



# MoBCI NEWSLETTER

**A Publication of the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative**

**SUMMER, 2007**

## MoBCI Flies Like an Eagle



**T**he title of this article may date me to my youth listening to The Steve Miller Band. But, actually it is an effort to help us stop and think about making a difference. How do we know we are making a difference for Missouri birds? Is it the number of meetings we have? Is it the amount of time we dedicate ourselves to bird issues? Is it the funding that we provide for habitat work specifically for birds? The simple answer is YES! This year marks a milestone for our fledgling organization—our 5<sup>th</sup> year! This year is also important to the Bald Eagle. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is prepared to remove the Bald Eagle from the Endangered Species list, declaring the bird a recovered species. How are MoBCI and the Bald Eagle alike? Bear with the following comparison:

If MoBCI were a Bald Eagle born 5 years ago, this year would likely be (on average) the first year for a successful nest of that newly matured eagle... If MoBCI represented the “species of bald eagles”, then in the first year (2002), MoBCI would still be in low enough numbers to deem leaving it on the Endangered Species list, but MoBCI has grown to over 40 different organizations a sustainable success story.

Why the comparison to the Bald Eagle? Because in Missouri many organizations have dedicated themselves to improve the nesting and wintering habitats of Bald Eagles—that dedication has helped to recover the eagle. Similarly, a lot of dedication has gone into insuring MoBCI thrives as a diverse partnership dedicated to the conservation of wild birds and their habitats and this year, not by design, the Bald Eagle has been a theme in our organization stemming from last year’s annual conference. Read on for a summary of highlights of this year’s actions of the Steering Committee which continue to help bring more conservation to Missouri birds, including the Bald Eagle.

You may recall that MoBCI was a recipient of a \$10,000.00 settlement resulting in the loss of a Bald Eagle nest and the Steering Committee has chosen to utilize these funds among proposals submitted for the 2008 MoBCI grant program that best meets the habitat needs of the bald eagle. The project(s) chosen or portions thereof would be funded from the settlement monies. MoBCI members brought many ideas forth on how best to utilize this settlement funding. What is most

important is that discussions generated new ideas that we can work on in the future such as providing small grants to school teachers who want to teach children about birds, having “seed” money to start an endowment, having funds to help support equipment purchases that will be used for bird conservation, to name a few. Thank you so much for helping generate these ideas and please keep thinking creatively on how MoBCI can advance bird conservation in Missouri, no matter what the funding source.

MoBCI members visited Governor Matt Blunt again this year for the Proclamation of Missouri Bird Conservation Day. The Governor was pleased to be pictured with Liberty, a World Bird Sanctuary Bald Eagle and accepted the book “Return of the Eagle: How America Saved Its National Symbol” authored by Greg Breining and photographed by MoBCI Steering Committee member Frank Oberle. This is our 4<sup>th</sup> visit to the Governor’s Office for a proclamation for Missouri Bird Day, which aligns with the annual Migratory Bird Week—a week reserved in early May for the awareness of bird conservation nationwide. A huge thank you goes out to Brad Jacobs and the Missouri Department of Conservation for helping to work out the logistics and for preparing the proclamation for the Governor’s signature. Thanks also to Frank Oberle, for donating the book and to Walter Crawford, Wild Bird Sanctuary, and Liberty for joining us for this most successful event.

Grant proposals link up MoBCI organizations by posting proposals on the web. Last year, the Steering Committee made all MoBCI Grant proposals available on the website [www.mobci.org](http://www.mobci.org) so that all MoBCI member organizations could review and determine if they could help. This was a success and we will be going through the same process this year so that everyone can review the proposals, determine if their group can help with project implementation and strengthen partnerships. Mike Currier, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, has been instrumental in making this work and keeping the website up and running for everyone to use. Please look at the message board, ask questions of the Steering Committee, learn about MoBCI habitat projects, and provide new information by contacting the web manager.

The MoBCI grants program continues to provide strength for effective bird conservation. This year, proposals were innovative and “outside-of-the-box” approaches. Please read about which proposals were funded to help you generate ideas for your organization. Don’t forget about the Important Bird Areas around Missouri where you can propose a habitat project for funding. Thanks to George Seek, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., and members of the MoBCI Grants Committee for reviewing and recommending projects for MoBCI funding. Also a heart felt thanks to Dave Erickson and the Missouri Department of Conservation whose leadership has insured the continued success of bird conservation “on the ground.” This year the National Wild Turkey Federation also helped fund some innovative MoBCI projects so a big thank you to them as well.

