

CONSERVATION COMMENTS

Preble Soil and Water Conservation District

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FEBRUARY 2011

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Erik Lewis

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Preble SWCD
Web Address:
www.prebleswcd.com

Please visit our new website!

2011 Tree Seedling Sale

The Annual Tree Seedling Sale is now underway at Preble SWCD, offering 17 different species of conifers, hardwoods, small trees and shrubs, as well as groundcover. These plants can be used for windbreaks, landscaping, reforestation, and wildlife habitat. There are no restrictions on where these seedlings may be planted, or how many may be ordered.

New to the sale this year are our 'Tree Cages', designed to keep small wildlife away from your seedling trees. Look on the back of the order form for more information.

The 1-3 year old seedlings are bare-rooted and sold in packages of 5 to 10 trees, depending on the species. Each package is dipped in a preservative gel to keep the roots moist, and then placed in a plastic bag. The seedlings should be planted as soon as they are received. Orders will be taken until Friday, March 18th. Payment must accompany the order in the form of cash or check. No orders will be taken by fax or e-mail. This year's pickup date will be Tuesday, April 5th, at the Preble SWCD office. A reminder postcard will be sent out prior to the pickup date.

A description of each of the tree species is included on the back of the order form. If you would like more information about the plants for sale or their suitability for planting, please contact the office at (937) 456-5159.



2010 Open House Highlights



Groh Farms (Doug, Adam, & Andy Groh) was recognized as the 2010 Outstanding Cooperator

On November 16th, 2010, the Preble SWCD held its Annual Meeting-Open House at the Preble SWCD Office. At the meeting, there were several cooperators recognized for their conservation work. Donn Kolb was also re-elected to serve another three-year term on the Board of Supervisors.



2011 Preble SWCD
Board of Supervisors

QUAIL, HABITAT, AND HOW YOU CAN HELP!!!!

CP33 Habitat Buffers Can Help Restore Quail Habitat

By: Erik Lewis, Farm Bill Biologist

Here we are, five years after the USDA introduced its first wildlife specific conservation practice aimed at restoring declining habitat for the Northern Bobwhite Quail and other grassland dependent wildlife. The practice, known as CP33-habitat buffers or “quail borders”, is designed to provide nesting and brood rearing habitat as borders on the edges of crop fields. The USDA offers rental and cost share payments to landowners with eligible crop land who establish CP33 on their crop fields. The borders are planted into native grasses and wildflowers that provide early succession grassland habitat that quail require as a part of their habitat needs.

The Northern Bobwhite Quail population has been in decline for many decades throughout its entire range; this is due to many factors like severe weather, changes in farming practices, and habitat loss. I have met with many landowners who remember days of abundant quail and multiple coveys on their farms, but also recall the lack of quail following the heavy snow storms of the late 70’s. Quail populations in Southwest Ohio have managed to hang on, probably due to less large scale farming. The other benefit to quail is the rolling type landscape with more fencerows, smaller crop fields, and woody draws in the region. These areas have also seen some of the best quail responses to the CP33 habitat practice. I personally have seen increases in quail numbers in Butler, Miami, Montgomery, and Preble counties.

Partnerships among conservation and wildlife agencies and groups help spread the message and get habitat back on the ground. The Ohio Division of Wildlife is taking quail management very seriously and has very experienced and passionate biologists who can help private landowners. “The Division of Wildlife is seeing positive results from the CP33 Quail Borders. I have heard from numerous landowners that quail are using the borders and that they have seen quail on their farm for the first time in many years” said Al Gerhart, District 5 Assistant Wildlife Management Supervisor. I also had a chance to talk with Terry Lavy who is habitat chairman for the Miami County Chapter of Pheasants Forever and he said “I am delighted that each spring I get more and more reports from our members and landowners who call us and remark that they just saw a rooster pheasant cross our driveway or Quail are calling from the fencerow! It is also obvious that other wildlife, both game and non-game critters, are benefiting as well. The recovery is not always as fast as we would like to see it, but it is working”.



So, how can you as a landowner manage for quail on your property? Optimal Bobwhite habitat should have 5-20% woody/shrubby cover, interspersed with herbaceous cover consisting of native clump grasses and native wildflowers (i.e. Forbs), with 30 to 60 percent bare ground underneath so the young quail chicks can forage. The buffers also provide food and cover from weather and the many species of quail predators.

Landowners who are eligible for CP33 should also consider establishing habitat buffers into their agricultural practices. It has been shown that CP33 can be used to recover regional populations if used on a broader scale (i.e. township size). With partnership funding at the local, state and federal level, there is also minimal cost to the landowner and in many cases it can increase farm income.

Mark your calendars for the upcoming Quail Management Workshop held at Hueston Woods State Park on Saturday, February 19th, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. A free meal will be provided. Pre-registration is required.

To register for the workshop or to find out more about quail management, please contact Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist, Erik Lewis at 937-654-3884.

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Eaton, OH 45320-1021

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit #342
Eaton, OH 45320

PREBLE SWCD TREE SALE

Look inside for the 2011
Tree Sale flyer.

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.

Great Backyard Bird Count at Preble County Historical Society Farm

Take a mid-winter nature break with the Great Backyard Bird Count February 18th-21st, 2011, from 10:00 am - 5:00 pm each day at the Preble County Historical Center, located at 7693 Swartsel Road, Eaton, Ohio (about six miles Southeast of Eaton and one mile Northwest of Gratis off St. Rt. 122).

This event is free and open to the public. Participants will join tens of thousands of volunteers of all levels of birding experience in counting the birds.

Each checklist submitted by these "citizen scientists" helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how the birds are doing—and how to protect them. Last year, participants turned in more than 93,600 checklists online, creating the continent's largest instantaneous snapshot of bird populations ever recorded.

“Taking part in the Great Backyard Bird Count is a great way to get outside with family and friends, have fun, and help birds—all at the same time. Anyone who can identify even a few species can provide important information that enables scientists to learn more about how the environment is changing and how that affects our conservation priorities,” said Audubon Education Vice President, Judy Braus. “Everyone who participates in the GBBC—families, teachers, and young people—will get a chance to hone their observation skills, learn more about birds, and make a great contribution to the future!”

Join in the fun, hike the trails; it's a great winter family-oriented activity. Guided hikes will be offered, or hike at your leisure on the six miles of trails throughout the Center's grounds. Children's activities will be offered: make a bird-house, suet, bird feeders, bird puzzles, bird word search, coloring pages, and plenty more! All children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Please remember to dress appropriate for the weather.

For updates about the Great Backyard Bird Count sponsored by the Preble County Historical Society on February 18th-21st, call (937)787-4256, or email: preblecohistsoc@brecnet.com, or visit their web site: <http://www.pchs.preblecounty.com>.