

MANAGEMENT CHOICES: USING QUAIL MANAGEMENT TO BENEFIT OTHER WILDLIFE

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Wildlife enhances our quality of life, forms an integral part of our landscape and provides a barometer of environmental health. Quail management utilizes land management applications such as prescribed fire, mowing, roller chopping, timber management, and grazing to enhance or maintain the proper combinations of food and cover. Although quail have unique habitat requirements, many management practices that target this species are also required to maintain diverse and abundant populations of other wildlife, both game and nongame. By understanding the individual life requirements of the desired wildlife, recognizing the potential habitat overlap between the different species, and knowing the factors that limit population growth, we can prescribe the proper management action(s) to encourage habitat conditions that favor wildlife diversity and productivity.

In native landscapes, land management in South Florida often includes the control of various vegetation types to produce timber or forage. This affects wildlife populations because various wildlife species depend on different stages of plant growth, commonly referred to as successional stages. Some wildlife species like quail depend entirely on early successional stages (e.g., grasses, legumes, and weeds); other species need only mid-successional stages (shrubs and saplings); others require late successional stages (mature pine and hardwoods); while a great number of wildlife species must have a mixture of all successional stages. A landowner's wildlife objectives may be most successfully achieved by varying land management across his/her property to meet the seasonal needs of wildlife. So what are the considerations for successful management?

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL HABITAT MANAGEMENT FOR MULTIPLE SPECIES

- Active management through the proper use of prescribed fire, mowing, chopping, and timber harvest to encourage species diversity within and between forest stands, pastures, and other habitat patches.
- Discourage extensive acreage of similar habitat types or conditions by varying both the timing and location of management treatments.
- In timbered stands, retain older stand components by varying the rotation length on some portions of the property/landscape.
- Retain portions of mixed stands of hardwood/pine and cypress.

SPECIES SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT AND OVERLAP

WILD TURKEY

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- Vary the timing, scale, and location of prescribed burning across the property
- Active timber management (multiple thinnings) to keep an open canopy and increase or maintain ground cover diversity and growth
- Encourage grasses and legumes by chopping and burning
- Minimize mowing during the nesting season (April –July)
- In forested stands, create permanent openings for bugging/foraging, and brood rearing

WHITE-TAILED DEER

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- Vary timing and location of mowing, burning, thinning to maintain optimum forage conditions
- Maintain some thickets for escape or screening cover
- Create and manage the edges of different habitat types
- The retention of a hardwood and soft mast (fleshy fruits such as palmetto berries, plums, persimmons) component is seasonally important

SONG BIRDS/QUAIL

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- Variety and abundance of bird species present is a function of groundcover and tree canopy structure, diversity, and layering of vegetation
- Vary the timing and location of burning and thinning to maintain optimum ground cover structure and composition (palmetto coverage <20-40 percent and height < 2 feet tall)
- Minimize mowing during the nesting season (April –July)
- Retain fence rows and the associated shrub component
- Retention of snags and some timber component for perching and safety

Conclusions

For landowners wishing to implement quail management strategies that target quail, but enhance habitat conditions for other wildlife the most important steps are to:

1. Set realistic goals based on the desired wildlife and economic objectives for the property
2. Inventory wildlife resources including type and condition of available habitats
3. Develop a long range management plan that addresses the various management strategies that will be employed to meet your established goals and objectives