As you can see MoBCI soars over the blue skies of Missouri, just like an Eagle--the king of all birds. MoBCI is the largest partnership of Missouri bird organizations, and now is a time to celebrate the efforts that we are collectively taking to conserving all wild birds and their habitats.

Your Conference Planning Committee has been working hard to plan a useful, informative Conference this year. One of the major issues we all deal with is the challenge with invasive



species plaguing the landscape and negatively impacting bird habitats. This year our Conference theme is "Dealing with Exotics." We have lined up experts to help you understand the impacts of invasive species on native habitats and how to deal with them. We have updates on the state Comprehensive Wildlife Habitat Strategy and MoBCI habitat project updates. We also have a fantastic silent auction scheduled again this year. Thanks to John Burk, National Wild Turkey Federation, Alan Leary, Missouri Department of Transportation, Linda Tossing, St. Louis Audubon Society, and Jerry Wade, Audubon Society of Missouri, for their awesome leadership and efforts in preparing this year's conference. They make it seamless but it is an incredible effort.

I want to thank every member of the Steering Committee for his or her help in making this year another huge success. This group of individuals has such a tremendous soft spot for Missouri birds, they are always present for our Steering Committee meetings and we generate a lot of discussion about birds and bird related issues. This year we have had discussions about the upcoming Farm Bill, wind turbine energy, and invasive species. In August, several members of the Steering Committee's time serving will be up. If you would like to be a part of the MoBCI leadership, please talk to a Steering Committee member or me. We need your strength and support in 2007/2008 to continue our success. It is a rewarding experience and you get to meet so many people who have the same concerns about birds as you do—I encourage anyone to put your passion and energy to work on the Steering Committee, you will be glad you did.

*Kelly Srigley Werner*  
*MoBCI Steering Committee Chair*

## The MoBCI Grant Program

### Habitat Projects Designed to Conserve Birds in Key Locations of Missouri

This year marks the 4<sup>th</sup> MoBCI granting process, which has aided MoBCI Organizations in providing key wildlife habitat for all bird conservation. Over the past 4 years there have been success stories for wetland, prairie grassland, glade, forest, and savanna habitats which address the foraging, nesting, and resting needs of waterfowl, songbirds, ground nesting birds, wading birds, and shorebirds in addition to the other wildlife which depend on these habitats too.

This year's recipients were no exception to the excellent habitat partnerships that are occurring in Missouri to benefit birds and their habitats. MoBCI member organizations who were awarded for habitat restoration dollars provided by the Missouri Department of Conservation are as follows:

**Clay County Grassland & Savanna Restoration Project, Clay County Missouri Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites \$10,000:**

The goal of this project is to restore and recreate 2,300 acres of pastures and cropland to pre-settlement grassland and savanna landscape conditions at Smithville Lake and Rocky Hollow



Lake. Project objectives include the converting of existing rowcrop fields and fescue pastures to native grass and forb grasslands, eradicating infested *Serecia lespedeza* and Johnson's grass areas, preserving and enhancing degraded savannas by using savanna management techniques, and utilizing patch burning and grazing as methods to maintain restored and recreated grasslands and savannas. The project is designed to be completed in 10 years.

**River Hills Forest Habitat Project Phase III, Ruffed Grouse Society \$20,000 (\$8,233 provided by USFWS Missouri Private Lands Office)**

This is a continuation of a project designed to encourage private landowners through cost share funding and educational efforts to help achieve a goal of maintaining 10 – 15 % of the project area in a regenerating oak-hickory forest condition. Currently, less than one percent of the forest is regenerating and the lack of early-successional stands are causing a population decline in many of those forest wildlife species that depend on young forest habitats.

**Montrose Wetland Restoration Partnership, Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation \$7,500**

Restore wetland functions and values on 300 acres of Montrose Conservation Area in Henry County by incorporating modern wetland science and design/construction approaches to opportunistically capture and manage water, thereby improving reliability and efficiency of pool management.

**Prairie Restoration in North Central Missouri for the Greater Prairie Chicken and Declining Grassland Bird Species, Missouri Prairie Foundation (MPF) \$14,300**

This is a multi MoBCI organization partnership including MPF, the Missouri Department of Conservation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Pure Air Native Seed to provide and manage for a mixture of native warm season grasses, prairie forbs, legumes, and cool season grasses in the Central Dissected Till Plains of Missouri to benefit rare and declining grassland dependent birds on approximately 125 acres of lands owned by Premium Standard Farms and leased by MPF in Sullivan County, Missouri.

