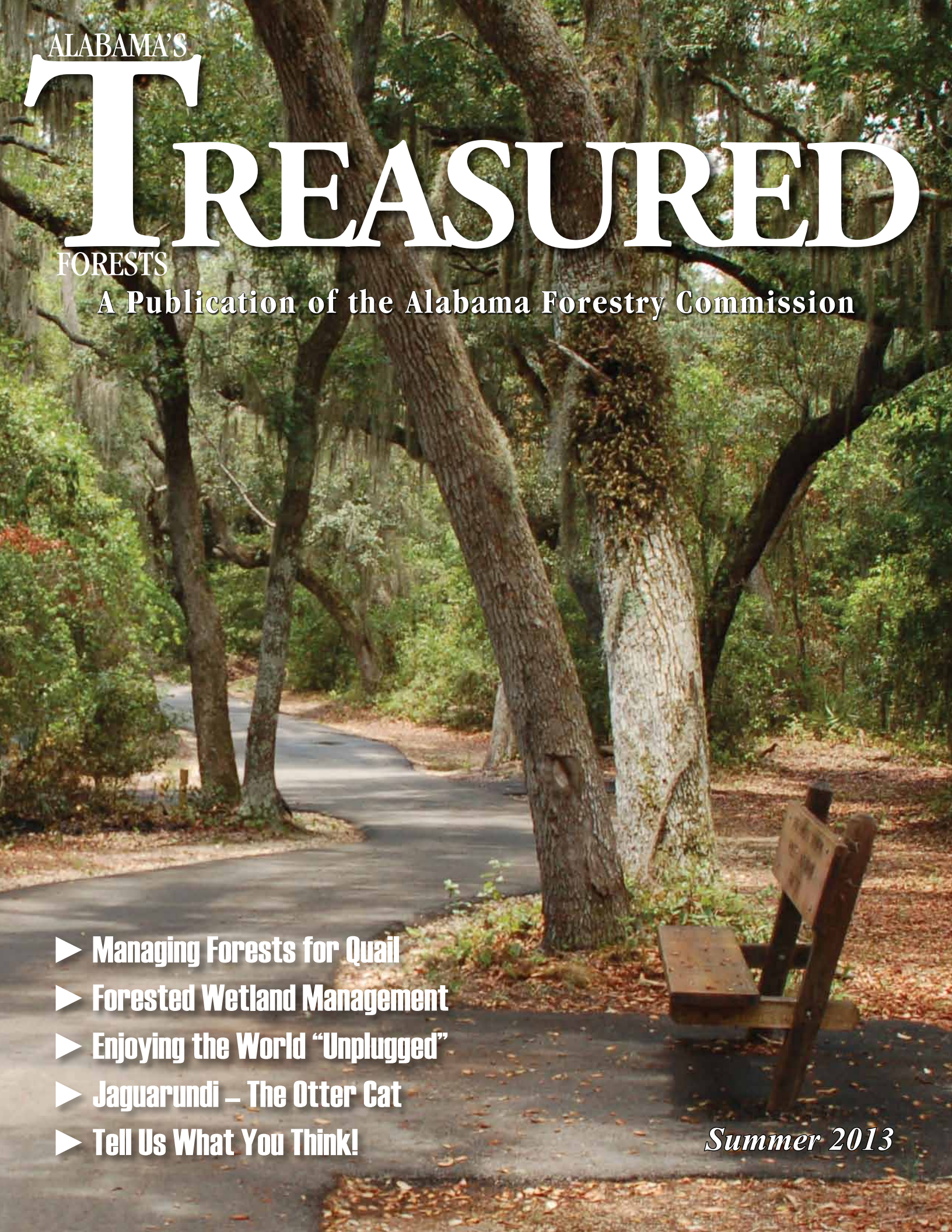

ALABAMA'S

TREASURED FORESTS

A Publication of the Alabama Forestry Commission

- Managing Forests for Quail
- Forested Wetland Management
- Enjoying the World "Unplugged"
- Jaguarundi – The Otter Cat
- Tell Us What You Think!

Summer 2013

Message from the *STATE FORESTER*

We are fortunate and blessed with an abundance of forests in Alabama. In addition to the more obvious benefits they provide, their significant economic impacts cannot be understated. On average, one out of every 4.6 jobs in Alabama is related to forestry and agriculture. In 2010, timber production and processing contributed $21.4 billion to our state's economy, employing over 122,000 people. Total output and employment impacts of agriculture, forestry, and related industries amounted to $70.4 billion, accounting for almost 40 percent of our GDP, and over 580,000 jobs — that's 22 percent of the state's workforce! This economic sector is a critical component of the economies in each of Alabama's counties.

These statistics are just a snippet of the wealth of very interesting information found in *Economic Impacts of Alabama's Agricultural, Forestry, & Related Industries*. Released by the Alabama Agribusiness Council, in collaboration with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Auburn University, and other businesses and organizations, this compilation of agricultural and forestry economic data was collected from all 67 counties. In addition to providing a detailed and comprehensive county-by-county picture of the impact of agriculture, forestry, and related industries, the reports are intended to provide county leaders and other policy makers with a strong basis for making economic decisions in the future. Find your county impact reports at **www.AlabamaAgImpact.com.**

In a similar vein, an economic impact report recently released by the National Alliance of Forest Owners (NAFO) confirms that private forest owners are a driver of the U.S. economy by providing millions of jobs, while producing a broad range of goods and services that improve quality of life in every home and community. This substantial economic contribution is possible because forest owners recognize that responsible management today yields sustainable economic and environmental benefits over the long term. *"The Economic Impact of Privately-Owned Forests in the United States"* provides national, regional and state-specific data on jobs, payroll, sales, acreage ownership and contribution to overall manufacturing and gross domestic product. This data is based on 2010, the most recent and complete year for which data is available. To learn more, visit **www.nafoalliance.org/working-forests/jobs-economic-growth/**.

Whether you're a forest landowner or a natural resource professional, it's always nice to have plenty of tools in your toolbox when it comes to making wise forest management decisions. That's why I wanted to share these two very useful on-line resources with our readers. *Alabama's TREASURED Forests* magazine is one of the primary avenues in circulating such information. Through landowner success stories and stewardship articles, this publication is designed to inspire other landowners to continue in being good stewards of Alabama's forests. In this issue we've touched on all three branches of the AFC's mission: protect, sustain, and educate.

Protect: We're pleased to introduce the newest member of our canine arson team: Ember. Now in training, this young bloodhound pup will soon join seasoned veteran Blaze in tracking down woods arsonists who plague Alabama.

Sustain: As always, we feature a successful forest landowner – or in this case, landowners – and the keys to achieving their accomplishments. Meet father and son, Ray and Raymond Jones of Jackson County, previous winners of the Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Award along with several other conservation recognition awards.

We also provide some of the do's and don'ts of managing forested wetlands, pointers on successfully managing your forest for quail, as well as the latest tree seedling source list, because as we all know, tree planting season IS just around the corner!

Educate: We not only highlight a "Field Day that Educates & Inspires Landowners," but we also present stories on two unique educational events for our *future* Alabama landowners and stakeholders: "Enjoying the World Unplugged" (the Butler County Natural Resources Youth Camp) and "Fourth Graders Explore Forest Ecology and Management at the Escambia Experimental Forest." On pages 18 and 31, please note information on upcoming educational events in which you might wish to participate.

For some end-of-summer reading enjoyment, we've included a couple articles announcing the 2013 Champion Trees, as well as the longleaf revitalization happening at Baldwin State Forest. Whether an old favorite or perhaps something unfamiliar, it's always interesting to see which species of the Trees of Alabama will be introduced to us by our friend Fred Nation. And speaking of unfamiliar, have you ever seen – or even heard of – a jaguarundi?? Most everyone is fascinated with "cryptic" wildlife, so this may be a story for which you've been waiting!

Finally, we'd like to know what YOU think. Please take just a few moments to let us know how we're doing in carrying out our mission by taking this very brief survey. You can access the survey by visiting our homepage at **www.forestry.alabama.gov**. We value your input and appreciate your time.

Linda Casey

ALABAMA'S TREASURED FORESTS

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On the Cover:
Late summer within a peaceful glade at Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, Alabama.

Photo by Kelvin Daniels

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Alabama's TREASURED Forests (ISSN 0894-9654) is published by the Alabama Forestry Commission, 513 Madison Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36130. Telephone (334) 240-9355. Bulk rate postage paid at Montgomery, Alabama. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: *Alabama's TREASURED Forests*, P.O. Box 302550, Montgomery, AL 36130-2550. Website: **www.forestry.alabama.gov**

The publication of a story or article in this magazine does not constitute the Alabama Forestry Commission's endorsement of that particular practice or product, but is an effort to provide the landowners of Alabama with information and technical assistance to make informed decisions about the management practices they apply to their land. The Alabama Forestry Commission is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

A Family Affair

THE JONES FARM IN PAINT ROCK VALLEY

By Lynn Washington, Registered Forester/Jackson Work Unit Manager and Elishia Ballentine, Editor, Alabama Forestry Commission

In north Alabama, property ownerships are smaller and more fragmented than in the central and southern parts of the state. So, it is somewhat unusual to have a contiguous parcel of land that is close to 5,000 acres. However, in the Paint Rock Valley of Jackson County, some 4,670 acres of the Jones Farm straddles the Paint Rock River. Roughly 2,670 acres of the property are in native upland hardwood stands, while approximately 2,000 acres are semi-open cropland, food plots, and fields.

Historically cut off from the rest of the world by the river, this farm located in Hales Cove was purchased by Ray Jones (Sr.) and his father in the 1950s. By the 1960s, the land had been cleared and converted from a cotton farm into a cattle operation. They constructed a ford to cross the river. Fences were built around the entire cove; fescue pastures were planted. Ray set a goal of producing beef cattle of the highest quality. At the same time, soil conservation and taking care of the environment were top priorities. Eventually, livestock was watered out of troughs rather than being allowed access to streams and rivers. Measures were taken to prevent erosion as well.

The Jones family proved to be excellent managers of their farm with a herd of more than 1,000 cattle. This is evidenced by the honors bestowed on them over the years. In 1995, Jones was presented with the Southeastern Region "Environmental Stewardship Award" by the National Cattlemen's Association, and was later named "Steward of the Year" by the Stewards Partnership. Then in 1996, they were designated as a "Farm of Distinction" by the Alabama Farm City Week Committee. That same year, Jones was not only selected as the "Alabama Farmer of the Year" at the Lancaster/Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie, Georgia – billed as North America's premier farm show – he was also named the overall winner that year as the "Southeastern Farmer of the Year."

However, cattle was not the only concern of the Jones family . . . they were very interested in wildlife management as well. In those days, there were no deer in North Alabama and very few turkeys; both species had been decimated during the Great Depression. In cooperation with the Alabama Department of Conservation, Jones undertook to stock the farm in 1964, one of the first such releases on private property in North Alabama. Transported from the Fred Stimpson Wildlife Sanctuary (Clarke County in south Alabama), 30 white tail deer and 35 turkeys were released on the Jones Farm.

