



# Wild Know-How

Fall 2018

A Private Lands Newsletter from the Division of Wildlife



## Introducing Kentucky Wild

**Laura Burford**  
Program Coordinator, KDFWR

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources recently introduced a new program designed for Kentuckians that are passionate about our state's wildlife, but that do not necessarily hunt or fish. This new program - aptly titled Kentucky Wild, launched on June 1st and already has members from 12 states.

When most folks think about KDFWR, they think of turkey- deer- elk- and sportfish. However, KDFWR has the regulatory authority for all wildlife in the state. That is nearly 1,000 species! It is the agency's responsibility to steward these resources for current and

future generations of Kentuckians.

Many people do not realize that our agency has a team of scientists devoted to the study of animals that are not hunted, fished, or trapped. These animals make up about 90% of the wildlife out there - animals such as songbirds, raptors, bats, small mammals, lizards, salamanders, frogs, snakes, crayfish, and freshwater mollusks. We also have a wildlife action plan that drives our conservation activities. Developed in 2005 and comprehensively reviewed every ten years, this plan identifies over 300 species and habitats in greatest conservation need, as well

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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.



# Improving Older Native Grass Stands For Wildlife Part II

**David Howell, Wildlife Biologist  
and Thomas Young, Private Lands  
Biologist, KDFWR**

**O**k! I get it, you're really confused now. The Biologist said to plant some Native Warm Season Grasses (NWSG) and wildflowers a few years ago. "Going to be great for wildlife, small game, quail, rabbits and deer!" Now the biologist came back several years later, said to kill the NWSG, thin it out, spray it, disc it, and maybe even burn it. What gives? Many older stands (10+ years since planting) of NWSG can experience a decline in plant species diversity and wildlife productivity. A thick stand of NWSG may be good for cattle and grazing, but it has little value for wildlife because the lack of food. This can be especially true if there have been infrequent management activities since the initial planting. Often times, more than one habitat management activity will be needed to restore better wildlife habitat conditions.

Let us review a combination of 3 fall/winter management activities that can help benefit older NWSG stands. While controlled burning is an excellent management practice, it has been my experience that burning alone will not be enough to create better wildlife habitat conditions on older established NWSG stands. It is very important that you consider dividing your grassland acres into blocks, always leaving ½ or ⅓ of the overall acreage undisturbed for winter cover and food.

## Fall disking

One of the easiest management strategies is fall disking (September



– November). This simply involves a tractor and disk, cutting strips and/or blocks of NWSG, trying to leave approximately 25% residue when complete. It is important to note that NWSG have extensive root systems and multiple passes with implements will be required. Most times, site-prep such as haying, grazing, prescribed burning, herbicide or mowing will be necessary prior to disking to be effective. Also, take note of the contour of the land, always limiting erosion by disking horizontal to the slope. In addition, planting 50-100 lbs. of winter wheat or other cover crops in sensitive areas can help slow erosion.

## Fall Herbicide Treatment

September/October are good months to spray old, rank NWSG stands with glyphosate herbicide. This time

period accomplishes several things; 1) if the stand contains native forbs/wildflowers, most will have completed their maturation and not be effected by the spray; 2) a thinning effect after spraying, not a total kill will occur; 3) in some stands goldenrod and sericea will be thick and will be selectively thinned out. Spray the NWSG when about 50% of each plant has turned brown. Spraying can be done in blocks or strips on a portion of the area under treatment. Use 1 quart of glyphosate per acre. Prepare a mix of granular ammonium sulfate at 17 pounds per 100 gallons of water (mix well with water before pouring in spray tank) or 1 gallon of liquid ammonium sulfate per 100 gallons of water, then add the appropriate amount of glyphosate and finally add

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# Brush Piles for Small Game

**Cody M. Rhoden**  
Small Game Biologist, KDFWR

**M**any landowners might wonder what they can do to quickly and easily attract wildlife to their property. There are many practices that may suit this question, however one of the quickest and easiest things are brush piles. Let's be clear: there are good brush piles and bad brush piles for small game. The structure, location, and materials of the brush pile are the three most important things contributing to the success of a usable brush pile. Let us review the following steps to ensure the construction of your brush piles can be safely used by small game.

## Structure

The first thing to consider when getting started on a new brush pile is openness at the base of the pile. If you are targeting rabbits, create openings at the base of the pile that are just large enough for a rabbit to get into, but not large enough for a predator such as a fox or coyote to get through. These openings can be reinforced to prolong the life of your brush pile. You may use logs, pallets, cinder blocks, stone, or other materials to reinforce the base and openings. The structure of everything atop your base will depend on what animals you are interested in attracting to your property. For small mammals like rabbits, dense



brush should be piled atop the base. For birds like quail, loose brush should be piled atop the base. For birds keep in mind not to make the openings in the brush large enough for an avian predator, such as a hawk, to fly into the pile. You may also reinforce the sides of the brush pile with wire, cattle panels, or t-posts (see picture). This again will prolong the life of your brush pile and preserve the spaces within the pile for small game.

## Location

Often times the location of your brush pile will be determined by your convenience or personal preference. There are however, a few guidelines to follow that can maximize the use of the brush pile. For rabbits and quail, your brush pile can be placed right on the border of a forest and open area such as a field. The best place for a brush pile, from a small game perspective, is the middle of an open field. For quail, a good rule of thumb is to have woody cover, such as a brush pile, no further away than you could throw a softball

(50 yards) from any point in your field.