**Wetland Restoration, Urban Outreach, Environmental Education and Bird Monitoring, Missouri Department of Natural Resources \$10,000**

The outreach, education and monitoring project involves local schoolchildren, (from the St. Louis area), and the St. Louis Chapter of the Audubon Society (SLAS) in the restoration of wetland natural communities at Confluence Point State Park, managed by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). School groups benefit from interpretive and educational activities and hands-on involvement learning about the values of big rivers, wetlands, migrating waterfowl, shorebirds, songbirds, and species of conservation concern (e.g. bald eagle). They are involved in bottomland forest and wet prairie restoration by planting trees and prairie plugs. This project is part of the park's ongoing ecological restoration efforts. Most of this 1,118-acre state park recently has been or presently is being farmed. Natural communities ultimately to be restored include bottomland forest, shrub swamp, wet prairie, and marsh.



The St. Louis Chapter of the Audubon Society (SLAS) will participate in the project and partner with MDNR to provide quarterly bird monitoring and participation in the 2007 River Kids wetland education events.

**Prairie/Savanna Restoration Project – Texas County, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, \$14,633**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) are working in partnership with a private landowner, who desires to restore prairie and oak savanna habitat on 76 acres of his property in southern Texas County, Missouri. The project site is adjacent to 212 acres of woodland that is managed for both timber production and wildlife and will benefit Chuck-Will's-Widow, Bobwhite Quail, Bachman's Sparrow, Eastern Wild Turkey, Summer Tanager, Field Sparrow and numerous other savanna dependent species.

**Kansas City Wildlands-Bridging The Gap Blue River Parkway Restoration Project, \$20,000 (\$8,200 provided by USFWS, Missouri Private Lands Office)**

This is a continuation of a project, which will restore native habitat for birds and other wildlife in an urban bottomland forest along the Blue River. Restoration is a continuation of work accomplished through a large-scale elimination of invasive shrub honeysuckle from bottomland forest along the Blue River Parkway. After eradication, habitat will be improved by enhancing and protecting biological diversity by planting native soft and hard mast-producing trees and shrubs, thereby improving the aesthetic and recreational value to the public in urban setting.

**Taberville Area Prescribed Fire Partnership, Taberville Fire District, \$8,000 (\$5,000 provided by National Wild Turkey Federation)**

This project will increase awareness of the benefits of prescribed fire for grassland communities, build the capacity of local partners to conduct controlled burns and directly assist landowners with habitat improvement on approximately 2,500 grassland acres. The Missouri Department of Conservation's Best Management Practices listed as part of the Greater Prairie-chicken Recovery Initiative states that, "Grasslands should be periodically burned to control woody invasion, remove excess litter and focus livestock grazing." Most area landowners understand the benefits of prescribed fire but are reluctant to initiate the work without help. This project will provide area landowners with technical assistance and confidence so that more grassland acres can benefit from prescribed fire.

**Grassland-Prescribed Burns in Southwest Missouri, Quail Unlimited \$5,000 (funded by the National Wild Turkey Federation)**

This is a project designed by a local Quail Unlimited Chapter to train and equip a burn crew to work in partnership with local landowners to improve grassland, early successional, and buffer habitat on private lands to support grassland and quail initiatives in southwest Missouri.

**Native Prairie Acquisition in Northeast Missouri, Missouri Prairie Foundation \$20,000**

The 50-acre Runge Prairie was dedicated in August of 2006 in commemoration of former Conservation Commissioner Andy Runge who was an inspiring prairie enthusiast and who was a champion of prairie habitats and the species which depend on them.



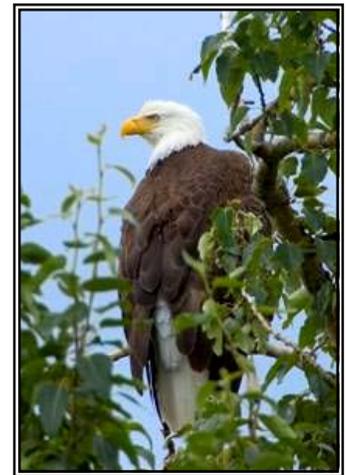
The MoBCI Steering Committee congratulates those recipients of this year's MoBCI Grant Program and once again encourages all MoBCI organizations to participate in the grant process. This is a great source of funding for projects you would like to implement. If you have questions about how the grant process works, what kinds of proposals would be competitive, where to do a project, or how to write a good grant, please contact a Steering Committee member at the upcoming MoBCI conference.