Adapting to the mountainous terrain and river bottom habitat, the deer thrived. The turkeys, on the other hand, simply left. Some of them were radio collared, and it seems they walked north into Tennessee. According to Mr. Jones, there wasn't enough suitable cover or nesting habitat. "What we really needed was warm season grasses," he acknowledged.

Never one to give up easily, a second release of wild turkeys was conducted in 1985. A couple years later, a dozen or so wildlife ponds were built at various spots on the side of the mountain, and a number of Canada geese and mallard ducks were released in cooperation with the Alabama Waterfowl Association.

Then in the early 1990s, Raymond Jones, Jr. took over management of the farm. At that time, he recalls, "The farm was just vast, vast open land. You could stand on the property and see for miles in either direction, with the mountains as a backdrop. It was all very neatly trimmed. Quite honestly, it was like a barren wasteland or desert for wildlife."

Realizing that these vast open pastures and hardwood timber on the mountainsides were not exactly the diverse habitat that turkeys needed, the Jones family decided to convert the award-winning 1,770-acre cattle operation into a row-crop farm and focus on wildlife habitat enhancement.

Becoming a Wildlife Paradise

With the aid of the Alabama Forestry Commission, a TREASURE Forest management plan was developed in 1997 that suggested establishing wildlife corridors, food plots, riparian buffers along the river, drainage streams, and pine plantations. The plan also recommended selective timber harvesting and clear-cuts on the hardwood mountainside, although Ray Jones (Sr.) did not very much like the idea of logging and was strongly against planting pines. He explains, "I didn't think much of pine trees at the time, mainly because the deer would eat them as soon as they were planted!"

However, experience taught that installing tree shelters would not only protect the young trees from excessive deer browse, but also greatly increase their growth rate. Ray (Sr.) noted that another big influence about this time was their neighbor upriver and fellow TREASURE Forest landowner, Jack McQuinn, who encouraged them to plant trees. After receiving advice from several wildlife biologists, foresters, and other natural resource professionals, Jones Sr. was persuaded, and the decision was made to "go all out" in the effort to transform the farm into a wildlife oasis.

This transformation included converting the clean, immaculate fence lines into hedge rows comprised of Chickasaw plum, honeysuckle, and natural vegetation. To create more diversity and provide the "fawning, bedding, bugging, and nesting habitat" so desperately needed by wildlife, 40 acres of big blue stem, little blue stem, Indian grass, and other native warm season grasses were planted under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) program. According to Raymond (Jr.), they had to rethink what was "pretty." "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder . . . what might be ugly to us, as humans, is paradise to wildlife," said Jones. "A field overgrown with weird looking plants is actually beautiful to them."

Raymond (Jr.) and farm manager, Mike Miller, worked diligently on implementing the forest management plan. In addition to seeking professional advice and consultations, cost-share funding was utilized; partnerships were developed with resource

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Landowners Ray Jones, Sr. and Raymond Jones, Jr. with Farm Manager, Mike Miller (kneeling)

A Family Affair

(Continued from page 5)

agencies such as the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the AFC, and the Nature Conservancy.

The hardwood canopy at the back of Hales Cove was selectively logged for the first time in many, many years. On some of the areas that were clear-cut, the Alabama Forestry Commission conducted prescribed burns at different times to create differing successional stages. Food plots were planted in a mixture of oats, wheat, rye, and clover, as well as chufa. Duck boxes were installed on the ponds. Several miles of permanent fire lanes were installed. The use of "easements" was also part of the plan to reach the landowners' objective of enhancing the habitat for wildlife. In trying to create diversity, Jones noted that all the hardwood logging, as well as various planting, was done in patches throughout the farm, much like a patchwork pattern.

Certified as a TREASURE Forest in 1998, the primary emphasis for the Jones property was of course wildlife management. Their secondary objective was timber production. A little over ten years later in 2009, this third generation farm in Jackson County won the prestigious Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Award for the North Region. Other honors include being nominated for the Alabama Wildlife Federation's Governor's Conservation Achievement Award in 2006.

About 10 percent of the 2,000 acres of open land has now been converted to timbered acres by planting rows of loblolly pine to create wildlife corridors. In the riparian buffer zones along the Paint Rock River, various species of mast-producing hardwood seedlings were planted – including Shumard oak, Nuttall oak, cherrybark oak, and yellow poplar – through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Extending out into the fields, this natural buffer stretches up to 300 feet wide in places.

Sawtooth oak seedlings were planted along the edge of the hardwood plantations, as well as Chickasaw plums and other fruit trees. A beautiful cherrybark oak plantation on an oxbow island was planted under cost-share funding. This stand was one of the tour stops during the Alabama Natural Resources Council (ANRC)/Tree Farm Regional Forestry Event/Field Day held on the Jones Farm in 2010 at which 120 people attended.

The educational aspect of the TREASURE Forest philosophy has not been ignored at the Paint Rock Valley farm. In 2011, the

Management Chiefs division of the Southern Group of State Foresters toured the property, observing the various management practices that had been implemented. Throughout the years the Joneses have hosted several tours, such as the Northeast Alabama TREASURE Forest Landowners Association in 2000. Back in 1996, former State Forester Bill Moody escorted a tour of the farm for 150 or so teachers. Numerous school groups (including "Adopt-a-Class" programs sponsored by the Jackson County Forestry Planning Committee), church groups, and Boy Scouts have also enjoyed hay rides and educational tours on the Jones property.

Results ~ Seeing is Believing

The transition from an open fescue cattle operation to a wildlife oasis has taken a huge commitment, but this transformation of habitat shows what a landowner can accomplish with hard work and a management plan, whether on a small or large scale.

Case in point . . . in years past, the east side of the farm was the primary area of deer use with all of the hunting conducted east of the Paint Rock River. However, Raymond (Jr.) said recently that family and friends harvested more deer on the west side of the river this past season than on the east side or up on the mountainside. The advice had been followed of Stan Stewart, wildlife biologist with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, which emphasized developing the property on both sides of the river to create the diversity needed to transform the farm.

Jones noted, "While there were fewer turkey, quail, and other types of wildlife we desired, there were probably too many deer. The habitat simply could not support them. Although improving the turkey population remained our main focus, we wanted to be good stewards of the wildlife with which the Good Lord had blessed us. We wanted to manage the deer better . . . provide more for them, so we reduced the herd through selective harvest." Raymond continued, "Now the deer herd is healthier, and our land supports it better. We not only reduced the deer population, but also increased and improved the habitat component to support it."

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Meet Ember, the Newest Canine in the AFC's "Arson Dog" Program

By Elishia Ballentine
Editor

The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) is doggedly determined to stop arsonists in their tracks. To assist in finding wildland arson suspects in North Alabama, a second bloodhound has recently been purchased by the Alabama Forestry Commission. This action will give the agency more complete coverage across the entire state, according to AFC Law Enforcement Chief Craig Hill. "The decision to add another bloodhound was based on the successes of 'Blaze,' our first arson dog," said Hill. "Stationed in South Alabama, it is not practical – neither logistically nor economically – to use Blaze in North Alabama . . . it's just too far to mobilize him to a woods arson crime scene in a timely manner."

The new bloodhound puppy, a liver-and-tan colored female, has been named "Ember" by AFC employees. Chief Hill related, "We got her in March from Grant Mountain Bloodhounds located in Marshall County. At the time, she was about 8 weeks old and only weighed between 10-15 pounds." Ember and her handler, AFC Investigator Jamey Bozeman, are currently being trained to track human scent by Sleuth Hound, LLC of Madison County. The team should complete their training by December of this year, and then be nationally certified in scent discrimination by the International Bloodhound Training Institute.

In the four years prior to the implementation of Blaze, an average of over 40 percent of all wildfires in Alabama was determined to be "incendiary" in nature, not only destroying natural resources, wildlife, and property, but also endangering human life. Since he went "on duty" in 2009, the average arson rate has dropped to approximately 31 percent. Blaze is credited with five arrests and/or confessions. He has also been utilized in three other criminal activities occurring on AFC property, as well as assisting in finding missing persons.

State Forester Linda Casey said, "The great thing about our Arson Dog program is that it has been funded totally through donations. All expenditures connected with the purchase, veterinary care, and training of these puppies are covered by contributions. We appreciate the organizations and individuals who support this program, especially Sunshine Mills, Inc. and Tractor Supply Co. for providing the food for our dogs. We initiated the bloodhound program to reduce the unacceptable high number of woods arson cases in Alabama, and the statistics show that strategy is working. With the addition of this new puppy to our law enforcement team, we look forward to increasing our effectiveness even higher in deterring arsonists across our state."

In its mission to protect and sustain Alabama's forest resources, the Alabama Forestry Commission is committed to reducing the number of forestry-related crimes that occur each year across the state. These crimes generate losses of hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to landowners, the timber industry, and Alabama's economy. The AFC provides an Arson/Forest Crimes Hotline so that citizens can call and report wildland arson, theft of timber, and vandalism or theft of harvesting equipment. The toll-free number is 1 (800) 222-2927. Any information provided is confidential and the caller remains anonymous.


JOHNSON-GJERSTAD
STATE FOREST

Longleaf Rehab in Section 16:

The Story of Baldwin State Forest

By Madeline W. Hildreth, Escambia County Forester
Alabama Forestry Commission

When Alabama became a state, the section numbered "16" in every township was granted to the area for the use of schools. Many of these sections were later sold or exchanged. In 1939, the State Commission of Forestry acquired a portion of Section 16 land from Baldwin County through a land exchange. According to documents, the governor was Bibb Graves and the state forester was Page S. Bunker. This was the beginning of the Alabama Forestry Commission's association of an isolated tract of land in south Baldwin County.

Down and Out in LA (Lower Alabama)

Baldwin State Forest, as the tract was known, was often a forgotten parcel of land. The isolated location of the tract, coupled with Forestry Commission personnel's other priorities made management difficult . . . the frequency and intensity of wildfires in the county often left little time for managing the state forest.

Over the years however, attempts were made to properly manage the remote tract. In 1979 some of the timber was sold, but before harvest began, Hurricane Frederick ripped through the state. The area was significantly altered and a salvage cut was required in addition to the original harvest. Ten years later, the forest was cut to a shelterwood. After a clearcut in 1995, a stand remained naturally regenerating in longleaf. Following a prescribed burn, the stand was left, mostly unmanaged and forgotten. Local Commission employees were occupied with other projects, including wildfires and subsequent hurricanes.

Salvation and Rehab

Fast forward to 2010…a sagging economy was bolstered by federal grants. The Alabama Forestry Commission partnered with the Longleaf Alliance to take advantage of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant money. This was to be the salvation for Baldwin State Forest. The goal of the grant was to highlight the longleaf forest and use the area for educating the public. Soon a plan was designed to promote longleaf pine growth through proper management practices. Slowly, the state forest was to emerge as both a template for managing longleaf pine in this region, as well as an educational tool for all ages to enjoy.

Upon surveying the remote area, the Longleaf Alliance knew there was much work to be done. Before any management practices could be implemented, the roads had to be re-worked. Years of neglect coupled with wet areas made access nearly non-existent. In some places, six inches of water covered the road. Once the ditches were refurbished, roads were crowned, and turnouts were established, water was able to flow across the road without creating erosion problems.

