Wildlife Management Extension Websites

Web-based resources, supported by Florida Wildlife Extension at the University of Florida, are available to landowners and managers, farmers, and wildlife enthusiasts to provide easy access to information on ways to manage property for the benefit of wildlife. These websites feature habitat information, management techniques, resources for assistance programs, as well as video streaming of Florida Cooperative Extension Service shortcourses on wildlife management.

Wildlife and their use have always been a part of Florida, and conserving wildlife resources continues to be a priority for many Floridians and visitors to the State; as is preserving the way of life, culture, and means of making a living. Consequently, it is not only wildlife resources that enhance the quality of life and attract people to Florida, but also its farms, ranches, prairies, and forest lands, as well as the people and communities that depend on them. Changing land-uses throughout the State in recent decades have led to wildlife habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation, and concomitant declines in many wildlife populations. Such declines in wildlife populations not only hurt Florida’s multi-billion dollar ecotourism industry, but its culture as well.

The “Florida Quail” website (http://floridaquail.wec.ufl.edu/) provides information on bobwhite biology, status and distribution, management, conservation options, and alternative enterprises to keep land managers or other stewards informed in the recovery of the important bird.

The northern bobwhite, or simply the bobwhite quail, has always been a favorite quarry of Florida’s hunters. However, during the past 50 years this bird has undergone considerable declines in Florida and throughout North America. Such declines not only effect hunters and tradition, but all of Florida’s people and ecosystems, as the bobwhite has important biological, aesthetic, social, recreational, and economic value. Declines in quail populations appear to be primarily the result of habitat loss and degradation associated with changing land-use practices. All is not lost, however, as bobwhite populations respond quickly to habitat improvements, and several programs are now underway at local, state, and national levels to restore habitats and quail populations throughout Florida and elsewhere in its range.

Another website “Wildlife and Agriculture” (http://wildlifeandag.wec.ufl.edu/) provides information on how agricultural lands can be managed so that wildlife and agriculture can both thrive on the same piece of property to benefit wildlife conservation, preserve agricultural lands and culture, and provide sustainable and profitable business opportunities.

For more information on these websites, contact Bill Giuliano, Professor and Extension Specialist in Wildlife Management at the University of Florida, at docg@ufl.edu.
Upcoming Conferences

- **Carbon Credit Conference**
  March 4, 2008, 9-11 am at UF/IFAS Suwannee County Extension Office, Live Oak, FL
  Call Brian Cobble (386) 364-5314 to register

- **Ecological Dimensions of Biofuels**
  March 10, 2008 at Ronald Regan Building & International Trade Center, Washington DC
  For more information visit [http://esa.org/biofuels/](http://esa.org/biofuels/).

- **Third Montane Longleaf Conference**
  March 11-12, 2008, Auburn Univeristy, Auburn AL
  Contact John Kush at 334-844-1065 or [kushjoh@auburn.edu](mailto:kushjoh@auburn.edu) for registration form

- **Sixth Southern Forestry and Natural Resource Management GIS Conference**
  March 24-26, 2008 at Radisson WorldGate Resort, Orlando, FL
  For more information visit [http://soforgis.net/](http://soforgis.net/).

- **39th Annual SAF/SFRC Spring Symposium**
  April 15-17, Paramount Hotel, Gainesville, FL
  More information will be posted soon at [http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/events.html](http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/events.html).

Recent Research Findings

**Influence of deer, cattle grazing and timber harvest on plant species diversity in a longleaf pine bluestem ecosystem**


Despite a recent slowing in the negative historical trend, losses of naturally-regenerated longleaf pine forests currently continue, largely as a result of conversion to plantations of faster growing pine species. Comparing the impacts of type conversion with silvicultural approaches that maintain longleaf pine and ascertaining their interaction with the influence of other resource management practices, such as grazing, on plant species diversity are essential in discerning the effects of these activities on the long-term sustainability of these ecosystems. A flatwoods longleaf pine bluestem ecosystem, which naturally regenerated following timber harvest during the early 20th century, on the coastal plain of southern Alabama, USA was thinned to a residual basal area of 17 m2/ha or clearcut, windrowed and planted with slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) seedlings in 1972 and then fenced in 1977 to differentially exclude grazing by deer and cattle. Neither grazing by deer alone nor deer in combination with cattle significantly altered vascular plant cover or species diversity; however, substantial differences were noted between the understory plant communities in the thinned forests and clearcut areas. Woody understory vegetation steadily increased through time, with woody plant cover in clearcuts (41%) dominated by the tree seedlings of *Pinus elliottii* and *Quercus spp.* being greater than that in thinned forests (31%) which were dominated by shrubs, principally *Ilex glabra*. While grass cover dominated by *Schizachyrium scoparium* and *Andropogon spp.* remained stable (approx equal to 81%), the foliar cover of all forbs declined through time (from 42 to 18%) as woody plant cover increased. Although the overall species richness and diversity declined and evenness increased through time, understory species richness and diversity were consistently higher in thinned forests than in artificially-regenerated clearcuts. Despite a modest short-term decline in this differential, indicating a partial recovery of the clearcut areas over time, the disparity in understory plant diversity between thinned forests and clearcuts persisted for at least a decade. Whether grazing includes domestic cattle or is limited to native ungulates, such as white-tailed deer, we recommend that longleaf pine forests not be clearcut and replaced by plantations of other pines, if the ecological diversity is to be conserved, high quality habitat is to be maintained and longleaf pine ecosystems are to be sustained.