## Material

When we think of a brush pile, usually the first thing that comes to mind is a great heap of logs and branches. There are however many other materials that can be used in the creation of this habitat. If you plan to burn a field your brush pile is in, be sure to construct your pile with material that will not be consumed by the fire, such as cinder blocks or stone. Cedar and invasive shrub removal projects are a perfect opportunity to upcycle material into new brush piles. You may also upcycle scrap lumber and blocks from a building project into new brush piles. Hinge cutting small trees can also serve as a “living” brush pile.

Escape and winter cover is often a limiting factor for small game in Kentucky. The construction of well-made brush piles can quickly and easily serve the need for this cover for several years.

For more information please visit [fw.ky.gov](http://fw.ky.gov) and search “Habitat How-To’s”





# Protect Our Streams

By Wes Little  
Wildlife Biologist, KDFWR

**K**eeping cattle and other livestock out of streams and riparian areas (the soil and plants adjacent to a stream) is an easy way to improve both water quality and wildlife habitat. The old saying “what goes in, must come out” is very true when referring to cows eating habits, and they don’t care where they are when it “...must come out.” Every time a cow stomps down a stream bank there is potential for soil loss, sending a little bit of property downstream with every step. The plants found in a riparian area can also be damaged when livestock are given free access. These plants are responsible for controlling erosion, maintaining clean water, and for supplying critical habitat to aquatic and land dwelling wildlife.

Livestock are not the only threats to riparian habitats and streams. Crop farmers can also be guilty. Turning un-

der riparian habitat to maximize planted acres can end up costing landowners more than the gain those riparian acres yield. Without permanent protection from rooted plants, soil loss will occur. Runoff carrying soil, fertilizer and chemical particles also have direct access to streams when the riparian areas are not protected.

There are many USDA programs available to help with the cost of protecting water resources and wildlife habitat. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has practices specifically for creating and protecting riparian buffers. CRP will pay for fencing to exclude livestock from a stream and replace the livestock’s water source if needed. CRP can also pay to install riparian buffers for stream protection in cropland. CRP pays a rental rate/acre/year for the acres converted to a healthy riparian buffer. These contracts can be either 10 or 15 years. The Environmen-



## 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.

tal Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) also has cost share available for fencing streams and many other soil quality and wildlife habitat practices. For more information on these programs, contact your local KDFWR private lands or Farm Bill biologist, or your local NRCS Service Center.

## “Wild,” continued

as the actions necessary for recovery.

There is a lot of work to do, but current funding is not keeping pace. Our agency receives no general tax funds and operates primarily from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and federal grants. For Kentuckians interested in contributing to efforts for ‘nongame’ animals, but not interested in hunting or angling, buying a license isn’t really a good fit. Until now, there has been no other way to join the team- Kentucky Wild changes that.

So how does Kentucky Wild work? The program has two paths- one for individual memberships, and another for corporate/business sponsorships. There are six individual membership levels ranging from \$25 to \$1,000. Each level has different benefits, but ALL levels include a chance for some members to accompany Kentucky wildlife professionals in the field with projects such



as mollusk tagging, habitat builds, and backpack shock surveys for nongame fish. There are also four levels of corporate sponsorships, beginning at \$1500.

What will the money go for? All contributions to Kentucky Wild go directly to projects within our Wildlife Diversity (‘nongame’) program. Monies will purchase research equipment,

prove the wildlife habitat.

### Summer/Fall Burning

The last option is prescribed burning. Typically, if used by itself for thinning NWSG, burning during the growing season is recommended (late July-middle September). The stress on the root systems prior to winter thins the stand the next growing season. Obviously, establishing fire breaks, a prescribed burn plan, and all other safety related items and equipment should be covered before this option is used.

In addition to the three options list-

implement habitat improvement projects, and fund survey and monitoring for imperiled species. Current projects that Kentucky Wild supports include surveys and monitoring of rare salamanders, habitat establishment/improvement for pollinators like the monarch butterfly, and lab equipment upgrades at the Center for Mollusk Conservation.

Wildlife face a growing number of threats- invasive species, city growth, demands on limited water supplies, and competition for places to live. The time to act is now. We are confident that

Kentucky Wild will raise awareness and engage Kentuckians who are conscious and committed to preserving Kentucky’s natural heritage, wildlife, and wild places. Now is a great time to join! Memberships purchased now are good through December 2019. For more information about how YOU can become a member, visit [fw.ky.gov/kywild](http://fw.ky.gov/kywild).

## “Grass,” continued

2 quarts of surfactant per 100 gallons of water. Normally you will need to apply about 15 to 20 gallons of spray mix per acre. If spray booms are close (<4ft) to the ground, mow the section to be sprayed about 1 foot high, wait for regrowth and then spray. Wait 2 to 3 weeks after spraying before disking or doing a controlled burn. Thinning rank NWSG and removing heavy thatch build-up at ground level are necessary to permit an increase in forbs/legumes/wildflowers and im-

proved, a combination of them many times is best. Applying glyphosate in late summer and following up with block disking is very effective. Using prescribed burning first or haying/grazing, then following that up with disking and/or a herbicide application is also an option. Keep in mind that every NWSG stand will have different plant compositions, potential invasive species or other factors that require different management strategies. Regardless, to improve your grasslands on your property, consider implementing one of these disturbance techniques.



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### PRIVATE LANDS BIOLOGISTS