There are two distinct areas on the forest. With years of little management and natural disasters shaping the forest, the east side faired the best. This area has a decent stand of pine, and invasive plants are manageable. The west side of the forest, seriously damaged by a 2003 wildfire, had become overrun with many nonnative plant species. Heavily infested with cogongrass, Japanese climbing fern and tallow tree were also present.

The Alabama Forestry Commission established exterior firelanes around the property. Contractors established interior lines, mulched some of the areas with heavy underbrush, and conducted prescribed burns. Because of the intensity of fires due to cogongrass infestation, the area was burned in small compartments. When reintroducing fire on a site that has not been burned, hot spots are inevitable, especially in a closed canopy. The buildup of heat is very intense in these situations and can cause tree mortality. The first burn was extremely intense, and there were many hot spots. The west side had less damage from the prescribed burning simply because the 2003 wildfire had destroyed most of the canopy.

The Longleaf Alliance took advantage of the damaged areas, about 10 acres total scattered over the east side. Though not originally planned, when the project came in under budget, additional demonstrations were planned. One spot, approximately two acres, was planted in late June of 2010 with containerized longleaf. This area, demonstrating the possibility of planting with minimal site prep, had over 50 percent survival.

(Continued on page 10)

Longleaf Rehab in Section 16

(Continued from page 9)

The decision was made to use another open area to plant native grasses. This endeavor would help decide how to plant these species and see which species worked best. The area was prepared and planted with 13 different species. When asked what had been learned from the demonstration, Anne Rilling with the Longleaf Alliance replied, "Be patient! It takes time!" Plans are to continue monitoring this site for further results.

A boardwalk and an educational pavilion were also built on the property. Adjacent to the pavilion stands a kiosk giving visitors a brief history into both the ups and downs of the state forest.

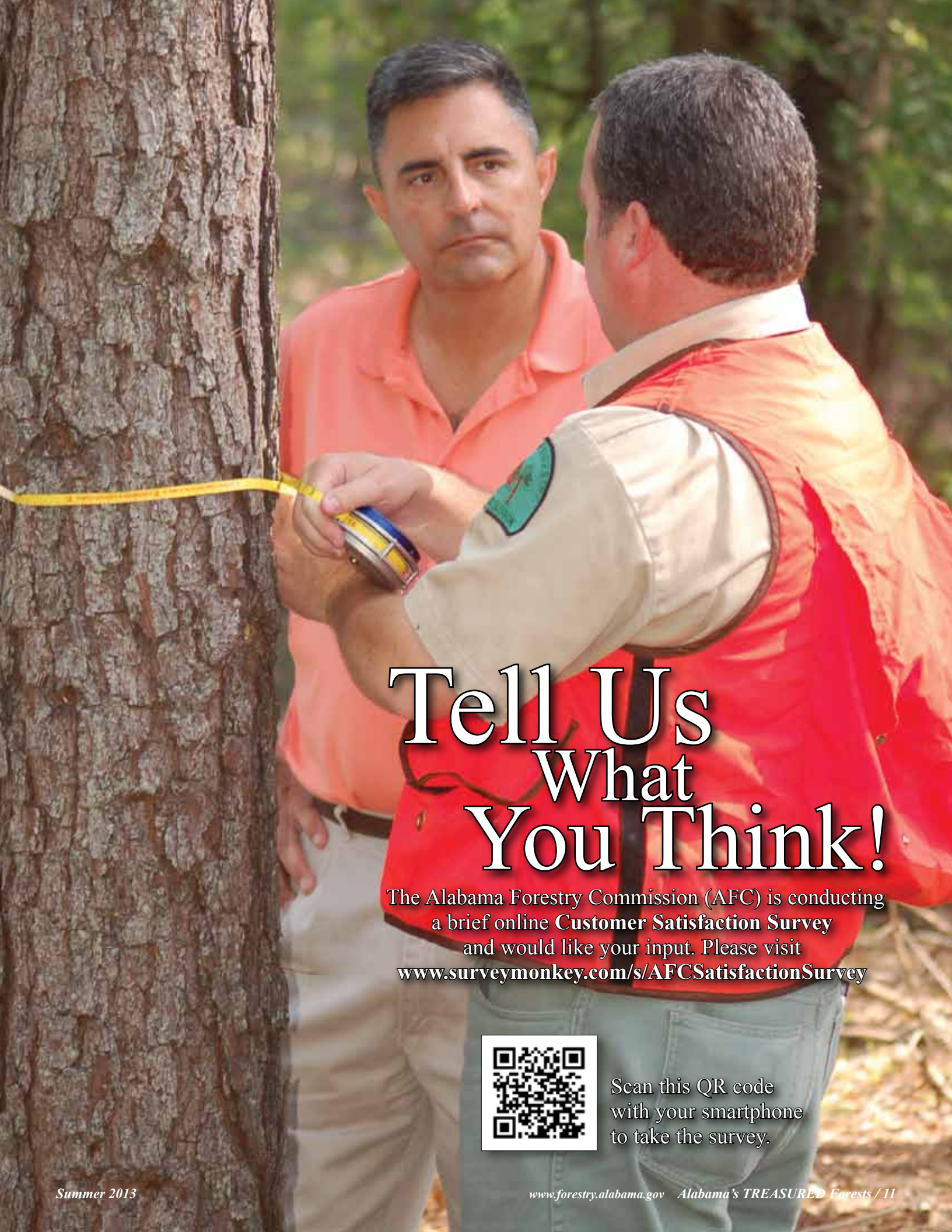
Realization of a Dream

In May of 2013, the Alabama Forestry Commission, the Longleaf Alliance, and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System showcased the new state forest to local landowners as well as local foresters in the area. Highlighting the practices initiated by the ARRA grant, the tour allowed the public to see the facility and appreciate the complexity of the longleaf environment. This event also presented an opportunity to honor two extraordinary individuals.

In 1995, Rhett Johnson and Dean Gjerstad had a vision. These Auburn University forestry colleagues dreamed of a group of people working together to manage and restore the longleaf ecosystem across the South. Through their efforts and dedication, these two individuals created national interest in longleaf forests and established the Longleaf Alliance. As restoration of this fascinating species began throughout the southeast region of the United States, their dream slowly became a reality.

An example of this restoration and a tribute to the success of a dream can now be seen at Baldwin State Forest. Through the efforts of numerous agencies working together, the forest is now a restored longleaf ecosystem. This tract of land – once an eye sore due to hurricanes and years of poor management – has now become the poster child for longleaf pine and the habitat it creates for many other species of plants and animals.

Just as the state forest has evolved, so, too, has the landscape across the South. Areas that were once totally neglected or managed with no regard for wildlife are now stately stands of longleaf. Dean Gjerstad and Rhett Johnson have seen their dream fulfilled. Quite fittingly, the state forest was renamed in honor of the two people who have worked tirelessly to restore the longleaf ecosystem. The newly designated "Johnson-Gjerstad State Forest" stands as a shining example of what is possible when people work together to achieve a common goal.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Gena Todia stands beside the 2013 Champion Slash Pine in Mobile County she co-nominated with Fred Nation.

Champion Trees 2013

By Brian Hendricks, Registered Forester, Champion Tree/FIA Coordinator
Alabama Forestry Commission

The results are in, and it appears that the popularity of *Alabama's Champion Tree* program continues to be at a high level. A total of 27 trees were nominated for 2013, and there are 12 new champions! With the addition of these new trees (and eliminating those champions that have died), Alabama now has a total of 143 champion trees.

Of the new trees, there were five that defeated a 2012 champion including: pond cypress *(Taxodium ascendens)*, live oak *(Quercus virginiana)*, overcup oak *(Quercus lyrata)*, white oak *(Quercus alba)*, and slash pine *(Pinus elliottii)*. Four of the trees filled vacancies for species that did not have a current champion, including: hazel alder *(Alnus serrulata)*, red buckeye *(Aesculus pavia)*, silver maple *(Acer saccharinum)*, and winged sumac *(Rhus copallina)*. Three others tied as co-champions with current champions as their total scores are in such close proximity to each other: American beech *(Fagus grandifolia)*, post oak *(Quercus stellata)*, and American plum *(Prunus Americana)*.

The purpose of the *Champion Tree* program is to discover, recognize, and preserve the largest tree of each species in Alabama. Anyone can nominate a tree for *Champion Tree* designation; however, an Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) forester is responsible for collecting the tree's measurements.

When determining a champion, three of the tree's components are taken into consideration: circumference, height, and crown spread. The formula used to determine the size of a tree is as follows: one point for each inch of circumference, plus one point for each foot of height, plus one point for each four feet of the average crown spread.

For a tree to be eligible for the *Champion Tree* program it must be a species that is recognized as native or naturalized in Alabama. A naturalized tree is an "introduced" species that has established itself in the wild, reproducing naturally and spreading.

Once a new champion is identified, both its owner and nominator receive a certificate. AFC county personnel present the nominator with a permanent tree marker that is placed in proximity to the base of the tree. New champions are added to the *Champion Trees of Alabama* publication which can be found on the AFC website at: **www.forestry.alabama.gov.**

If you know of a tree that you think might be the largest of its species in the state, you are encouraged to send in a nomination. To complete a nomination form on-line, visit the AFC website and click on the "Champion Tree Program" fast link found on the home page. Nomination forms are also available in county AFC offices that can be mailed or faxed. Although nominations may be sent in year-round, they must be received by the program coordinator no later than June 1, 2014, for a tree to be eligible for *Champion Tree* designation in 2014. Before sending a nomination, you are strongly encouraged to review the measurements of the current champion to get an idea if the candidate tree's score has a chance of defeating it. After all, there are millions of "big" trees in Alabama, but to be a CHAMPION it must be THE BIGGEST!

