



QUAIL AND UPLAND WILDLIFE FEDERATION

THE HABITAT GUIDE

VOLUME 17 ISSUE 2 • MARCH 2026



Notes from the Dashboard:

DANGER: Data center power station land grabs

By Craig Alderman — It is happening everywhere. At an alarming rate we are experiencing acres of farm lands being targeted and purchased for data center (AI) power stations. Lands in very rural areas with low populations,

very few regulations or codes, and very low oversight are being targeted for acquisition for these large solar panel arrays, designed to provide power to AI stations miles away. Located near main trunk lines heading to the AI location, they are not small projects. Further, the water use is very, very high - as in the millions of gallons.

From one we are fighting of 10,000 acres of the best farm land Missouri has, to smaller ones of 600 to 1,000 acres. They are a blight on the land but more important, they are robbing Agricultural lands for the future as once these data centers are installed, it is lost for anything else.

Tempting landowners with cash in hand quietly and almost secretly to avoid public notice, they are, in our opinion, unscrupulous and unethical. The loss of farm lands is very alarming, never mind adding this to the mix.

AT QUWF we have sounded the alarm for years of the lack of focus on “disappearing” private land owners, the family farms and ranches making up the backbone of this country. Millions of acres lost each year in all AG states, per state. The Farm Bill is a political piggy bank without much going to the landowner, he does not need coaching, does not need more surveys, does not need government mandatory anything.

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‘Tis the tick season!

From the editor — As the weather begins to warm, the ticks emerge from their winter hiding places. Many people suffer from various diseases caused by ticks, including Alpha-Gal, which causes horrible reactions to any meats, some dairy products, and animal by products like using beef tallow for frying.

In my family, my bride, daughter, and son all seriously suffer from Alpha-Gal. Some have near life-threatening reactions, so we do not take it lightly.

Read more on Page 6



Continued from Page 1 — He or she needs help in specific areas, not programs locking land use up for a decade. He needs help with costs, the cow/calf, crop or milk middleman taking the big dollars and letting him, the private landowner, suffer under increasing costs with absolutely no way to get compensation for increasing fuel costs, feed, seed, fertilizer or the Biggy, equipment. Expansion? Adding lands to the farm is like talking about buying a state instead of acreage.

Compound this by the super charged effort to build these Data Center power sources with excessive water use, and we, as a society, lose in so many ways. No land, no crops, no cattle, NO FOOD, no private lands, no wildlife, decreased hunting until it's gone. Use millions of gallons of water, no fish.

Do you get the picture yet? Stay tuned into the AI land grabs in your area, ASK!

On the other side, all farm children are exceptionally tempted to grab the cash these data centers offer and run. Farming is hard work, always has been, their bonding with the soil and work is not the same as their parents. They lived seeing the middleman taking the profit, hurting the farm (the family) causing constant financial problems, uncontrolled stress, the battles with government, poor prices and of course the weather. We have to change things, period. Once the land is sold it cannot be used for AG purposes again.

It is time to step up! Catch you across the creek, if there is enough water.



Craig Alderman is the Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation founder and executive director. Reach him at admin@quwf.net.

Leave baby animals alone, be mindful of diseases

Editor's Note: Each year we remind all conservationists, hunters and landowners of this message - leave baby animals alone. Take pictures but do not touch. Good article from Montana says it well.

Each spring, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks receives calls from people who have picked up deer fawns or other wildlife. It's important to remember that FWP does not accept, hold or rehabilitate moose, deer, elk and most other animals.

Often times, people think they are rescuing an orphaned animal. However, it's important to understand that wildlife care for their young much differently than humans. They have strategies to provide the highest chance of survival for their young.

One strategy that some species, particularly those species that are more commonly seen as prey (deer, rabbits, birds), use is to distance themselves from their young for many hours at a time. This helps to keep predators away from their young. For example, fawns are born without a scent and it is safer for them if their mother, who has a scent, is not nearby. This also can potentially distract a predator into focusing on the doe instead of their offspring.

FWP believes wild animals thrive better in the wild where they have plenty of natural habitat (food, water, shelter, space) and thrive better with other wildlife than with humans, who they consider an apex predator. Nature provides them the best options for survival and a better quality of life.

The potential to spread wildlife disease is also a good reason to leave young wildlife alone.

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Continued from Page 2 — Baby ground squirrels, raccoons and rabbits can carry zoonotic diseases, which means diseases that are infectious for humans. Examples include plague, hemorrhagic diseases and tularemia.

If you see a baby animal, whether a goose or a grizzly, keep your distance and leave it alone. Handling baby animals can be dangerous, and usually once young animals are picked up by people they can't be rehabilitated. They are often abandoned by adult animals once human scent is transferred to them.

What can you do?

- **Leave it there:** It's natural for deer and elk to leave their young alone for extended periods of time.
- **Control your dog:** Keep your dog under control, especially in the spring when newborn wildlife is most vulnerable. Pet owners can be cited and dogs that harass or kill wildlife may by law have to be destroyed.
- **Keep in mind:** It is illegal to possess and care for a live animal taken from the wild.



As a wildlife agency, FWP's priority is to keep wild animals wild. When people keep and raise elk, deer or other animals, it habituates wildlife to humans, potentially causing problems once released back into the wild.

Should someone bring a deer or elk to FWP, they'll be asked to take the animal back to the site where it was found. If the animal can't be returned, it may need to be humanely euthanized.

Deer camps hunt down hunger in the Natural State

Arkansas deer clubs donated 712 deer to Arkansas Hunters Feeding the Hungry last year, adding to the harvest from urban archery hunts and participating processors.

HOT SPRINGS — Arkansas Hunters Feeding the Hungry President Ronnie Ritter and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Deer Management Assistance Program Coordinator Jeremy Brown updated commissioners at the AGFC's March committee meeting on the success of a new partnership with deer camps to balance deer herds and fight food insecurity in the state.

Many older hunters grew up in a time when harvesting an antlerless deer was taboo, as the Arkansas deer population was still in the recovery stage after decades of overexploitation and market hunting, which nearly wiped the species from the state. Herds today have recovered to a point of abundance, shifting the management need to balance the herd into a healthy, manageable size. Now, managers focus on trying to take antlerless deer in equal numbers to mature bucks.

Brown explained that Arkansas's deer herd is now fairly well balanced, but some pockets still need more harvest of antlerless deer, especially on private land. Private land deer managers, provided through the [National Deer Association](#) and coordinated through the AGFC's Private Lands Habitat Division's DMAP program, have increased the agency's capacity to work one-on-one with clubs to best manage their properties. Even with this help, the gap in antlerless harvest on private land remained.

