

Record Gobbler at First GA-FL Turkey Invitational

Twenty-six teams of dedicated turkey hunters competed at the Inaugural GA-FL Turkey Invitational and raised \$10,000 for quail research at Tall Timbers. The inaugural winners were Walter Hatchet and Travis Sherman of River Ridge Plantation. Their one-of-a-kind gobbler sported 1 – 7/8” spurs on both legs, had a 10 and half inch beard, and weighed 20 pounds, making it the largest spurred Eastern on record in Florida! The overall score for this bird should make it the new state record for Eastern’s in the “typical” class. Second place went to Phillip Watt and Larry Harmon and third place was taken by John Daniels and Brian Knox. The record gobbler will be displayed at next year’s invitational. We thank everyone that participated and look forward to next year’s event!

From the
GAME BIRD PROGRAM
by BILL PALMER



River Ridge Plantation’s team with birds L-R, Travis Sherman and Walter Hatchet (holding record bird).

and 2005) and lower in decreasing years (2003-04). Male incubation can dramatically increase production of chicks in the good years.

First Incubated Quail Nests Bode Well

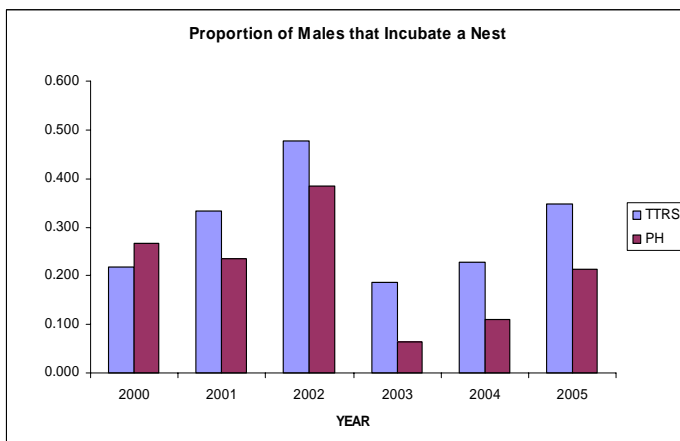
With good carryover of Fall populations and relatively high survival this spring we anticipated an early start to nesting. We found our first incubated nests during the last week of April and first week of May. We are anticipating a general increase again this year in bobwhite populations in the Red Hills.

Game Bird Program Develops National Plan to Restore Bobwhites

The Game Bird Program accepted an invitation to revise the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI). Similar to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan for ducks and geese, the NBCI provides the framework for conservation of bobwhite across the nation. The original plan was published in 2002 and this revision of NBCI is expected to be completed in 2008.

Male Incubation Rate

The proportion of males to incubate at least one nest during the nesting season varies from year to year. As the graph indicates, male incubation is higher during years with increases in bobwhite populations (2001-02



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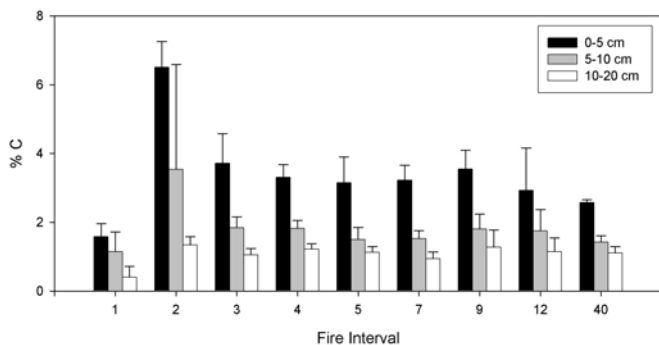


FIRE ECOLOGY

by KEVIN ROBERTSON

Fire Frequency and Carbon, Nitrogen Soil Storage

One question of concern to the public is how much of the carbon, nitrogen, and other nutrients stored in plants goes into the atmosphere, versus going back to the soil, when we burn. Of interest are the effects of prescribed burning on soil health and its contribution to greenhouse gases and global warming, which could influence the future of our right to burn. In the Red Hills, fuels for fires are mostly fine fuels, such as dead grass and pine needles. These mostly burn through flaming combustion, with gas emission rates of only about 4-18 g/kg of total biomass, compared to 12-60 g/kg during smoldering and glowing combustion of heavier fuels. Thus, our frequently burned pinelands burn much cleaner than your fireplace or a bonfire and return more nutrients to the soil.