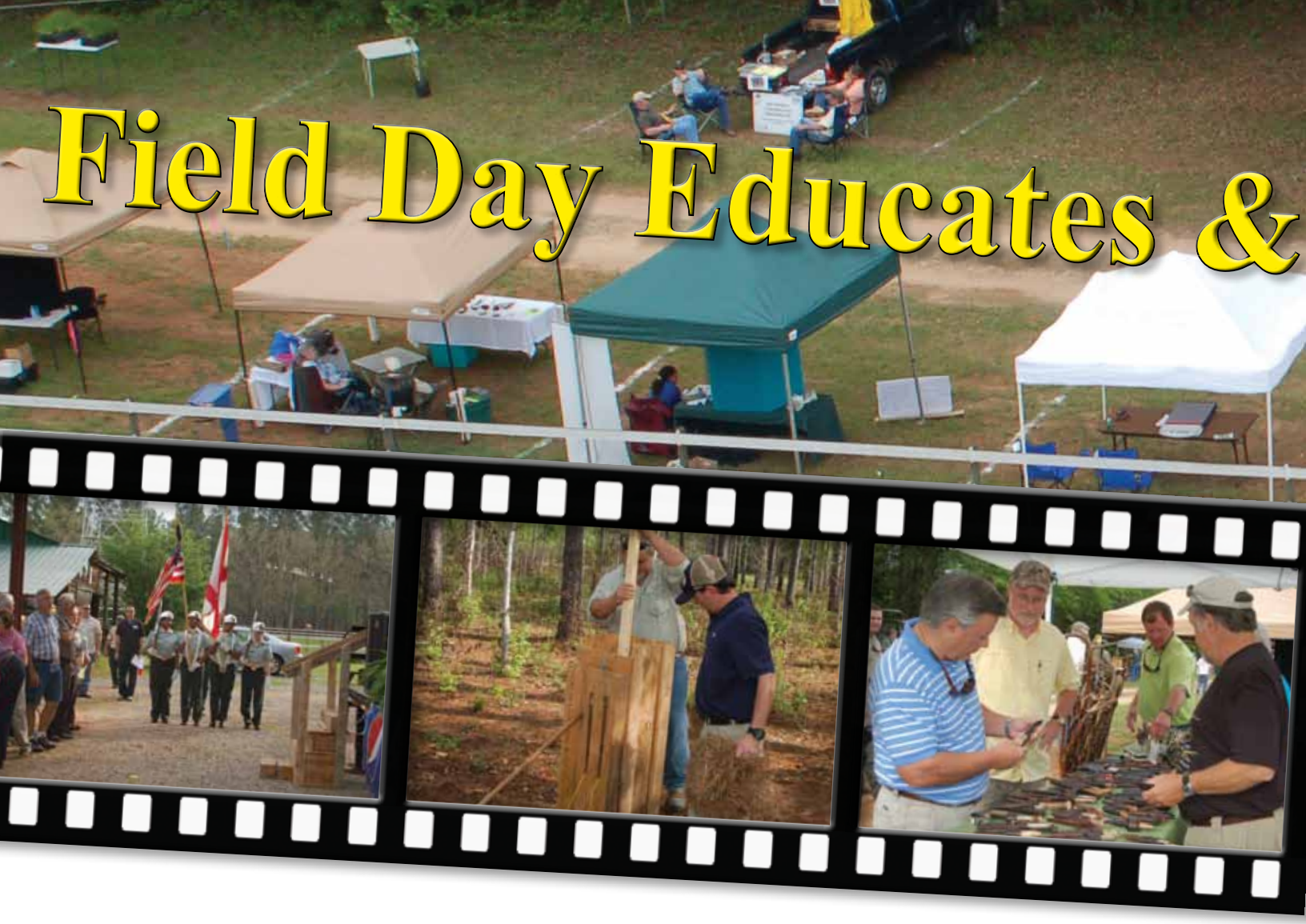
For more information about the AFC's *Champion Tree* program, contact Brian Hendricks by telephone at (334) 240-9370 or email at Brian.Hendricks@forestry.alabama.gov.

Congratulations to all of the nominators and owners of the 12 new champions for 2013 listed below!

TREE SPECIES	COUNTY	NOMINATOR	OWNER
Alder, Hazel	Talladega	John McBride	Allen McBride
Beech, American	Jackson	C. John Brewer	C. John Brewer
Buckeye, Red	Wilcox	Tommy Lawler	Tommy & Jeanell Lawler
Cypress, Pond	Mobile	Gena Todia & Fred Nation	Alabama State Port Authority
Maple, Silver	Jackson	Josh Angel & Adam Ziegenbein	Ron & Dianne Lee
Oak, Live	Mobile	Mayor Donald E. Nelson	Sandy Howard
Oak, Overcup	Dallas	Tom Wasmer	Tom Wasmer
Oak, Post	Chilton	Lee Roy Dennis	Lee Roy Dennis
Oak, White	Colbert	Darryl Rutland	Jeff Mitchell
Pine, Slash	Mobile	Gena Todia & Fred Nation	Alabama State Port Authority
Plum, American	Talladega	John McBride	Camp Mac
Sumac, Winged	Talladega	John McBride	Camp Mac

Photo by Fred Nation

Field Day Educates &



By Dr. Salem G. Saloom
Conecuh County TREASURE Forest Landowner

Managing Woodlands and Wildlife in Challenging Times was the descriptive title of a most successful educational forestry field day held on April 18, 2013, at the 2010 National Outstanding Tree Farm at Saloom Properties, LLC in Conecuh County near Evergreen, Alabama. You may wonder, what exactly are the criteria that determine a "most successful" field day? With this article, I hope to clarify those specific points that lead to a successful educational field day, as well as documenting highlights of this event.

It is imperative that everyone work together to help Alabama sustain its diverse natural resources for future generations. One of the rewards of multiple agencies, industry, and landowners working together is that it builds stronger and lasting relationships. These cooperative relationships compound into improved long-lasting conservation on the ground. Each of us views the world through a different set of lenses. When we bring the unique gifts of individuals and organizations to the table, we have established a recipe for success. Therefore the strong relationships of the various agencies, industry, and private volunteers working together and bringing different gifts to the planning of an event such as a forestry field day help to ensure its success.

The Conecuh County Forestry Planning Committee did just that when it pulled various groups together using the Incident Command protocol in planning and implementing the April forestry field day. This Incident Command System (or ICS), developed in the 1970s as a result of catastrophic wildfires in California, has become a standard in emergency management across the United States. Its five major functional areas are 1) Command, 2) Operations, 3) Planning, 4) Logistics, and 5) Finance/Administration. In addition to disaster situations, ICS can be modified to help plan and implement large events such as field days and meetings.

Implementing such a plan, the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) took the lead in logistical protocol on the day of this educational forestry event. This organizational structure is invaluable in helping the agency practice employing ICS and train for future emergencies. Under the leadership of an AFC Forester as Incident Commander, 34 AFC personnel were directly involved in the field day activities.

Other agencies and organizations that had key roles in the field day included the Alabama Natural Resources Council, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the National Wild Turkey Federation, Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, the

Inspires Landowners

Longleaf Alliance, the Nature Conservancy, the Alabama Wildlife Federation, and many private forestry consultants and individuals.

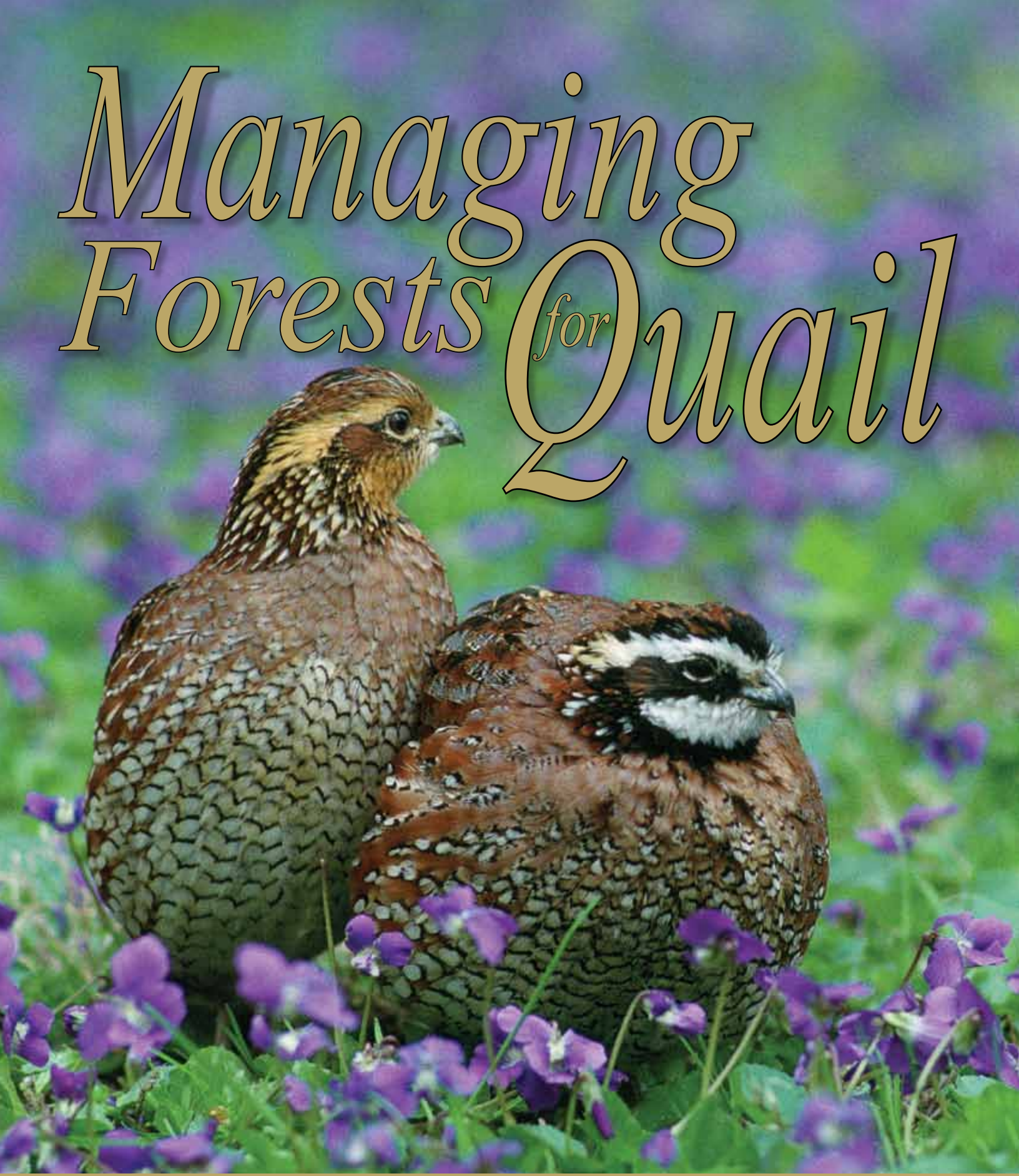
For the tour, four educational stations were established throughout the property. Because these are challenging times for forestry landowners, we wanted to be able to help those landowners find ways to become economically sustainable as well as having the tools to manage their woodlands. Therefore, at each educational station we encompassed the themes of longleaf, wildlife, and markets. There were lectures and offerings on subjects of feral hog control, pine straw production and markets, understory/mid-story mulching, longleaf and wildlife, longleaf and prescribed burning, longleaf markets, food plot planning and construction, as well as mid-rotation thinning via clean chips and fuel wood. With 28 vendors on site, the participants were also able to attain some tools to help them manage their own woodlands.

During the luncheon program featuring State Forester Linda Casey, over 320 participants enjoyed grilled chicken with side dishes prepared by our cooking team. More than 60 door prizes were given away, contributed by the vendors as well as local businesses in Evergreen, Brewton, and Monroeville.

By now, you may have noticed the near absence of specific names of individuals who contributed to this field day. Space is simply not available; and besides, as stated earlier, any successful event is a cooperative effort. Many new relationships were forged and others strengthened as a result of the planning and implementation of this outing. Furthermore, the educational process did not end at the close of the field day. Participants had an opportunity to complete a form requesting additional contact from an agency with information regarding certified Tree Farm, TREASURE Forest, Stewardship Forest management plans, longleaf pine management, timber, wildlife, aesthetics, as well as other educational events.