"We were working with all these clubs and issuing a lot of tags for them to harvest additional antlerless deer, but we just weren't seeing them get out and fill those tags," Brown said. "At the same time, Arkansas Hunters Feeding the Hungry was facing the challenge of collecting deer from hunters in a way that was more efficient than picking up one here and one there.

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Continued from Page 3 — The formula for success was there; we just needed to put the two groups together."

In 2022, Brown and Ritter got together to hold a focused antlerless hunt at the Battle Axe Hunting Club in Lee County. The club yielded 52 deer in year one, proving the concept was worth the effort. The program went statewide during the 2024-25 deer hunting season.

The program has evolved beyond simply collecting from a club, too. With a little coordination between hunters and staff, DMAP biologists are able to bring a refrigerated trailer to a deer camp the day before they schedule a hunt for antlerless deer, then pick it up a few days later, delivering dozens of deer to processors at one time.

"I just don't have the staff or capacity to drive to all the locations across the state in time to get the deer processed, but the DMAP biologists and multiple refrigerated trailers have really helped with that issue," Ritter said.

The 2025-26 deer season broke new records, thanks to the combined effort of the two agencies and multiple deer clubs.

"Last deer season, hunters harvested and donated 715 deer in 52 clubs across the state," Ritter said. "That generated 23,595 pounds of venison. More than 5,300 pounds of ground venison was distributed to needy families, and we created 128,000 packages of shelf-stable snack sticks. Those sticks are used in backpack programs at schools to ensure children in that area have protein to eat at home on weekends."

The plan is working for the clubs, too.

In addition to ground venison for food banks, AHFH delivers shelf-stable snack sticks for backpack programs at schools throughout Arkansas. AGFC photo.

"We receive a lot of comments from club members who are excited to be a part of this program, knowing their effort is being put to a truly good cause," Brown said. "And as these clubs start to reach those harvest goals the biologists recommend, more are also seeing increased herd quality. Mature bucks are being seen more frequently, and the quality of those deer is increasing with additional resources available now that the herd is balanced."

The demand for protein is far from met, however. Despite record numbers of deer provided and servings of food distributed through AHFH, Ritter says he receives as many calls today as he did when he first began working with the agency more than 25 years ago.

"I receive calls every week from food pantries looking for ground meat," Ritter said. "During these government shutdowns, that increases to two to three calls a day."

Brown says the management side of the equation also has room to grow.

"We probably have about 300 clubs with the capacity and need for increased antlerless harvest, so we're really only limited by the funding to pay for the processing and the availability of the refrigerated trailers AHFH has.

"The trailers were fully booked in the early part of the season, but we have a lot more availability from December to February if clubs still need to remove those does to meet their goals."



DMAP biologists drop off refrigerated trailers at deer clubs for a weekend hunt, then collect the trailer when the hunt is complete and deliver the deer to participating processors. AGFC photo



Ask Alexa to play 101.3 Real Country or AM 560 in the Morning, or go online and download the **free app**.

Continued from Page 1 — As a biologist and one who totally enjoys working outside in the woods and fields, have to be extremely careful I do not bring the bad critters in the house. I have a ritual to prepare for the work and after each outing.

1. I wear gators, a knee-high pair of leggings sprayed down regularly with Sawyer brand Permethrin. The gators are re-sprayed after each use on both sides and hung to dry. They hook under my boots which are also sprayed before I put on the gators along with pant cuffs. They are not expensive and are available from Amazon, as is the Sawyer Clothing Spray. This works and you can see the critters on the gators release. You can try the local box stores, but when the season hits they rarely have any in stock and not the larger spray bottles we use.
2. **I have work pants I use in the woods that are regularly sprayed down and let dry overnight BEFORE wearing them.** If you carry any gear bags into the woods, make sure that it is sprayed down well before heading out. Again, spray the night before to let it dry. Long sleeve shirts are the best in tick country, sprayed down and dry before wearing. Any place that is tight or restricted like a belt line, sock line, is where they like to attach but they can be anywhere.



Now for exposed skin.

3. **Rule one, I always wear good leather work clothes in the woods or while working, no exceptions.** There are many critters that just bite when you least expect it. We have brown recluse spiders (in the barn while reaching into boxes or containers) and black widows that live up to their names.
4. **I spray down exposed skin with Sawyer 100% Deet, spraying some on my hands and wiping around my neck as well as hitting the belt line. I take off my "work watch" before spraying my arms as the Deet will cloud the lens, then put it back on.**
5. **Needless to say, after working, gators and boots are removed in the garage. Gators are resprayed and hung to dry.**



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6. Each day a good shower is required with, of course, a serious tick check. Do not forget to spray the tractor, dozer, ATV or UTV seat.

We carry the 100% Deet with us. You can use 100% Deet on shirts, T-shirts and pants, **but never use it on children.** As mentioned, get supplies early. When you need it most likely it will be out of stock locally in the strength you need. Many stores do not carry the 100% Deet version, but if you work in the woods, this is the best option.

Also understand where ticks are most likely to be, around shady low cedar limbs, lower tree branches, brush, etc. They do not jump so they need you to brush up against their launch pad to attach.

Important note: Ticks have no cooling system so they will avoid direct sunlight choosing shady field edges not exposed to direct sunlight. They are transported, moved around, by deer primarily and will drop off when they have extracted the blood in any location a deer has travelled. Any time you install wildlife forest openings, allowing much more sunlight to hit the forest floor, they avoid the light.



ND game wardens association offers scholarships



The North Dakota Game Wardens Association is sponsoring scholarships for the fall semester for higher education students interested in majoring in wildlife law enforcement or a related field.

Applications must be submitted by email to ndgamewardens@gmail.com by May 1.

For all your chapter needs, please call Leslie Casanova direct at Sportsman Insurance Agency at 1-800-925-7767. In most cases, Leslie can have your insurance the same day!



Wildlife captures provide insights to big game

Wildlife officials bolstered research and monitoring efforts of big game species in Nebraska with the help of a contracted helicopter crew in February.

With cooperation from landowners, elk, mule deer and bighorn sheep were captured, processed and returned to the landscape in specific regions of the state.

Bighorn Sheep

The most recent of the captures was Feb. 23 when 32 bighorn sheep were fitted with radio collars in the Wildcat Hills and Pine Ridge. The captures were part of a continuing effort to track movements, distribution, habitat use, survival and disease prevalence.

In recent years, bighorn sheep captures have been conducted annually by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in collaboration with many conservation partners. Once extirpated, the species stands at about 220 sheep in the Panhandle.