On behalf of MoBCI I want to personally thank Mr. Dave Erickson and the Missouri Department of Conservation, for providing this great funding source to support quality habitat restoration and habitat enhancement for Missouri birds. Also, Mr. John Burk, a huge thank you on behalf of MoBCI for the financial support provided through the George Clark Missouri State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation for helping to fund two of this year's projects. It is this kind of partnering spirit that enables us to grow the granting program for all bird conservation.

*Kelly Srigley Werner*  
*MoBCI Steering Committee Chair*

## Bald Eagle Recovery Continues in Missouri

Once eliminated as a breeding species from the state, the Bald Eagle is continuing to stage an amazing comeback. In Missouri, Bald Eagles were essentially eliminated as nesters by the early 1900s due to habitat destruction and shooting. Between then and the 1980s, there were only a few verified nesting attempts in the state. Nationally, populations were also severely impacted by eggshell thinning as a result of the use of the insecticide DDT and other insecticides, although eagles were already eliminated as breeder in Missouri prior to its' widespread use. The species was listed as an endangered species in 1978 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



With the banning of DDT, eagle populations began to rebound. Wintering eagle populations in Missouri steadily increased year after year. From 1981-1990, the Missouri Department of Conservation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other conservation partners undertook an ambitious effort to restore the Bald Eagle as a nester in Missouri. A total of 75 young eagles were "hacked" at Schell-Osage Conservation Area and Mingo National Wildlife Refuge during that timeframe. The results of this effort couldn't be more pleasing.



After a few sometimes shaky initial nesting attempts scattered across the state over the first few years, the nesting eagle population began to explode. In 1990, we had 11 nesting territories. In 1995, we had 24 nesting territories. In 2001, we were up to 76 known nesting territories. Today, we are aware of at least 150 active nests in the state, and new nest reports continue to pile in, thanks to the reports of excited Bald Eagle watchers and conservation professionals. If you happen to spot a nest, please feel free to report it to me at 573-447-2249 or Andrew.Forbes@mdc.mo.gov.

Trends in Missouri are essentially a mirror image of national trends. In 1966, there were only 417 nesting pairs in the lower 48 states. Today, we estimate approximately 10,000 breeding pairs. As such, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed that the species be removed from the federal list of threatened and endangered species. This represents a huge victory for conservation, and is an inspiring example of the positive results that can happen when people work together to achieve a common goal.

- Andy Forbes, MDC

***On June 28, 2007 the Secretary of Interior Dirk Kempthorne announced the removal of the bald eagle from the list of threatened and endangered species at a ceremony at the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C. The removal of the bald eagle from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants will become effective 30 days after publication in the Federal Register. The Secretary acknowledged the Herculean efforts of conservation groups nation wide to save and protect our national symbol.***

***Why not extend this effort for the benefit of all-bird species?***

## \$75,000 Grant for Montrose Conservation Area

**T**he Small Grants Program/North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) announced a \$75,000 award for partnership work at Missouri Department of Conservation's Montrose Conservation Area (CA). Six new conservation partners, including *the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative*, joined the group which had worked together previously on the extremely successful multi wetland restoration projects on Truman Reservoir. Bringing in new partners and committing \$245,000, the team again focused on the Golden Anniversary Wetland Initiative, a partnership effort for capital improvements on conservation areas holding its earliest wetland developments.

Partners include:

Agri Drain Corporation  
Conservation Employees Credit Union  
Kansas City Power and Light

Audubon Society of Missouri  
Ducks Unlimited  
Mailings Clearing House



Mississippi Valley Duck Hunters Assoc.  
 Missouri Conservation Heritage Fdn  
 Missouri Waterfowl Assoc-Westside Chapter  
 Mr. and Mrs. Chet Douthit Memorial  
 Robert “Bob” Dunkeson Memorial

**Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative**  
 Missouri Dept. of Conservation  
 Missouri Waterfowl Assoc-State  
 Rick Thom  
 Sharp Brothers Seed Company

Managers face an array of challenges on these areas; they have reached or soon will reach their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The original infrastructures have quite simply outlived their life expectancy. The science and art of wetland management and engineering, design, and construction capabilities are vastly improved from five decades ago. Major efforts are necessary to restore wetland management functionality of these areas; their rehabilitation is the focus of this initiative.