The foundation for this educational forestry event was formed by the following objectives: it would 1) actively engage state and county resource agencies in working together for a common goal, 2) provide useful information about wildlife and longleaf timber restoration and management, 3) present a harmonious fun-filled family atmosphere for all participants, and 4) create an attitude that by working together, we can make a positive difference in our county and state. Overall, we wanted to provide a safe and enjoyable, yet informative field day learning about the longleaf pine ecosystem, timber markets, and wildlife habitat enhancement concentrating on wild turkey, deer, and feral hog management. At the end of the day, we felt that our objectives had been met.

Managing Forests for Quail



By Stanley D. Stewart, Wildlife Biologist
Retired, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources,
Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division

Historical records indicate that prior to European settlement, much of the landscape of Alabama was a mosaic of open forests and grasslands. This was largely due to the actions of Indians who cleared land for farming and frequently burned the landscape to maintain open fields and open woodlands. With the progression of European settlement, additional land was cleared for farming, and burning the landscape to keep it open continued. Quail were abundant and widely distributed as long as this pattern of land use persisted.

As the decades of the 20th century passed, farming declined. The common practice of burning the woods fell into disfavor as timber production from forests gained importance. The result of these land-use changes was the inevitable decline of quail populations from landscapes where they had long been taken for granted. The dependence of quail on open lands maintained by tillage and woods kept open by frequent burning was not well understood. Throughout the latter half of the 20th century and to the present, quail continued to disappear from the land.

Quail have survived, however, on the "piney woods" quail plantations. In addition, on some of the plantations, quail numbers have surged in recent years with more knowledgeable management. Quail survived on these lands because, for the most part, the lands maintained their character from the past when quail were widely abundant. That general character was one of "open" woods, meaning that the number of trees and the tree canopy were relatively sparse. The open nature was maintained by timber thinnings and frequent burning. These practices are fundamental in managing forests for quail because they create and maintain vital groundcovers. Quail live on the ground, so all management must focus on groundcover conditions.

To favor optimal groundcover in woodlands, the tree canopy should be open enough to allow half of the ground to receive full sunlight. This will allow the growth of grasses and weeds that quail require for reproduction and food. In silvicultural terms, a pine forest managed at a basal area of 40 to 60 square feet per acre permits an optimal groundcover environment for quail. For a stand of trees that average 12 inches in diameter, this would equate to 50 to 75 trees per acre.

After the tree canopy is open, groundcover is best managed with prescribed fire. Burning controls the growth of dense brush and maintains an environment of native grasses, legumes, and scattered brush. Fire must be frequent, but carefully applied. Ideally, prescribed burning is performed annually in a pattern that leaves 25 to 50 percent of the groundcover unburned. This unburned cover is necessary for nesting areas; however, these areas should escape fire only one year so that native grasses and herbaceous seed-bearing plants always predominate. Plant responses vary with the season when fire is applied. Spring fires control brush and favor grass. Fall fire reduces grass and favors seed-bearing plants such as legumes. Fall, winter, and spring fires all have application in quail management depending on the desired response. Summer fires are detrimental to nesting and should be limited to locations where hardwood control is needed.

Periodic thinning and frequent prescribed burning are necessary practices when managing forests for quail. One other practice will increase quail production in forests: the development of permanent openings. Even with an open canopy, quail production in forests is further increased with the development and management of well-distributed permanent openings that occupy at least 20 percent of the forest area. Small fields, three to five acres in size, managed with annual fall-winter disking will grow up in annual weeds that provide high quality summer brood habitat.

The practices of timber thinning, prescribed burning, and small field management re-create the forest conditions of the past when quail were formerly abundant.

Quail Need Wild, Weedy, Wooly Areas

By Jim Schrenkel, Certified Wildlife Biologist
Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division

The call of the bobwhite quail is heard during spring and summer months and is often associated with wild areas. Early successional habitats, those dominated by grasses, weeds and shrubs, are essential for quail to thrive. The loss and conversion of such habitat has resulted in an 80 percent decline in quail numbers since the 1960s.

The good news is that quail habitat can be improved or created. Many landowners actually already have beneficial quail habitat present. To some, these weedy areas of ragweed, broomsedge, and/or briar thickets are an eyesore and are regularly mowed. While mowing and keeping areas manicured is attractive to most people, little benefit is found by quail, which thrive in weedy habitats. Mowing is probably the management practice most overused by landowners. Not only does mowing destroy beneficial vegetation, but when performed during the nesting season, it can destroy quail nests.

Early successional habitat maintenance requires two things: ample sunlight to produce beneficial weeds, grasses, and shrubs, and some type of disturbance such as burning or disking. "Organized chaos" is a good way to describe good quail management. Keeping areas in varying stages of vegetation succession is the key. Rotational disking of one-third of the weedy, grassy areas throughout the property each year maintains desired vegetation. This may be accomplished by disking in strips or blocks depending on the size of the unit. A burning rotation in open timberland or fallow fields every two years usually provides the diverse habitat necessary for bobwhites. A combination of both burning and disking provides optimal habitat. The key is to maintain weedy and wooly areas – the "woollier" the better. However, if these areas are not maintained by some type of disturbance, they will quickly revert to unsuitable habitats dominated by a woody component.

Managing for weedy areas can be a difficult adjustment. We generally want our yards and roadways manicured, so it stands to reason that we use these values when managing other landscapes. Early successional habitats must be maximized to sustain bobwhite populations. If land managers will remember three words for quail management – wild, weedy, and wooly – the call of the bobwhite quail might indeed be music to your ears.

WEED'EM & REAP

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You Bet Your Grass You Can't Afford to Miss One of These Native Warm Season Grass Field Days!

September 28th | Pintlala, AL | 9:00am - Noon
(Wetland Reserve Program / Private Property)

TOPICS:
- An overview of the wetland reserve program
- Bottomland hardwood establishment
- Establishing shallow water impoundments for waterfowl
- Native warm season grass establishment and management
- Using a native warm season grass drill
- Financial assistance programs for establishing native warm season grasses

SPEAKERS:
Ms. April Jones
Mr. Tim Albritton
Mr. Jeff Thurmond
Mr. Claude Jenkins

October 12th | Orrville, AL | 9:00am - Noon
(Private Property)

TOPICS:
- Planting containerized native grass seedlings
- Using a native warm season grass drill
- Integrating wildlife and environmental considerations into a row crop production system
- Native warm season grass establishment and maintenance
- Quail and grassland songbird response to field borders

SPEAKERS:
Mr. Patrick Cook
Dr. Mark Smith
Mr. Claude Jenkins

COST: $0 - Please pre-register online at
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Every attendee will receive a FREE DVD
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This project is funded in part, through a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and Southern Company's Power of Flight program; with additional support from the Alabama Quail Trail.

Enjoying the World "Unplugged"

By Paul Hudgins, Registered Forester/Butler Work Unit Manager
Alabama Forestry Commission

Spending over 72 hours in the deep woods of Butler County is not the typical way most sixth graders would want to start their summer vacation; however, for 27 students from across Butler County, that is exactly what they chose to do this past June.

The Natural Resources Youth Camp is sponsored annually by the Butler County Forestry Planning Committee (FPC), with tremendous support from the forest community, local businesses, and interested individuals. Because of such support, the FPC has offered this "hands-on" camp for area sixth grade students – at no cost – for the last 18 years. Once selected by their school to attend the camp, students spend three days and two nights at Mussel Creek Hunting Lodge, a rustic cabin located on private property in north Butler County. Campers leave behind their smart phones, iPhones, iPods, iPads, Kindles, NOOKs, televisions, radios, and text messaging to take part in this one-of-a-kind adventure.

The camp offers kids the opportunity to learn about Alabama's forest environment, how it relates to the everyday economy, as well as the important role it plays in our daily lives. The camp also provides students something to do from 7am to 11pm – and even later if you're the last one to get a shower.

Lost . . . and Found

The camp begins with students being given a compass and a "crash course" on how to use it, as well as instructions on determining an unknown distance by "pacing." Campers are divided into teams with one adult leader, carried to a starting location, given a pair of snake leggings, and wished a fond farewell. They then compete in an orienteering field exercise that stretches across wooded terrain. Completing this rugged course requires the students to not only work together as a team, but also individually. Each student is required to complete at least one leg of the course without any assistance from their team. At the end of camp, awards are given to the team(s) completing the course in the quickest time and locating the most correct points. Only twice have we had a team to get so completely turned around that they missed a portion of the course. On a side note, this year we were lucky to finally find "Fred," an unfortunate camper that's been missing since 2011!

Keeping it Safe

While some students are becoming skilled at orienteering, others are hearing about power line safety from Mr. Phillip Baker, System Engineer with Pioneer Electric Cooperative. Still others are learning about home fire safety from the Greenville

(Continued on page 20)

Enjoying the World "Unplugged"

(Continued from page 19)

Fire Department and their smoke trailer demonstration. These three activities work in conjunction with each other to ensure the students experience a busy first morning.

Name that Tree

After a hearty lunch, Mr. Chris Erwin, Education Coordinator with the Alabama Forestry Association, takes the students on a walk around the property for two Project Learning Tree activities: "Every Tree for Itself" and "Tree Identification." Using the differences in overall appearance, leaf characteristics, and tree bark, they learn to identify different tree species.

Dirt Pie, Anyone?

Following tree identification, students are treated to a soil education activity entitled "Dig It." Mrs. Beth Chastain and Mr. Jimmy Massey, both with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, show students how different land covers can affect soil movement, and how this soil movement could eventually impact creek sedimentation and possibly even their drinking water. This exercise ends with the campers creating some "edible" soil . . . with Oreo cookies, gummy worms, sprinkles, pretzels, and a cup cake. I really don't remember dirt tasting this good when I was a kid!

The Great Outdoors

Next on the agenda, students study different types of wildlife habitat, and what it takes to improve this habitat, with Mr. Thagard Colvin, Wildlife Biologist, Retired, with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Following a super supper of fried fish, they hear about open water/boating safety from Mr. John Bozeman, Marine Police Officer with the Department of Conservation. Finally, a discussion on Hunter Ethics and Preserving Our Hunting Heritage is delivered by Mr. James Altiere, Hunter Education Instructor with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the last scheduled topic of the day before we take a "hay ride" into the dark woods.

Wild Nightlife

Each evening, well after darkness falls, the students are loaded onto the FPC's tour trailer and driven through the deep forest of South Alabama. The purpose of these nighttime excursions is to look for nocturnal wildlife, and again this year we were lucky enough to call up a pair of owls that perched on a limb just above the students' heads.

Making Tracks

Early on the second day, the kids find out how to identify wildlife "footprints." Using the Project Wild activity, "Making Tracks," Mr. Mike Older, Forester with the Alabama Forestry Commission, introduces students to the different types of tracks made by Alabama wildlife. Following this presentation, Mr. Mike Sievering, Wildlife Biologist with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and Mr. Jerry Fiest, Wildlife Biologist with the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, teach the campers about fur bearer population management and trapping techniques used in Alabama. They learned how and what it takes to control nuisance animals by trapping as a safe and effective way to limit damage.