Mule Deer

In mid-February, 58 mule deer were fitted with tracking collars or solar ear tags in the Wildcat Hills for a study aimed at investigating the impact of chronic wasting disease in the species. Additional biological samples were collected for data about mule deer health and to develop and evaluate tools for CWD detection in live animals.

The research project, now in its third year, is a partnership between Game and Parks, the National Wildlife Research Center and Colorado State University. Researchers are working to develop understanding about how CWD affects deer populations, identify areas of increased transmission through accumulation on the land, and determine CWD infection status and behavioral responses by observing how animals use the landscape.

Elk

In a research project led by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, elk captures were conducted in hunting units 7 and 14 of the state's central and north-central regions Feb. 2-6.

This is the fourth and final year of the project's capture phase with 28 elk captured and radio-collared. Since 2022, 229 elk have been collared throughout the species' range in Nebraska.

The project is evaluating resource selection, movement, survival and population dynamics of elk.

The analysis phase has begun and is set for completion in 2028. Findings will guide management decisions for the species.



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Sturm, Ruger & Company, Inc. (NYSE: RGR) proudly announces the launch of its 250th Anniversary Series of firearms, commemorating the United States Semiquincentennial and celebrating the Company's deep roots in American manufacturing.

Echoing the iconic commemorative line introduced for the nation's Bicentennial in 1976, each limited production model in this new series is distinctly marked: "Made in the 250th Year of American Liberty." In honoring this milestone, the series also pays tribute to the freedoms safeguarded by the Second Amendment - protections that have helped shape the American experience for 250 years.

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reflecting generations of American skill and spirit. Crafted with the care and workmanship that have long defined American industry, they are built to serve in the field today and to endure as heirlooms for future generations.

Initial offerings include commemorative models across several popular product lines, including the 10/22® rifle, LCP® MAX pistol, Ruger American® Gen II rifle, Mark IV™ 22/45™ pistol, Super Wrangler® revolver and AR Lower - ensuring a 250th Anniversary option for every Ruger customer.

Ruger is also proud to reintroduce its standard stripped AR Lower for enthusiasts who prefer a noncommemorative foundation for their next build. Ruger's AR Lower Receiver is a stripped AR-15 pattern lower receiver machined from 7075-T6 forgings with a hardcoat anodized finish. This AR Lower is machined to mil-spec dimensions ensuring that your build goes together smoothly.



TWO HISTORIES ONE NEW LEGACY



University of Montana names next Boone & Crockett prof

Biologist Heather Johnson will serve as the University's next Boone and Crockett Professor of Wildlife Conservation. (Courtesy photo)

The University of Montana's top-ranked [Wildlife Biology Program](#) recently named Heather Johnson the new Boone and Crockett Professor of Wildlife Conservation.

The inaugural Boone and Crockett Chair was appointed in 1993, and Johnson will be the sixth researcher to serve in the role.

As a researcher with the UM-based [Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit](#) and several state wildlife agencies, Johnson's work has actively informed management and policy decisions for wildlife conservation across the West.

"I am honored and thrilled to serve in this position and to work on behalf of both the University of Montana and the Boone and Crockett Club," Johnson said. "In this role, I look forward to building a research program that produces actionable science for big game, delivers meaningful conservation outcomes and helps train the next generation of wildlife professionals."

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QUWF welcomes All veterans. All the time.

The Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation was formed to focus on and help veteran landowners, veteran sportsmen, and all veterans who are interested in the great outdoors.

QUWF staff will help all veterans find and get benefit assistance through the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) or other resources.

You are NOT alone.

Veterans who served our country honorably deserve and have earned the right now to enjoy its freedoms and receive the support and benefits they deserve.

We are the ONLY VETERAN FORMED and managed national wildlife and conservation organization in the U.S. QUWF and our chapters support veteran businesses as well. Let us know.



Continued from Page 10 — Founded in 1887 by Theodore Roosevelt, the Boone and Crockett Club is the oldest conservation organization in the country, playing a critical role in the conservation of the nation's wildlife and land resources for almost 140 years.

In order to educate the next generation of wildlife leaders and professionals, the Club established its University Programs in 1993 to provide science-based knowledge from seasoned wildlife professionals and educators to prepare policy-fluent wildlife biologists for the responsible and wise management of wildlife in the future.

A central component of Montana's Boone and Crockett program is integrating wildlife conservation and land management.

"Our organization created this endowed professor role with the vision of supporting the development of the next generation of conservation professionals," said Dr. Steven Leath, executive vice president of administration for the Boone and Crockett Club and chair of the University Programs committee. "Dr. Johnson's broad experiences in practical wildlife science, and her experience at the University of Montana, will carry on this tradition as we educate and train the students who will develop solutions to the significant challenges in natural resource conservation that we face."

Additionally, the Boone and Crockett Wildlife Conservation Education and Research Endowment, created by generous gifts from numerous donors, exists at UM to support the research and graduate education functions of the program. This fund amplifies the impact the professor in this role can make.

Johnson's research focuses on conservation and management challenges facing large mammals like bears, elk, caribou and bighorn sheep. Her work primarily investigates how climate change and human activities influence wildlife habitat, behavior and population dynamics, as well as the effectiveness of different management strategies for minimizing these impacts.

She is a nationally and internationally recognized expert often consulted by managers, scientists and policymakers across the country.

"Dr. Johnson has established herself as one of the premier large mammal ecologists working on applied conservation challenges," said Chad Bishop, the director of UM's Wildlife Biology Program. "She will be an asset to both our program and the Boone and Crockett Club as we work with partners to strengthen science-informed conservation policy in North America."

UM's Wildlife Biology Program ranks among the top wildlife conservation programs in the country, and its faculty lead the field in scholarship and teaching.

The program is an interdisciplinary effort shared by the [W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation](#), the [Division of Biological Sciences](#) and the Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit.

"Dr. Johnson's addition to our team will help ensure we maintain our prestige in wildlife biology," said Dean Libby Metcalf. "She will strengthen the research we conduct with partners across the state and beyond, bringing actionable science to decision makers."

Johnson will begin her appointment in the fall semester. Until then, she will continue her work researching caribou in the Arctic with the U.S. Geological Survey Alaska Science Center in Anchorage.



Mild winter means fawn, calf survival looks good

Statewide, 89% of collared fawns and 99% of collared calves have survived through February.

Statewide winter survival for mule deer fawns and elk calves fitted with tracking collars has shown to be higher than average through the end of February.

