

CONSERVATION COMMENTS

Preble Soil and Water Conservation District

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AUGUST 2011

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Preble SWCD
Web Address:
www.prebleswcd.com

Preble SWCD Fish Sale Now Underway

The Preble Soil and Water Conservation District is accepting orders now through September 23rd for our annual fish sale. Fingerling-sized Largemouth Bass, Redear Sunfish, Black Crappie, Channel Catfish, Bluegill, Hybrid Bluegill, and Yellow Perch may be purchased for pond stocking. Black Fathead Minnows, Golden Shiners, and White Amur will also be offered for sale.

Most ponds are stocked with a combination of a predator species and a forage species. Largemouth Bass is the recommended predator species for ponds in Ohio. Because bass feed almost entirely on other fish, a forage species should be stocked as a food source. Bluegill is the most commonly stocked forage species. Redear Shellcracker, commonly known as Redear Sunfish, is also a good food source. Their tendency to feed on snails, crayfish, and other mollusks earned them the name Shellcracker.



Channel Catfish can be stocked but probably won't reproduce in most recreational ponds. If they are fished out, restocking is the best way to keep a desired population. In larger ponds, structures have been installed to encourage spawning with some degree of success.

Yellow Perch and Black Crappie should only be stocked in larger ponds. They can compete with other species for food and eventually take over.



Stocking ponds with fish caught from streams and lakes is discouraged. It is easy for even the experts to misidentify some species. This practice usually results in an undesirable population in the pond.

White Amur, often called grass carp, are sometimes stocked as a biological method for controlling weeds. Even though they are a member of the minnow family, they have the potential to become quite large. As they grow, they develop a ferocious appetite for certain types of submerged aquatic vegetation, which is why they are effective in ponds. However, they are not effective for controlling algae and generally work best along with other means of weed control.

When stocking a pond, remember, the number and type of fish stocked will affect your success. Maintaining the proper balance of species is the key. The Preble Soil and Water Conservation District can assist you with questions on stocking a pond. For more information, call the office at (937) 456-5159.



Helping Quail in Southwest Ohio

Eric Lewis, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist

Hearing the call of “bob...white” in the morning or evening is not something many people in southwest Ohio get to hear these days, but the call of the Northern Bobwhite was a common bird call to hear at one time in southwestern Ohio. Loss of habitat and habitat fragmentation has really put a damper on the quail population in the last 20 years or so. But in the last few years, it seems there has been a slight increase in quail numbers in our area. This increase is possibly due to the conservation efforts in the past 5-10 years.

In my position as a wildlife biologist, over the years I have met with many landowners who recall days of multiple coveys on the farm, and days of hunting quail. There seems to be a historical tie between quail and the farms of times gone by. This helps spark a great interest in restoring quail and their habitat. There are ways that today’s farmers can help quail by implementing some basic management practices on their farms.

Three basic components for quail habitat are required for them to thrive in a given area and all of these components should be fairly close (within 70 feet) of each other:

- Brood rearing habitat - areas of clump grasses mixed with wildflowers. These areas should be fairly open at ground level with good overhead cover. This allows quail chicks to get around easily.
- Shrubby cover - provides thermal cover and escape cover from predators.
- Vegetation to provide insects and seeds for food - restored prairies can provide this habitat component.

Tall Fescue can be a major deterrent for bobwhites. Getting rid of fescue can make your farm much more attractive to quail. Fescue is a sod forming grass and is too thick for quail to use. There are native grasses like little bluestem, big bluestem, switch grass, and side oats that can be used in place of fescue and will improve your quail habitat tremendously. Even orchard grass can provide a good grass cover for quail. Reduced or delayed mowing can also help quail nesting efforts.

Now you may be asking, “That sounds great, but how do I get started?” There are cost-share programs available through USDA and other wildlife or habitat organizations that can help landowners restore quail habitat on their properties. There are also Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologists who work hand in hand with these conservation organizations and can help you get headed in the right direction. Your local SWCD/NRCS office is often a good place to start.

Constructing quail habitat and building quail populations takes time and results can vary widely, but without habitat restoration efforts, the quail of southwest Ohio may continue to decline.

For more information contact Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist, Erik Lewis at (937) 654-3884.



Meet the Summer Intern



Kristin Chambers has been employed as a Summer Intern at Preble SWCD since mid-June. As an upcoming Sophomore at Miami University who is majoring in Speech Pathology, she accepted the internship as a way to learn more about agriculture, conservation, and the environment. She is a resident of Lewisburg, where she resides with her mom, dad, brother, two dogs and one cat.

This summer, she has been able to help with the Pond Clinic and the annual Tillage Survey with Miami University, and has assisted with many waterway layouts, surveys, and construction checks. Kristin has also reorganized several of the filing systems in the office to make farm plans and administrative files easier to find. Kristin has enjoyed her time at Preble SWCD and will be concluding her 10-week internship in mid-August, just in time to resume fall classes at Miami University.

Preble Soil & Water Conservation District
1651 N. Barron Street
Eaton, OH 45320-1021

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Return Service Requested

FISH SALE

Now through September
Details Inside

All programs and services of the Preble SWCD are offered on a nondiscrimination basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or handicap.

Annual Meeting and Open House

November 15, 2011 - Mark your calendars for the Preble Soil and Water Conservation District's 62nd Annual Meeting & Open House. The SWCD Supervisor election will take place at this meeting.

Any resident 18 years of age or older who resides in Preble County can seek election to the SWCD board of supervisors. Names can be placed on the ballot by one of two ways:

- Candidates can be nominated by the SWCD nominating committee. This committee works throughout the year, looking for candidates who are interested in the conservation and protection of natural resources within the county.
- Interested individuals may also stop at the SWCD office at 1651 North Barron Street, Eaton, and pick up a nomination petition form.



Potential candidates need to secure at least 10 signatures from residents and/or landowners from the county and submit the petition to the district by the close of business on October 11, 2010. Candidates meeting the eligibility requirements and deadline will be listed on the ballot for the special election, which will take place on November 15, 2011 at The Preble Soil and Water Conservation District Office, Eaton, Ohio.

Soil and water conservation districts, located in all 88 Ohio counties, are legal subdivisions of state government that provide natural resource management assistance to county landowners and other units of local government. The district is funded by the Preble County Commissioners, and county funds are supplemented by funding from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. The district is governed by a five-member board of county residents. Board members serve staggered three-year terms.