Creature Features

Next, students are treated to an educational "live flight" demonstration from a few of Alabama's birds of prey. Mr. Dale Arrowood with the "Winged Ambassadors" raptor program provides the kids an up-close and personal look at these birds and what an important role they play in the environment. After spending time with the birds, campers are presented with "A Cooperative Environment" by Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Stiles. Mr. Stiles is an Environmental Services Analyst with PowerSouth Energy Cooperative. The students are given a hands-on, close-up encounter with some of Alabama's local inhabitants. An alligator, a pine snake, a king snake, tree frogs, toads, and legless lizards are just a few of the "creatures" that the kids get to touch and even hold, if they dare.

In the Creek

The next activity offers students a chance to explore and learn what really lives in a local creek with Mrs. Mona Scruggs Dominguez, Water Quality Education Specialist and 4H/Youth Development Leader with the

Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Campers take creek samples using nets, then look through these samples to make an evaluation of the creek's overall "condition." Once this condition is determined, the students have time to swim, play, and just explore Mussel Creek.

Civilizations from the Past

After cooling off in one of Alabama's creeks, the campers are presented with some local Native American history by Mr. Charlie Clark, Executive Director, Farm Service Agency, and Ms. Elishia Ballentine, Publications Specialist with the Alabama Forestry Commission and "Living History" interpreter who portrays an 18th century Creek woman. They share artifacts, pottery, and animal hides with the students, as well as stories of Native Alabama cultures.

Going Hog Wild

New this year on the second evening, following a delicious dinner of barbeque ribs and all the fixin's of a Cajun low country boil, students were treated to a "wild game" tasting. This challenge was not only to sample the seven different Alabama wild game "mystery" meats, but also identify as many as possible. Several campers were brave enough to participate in the challenge, and before it was over, almost all of them had at least tasted the wildlife dishes which included wild hog, white-tailed deer, raccoon, rattlesnake, goose, duck, and alligator. This activity was such a success, it will no doubt be repeated next year featuring some new mystery meats from the wild woods of Alabama.

Firearms 101

While allowing their supper to settle and in preparation of the next day's exciting activities, the students were introduced to firearms handling and safety by Mr. James Altiere.

Bird Walk

The third and final day starts off with an early morning walk with Mr. Charlie Kennedy, President of the Alabama Ornithological Society. Mr. Charlie, as he is affectionately called, explores the woods with the students looking for a variety of birds, both large and small.

Top Guns

After the bird walk this year, campers enjoyed an archery demonstration by champion archer, Mr. Justin Martin of Justin Martin Outdoors. The remainder of the final day of camp is spent learning to shoot skeet, black powder, 22s, and archery. For some of these students, this is their first time to ever shoot a firearm or even pull a bow. For others, it's their opportunity to show everyone how good they really are, or how good they really think they are. Over the past 18 years, the girl campers have given the boys a run for "top shooter." As a general rule, girls listen better to the instructors and are easier to teach. However, this year proved the exception to that rule; we had no female "top shots."

Going Home

To close out the "camp experience," students are given several Audubon Field Guide books, the *Longleaf* novel by Roger Reid, and other nice prizes for "surviving" camp. Special awards are presented for the best shooter in each of the firearm events, as well as top shot in archery.

All of this natural resources experience is funded in part by tremendous community support as well as grants from the Alabama Forests Forever license plate and Rayonier Foundation. In a few years, when the campers look back at their time at Mussel Creek, we hope they remember us fondly and think of this camp as an experience of a lifetime!

VIOLATION: Normal flow of water in a wetland is blocked, creating ponding.

HARDWOOD CORNER

Forested Wetland Management

By James P. Jeter, Registered Forester/BMP Coordinator
Alabama Forestry Commission

Yes, this may be old news covered again; however, let me reassure you, it bears repeating. And if you own forested wetlands, operate in forested wetlands, or are thinking about buying forested wetlands, you better take the time to read this article and become very familiar with Section 6 (pages 17 through 21) of *Alabama's Best Management Practices for Forestry* (BMP) manual.

I will not cover this section word-for-word, but I want to highlight the section's main points in an effort to save you the time of having to obtain an individual Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE).

Wetlands

There are many types of wetlands; some are **not** wet all the time. To be delineated as a wetland, the area must meet three criteria: hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and wetland hydrology must be present on the same site. *The Clean Water Act of 1972* (CWA) set the guidance for these wetlands. There is a manual for delineating jurisdictional wetlands, and then there are isolated wetlands. Jurisdiction for these wetlands is unclear at this time because the CWA is up for reauthorization, and who will win the battle of defining jurisdictional wetlands has not been decided. With that point of confusion stated, I tend to look at all forested

wetlands the same, to err on the conservative safe side.

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act requires that a permit be obtained from the USACOE before a discharge of dredged or fill material can be made in the wetlands. In forestry, this usually involves road construction and maintenance.

Section 404 Silvicultural Exemption – Most forestry practices are exempt from having to obtain a permit, if certain criteria are met and the practices are part of normal forestry activities. Let me warn you: this is a *forestry* exemption; recreational activities or uses are **not exempt**, a point being clarified in the court system every year.

Roads and stream crossings within wetlands and other waters of the U.S. **must** be constructed and maintained in accordance with the 15 mandated federal BMPs listed in the manual. Failure to meet or implement any one of these 15 federally mandated BMPs will invalidate your exemption from having to obtain a permit.

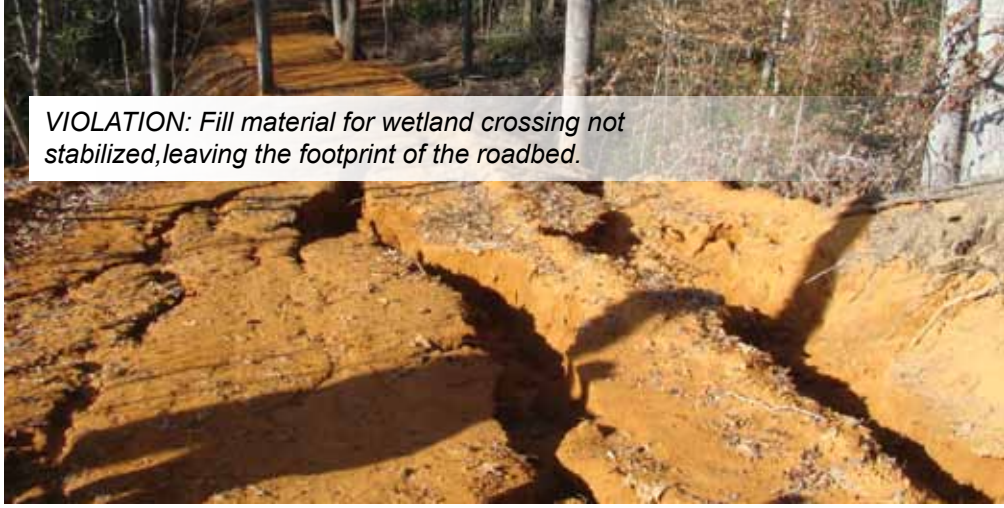
Forest Management Plan

Although wetland regulations do not require a written forest management plan, it is in the landowner's best interest to have one to document that operations are established, that BMPs are being implemented and effective, and that all activities are consistent with other Section 404 exemption criteria.

My reason for continuing to bring up this issue is this: I had much rather see you forewarned and asking for further guidance, than see you wanting help with remediation. If you have any questions dealing with forested wetlands and the silvicultural exemption, please contact me. This is 2013, not 1975; pleading ignorance and asking for forgiveness is no longer accepted by the regulatory agencies at any level, not to mention the court system.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The complete *Alabama's Best Management Practices for Forestry*, plus a "BMP Overview" video are both available online at: **www.forestry.alabama.gov/afc_brochures.aspx**
Email your BMP questions to Jim Jeter, BMP Coordinator with the Alabama Forestry Commission, at James.Jeter@forestry.alabama.gov or call him at (205) 333-1590.



VIOLATION: Fill material for wetland crossing not stabilized,leaving the footprint of the roadbed.

VIOLATION: Improper culvert installation/stabilization.

VIOLATION: Dredged/cast material deposited in a wetland.

TWO VIOLATIONS: 1) No culvert installed. 2) Drain filled with dirt which then deposited in the wetland.

Fourth Graders Explo Management at Experiment

By David S. Dyson, Registered Forester, USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station, Restoring Longleaf Pine Unit, Escambia Experimental Forest

Fourth grade students from the W.S. Neal Elementary School in East Brewton, Alabama, recently visited the Escambia Experimental Forest (The Escambia) to get first-hand experience with the plants and animals of the longleaf pine ecosystem. After several days of instruction about the history and ecological significance of longleaf pine from guidance counselor Marina Chancery, 100 children were able to apply and expand their new knowledge through a variety of activities.

Managed by the U.S. Forest Service Southern Research Station (SRS) Restoring and Managing Longleaf Pine Ecosystems unit, the Escambia provides an ideal location for a field trip because it contains so many different communities of the longleaf pine ecosystem on one contiguous property. Not only does the experimental forest exhibit forest stands between two years old and greater than 100 years old, but it also contains habitats ranging from dry uplands to seepage slopes and bogs, to mixed pine-hardwood forests along streams. This property provides demonstrations of different cutting and prescribed burning regimes as well.

With such a variety of forest types, ages, and management systems in one place, students were able to better grasp the significance of the longleaf pine ecosystem and its importance for notable wildlife species such as the eastern fox squirrel, gopher tortoise, and eastern indigo snake, in addition to how the forest can be managed to protect them.

Forest superintendent Ronald Tucker teamed with Ms. Chancery to let the students experience a day in the woods and learn why sustainable management is important. After a walking tour on which students discovered gopher tortoise burrows, pocket gopher mounds, wild turkey tracks, and a variety of native plant and tree species, forester Madeline Hildreth and rangers Woody Jackson and Dustyn Tyer of the Alabama Forestry Commission taught the students about forest products and wildland fire safety.

The tour ended with a ride through the experimental forest that helped the students further understand the role scientific research plays in forest management and how forestry research improves forests' ability to produce clean air and water as well renewable wood products. Equally important, students saw how science generates the information they learn in a classroom.

Brewton, Alabama, is located near the center of the largest remaining tracts of intact longleaf pine forest, but many youth know very little about the natural world around them. "Many of our students know more about the giant pandas than the rare plants and animals right outside our window," noted Ms. Chancery.

re Forest Ecology & the Escambia al Forest

Reprinted with permission from CompassLive, the online science magazine of the USDA Forest Service SRS. For more about forest science in the South, sign up for weekly updates from CompassLive at **www.srs.fs.usda.gov/compass/**.