"Right now (in mid-March) things are looking promising for both deer and elk," Fish and Game's Deer and Elk Coordinator Toby Boudreau said. "We'll know for sure what survival will look like in the coming month and a half after we've tallied up the final numbers. But this is exactly what we were hoping for — back-to-back mild winters to help get herd numbers, specifically in southeast Idaho, back on track."

A glimpse into winter survival

To monitor herds, Fish and Game biologists in early winter captured and collared 188 mule deer fawns and 75 elk calves across 14 different units to track their survival over winter.

Winter survival is typically the biggest single factor affecting mule deer herds, and the long-term average is about 60% of fawns surviving their first winter, but that percentage can drop significantly during hard winters.

By the end of February, 89% of collared fawns and 99% of collared calves were still alive, and here's how that compares with recent years:

- 89% fawns and 99% calves in 2025-26
- 78% fawns and 95% calves in 2024-25
- 92% fawns and 95% calves in 2023-24
- 72% fawns and 92% calves in 2022-23
- 84% fawns and 92% calves in 2021-22
- 83% fawns and 92% calves in 2020-21

This year's winter (if you can even call it that) has been one of the mildest winters in decades, which may be bad news if you're a skier or dried-out lodgepole pine in the month of July. But if you're a deer or elk, it's Easy Street — at least for now.

Not out of the woods yet

Depending on weather, March and April are often when fawn and calf mortality reaches its peak because the young animals' fat reserves are largely depleted and their digestive systems need time to convert to digesting fresh, green forage.

While many people associate a "hard winter" with deep snow and frigid temperatures, spring weather is also critical to survival.

For mule deer fawns in particular, a stretch of cold, wet weather in the early spring can substantially drop survival, and biologists can see winter-related mortality as late as May. So while things are tracking well, it's no guarantee the current crop of fawns and calves will continue on their current trajectory.

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Continued from Page 12 — Why it all matters

Fawn and calf survival is critical to growing herds or sustaining current populations. Survival of young mule deer has a direct relation to the fall deer harvest because yearling bucks typically make up a significant portion of the overall mule deer harvest.

In addition to that, knowing how many collared animals die each winter gives our wildlife biologists a good estimate of how the rest of the population is faring. And knowing just how many animals — in this case, deer and elk — are out on the landscape is crucial when it comes to setting seasons and providing hunting opportunities.

For more information on this topic and other deer and elk information, go to Fish and Game's State of Deer and Elk webpage. We've put together a robust series of 12 videos that highlight everything you've ever wanted to know about deer and elk, including why surveying matters.

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2026 North Dakota waterfowl hunting season

North Dakota's waterfowl season opens for residents Sept. 26, while nonresidents may begin hunting waterfowl Oct. 5.

The resident-only portion of the season has been extended from seven days in previous years to nine days in 2026. This change, which was first presented to the public starting summer 2025, provides additional early season opportunities for resident hunters.

The zones and overall season structure for nonresident hunters will remain the same as the 2025 hunting season. The Hunting and Trapping Guide will be available this summer.



Delta Waterfowl begins predator management

Editor's Note: Predatory management may be the critical factor in many ground nesting birds including quail and turkey as well as ducks. Too long it has been ignored as a viable threat to population decreases by nest destruction, always being countered with "it's all about habitat". NO, it is not! Even our state supposedly a leader in Conservation, ignores the predator factor.

Predator control is a true and significant threat to many specie populations due to nest destruction, and it is total destruction, many times including the nesting hen. It is not the golden bullet, but when science and numbers show the explosive expansion of predators, it is for that area. Good work, Delta Waterfowl.

Although snow and ice still have a firm grip over most of the prairie pothole region, field work has started for Delta's Predator Management Program in preparation for the 2026 duck nesting season.

Delta's team of professional trappers has begun working at 51 sites in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, North Dakota, and South Dakota, key areas that serve as vital nesting grounds for North American waterfowl. Up to 70% of the continent's ducks hatch in the PPR, which is often referred to as "North America's Duck Factory." Millions of ducks hatched in the region migrate through all four flyways each fall and winter.

"Our efforts in the PPR give hens a leg up to produce a successful nest," said Mike Buxton, waterfowl programs director. "Fewer predators on the landscape gives more ducks a fighting chance to make it to the fall flight."

Delta's proven Predator Management Program is a targeted approach to increase nest success, adding hundreds of thousands of ducks to every fall flight. Nest success, defined as a nest with at least one hatched duckling, is often less than 5 to 10% in many key breeding areas of the PPR. A hatch of 15 to 20% is required just to maintain current populations.

"Delta's trappers focus on areas of the PPR with high waterfowl breeding density but low nest success," said Joel Brice, Delta's chief conservation officer. "By strategically managing predators in these areas, we increase the likelihood of more nests hatching."

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Continued from Page 14 — Raccoons and skunks are two primary duck nest predators on the prairie, species that were absent or scarce across most of the prairie before the 1950s. Today, these overly abundant predators can have devastating impacts on duck nests — research shows that up to 90 percent of failed nests are destroyed by predators.

"Targeting areas of the prairie with a predator/prey imbalance has proven to be a sound way to ensure more ducks will hatch each year," Brice said. "This strategy is central to Delta's mission of producing more ducks."

Delta's trappers, and more importantly, the returning ducks, face variable habitat conditions across the PPR. Late summer and fall rains in 2025 across the Dakotas kept many of the wetlands in good shape throughout the winter despite intermittent snowfall. Conditions in the Canadian provinces are mixed, with some areas still suffering drought, while other areas have better water to start nesting season.

"There's a lot of variability in a vast place like the PPR," Buxton said. "An area that's dry today can be full of water in a matter of weeks. Spring rains can dramatically improve drought-stricken areas in time for returning waterfowl."

To support and grow Delta's capacity to produce ducks through effective Predator Management, the organization must recruit, train, and work closely with a team of professional trappers.

In April, Delta is hosting its first trapper training course, a comprehensive program designed for interested trappers to learn about essentials like safety, equipment, tactics, and lures. After attending the course, those prospective trappers will spend time afield with a member of Delta's trapping team to gain eligibility for a contract in 2027.

"The ability to identify prospective trappers and train them well in advance provides us with a solid growth trajectory," Buxton said. "This way, we're expanding the impact of our Predator Management Program each year."



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NSSF applauds passage of hunter, angler protection

NSSF®, The Firearm Industry Trade Association, applauds the U.S. House of Representatives for the bipartisan approval of the Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act, [H.R. 556](#), introduced by U.S. Rep. Rob Wittman (R-Va.). This crucial legislation would ensure our nation's number one resource of conservation funding remains in place and that hunters, recreational shooters and anglers throughout the nation can continue to enjoy America's hunting and shooting sporting heritage.