Average percent carbon (\pm standard deviation) in the soil related to fire interval (years) at three soil depths.

To look at how different fire frequencies influence carbon storage in the soil, we used the Tall Timbers Fire Plots that have been burned at different intervals for 46 years. The 1-year interval fire plots had the lowest carbon and nitrogen, the 2-year plots had the highest, and the longer intervals had intermediate levels (see figure). Generally, soil carbon and nitrogen is related to annual plant productivity, or how much carbon is annually fixed by plant growth. In the 1-year fire interval, herb and woody vegetation is kept relatively sparse and at low annual productivity. During 2-year fire intervals, there is a great deal of growth in both herbaceous and woody vegetation, and also high root mortality that adds organic matter and carbon to the soil. At longer intervals, woody plants dominate and begin to survive fires, thus storing carbon and nutrients above the ground while depleting the soil.

With this information we and other researchers are contributing toward the understanding of carbon and nutrient budgets for pinelands under different fire regimes. This will help inform policy makers with reliable data on the effects of prescribed burning on greenhouse gases in southeastern United States pinelands managed with fire.

LAND MANAGEMENT

by ERIC STALLER

Getting the Community Involved

Jack Hittenger from Chiles High School, Tallahassee, Florida,

completed his externship, a program which allows school credit for training and work outside of the classroom. He has worked six hours a week during the school year at Tall Timbers and has been a big help with the Wood duck monitoring program, prescribed burning, post burn evaluations and spot herbicide treatments.



Tall Timbers' new landscaped and erected sign.

The Boy Scouts have been busy at Tall Timbers as well, Andrew Smith's eagle project, Troop 109, landscaped and erected the new Tall Timbers sign, while Hensley Harrison's, Troop 115, erected eight Wood duck boxes and also stained the Bird Watch Education Center building located near Gannet Pond on Tall Timbers' Henry M. Stevenson Memorial Bird Trail.

The newly stained Bird Watch Education Center located near Gannet Pond on Tall Timbers.



VERTEBRATE ECOLOGY

by JIM COX

Sparrow Breakthroughs

The summer breeding season has arrived, and with it comes some important new breakthroughs that have greatly enhanced research efforts in the Vertebrate Ecology section. Clark Jones has developed some new procedures for netting and banding Bachman's Sparrows that have led to unprecedented success. Using an expanded repertoire of sparrow calls that includes chip notes, aggressive twitters, as well as the normal song, Clark is netting sparrows at unheard of rates. For example, as of early 2004, only 850 sparrows had ever been banded throughout North America. In contrast, since March of this year, Clark and his intern Matt Klosterman have banded nearly 200 individuals on Arcadia and Pebble Hill Plantations.



Clark Jones holding a Bachman's Sparrow that was netted using a new calling procedure.

The phenomenal effort is leading to many new insights into the ecology of this declining pine-grassland species. For example, one long-held belief has been that sparrows abandon their breeding territories at the end of the year and move into new areas the next season. Clark has found a much higher degree of site fidelity and recorded dozens of males that occupy the same 5 to 10 acres held the previous year.

Woodpecker Consortium

Greg Hagan's recent move to the Game Bird Program as the Coordinator for the Upland Ecosystem Restoration Project (UERP) in Florida, has led to a big shift in the focus for Jim Cox. Cox is heading up all woodpecker-related activities until a new woodpecker biologist is hired. If you are enrolled in Georgia's Safe Harbor Program and need assistance developing contracts for burning or artificial cavities, please don't hesitate to contact Jim Cox ([850] 893-4153 ext. 223; email:jcox@ttrs.org). You'll probably have to leave a message because Cox also is monitoring 47 groups of woodpeckers this summer in hopes of securing enough juvenile birds to re-introduce woodpeckers to Tall Timbers Research Station this Fall. As of early May, over 35 nestlings had been banded and another 15 nests have young or eggs.



Jim Cox shown above in longleaf banding Red-cockaded Woodpecker nestlings.



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