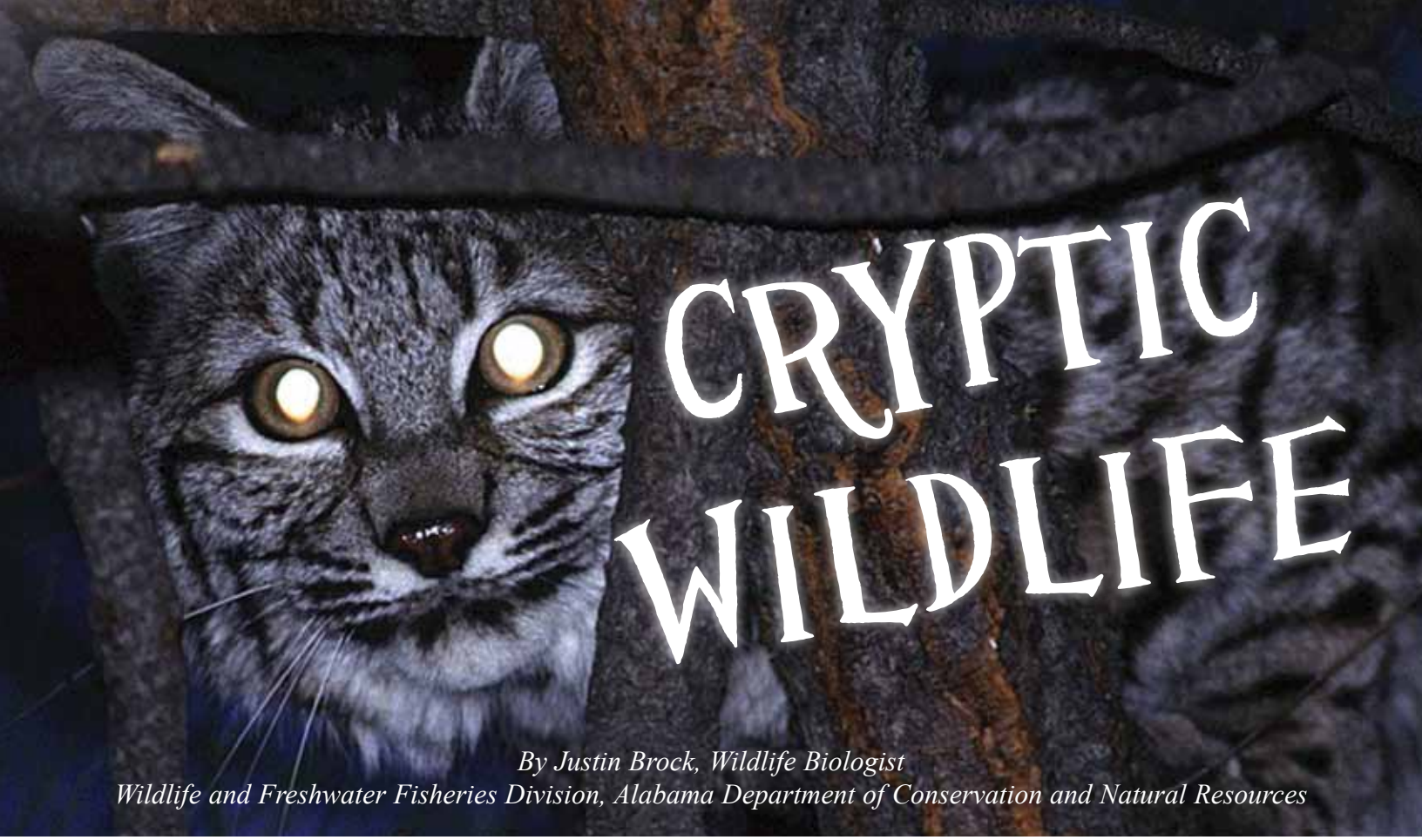
This 3,000-acre field laboratory, located 7 miles south of Brewton, Alabama, was established in 1947 by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Southern Forest Experiment Station (now Southern Research Station), primarily to study problems associated with the ecology and management of longleaf pine forests. A forest superintendent employed by the USFS manages the Escambia Experimental Forest on site. Research operations and general administration of the Forest is handled by the USFS "Restoring and Managing Longleaf Pine Ecosystems Research Project," located on the campus of Auburn University.

The T. R. Miller Mill Company of Brewton provided land for the Experimental Forest, at no cost, under a 99-year lease to the government. Products derived from operations on the Escambia go to the company. Through 1996, 4.03 million cubic feet of pine, 65 percent in poles and logs, plus 231 thousand cubic feet of hardwood had been harvested.

A little over 80 percent of the Forest is in the longleaf pine type with the remainder in slash pine-hardwood bottoms. Research operations here have developed many age classes of longleaf pine, from newly germinated seedlings to stands with trees up to 160 years old. Most of the second-growth timber on the forest is about 85 years old (1997). About 1,200 acres have been naturally regenerated, and more than half of this is in stands ranging from 35 to 50 years of age. Many stand densities have been created, particularly in connection with growth and yield studies. Site quality for longleaf is extremely varied but averages between 70 and 75 feet at 50 years of age. No other location has the combinations of stand ages, sites, and conditions that are found on this Experimental Forest.

Research on the Escambia has investigated many longleaf problems including regeneration, stand management, management alternatives, growth and yield, site evaluation, fire ecology, woods grazing, and a few studies in the branch bottom type. Most of the research and development of the shelterwood system for longleaf pine natural regeneration was done on the Forest. Cooperative studies with other USFS research units and universities have also been conducted on this Experimental Forest. The regional longleaf pine growth and yield study was initiated here in 1964, and has since spread to other locations in Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina. Nearly half of the 305 plots in this long-term cooperative study are located on the Escambia Experimental Forest.

Due to its central location in the longleaf pine belt that extends from the Carolinas to eastern Texas, the Escambia Experimental Forest is well situated for the study of this species. Over 20 percent of the remaining longleaf pine forests in the Southeast are within 75 miles of this location. In the heart of the Middle Coastal Plain Province, where much of the second growth longleaf was growing, it is near four other provinces that contain natural longleaf: the Lower Coastal Plain, Upper Coastal Plain, Piedmont, and Mountain.



CRYPTIC WILDLIFE

By Justin Brock, Wildlife Biologist
Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

In the darkness of the forest, a sound is heard that cannot be explained. Somewhere on a backcountry road, an image crosses someone's path. What are these strange sounds and sightings? Some claim to know exactly what they are, while others can only speculate. Cryptic wildlife is a hot topic among believers and non-believers alike. Some people are determined to prove the existence of these creatures through the study of "cryptozoology," the search for animals that are considered legendary or otherwise nonexistent by mainstream biology. These individuals dedicate countless hours to searching for these supposed hidden marvels of our outdoor world.

Cryptozoologists look for two groups of animals that can be referred to as cryptic species. These two groups are comprised of animals that are considered extinct or out of place, or species that are not recorded to have existed except by myth, legend, sightings, or some other evidence that is less than concrete.

Extinct or Just Out of Place?

Cryptic wildlife supposedly in Alabama are those species considered extinct or out of place. The most known and talked about of this group are those of the large cats reportedly sighted across the state. Of these species, the panther, also known as the cougar, puma, or mountain lion, makes up the largest percentage of the reported sightings. The cougar once called this area home, but no official report of the animal has been recorded in decades. Although there is still a small breeding population of cougars located in south Florida, it is unlikely that any of these cats are in Alabama due to the lack of physical evidence such as road-killed individuals.

Other possible mystery cats roaming the woods that seem to acquire the most attention are the jaguar and jaguarundi. Jaguars are native to South and Central America and have been reported as far north as New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona. Jaguarundis are also found in South America and have been sighted as far north as New Mexico and Texas. Additionally, there have been confirmed sightings of jaguarundis in Florida, believed to be descendants of a small number of cats released in the state in the 1940s.

Myth and Legend?

The second group of species sought out by cryptozoologists is of the mythical variety. These creatures are the ones that are not supposed to exist, despite their popularity or the many people who claim to have seen them. The most popular and legendary of these is Bigfoot. Reported to be a bipedal primate with dark red to black hair, most sightings describe an animal over 6 feet in height with a stocky muscular build. Sightings continue to emerge throughout the country. There are even websites dedicated to the creature. However, as with many cryptic species, there is not enough evidence to support the sightings and other claims of Bigfoot's existence.

A part of all of us would like to believe the unknown is always possible and all evidence is good evidence. However, most sightings of the crypto wildlife we hear about are merely that of misidentification or possibly hoaxes that are known to occur. Dogs, large house cats, or perhaps dark colored bobcats can cause even an experienced eye to cast a second glance under the right conditions. It is part of the wonder of the outdoors that keeps our eyes glued to the nearest woods. If the day comes when someone can go into the forest knowing the exact species of bird they will see that given day, or where every track was laid the day before, the world will be a less intriguing place.

Jaguarundi – The Otter Cat

By Marisa Futral, State Hunter Education Coordinator
Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

The jaguarundi is a small cat native to Central and South America that is a little larger than a house cat. The appearance of this cat is unique among felids in that it more closely resembles a weasel or otter, and therefore is sometimes referred to as the "otter cat."

Photo by Wikipedia Commons License

With a slender, elongated body, short legs, a small flattened head, short weasel-like ears, a long otter-like tail, and a sleek, unmarked coat, an adult jaguarundi can weigh as little as 6 pounds or as much as 20. These cats stand 10 to 14 inches at the shoulder and reach a length of up to 3 feet, not counting the tail. They have three color variations that include black, brownish-grey, or red. Any or all colors can occur in a single litter, but generally the darker colors are found in the rain forest and paler colors are found in drier environments. Jaguarundis are one of the only felines that have no contrasting colors on the backs of their ears.

While not native to the southeastern United States, it is believed that a feral population of jaguarundis exists in Florida, established from an introduced population of escaped pets during the 1940s. Apparently thinking they were easier to tame than most wild cats, some people used them to help control rodent populations.

In Alabama, rare sightings have been reported from the southwestern and central part of the state, but there is no physical evidence that the cat exists here. Sightings from credible sources have occurred at Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores and other locations in Mobile and Baldwin counties as late as the early 1990s. However, none of those sightings were confirmed by photographs or tracks, and there have been no reported sightings since the mid 1990s.

Though highly adaptable, the natural habitat of this wild cat is dense forest and shrubby areas. It is a good swimmer, an adept fish hunter, and is usually found near water. In addition to fish, birds are frequently preyed upon, as are rodents, small reptiles, and frogs.

Although the fur of the jaguarundi is not highly sought after by fur traders, the cat is at risk through general deforestation and loss of its natural habitat. In the United States where sightings are very rare, the jaguarundi is classified as an endangered species and as such is protected from hunting and trapping.

For more information regarding the jaguarondi or other wildlife species found in Alabama, contact Marisa Futral, State Hunter Education Coordinator with the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, at marisa.futral@dcnr.alabama.gov.

Photo by Keven Law

Photo by Terry Spivey, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Tree Planting Season is Just Around the Corner . . .

Successful tree planting not only requires good planning, skillful site preparation, correct handling, and proper planting, it also helps to have a reputable and reliable tree seedling source. To assist in this process, a list of tree seedling nurseries that serve Alabama landowners is presented here. This alphabetical listing is in no way an endorsement of any particular company or product. The Alabama Forestry Commission also maintains a list of tree seedling nurseries on the agency website at **www.forestry.alabama.gov/seedling_search.aspx**. Qualified tree seedling vendors that market to Alabama landowners and wish to be added to this list should call (334) 240-9308.