"This important bipartisan legislation will protect the primary funding for wildlife conservation in America," said Lawrence G. Keane, NSSF Senior Vice President and General Counsel. "Firearm and ammunition manufacturers and importers are responsible for over [\\$31 billion](#) of conservation funding apportioned to the states — when adjusted for inflation — since 1937 and that has been the leading funding source of wildlife and habitat conservation in America. Efforts by bureaucrats to limit or eliminate the use of traditional lead ammunition and fishing tackle puts those conservation funds at serious risk by increasing costs and creating barriers to participation in outdoor recreation. The bipartisan passage of the Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act by the House of Representatives is a significant step to protecting wildlife conservation and preserving access to our public lands."

This NSSF-supported legislation would require the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to provide site-specific peer-reviewed scientific data that demonstrates traditional lead ammunition or fishing tackle is causing detrimental wildlife population impacts before prohibiting their use by hunters and anglers.

NSSF denounced the previous administration's [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Final Rule](#) (USFWS) published in 2023 that offered sportsmen and women a "[bait-and-switch](#)" deal to open hunting and fishing opportunities on National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs) but banned the use of traditional lead ammunition and fishing tackle. The rule offered no scientific evidence of detrimental population impacts to justify banning the use of traditional ammunition, despite promises by the Biden administration to "follow the science."

Requiring the use of alternative ammunition would put a significant cost barrier to participation in hunting and fishing on public lands. Alternative ammunition is, on average, 25 percent more expensive than traditional lead ammunition and less available in the market. That barrier would "price out" many hunters and anglers and decrease the excise tax funding paid by firearm and ammunition manufacturers and importers they support.

Firearm and ammunition manufacturers and importers pay an excise tax of 11 percent on long guns and ammunition and 10 percent on handguns into the Wildlife Restoration Trust Fund, commonly referred to as the "Pittman-Robertson excise tax." The firearm and ammunition industry was directly responsible for over [\\$804 million Pittman-Robertson taxes](#) of the nearly \$1.3 billion apportioned to the states through the USFWS for state conservation and education programs in 2026 alone.

About NSSF: NSSF is the trade association for the firearm industry. Its mission is to promote, protect and preserve hunting and the shooting sports. Formed in 1961, NSSF has a membership of thousands of manufacturers, distributors, firearm retailers, shooting ranges, sportsmen's organizations and publishers nationwide. For more information, visit nssf.org.



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Animal rights groups hijack farm bill to add hunting ban

The Farm Bill is one of the most important pieces of legislation considered by the U.S. Congress. It contains funding and sets policy on items ranging from conservation programs valued by American sportsmen to SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits that help feed low-income families.

Unfortunately, thanks to significant pressure from the animal-rights lobby, the Farm Bill just approved by the House Committee on Agriculture also includes a hunting ban. Committee Democrats teamed up with a handful of Republican legislators to amend the Farm Bill by inserting House Resolution 5017, the Greyhound Protection Act of 2025 – a bill that had no chance of advancing on its own.

H.R. 5017 would ban certain types of hounds in hunting, as well as the use of "live lures" for training or field trials. While H.R. 5017 was completely portrayed by the sponsor and supporters as only focused on ending commercial greyhound racing, the language is much more broadly written and would ban the use of sight hounds in hunting.

Additionally, the language included in H.R. 5017 **could go so far to impact anyone that hunts with bird dogs or scent hounds by banning the use of live animals in dog training.** Amendment supporters never told Committee members of the broader impacts of the bill.

Animal rights extremists, with the help of members of the House Agriculture Committee, inserted the controversial language into the Farm Bill by voice vote, despite concerns expressed by Committee Chairman GT Thompson, with no public debate or an opportunity for American hunters or houndsmen to be heard in the process.

The extremists know the public is counting on passage of the Farm Bill, so they are hoping Congress will allow the anti-hunting language to remain in the bill rather than derail the huge and vital legislation.

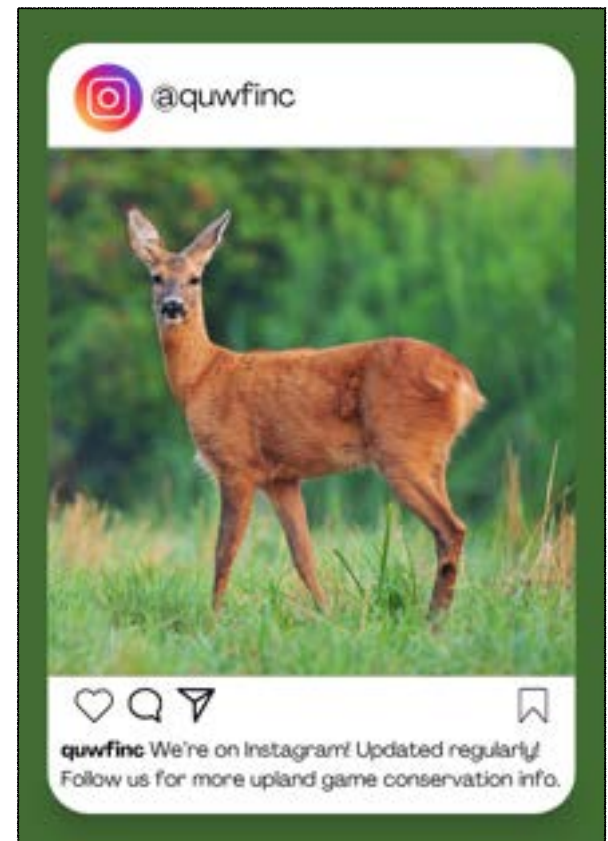
All is not final, however. The Farm Bill will now head to the House Rules Committee, before being voted on by the full House of Representatives. Should the hunt ban remain in the House-passed version of the Farm Bill, the U.S. Senate will craft its own version of the Farm Bill. Sportsmen now have the opportunity to weigh in with their own U.S. Senators to ask for help now that the sneak attack on hunters has been made public.

The Sportsmen's Alliance is calling on its members and all who hunt, hunt test, and field trial with dogs to take two steps:

- First, contact your U.S. House Representative and ask them to strip the anti-hunting language from the Farm Bill. **Take Action here!**
- Second, contact both of your U.S. Senators and ask them to prevent the hunting ban from being included in the Senate version of the Farm Bill. **Take Action Here!**

This sneak attack on the Farm Bill by fringe radical activists isn't just aimed at hunters and farmers, it's an attack on every American dedicated to conservation and those concerned with feeding our families.

It's the epitome of what's wrong in Washington today.



