

Wildlife Habitat Committee Newsletter

September 2011

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Note from the Chair, Clare Paulson

I hope all is well for each of the members of the committee. As I have pondered what to write about, I thought of a statement from Bendigo Shafter by Louis La'Mour, "We are a people of the frontier, born to it, breed to it, looking always toward it. And when the frontiers of our own lands are gone, when we have drawn them all into an ordered world, then we must seek other frontiers." I feel this type of drive and longing about our environment. It is the always looking towards the natural world that lead me to chose wildlife and range as my course of study and career. Just being able to work in and study the beauty of nature makes each day exciting. Living back in the red rock country of Southern Utah and Northern Arizona, I marvel each day how the colors are always different. It is a true reminder of how everything around us is in a continual state of change and how much there truly is to nature. Trying to understand it all and work with nature makes my job fulfilling. All winter long, I find myself looking forward to the spring to get back out in the field to start on all the different projects for work.

I missed being at the annual meeting this past February. I heard that the symposiums sponsored by the committee were a success, as was the entire meeting. I think we should take time to thanks those who put forth the effort to organize them. From the minutes, it looks like the committee will be sponsoring three more great symposiums at the Spokane, Washington meeting on Wild Horse/Wildlife Interactions, Energy development effects on Rangelands and possibly on salmon and riparian habitat expanded to Threatened and Endangered Species. In closing, I want wish everyone a great fall and hope you enjoyed your time out in the field.

PROPOSED FIRE CONSORTIA BEGIN PLANNING

By Sherry Leis

The Joint Fire Science program (JFSP) is encouraging the development of regional fire consortia. JFSP is an interagency effort to support development of fire science and dissemination of fire science to managers. JFSP has offered competitive grants for groups to form regional consortia to improve communication and information dissemination between researchers, natural resource managers, and fire practitioners http://www.firescience.gov/JFSP_Consortia.cfm. Fire fire consortia with geographic and ecosystem foci that include the Great Plains, southwest, western states and California are being formed. Several other fire consor-

tia are being planned in the Midwest and eastern states.

The Great Plains fire consortium will be based at Oklahoma State University and will focus on increasing the availability and application of fire science information for natural resource management and to serve as a conduit for fire managers to share research needs with the research community within the Great Plains. Their focus includes both public and private grassland as well as working lands. The Midwest Oak and Woodland Forest planning consortium will be based in Columbia, Missouri and will focus on woodland systems in the Midwest. The Eastern Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savanna Consortium will be based in Madison, Wisconsin and will focus on prairie

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Fire Consortia.... Continued from page 1

and savanna remnants and restorations in the upper Midwest.

Each of these consortia is developing a full proposal to submit by September 30. The proposal development process includes gathering feedback about information needs and preferred modes of communication from professionals and private landowners in each geographic focus area. The three planning consortia listed above have collaboratively developed a survey that will be disseminated to many who use fire on wildlands in the region. The survey is your chance to help shape the consortium and will arrive in an email from the Survey Center at the University of Wisconsin. Other elements of the proposal include details about website development and other activities and products that the consortia plan to produce to address their objectives.

Existing consortia, such as the Southern Fire Exchange, are already hosting webinars, local training events, and producing newsletters. The three Midwestern consortia in development are also excited to help bridge the gap between natural resource management with fire and the research community of the Great Plains and Midwest. Even though the fire community is a relatively small group of often disconnected individuals, the consortia plan to strengthen existing relationships and build new ones. If you would like to be placed on the contact list for any of the three planning consortiums, please contact the following:

Great Plains Consortium, please contact greatplainsconsortium@okstate.edu

Midwest Oak Woodland and Forest Consortium, please contact Keith Grabner, kgrabner@usgs.gov (573-777-1670)

[Eastern Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savanna Consortium](#) or please contact Paul Zedler, phzedler@wisc.edu, (608-265-8018)

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Range Management Specialist

BLM

Monticello, UT

usajobs.gov

Closes 10/5/11

Wildlife Biologist

NRCS

Minden, NV

usajobs.gov

Closes 10/5/11

Range Management Specialist

Forest Service

Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest

usajobs.gov

Closes 10/18/11

Olfactory Crypsis

By Dale Rollins

(article borrowed from Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch E-quail Newsletter)

Have your bird dogs ever pointed a quail on a nest? Amazingly, mine have not, and they're with me nearly every time I go out. And I'll hold my dogs up next to anybody's for their ability to find and point quail.

Thus, it begs the question "does a nesting quail have the ability to mask its scent," i.e., to achieve some level of "olfactory crypsis?" Recent research in Europe has investigated the ability of nesting birds to remain undetected from their keen-nosed predators. The initial results are intriguing and sure to spur more extensive studies.

The secret appears to be linked to the "preen gland" ("oil gland"), technically known as the uropygial gland. This external gland sits at the base of the bird's tail feathers and produces an oily substance used to preen and condition the bird's feathers. But maybe its function goes beyond weather-proofing . . . perhaps it has a role in predator-proofing too.

An interesting example of apparent olfactory crypsis is the change in the composition of preen oil associated with breeding recorded in several ground-nesting birds. Normal oils are replaced by less volatile ones prior to the onset of breeding and continues into incubation (suggesting olfactory camouflage). Further, in species where only the female incubates, the male does not show this change in oil composition. An experiment with a single dog provides some evidence that the breeding-related waxes are more difficult to detect than the normal waxes in an abstract situation. These promising results very much warrant further investigation in a more realistic setting, if possible with natural predators.

Scientists at the Game Conservancy Trust in Scotland discovered evidence for a parasite-induced increase in the scent produced by grouse in such a way as to increase their vulnerability to mammalian predators (see [publication](#)). Grouse treated with an anthelmintic drug were less easily found by dogs. Nesting grouse treated with an anthelmintic survived at higher rates than non-treated birds.

Ongoing research at RPQRR is examining the dynamics of the bobwhite's cecal [worm](#) (*Aulonocephalus*) to determine its possible role in parasitism-induced predation. Stacie Villareal, a graduate student at Texas A&M-Kingsville, has analyzed bobwhites from RPQRR for two years and reports heavy parasite loads from cecal worms and also eyeworms. She will defend her thesis this fall . . . stay tuned.

Comments From The Editor

If you have information that you would like posted or an article that you would like to share with the Wildlife Habitat Committee please contact the editor. This newsletter is a forum for exchanging ideas and experience. The next issue will come out in May 2012. Please send information to the editor (Erica Freese) by e-mail to:

efreese@cabnr.unr.edu

You can also find this and every past newsletter at

http://www.rangelands.org/wildlifehabitat/whc_newsletters.shtml