The 3,600-acre Montrose CA is located in Henry County and centered on a 1,600-acre lake built to provide cooling water for a coal-fired electrical generating plant constructed in 1955 and operated by the Kansas City Power and Light Company (KCPL). In 1956, MDC entered into a lease agreement with KCPL and several small auxiliary wetland units were developed around the margins of the lake.

These units had fill-and-drain capabilities with the lake serving as the water source. As customary during that era, they were constructed quickly with little regard for long-term maintenance and management efficiency. All have relatively steep-sided levees with deep borrow area immediately adjacent. These levees have proven difficult to maintain and year-around water has resulted in high rates of damage by burrowing rodents, primarily muskrats and beavers, with associated expensive repairs and periodic failures.

Purpose, Goals and Objectives: This project will restore wetland functions and values on 110 acres and replace a disabled-user viewing and hunting blind on the upper reaches of Montrose CA. Restoration elements will include:

- Utilization of natural, existing contours in design features.
- Removal of 8 existing, dilapidated and non-functional structures and associated levees.
- Construction of approximately 2 miles of low-head levees with 12-foot tops and 8:1 side slopes.
- Creation of a series of shallow scours and raised habitat mounds, including revegetation on some sites.
- Installation of 5 water control structures.

The Montrose Wetland Partnership project will provide nesting and brood-rearing habitat for the following species: *hooded merganser, wood duck, mallard, blue-winged teal, and Canada goose*. Many migratory waterfowl, especially the following species will benefit *mallard, northern pintail, gadwall, American wigeon, northern shoveler, blue-winged teal, green-winged teal, lesser scaup, and ring-necked duck*.

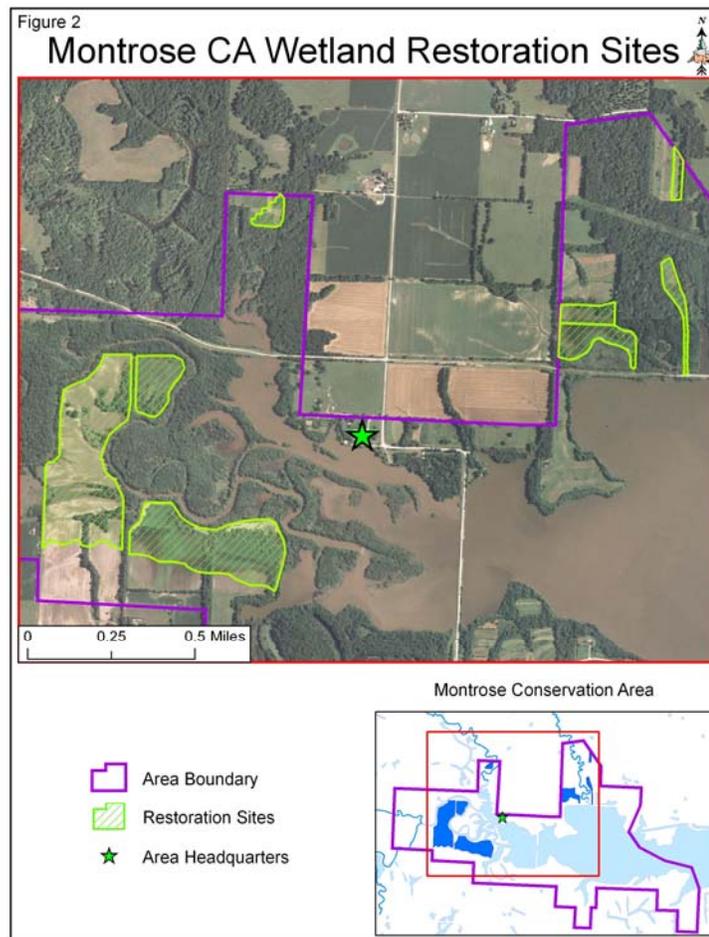
This project lies in the Eastern Tallgrass Prairie Bird Conservation Region benefiting bird species from that region. Among species groups, breeding and migratory shorebirds will benefit the most, because of extensive mudflats that will result. Planned water management will increase



opportunities to expose wet soil with decaying vegetation that has had time to develop high invertebrate fauna. Breeding shorebirds will include killdeer, *American woodcock*, and *spotted sandpiper*. Where water depths can be maintained to minimize nest depredation, successful breeding by *least bittern*, *American bittern*, *common moorhen*, *American coot*, *piebilled grebe* and *king rail* is likely.

