for the program is to reach the 25 percent of hunters who don't have a place to hunt. The program went very well for the first year; it will take time to reach the groups that are not taking advantage of the program.

# New Edition of Field Manual

The second edition of the Field Manual of Wildlife Disease in the Southeastern United States will be available in early 1998. The manual has had extensive revisions from the first edition. Information has been updated in chapters on toxicoses, white-tailed deer, wild swine, raccoon, red fox, bobcat, opossum, gray squirrel, woodchuck, wild turkey and bobwhite quail. In addition, three new sections have been added on common disease problems of nongame birds, disease issues related to captive Cervidae and diseases that have human health implications. The second edition of the Field Manual includes 29 new figures, most of which are color photographs, and approximately 125 more pages of text. As before, the new edition has high quality water-resistant paper, a vinyl cover, and the convenient 4½ × 7-inch size.

Sale will be handled by the American Association for Vocational Instructional Materials (AAVIM), and orders can be placed by mail (AAVIM, 220 Smithonia Road, Winterville, GA 30683-9527), FAX (706-742-7005), or telephone (800-228-4689). Cost of the new manual will be $20, plus shipping and handling.

"Three new sections have been added on common disease problems of nongame birds, disease issues related to captive Cervidae and diseases that have human health implications."

# Survey of Research Needs of the ADC Program

In February 1996, the USDA Animal Damage Control (ADC) program's management team requested that the listing of ADC research needs and their relative priorities be updated. The objective was to determine the spectrum of wildlife damage problems faced by the ADC program and its customers that could be better addressed by additional scientific information, alternative control measures, or improvement in existing methods. The National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) assistant director led a team consisting of an assistant director from each of the ADC Western and Eastern Regional Offices and the Director, ADC Operational Support Staff.

## Highest priority research needs of the ADC program, 1996

### Birds

- Determine the economic impact of, and investigate and develop methods of protection for freshwater and marine aquaculture resources from bird damage, in the Southeastern and Northeastern United States
- Reduce the negative impacts of waterfowl (geese, ducks, mute swans) in agriculture, fishery, and human health / safety (water quality) in urban / suburban situations.
- Determine the causes of vulture predation on birthing and young livestock and damage to plastics, vinyl, rubber, vehicles, and structures on outdoor property and develop effective methods and strategies to resolve these problems.
- Investigate and develop methods needed to manage problem blackbird or starling roosts in urban, suburban and industrial situations.
- Develop more methods to protect crops from bird damage.
- Develop more tools / techniques and strategies for managing gull populations in agriculture, fishery, and human health and safety situations.
- Develop methods to estimate the numbers of birds killed during operational use of chemical control methods.

### Mammals

- Assess strategies and programs and develop methods to manage coyote predation on livestock.
- Develop methods and programs to protect forest, orchard, and nursery resources from damage by ungulates.
- Develop methods (repellants, lures) to manage beaver populations in urban / suburban situations.
- Investigate a wider variety of methods (rodenticides, repellants, immunocontraception, habitat management) and programs to protect agricultural crops, forestry, and rangelands from damage by rodents.

> "The objective was to determine the spectrum of wildlife damage problems."

# Cormorant Rule Expected in January

ARLINGTON, VA–Cormorants may have had half a season of pond feeding before catfish producers see the details of the new federal regulations allowing cormorant takes.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) expects the final rule implementing a depredation order for double-crested cormorants to be published in the Federal Register sometime in January, according to Al Manville, branch chief of the Office of Migratory Bird Management in Virginia.

An F&W proposal, which liberalized the rules for allowing farmers to shoot cormorants at catfish ponds, was posted for public comment in June. The service received over 300 responses from a broad range of stakeholders, Manville said.

# Wetland Reserve Programs

• As of mid-1997, enrollment in the Wetlands Reserve Program and the Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program stood at 533,026 acres in 43 States.

• Fifty-eight percent (308,648 acres) of the total was enrolled in Louisiana, Mississippi, Iowa, Missouri and Arkansas.

• Landowners enrolled 88 percent (468,319 acres) of the total under permanent easements, 10 percent (51,521 acres) under 30-year easements, and 2 percent (13,186 acres) under 10-year restoration cost-share agreements.

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) was established in the 1990 Farm Act to restore prior-converted wetlands through the purchase of conservation easements from willing sellers. The Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program (EWRP) was established in response to the 1993 flooding in the Upper Mississippi and Lower Missouri River basin, and is targeted specifically at prior-converted wetlands damaged by flooding in that region. The programs are administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Kansas has 6,899 acres enrolled in these programs.

> "The Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program was established in response to the 1993 flooding in the Upper Mississippi and Lower Missouri River basin."

# Current Status and Future Prospects for Mesurol as a Bird Repellent

Birds feeding on agricultural seeds often cause substantial economic impact. Reducing bird damage to seeded crops is best accomplished through an integrated approach that can include bird deterrent seed treatments. Formulated pesticides applied to seed prior to planting must also include a distinctive dye. Thus, a potential factor in reducing depredations to chemically treated seed is a dye color that is unattractive to birds. In a series of cage and flight pen trials, we offered red-winged blackbirds and boat-tailed grackles rice seed colored red, white, blue, green, yellow, black and tan. Although there was considerable variation among individuals, blue was avoided most consistently by both species. We contend that incorporating blue dye or pigment in seed treatment formulations will not only satisfy regulatory requirements, but will also reduce the attractiveness of seed to foraging birds. This will lessen the likelihood of accidental ingestion of potentially harmful chemicals and also enhance the effectiveness of bird deterrent seed treatments.

Abstract from 4th Annual
Conference of the Wildlife Society
Michael Avery
USDA-APHIS-National
Wildlife Research Center

## Now Available

Contraception in Wildlife Management. 1997. Edited by Dr. T.J. Kreeger. USDA Technical Bulletin 1853.

Proceedings of the Repellents in Wildlife Management Symposium. 1997. Edited by Dr. J. Russell Mason. USDA / National Wildlife Research Center Publication.

To receive a copy of the titles listed above, please contact the NWRC Library at:

USDA-APHIS-WS
National Wildlife Research Center
1201 Oakridge Dr.
Fort Collins, CO 80525
970-223-1588
nwrclib@aphis.usda.gov

## Proceedings Available

Copies of the 13th Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop Proceedings are available from this office. Send a check or money order for $15 to:

K-State Research and Extension Wildlife
Room 127, Call Hall
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506-1600.

**Department of Animal Sciences and Industry**
139 Call Hall
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506-1600

FARMERS & WILDLIFE

**Editor:**

Charles Lee

**Funded by:**

Renewable Resources Extension Act

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

**Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks**

K-STATE Kansas State University

## Tell Us What You Think

Do you have a comment, suggestion, or criticism regarding this newsletter? I am constantly reevaluating the newsletter contents to reflect your needs.

Your opinions are important to me. Please send them to:
Charles Lee, Extension Specialist, Wildlife
Animal Sciences and Industry
127 Call Hall
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506

**Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service**

Farmers and Wildlife newsletter is published by Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, and is free to natural resource professionals and landowners.