Spring turkey hunting season opens April 15

Nonresidents must wait 10 days to hunt public or access program land

HELENA – Montana's spring male turkey season opens April 15. Turkey hunters can purchase a turkey license for a general area at FWP offices, a [License Ambassador](#) location or [online](#).

A new regulation requires nonresident hunters on public lands and privately owned lands that are a part of a hunting access program to wait 10 days later than residents for all upland game bird species except mountain grouse.

Regulations are available at FWP offices, license providers and online at fwp.mt.gov.

When transporting a spring turkey in the state on Montana, hunters must keep one leg and foot naturally attached for evidence of sex. Montana law requires landowner permission for hunting on all private land.

All Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program enrollments are currently closed and only open during the fall hunting season. Similarly, most Block Management Areas are also closed, but some open for spring turkey opportunities. No shed hunting, hiking or other recreational activities are allowed on these properties without landowner permission. Be sure to check the FWP website for the dates and locations these properties open.

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How to avoid conflicts with rattlesnakes

Editor's Note: Though from Utah, the basic information in this article remains applicable in most states within the rattlesnake's range. Know how to identify the species in your state and where you should be most cautious. As a biologist, being out in the woods and fields all the time, we highly recommend you wear rattlesnake boots, high to the knee in rattlesnake country. ROCKY Boot has an excellent selection of very good snake boots and as a QUWF member, you do get the extra discount and free shipping. Stepping over or on a snake is the most common reason you upset their day.

With warmer weather on the near horizon, rattlesnakes will begin emerging from their winter dens, and you may encounter one while hiking or spending time outdoors. Here are some tips to help you stay safe and aware while recreating outside this spring and summer.

Rattlesnakes in Utah

Native snakes are an important part of Utah's ecosystem. There are five rattlesnake species in Utah, and the most common is the Great Basin rattlesnake, which is a subspecies of the Western rattlesnake. Rattlesnakes help to reduce diseases that are spread by rodents, and their dens may provide shelter for other snake species.

Continued on Page 20



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Continued from Page 19 — "It is important to become more knowledgeable about the rattlesnakes that you may encounter around your residence or during outdoor recreational activities," Utah Division of Wildlife Resources Native Herpetology Coordinator Alyssa Hoekstra said. "Being aware of species you may encounter is a great way to be proactive in avoiding any unwanted interactions with rattlesnakes and prepares you to respond in a safe manner."

Rattlesnakes are most active during the late spring and early summer months. This is when they are on the move, looking for food, water and mates. Although their activity levels peak at dawn and dusk, rattlesnakes can be encountered at all hours, especially in the spring.

Rocky benches, high-elevation slopes and dry canyons are the most common places in Utah to encounter rattlesnakes, often while people are out hiking, rock climbing or biking. However, you may also encounter rattlesnakes at lower elevations and in open areas. Individual rattlesnakes move around a large area (known as their "home range") and will usually move on from a specific location within a short period of time.

A rattlesnake's camouflage helps it to blend into its surroundings, so you may pass by a rattlesnake and never know it.

What to do if you encounter a rattlesnake

Rattlesnakes are protected under Utah law, making it illegal to harass or kill one. Rattlesnakes use their venom to subdue prey so they can eat it, and a snake will only bite defensively if it feels threatened.

Rattlesnakes do not chase people and will stop aggressive or defensive behavior once you are far enough away. Snake bites are quite rare, and harassing or trying to illegally kill the snake greatly increases the risk of being bitten. Never corner a rattlesnake or get close enough for a bite to occur.

When you are out hiking, make sure to always watch the trail ahead of you and check carefully before stepping over rocks, reaching onto ledges or sitting down on a rock or log.



Continued on Page 21

An advertisement for the Ruger Max-9 handgun. On the left, the text "RUGER MAX-9" is written in large, bold, white letters, with "YOUR NEXT HANDGUN" in smaller white letters below it. To the right is a high-resolution image of a grey Ruger Max-9 handgun, shown from a three-quarter perspective against a red background.

Continued from Page 20 — Keep your hands and feet where you can see them and avoid reaching into dense brush or crevices before visually checking to make sure they are clear.

"Like most wild animals, rattlesnakes fear humans and will do anything they can to avoid us," Hoekstra said. "If a snake is feeling threatened, it may act in defense. The best course of action is to maintain a safe distance from rattlesnakes and other native snake species."

If you do encounter a rattlesnake, the following tips can help you — and others — stay safe:

- Remain calm and stay at least 10 feet from the snake. Make sure to give it plenty of space. If the snake is in the middle of the trail, step off the trail and go around it.
- Do not try to kill the snake. Doing so is illegal and greatly increases the chance that the snake will bite you.
- Do not throw anything at the snake (rocks, sticks, etc.). Rattlesnakes may move toward you as they attempt to flee.
- Alert other people to the snake's location. Advise them to use caution and to avoid getting close to the snake. Keep children and pets away.
- If you hear a rattle, try to locate where the sound is coming from before you react, so you don't step closer to the snake or on top of it.

There is no need to kill a rattlesnake for fear of its return to an area. If you do repeatedly see a rattlesnake in a problematic area or if you encounter a rattlesnake in a public park, yard or play area, you can [contact the nearest DWR office](#) to report it.

Helping prevent rattlesnake encounters with dogs

To avoid conflicts between dogs and rattlesnakes, keeping your dog on a leash is highly recommended — especially when you hike during the late spring and early summer months.

Continued on Page 22



An advertisement for the Ruger LC Carbine in 10mm Auto. On the left, the text "RUGER®" is in large red letters, "LC CARBINE™" is in even larger red letters, and "IN 10MM AUTO" is in black letters below. On the right, a black Ruger LC Carbine rifle is shown diagonally, with five 10mm Auto caliber bullets lying on the surface in front of it.

Continued from Page 21 — Allowing your dog to roam without a leash increases the likelihood of a rattlesnake encounter. You can [also do rattlesnake aversion training](#) for your dog, which can help them learn to avoid rattlesnakes.

Pet owners should also be aware that not all emergency veterinary hospitals keep antivenom at their facilities. Be sure to check with the emergency veterinary hospitals in your area to learn which locations keep antivenom in stock, so you know ahead of time where to take your pet if it's bitten by a rattlesnake.

What to do if you or someone you are with is bitten by a rattlesnake

Rattlesnake bites are a serious medical emergency and require getting medical attention at a hospital as soon as possible. Rattlesnake bites in the U.S. are seldom deadly, especially when the appropriate medical care is received.