Virtually, all migratory shorebirds will benefit, including: *black-bellied plover*, *American golden-plover*, *semipalmated plover*, *piping plover*, *American avocet*, *greater yellowlegs*, *lesser yellowlegs*, *solitary sandpiper*, *willet*, *Hudsonian godwit*, *marbled godwit*, *ruddy turnstone*, *sanderling*, *semipalmated sandpiper*, *western sandpiper*, *white-rumped sandpiper*, *Baird's sandpiper*, *pectoral sandpiper*, *dunlin*, *stilt sandpiper*, *buff-breasted sandpiper*, *short-billed dowitcher*, *long-billed dowitcher*, *Wilson's snipe*, *Wilson's phalarope*, and *red-necked phalarope*.

Hérons will utilize the shallow water areas for foraging, especially from July through October when breeding colonies have dispersed. Species benefited in fall will include: *great-blue heron*, *great egret*, *snowy egret*, *little-blue heron*, *green heron*, *black-crowned night heron*, *yellow-crowned night heron*, and *cattle egret*. Probable local breeding colonies will include *great blue heron*, *great egret*, and *yellow-crowned night heron*.



Depending on the amount of cattails and other robust emergent marsh vegetation, there is a high possibility of attracting *marsh wrens and yellow-headed blackbirds*. Short, wet-prairie habitat type may attract *sedge wrens and northern harriers*. Willows and buttonbush in wet prairies would attract *willow flycatcher and black-billed cuckoo*. Many other more common species would also be present.

The tree mounds will benefit several suites of birds as they go through several stages. Early successional forest (ESF) stages will benefit *Bell's vireo, field sparrow, northern bobwhite, brown thrasher, and orchard oriole*. ESF will benefit winter graminivores such as *spotted towhee and Harris's sparrow*. Mature forests would benefit *Mississippi kite, Baltimore oriole, red-headed woodpecker, yellow-billed cuckoo, Eastern wood-peewee, and Chuck-will's-widow*.

For more information about the project and the partnership, contact Kit Freudenberg at 573-522-4115 x 3379 or [kit.freudenberg@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:kit.freudenberg@mdc.mo.gov).

## MoBCI and the National Wild Turkey Federation A Viable Partnership

The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) is a conservation organization consisting of over 545,000 members nationally. Over 19,000 of these members reside in Missouri and help to generate the over 230 million dollars that has been spent on wildlife conservation since the inception of the NWTF in 1973. The mission statement of the NWTF is *to conserve the turkey resource and preserve the hunting tradition*. Although the NWTF, at first glance, is a single species organization, the 5 subspecies of wild turkey found from Maine to Mexico exist in a wide range of habitat types and even within individual subspecies and states, wild turkeys are extremely adaptable. Therefore, specific life requirements can be managed for in a variety of habitat types that benefit a vast array of other wildlife species and allows flexibility when planning beneficial projects and identifying potential project partners.

The NWTF has always been good at collaborating with other organizations and agencies to pursue our goals. Unlike a lot of our state and federal agency partners, however, our operational funding comes from fundraisers that are completely dependent upon volunteer labor and monetary contributions. This support is annual and can fluctuate significantly. Therefore, every employee, from the “five-star generals” to the “field grunts” within our organization, are in tune with the politics, economics, and social aspects of conservation, making decisions within a matrix that balances conservation and business. A primary part of my job as the Regional Biologist for



NWTF is to be a miner for conservation opportunities that help us achieve our goals and “sell the sizzle” of resource management to keep the support dollars flowing. The attractiveness of MoBCI is that, with 41 member organizations, it is a directory of who’s who in the conservation community in Missouri. Therefore, being involved with MoBCI provides an excellent opportunity to be on the front lines of bird conservation in Missouri accomplishing great things for conservation and maximizing the effectiveness of our fund raising dollars.

As professional resource managers and passionate volunteer conservationists, we face continually increasing challenges as stewards of wild things and wild places. Urban sprawl, exotic invasives, renewable energy impacts, and a myriad of other factors continue to complicate our efforts and economics is always a factor regarding the kind of impact that we can make. As these challenges increase and our individual budgets decrease it becomes increasingly vital that the conservation community work together to minimize duplicated effort and waste, and maximize efficiency and impact.

Organizations like MoBCI also help to facilitate unique partnerships that may have been traditionally uncommon. Because of the diversity of special interests that MoBCI affiliates comprise, the organization can potentially help to sow new ground that may have historically been battlefields. I speak primarily of the historical rift that can often exist between consumptive and non-consumptive or management and anti-management user groups. Whether we will admit it or not most of us probably have some stereotypical image in our minds of what one or the other of these average members thinks or how they behave based upon our perceptions of what motivates them. Many non-consumptive users can not fathom what could possibly be so special about getting up at obscene-thirty in the morning, driving a good distance, walking for miles, sitting on a lumpy spot, and swatting mosquitoes in an effort to shoot a glorified turkey vulture. Still others may judge the moral fiber of a consumptive user based upon the killing aspect of consumptive activities that they personally can not accept. As a consumptive user, I do not understand the motivation of adding new birds to a list. Where our passion emanates from should not matter. However, it is this passion that motivates each of us to do more than the vast majority of society around us for the cause of conservation and that is vitally important. We may not completely understand one another, and probably won’t always agree on the small stuff. However, to me, MoBCI helps to clarify that we both want basically the same thing when it comes to the big stuff; improved habitat conditions that support more birds that provide us each with unique joys. Together we can achieve much more than either of us could independently. When you combine collaborated effort with the focused, science based approach of joint ventures and comprehensive wildlife strategies, the future for bird conservation in Missouri is quite bright.

John Burk, NWTF



## Populations of common U.S. birds in sharp decline --

**P**opulations of many common U.S. bird species have declined drastically over the past 40 years as sprawling development and agriculture devoured wetlands, forests, and grasslands, according to a National Audubon Society report released today.

The report -- prepared with data on 550 species from Audubon's annual Christmas bird count and the U.S. Geological Survey's breeding bird survey -- also cites global warming as a significant threat to bird populations.

"Direct habitat loss continues to be a leading cause for concern," Greg Butcher, the group's bird conservation director and a report author, said in a statement. "But now we're seeing the added impact of large-scale environmental problems and policies."



The report lists 20 species whose populations have fallen by at least 54 percent since 1967. Northern bobwhites were hit hardest, losing 82 percent of their numbers. Evening grosbeaks followed closely, having lost 78 percent of their population. Also on the list: northern pintails, greater scaups, eastern meadowlarks, common terns, snow buntings, rufous hummingbirds, whip-poor-wills and little blue herons.

"These are not rare or exotic birds we're talking about -- these are the birds that visit our feeders and congregate at nearby lakes and seashores and yet they are disappearing day by day," Audubon Chairwoman and former U.S. EPA Administrator Carol Browner said in a statement.

"Their decline tells us we have serious work to do, from protecting local habitats to addressing the huge threats from global warming." Although the birds do not face imminent extinction, Browner described the population losses as "noteworthy" and "disturbing."

The report warns that global warming could further damage key habitats and spur the spread of invasive species. However, it noted that one tool to combat climate change -- the increased production of corn for ethanol -- could usurp bird habitat. To prevent that, the study recommended promoting strong conservation provisions in the 2007 farm bill. Many species on the list are grassland and shrubland birds that would benefit from such conservation programs, Butcher said.

### Threats to boreal forest

Additionally, birds like the evening grosbeak in U.S. and Canadian boreal forest are in danger due to global warming, the report notes, citing increased numbers of invasive species and more wildfire outbreaks.



Butcher also said climate change affects birds like the greater scaup, which breeds in Alaska. "The permafrost is melting earlier and there is more woody vegetation [on the tundra]," he said. "Due to warmer weather, more nest predators are surviving and lowering reproductive success."

Naturalist Scott Weiensaul described birds as "metaphorical canaries" in a coal mine for the environment, saying their demise could foreshadow problems for other species.

"The good news here is this is an early warning," he said, noting that people have time and tools to save the United States' declining bird populations.

-Katherine Boyle, E&ENews PM reporter

## Musings About a Seed Drill

I had an incredible experience this morning as I was driving south of our farm here in Adair county along a Chariton River road headed to pick up our Amish crew west of La Plata. It is a route that I travel daily. Very few homes and lots of grasslands and open spaces. Almost everyday I see a variety of wildlife. Some days pheasants, short-eared owls, upland sandpipers, a black coyote, cooper hawks, turkey, deer and numerous eagles during the winter months. About halfway to my first stop as I was driving and watching the winding road ahead, out of somewheres an adult bald eagle flew right in front of my lumbering 350 ford diesel truck just missing the bumper and the barbed wire fence sailing down a grass ravine. I was truly surprised as well inspired to see an adult bald eagle this time of year.