If you are bitten by a rattlesnake:

- Do not attempt to suck the venom from the wound — this can introduce bacteria from your mouth to the bite and can increase the risk of infection.
- Do not apply heat, cold or a tourniquet to the bite; these steps may increase the risk of tissue damage.
- The best course of action is to remain calm and immediately go to the nearest hospital.

If you regularly recreate in areas outside of cell phone service, you may want to consider investing in a satellite phone for emergencies.

Keeping rattlesnakes out of your yard

Depending on where you live, you may occasionally find a snake in your yard. Here are some useful tips to help keep rattlesnakes out of your yard:

- Reduce the number of places that provide snakes with shelter. Brush, wood, rock and junk piles are all things you should eliminate from your yard.
- Control rodent populations: Bird feeders may draw rodents to yards, which in turn can attract snakes.
- Block off crawl spaces. Large holes underneath sheds and porches can provide shelter for rattlesnakes.
- Don't leave standing water in your yard. Rattlesnakes may come to water sources, especially during drought years.

Identifying a rattlesnake

Gopher snakes (also referred to as bull snakes and blow snakes) are very abundant in Utah. They are often mistaken for rattlesnakes due to similarities in their appearance and behavior. When alarmed, gopher snakes hiss loudly, flatten their heads into a triangular shape, curl their bodies into an S-like shape and vibrate their tails.

A rattlesnake's tail is wide and blunt — and tipped with a rattle, hence the name. A gopher snake's tail is slender, pointed and lacks a rattle. However, rattlesnakes may lose their rattles or sometimes may not rattle when they are disturbed. Do not count on a rattlesnake to reveal its presence by rattling.

Rattlesnakes also have broad, triangular-shaped heads and vertical eye pupils, while non-venomous snakes in Utah tend to have longer snouts and round pupils. If you cannot identify a snake you encounter, the best course of action is to move away and treat the snake as if it were venomous.

You can get additional rattlesnake safety tips on the [Wild Aware Utah website](#).



Wooden structures? How to prepare for carpenter bees

One of the significant pests many deal with if you have a wooden deck, log cabin, pole barn or other exposed wooden structure is Carpenter bees. They are not just a pest but can, if not controlled, weaken the structures to the point of critical failure. The male bee, larger yellow and black and normally the one who lets you know they are active as he flies in your face or hovers close by, is not the boring specialist, the much smaller female does the damage looking to lay eggs in the bored tunnels.

She is the one who looks for spots to drill the nest holes, which can grow to many feet of internal passages.

First step, if you have holes, fill and patch them with plastic wood before putting up traps. They like to reuse old holes for laying the new eggs. Plastic wood is good but not a total barrier, I have had them try to eat through the plastic wood in an attempt to reuse a hole. Fill it again.

This picture (left) is from the bottom of a Cedar beam. She ate through the first $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of plastic wood trying to reuse the hole. I refilled again. The other holes I filled held well, they tried a little but gave up.

They will bore into any version of treated lumber easily, it does not deter them, nor does lumber treated with a preservative and stain.

The traps are simple to make, THEY WORK, the instructions and tool requirements can be found on our QUWF website under the Research and Reference information drop down section. I use plastic bottles, old peanut butter containers, anything that is clear with a lid

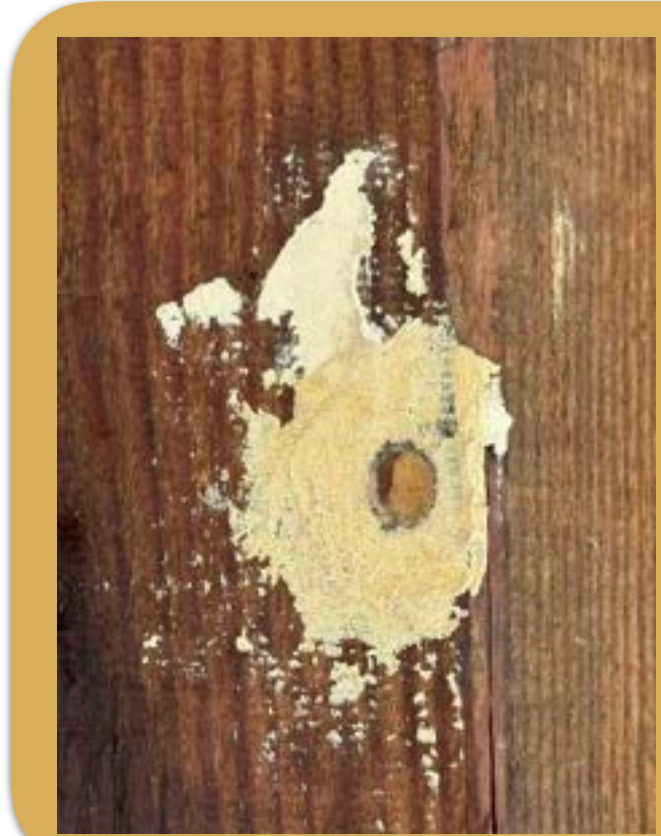
so I can see when it needs to be emptied. Further,

several are visible from my office window and observing them is very interesting. If two males get caught, they will fight for the territory not realizing neither will get out.

I use a piece of 4x4, the $\frac{1}{2}$ inch access tunnels are drilled at 45 degrees up into the block with a center core hole of 1.5 inches wide and three inches deep, up into the block, connecting to all the 4 access tunnels.

The bees go up into the block, see the light at the bottom through the center core, go down to it and cannot find their way out. I capture hundreds of bees a year, male and female and it has very dramatically reduced the boring attempts on the large deck.

Normally, I make many at one time to have extra, in case I drop even the plastic bottles and they crack. I also give some away to friends, neighbors and coop members that do not have the ability to make them, or the tools to do it.



Continued from Page 23 — I use what containers I have sometimes or buy a case of the smaller ones from Amazon. They are very inexpensive.

Also, I have gone to what can be described as larger cup hooks put into the beam or post to use on the eyelets installed on the top of the bee trap.

However, get the ones with the safety clasp that prevents strong winds from dislodging the trap from the hook.

Empty the traps after each season, normally mine will be about half full. Sometimes wasps will figure out how to get into the traps and try to build a nest in the bottle, it is a simple process to unscrew the bottle and get rid of their attempts. I use a piece of ½ rebar to clean the access tunnels and then blow all out with compressed air.

Did I mention, these traps work VERY WELL!



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The advertisement features a green skid steer loader with a black WoodMaxx MX8600 chipper attachment. The background is a wooded area with trees and a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the image in various colors and fonts, highlighting the product's features and company values.

Attention all QUWF chapters:

NSSF opens 2026 Hunting Heritage Trust grant applications

NSSF®, The Firearm Industry Trade Association, has opened the application period for the 2026 Hunting Heritage Trust Grants that offer a total of \$100,000 in support for programs that work to expand participation in hunting and the shooting sports.

Qualified non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may apply for a portion of this year's \$100,000 Hunting Heritage Trust Grant total, to be used to support recruitment, retention and reactivation programs, known collectively as R3 efforts. NSSF will place emphasis on programs that focus on increasing participation by attracting new participants and reactivating past participants.

Only project proposals submitted by and in the name of NGOs are eligible for funding. NSSF advises potential applicants to read the application guidelines carefully to fully understand which projects are, and are not, eligible for Hunting Heritage Trust Grant funding.



Continued on Page 25

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Continued from Page 25 — “We are excited to offer this new round of Hunting Heritage Trust Grants to encourage organizations to expand programs that facilitate participation among diverse groups in target shooting and hunting,” said Joe Bartozzi, NSSF President and CEO. “We’ll be looking to reward programs that address the needs of this growing participant base. If you’ve got a program in mind that meets the grant guidelines, a Hunting Heritage Trust Grant can help elevate your efforts.”

Grant applications must be submitted through the application link provided on the NSSF Hunting Heritage Trust Grants webpage no later than 5 p.m. (Eastern time) April 17, 2026. All projects awarded grant funding in 2026 must be completed by February 8, 2027.

Please carefully review the grant application guidelines and the grant proposal outline before starting your application. The link to the online application can be found at <https://www.nssf.org/grants/nssf-hht-grant-program>. If you have questions, email John McNamara, NSSF Vice President, Member Services, at jmcmamara@nssf.org or Melanie Knox, Events & Member Services Assistant, at mknnox@nssf.org.

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- CornholeGame.com:** Game boards
- InvaderConcepts.com:** Chest holsters & accessories, made in Montana
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- Rotopax:** Mountable container systems
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Notes from the Road:

So nothing has changed on your land or farm, has it?

By Nick Prough — Many of us work on local chapter habitat projects or landowner habitat projects that have continued to be worked on and improved over a long period of time, even some for multiple generations - since you were a young kid.

Throughout my career as a wildlife biologist, I constantly hear from landowners or sportsmen that, “Nothing has changed on my property for years, yet the (quail and other wildlife populations) have continued to go down.” I have heard this “nothing has changed” phrase for many years in multiple states across the country and from landowners both large and small in acreage size farms as well as from production farmers as well as recreational landowners.

Recently, while discussing some habitat practices with a large landowner/farmer, he commented that much “had actually changed” on his farm since he was a young kid, and that led to further discussions about this topic with him and to this article topic. I have had many old timers say their farm is the same since it was in 1960, and so I have in the past gotten out USDA arial maps from as far back as I could find and compared them with recent maps or even updated Google Maps to show them that much had actually changed for sure on their farms over that time period.

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Continued from Page 27 — Many times these changes occurred over a long period of time and those changes if you see them every day are not as noticeable to the actual landowner or land manager until shown in maps or brought up in examples specific to their farm.

This same thing can happen to people with their children when a grandparent or family member who hasn't seen the child in a long time says, "Wow, they have sure changed!" and the parent who sees them each and every day doesn't even notice it. Think back to some of your once favorite hunting spots for quail, for example, and think long and hard about what changes to the landscape have occurred on that site specifically to the quail habitat in that particular spot.

You will come up with a long list fairly quickly in many instances, as I know if I spend some time with most landowners talking about this they quickly begin to see it. Succession occurs over time ... and unless succession is managed or setback through habitat management, then it will change the landscape to a more mature timber, larger canopy trees in fencerows, change in plant composition under those trees as well as in the fields on your property and the specific wildlife that uses those areas and certain habitat types will also eventually change sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse.

This is a very common occurrence seen in many areas that once had good quail numbers, but now quail are lacking (for a variety of different reasons) but including succession and the lack of early successional plants and shrubs on the landscape that is occurring due to lack of habitat management.

For many landowners, just letting the ground sit idle or unmanaged/undisturbed for many years in a row will often occur right before their eyes, and they don't see it because they are too busy working on other aspects of their farming or lives. This has occurred on many unmanaged CRP fields as well across many states and is constantly being worked on by biologists and land managers to encourage good mid-contract management of those fields to try and help offset this stagnation.

In many Midwestern farms, the once small shrubby cover fence rows have now grown up into larger mature hedge trees or been removed all together for further opening up to even larger crop fields for larger equipment access, thus reducing the amount of useable edge for wildlife altogether. These maps mentioned above can also show you the stark difference in the landscape both in field sizes, loss or maturity of timber and hedge rows as well as other differences in the landscape that have occurred right before your eyes but as stated before ones that have occurred over a long period of time and unnoticed by many until they are pointed out. This also occurs in western states out in ranch country where the landscape looks to have been the same grass for generations, but many changes are occurring right before the ranchers eyes, grazing strategies change, number of animals on a piece of land change, rainfall rates change, all kinds of factors have changed over the years to bring about change on the landscape.

I encourage you to take a look at this next time you are out on a local project you are managing or on your own farm and see just what has changed that you can then try to replace or replenish back thru good active habitat management practices in the coming years. This constant habitat management is an effort that must be done in order to try to keep up with the ever-changing landscape occurring each and every year across the country.



Nick Prough is the QUWF chief wildlife biologist and wildlife partnership coordinator. He can be reached at chiefbiologist@quwf.net.

Apply now for spots at wildlife youth camp

Know anyone 14 to 16 years old who is interested in a career as a game warden or a fisheries or wildlife biologist? A great opportunity to get a taste of what that's like is the annual Wildlife Youth Camp this summer.

A week full of fun outdoor activities, conservation education and camaraderie is in store for up to three dozen lucky teens selected for the camp hosted by the [Oklahoma State Game Warden Association](#) and supported by the [Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation](#).

Applications are now being accepted for this once-in-a-lifetime event. **Deadline to apply is April 13.**

The in-residence camp will be June 14-19 at [Goddard Youth Camp](#) at Lake of the Arbuckles. Activities are adult-supervised and include archery, wildlife identification, rifle/shotgun shooting, fishing, ropes course, self-defense, wildlife law enforcement scenarios, wildlife and fisheries management education, and deer/turkey/waterfowl law enforcement techniques.

This five-day camp is free for the youngsters whose applications are competitively judged and selected to attend!

Applicants must be Oklahoma residents who will be 14 to 16 years old on June 14, 2026, and were enrolled in an Oklahoma school the previous year.

THE HABITAT GUIDE

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