Boy, I had to call the regional biologist, Greg Gremaud at MDC headquarters in Kirksville as soon as I could get to a high spot for a signal and share this exciting information. To my surprise, Greg mentioned that there were two bald eagle nests fairly close to our farm discovered last year and this year as well. He thought that this adult would be too far south to be part of the nests by our house. However, the closeness to the Chariton River where this bird was seen could mean a third nest in the area. I was just amazed when Greg had mentioned that right here in Adair County we have successful nesting pairs of eagles.

I was asked to write an update on Adair county Soil and Water District receiving funds from MoBCI affiliate members--that is the Missouri Dept. of Conservation and The National Wildlife Turkey Federation--coming to the rescue to assist our county and surrounding area with needed funds to purchase a new grass/wildflower precision planting drill. As matter of fact it is the new series 2 Great Plains drill. I had mention the need for one at a steering committee meetings and it seemed by the end of the evening the MoBCI passion to assist in creating better wildlife habitats/homes was engaged and Adair county would get the needed tools to help private



landowners with a new drill. I spoke to the office staff this morning about the drill and all I can say in few words to their response is WOW! They have already loaned it out for several specialized plantings which include fluffy grass and forbs mixtures and another planting needing to use the grain box to plant eastern gama grass while planting fluffy native grasses and wildflowers of different shapes, textures and weights.

Today is a special day. Supposedly--according to the TV networks--the US Fish and Wildlife Service is going to take the American Bald Eagle off the Endangered Species List. As reported yesterday on TV, there are an estimated 10,000 plus nesting pairs of eagles in the lower 48 states up from the 400 nest counted in 1970. With the removing of "DDT", public awareness, and the need for better habitat and the yeoman restoration efforts from conservation groups, our national symbol now soars over almost every state. I know that just as the bald eagle was assisted through one acre easements and improved nesting areas at a time, small investments like native seed drills can provide also the necessary tools to create the habitat/homes our rare and declining grassland dependant wildlife need to rebound like the eagle I seen this morning. Thanks MoBCI on behalf of Adair county for caring.

-Frank Oberle, Prairie Enthusiast, Nature Photographer



## Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative Grant Program 2008 Call for Proposals

Do you have a bird habitat restoration project in mind but lack the dollars and resources to make it a reality?

**The Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative is now accepting Grant Proposals.**

Help is only a Grant Proposal Away!

Individual grant awards are available up to a maximum of \$20,000 annually

Grant applications must be received **no later than 5:00 p.m. Friday September 28, 2007**, at the following address: *MoBCI Grant Subcommittee, in care of Audubon Missouri, 2620 Forum Blvd., Suite C-1, Columbia, MO 65203.*

For information on how to apply go the MoBCI web site at [www.mobci.org](http://www.mobci.org)

### Looking for Partners?

Plan to attend the Fourth Annual MoBCI Conference to be held August 24-25 at the Holiday Inn Select in Columbia Missouri. It's a great way to network your project, find new partners or play an important role in advancing "All-Bird Conservation."

*Get your 2008 MoBCI proposal on the website **MoBCI.org** to encourage other partners to become involved in your project! Contact [mike.currier@dnr.mo.gov](mailto:mike.currier@dnr.mo.gov) to post. All you need is an electronic copy (Word 97 or better).*





Volunteer: Kansas City Wildlands, glade restoration project

**Contributors to MoBCI Newsletter include:**

Kelly Srigley Werner, USFWS  
Dave Erickson, MDC  
John Burk, National Wild Turkey Federation  
Frank Oberle, Missouri Native Seed Association  
Andy Forbes, MDC

**Please add to this list by submitting articles on your bird habitat restoration projects to [Mike.Currier@dnr.mo.gov](mailto:Mike.Currier@dnr.mo.gov)**





**Pershing State Park**

**Wet Bottomland Prairie**

**Critically Imperiled Community**

**Threat: Reed Canary Grass**

**Prairie State Park**

**Headwater Stream  
Streambank/Riverbank**

**Imperiled Communities**

**Threat: Sericea Lespedeza**



Both sites are owned and managed by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to preserve and interpret the state's significant natural landscapes





Which is better bird habitat?-

(native prairie, left)

(Helton Prairie Conservation Area, MDC)

OR old field dominated by spotted knapweed (right)??