Advantage Forestry
Peter Frankowski
302 South Main Avenue
Demopolis, AL 36732
Phone: (334) 287-0106
www.advantageforestry.net

American Tree Seedlings
401 Industrial Blvd.
Bainbridge, GA 31717
Phone: (229) 246-2662
Email: customerservice@americantreeseedlings.com

ArborGen
Alabama SuperTree Nursery
Larry Foster
264 County Road 888
Selma, AL 36703
Phone: (800) 222-1280
www.supertreeseedlings.com

ArborGen
Bellville SuperTree Nursery
6482 Highway 169 South
Bellville, GA 30414
Phone: (877) 833-4760

ArborGen
Georgia SuperTree Nursery
78 Supertree Lane
Shellman, GA 39886
Phone: (800) 554-6550

ArborGen
South Carolina Supertree Nursery
5594 Hwy 38 S
Blenheim, SC 29516
Phone: (800) 222-1290

Baucum Nursery
3821 W. Roosevelt Road
Little Rock, AR 72204
Phone: (501) 296-1940

Bell Brothers, Inc.
Danny or Gary Bell
5619 Highway 169
Claxton, GA 30417
Phone: (912) 739-2273

Blanton's Longleaf Container Nursery
Robert Dismukes
302 Pecan Drive
Brewton, AL 36426
Phone: (251) 867-7629
Email: dismukesr@bellsouth.net

Blanton's Longleaf Container Nursery
C.J., Jay, or Jason Blanton
1091 NE Daylily Avenue
Madison, FL 32340
Phone: (850) 973-2967
Email: BIGJMB1@vol.com

Buckeye Nursery
Johnny Brown
1490 Buckeye Nursery Lane
Perry, FL 32347
Phone: (800) 838-2218

Chestnut Hill Nursery
15105 NW 94th Avenue
Alachua, FL 32615
Phone: (800) 669-2067

Chiappini Farm
P. O. Box 436
Melrose, FL 32666
Phone: (800) 293-5413

Deep South Growers
Rick or Candi Reed
1535 Harvey Vickers Road
Douglas, GA 31534
Phone: (912) 384-5450
Email: careed@hotmail.com

Delta View Nursery
659 Burdette Road
Leland, MS 38756
Phone: (800) 748-9018
Email: hardwoods@tecinfo.com

Florida Division of Forestry
Andrews Nursery
9850 NW 42nd Court
Chiefland, FL 32644
Phone: (352) 493-6096
Email: gillys@doacs.state.fl.us

Georgia Forestry Commission
Flint River Nursery
Jeff Fields
9850 River Road
Byromville, GA 31007
Phone: (229) 268-7308
www.gatrees.org/Seedlings/Orderinginfo.cfm

Hainds Nursery
Mark Hainds
5457 Harts Bridge Road
Andalusia, AL 36420
Phone: (334) 427-1029
Email: hainds@alaweb.com

International Forest Company
Wayne Bell
1265 Georgia Highway 133 N
Moultrie, GA 31768
Phone: (800) 633-4506
www.interforestry.com

K & L Forest Nursery
Ken Singleton
3782 Hwy 41 South
Buena Vista, GA 31803
Phone: (229) 649-3572
Email: singleton@windstream.net

Liner Tree Farm
4020 Packard Avenue
St. Cloud, FL 34772
Phone: (800) 330-1484

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry
Beauregard Nursery
Randy Rentz
P.O. Box 1628
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
Phone: (225) 925-4515
Email: forestreforestation@ldaf.state.la.us

LTF Greenhouses
Neal Kicklighter
195 Ty Ty Omega Road
Tifton, GA 31793
Phone: (229) 382-4454

Meeks' Farms & Nursery
Peter Frankowski, Alabama Sales
187 Flanders Road
Kite, GA 31049
Phone: (877) 397-0166
www.meeksfarms-nurserys.com

Native Forest Nursery
Paul Ensminger
11306 Highway 411 South
Chatsworth, GA 30705
Phone: (706) 483-3397
Email: paul@nativeforestnursery.com

Plant World Nursery
7509 Lee Rd 146
Opelika, AL 36804
Phone: (334) 745-0459
www.plantworldal.com

Plum Creek Timber Company
Jesup Nursery
1689 Nursery Road
Jesup, GA 31545
Phone: (912) 427-4871

Plum Creek Timber Company
Pearl River & River Bend Nursery
1032 Camp Lane Road
Hazlehurst, MS 39083
Phone: (601) 894-1072
Email: tom.anderson@plumcreek.com

Plum Creek Timber Company
Shubuta Nursery
1444 Shubuta Eucutta Road
Shubuta, MS 39360
Phone: (601) 687-5766

Ray Bracken Nursery
David McLemore
460 Woodville Road
Pelzer, South Carolina 29669
Phone: (800) 992-4321
Email: davidm@raybracken.com

Rayonier, Inc.
Elberta Nursery *(formerly Joshua Timberlands, LLC)*
Sue Gondert
29650 Comstock Road
Elberta, AL 36530
Phone: (251) 986-5210

Rayonier, Inc.
Glennville Regeneration Center
Kelly Dougherty
11704 Baxter Durrence Road
Glennville, GA 30427
Phone: (912) 654-4065

Rutland Forest Nursery
Terrell Rutland
502 Owen Medford Road
Lenox, GA 31637
Phone: (229) 382-5504

Sanctuary Timber & Wildlife
7509 Lee Rd 146
Opelika, AL 36804
Phone: (334) 782-2360
Email: info@stwildlife.com
www.stwildlife.com

South Carolina Forestry Commission
Box 219
Trenton, SC 29847
Phone: (803) 275-3578

Superior Trees
Alan Webb
12493 East US Highway 90
Lee, FL 32059
Phone: (850) 971-5159

Tennessee Department of Agriculture
9063 Highway 411 South
Delano, TN 37325
Phone: (877) 868-7337
Email: Nursery@state.tn.us

Wadsworth Christmas Tree Farm
3071 Dexter Road
Wetumpka, AL 36092
(334) 567-6308
Email: frank@wadsworthchristmastrees.com

Warren County Nursery
Richard Hobbs
6492 Beersheba Hwy
McMinnville, TN 37110
(931) 668-8941
Email: wcnursery@blomand.net

The Wildlife Group
Allen Deese
2858 County Road 53
Tuskegee, AL 36083
Phone: (800) 221-9703
www.wildlifegroup.com

A Family Affair

(Continued from page 6)

Father and son agree that the main goal for management of the farm was and is to increase the turkey population. Both are avid turkey hunters. In fact, Raymond (Jr.) achieved a "Royal Slam" in 2009, which means he harvested a bird from five subspecies of wild turkeys – the Eastern, Rio Grande, Osceola, Merriam's, and Gould's – from all over the country.

Illustrating his own love of turkey hunting and dedication to family values, Ray (Sr.) published a delightful book entitled *Southern Turkey Hunting – A Family Affair*. In the preface of his book, Mr. Jones states, "Turkey hunting is more than just another sport or pursuit of another wildlife species, it's a way of life."

The farm is still highly populated by deer, and Raymond (Jr.) says with a smile, "There's something very satisfying about shooting a deer under a tree you've planted." But now the sight of turkeys "bugging" through the areas of warm season grasses or nesting on the edge of the bottomland pine plantations is also a normal sight. Hunting turkey on the property, as well as deer, has now become a Jones family tradition. Just a few years ago, the first long-bearded gobbler was taken on the farm.

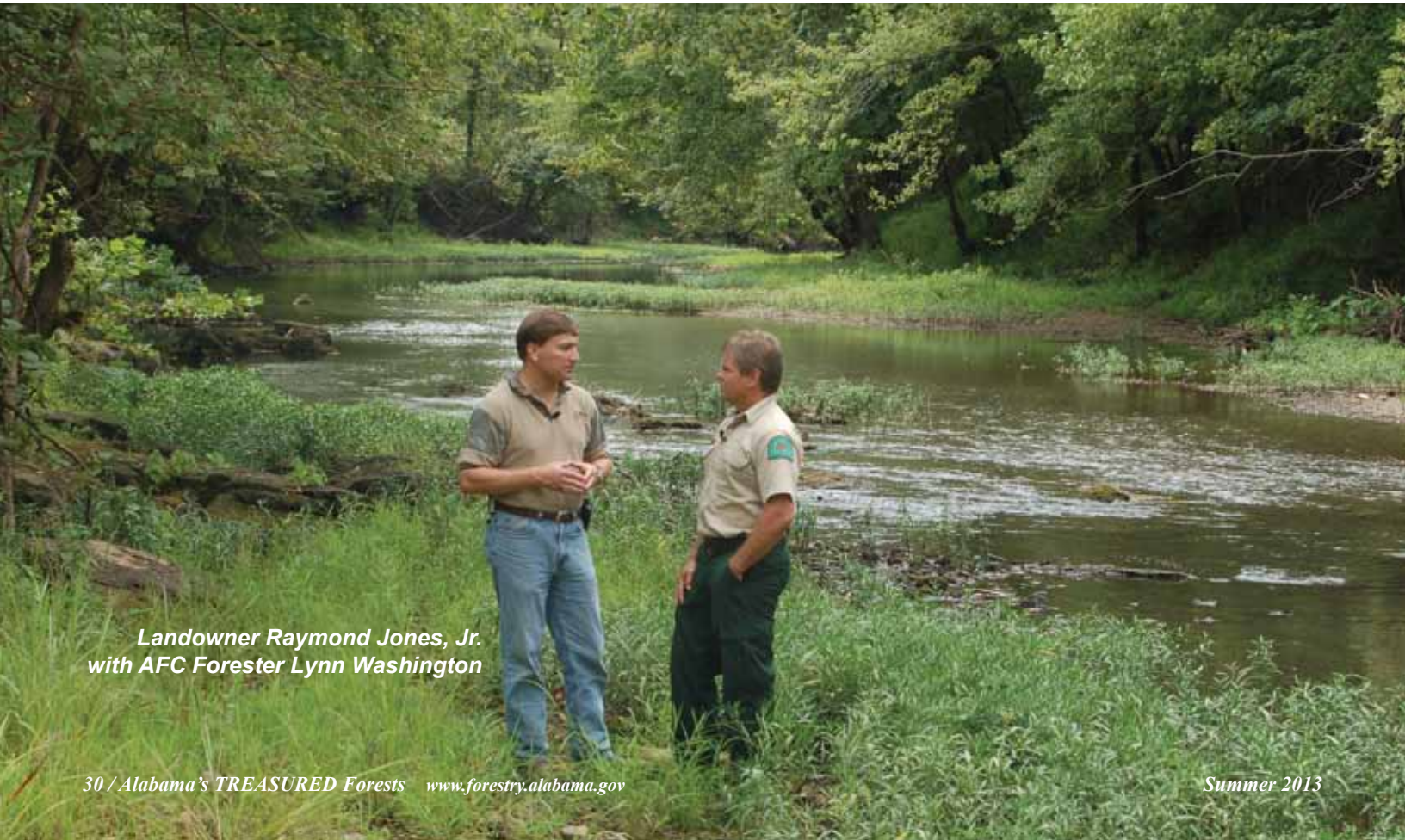
Today, the Jones farm continues to be managed in an environmental-friendly manner. Ongoing maintenance requires bush hogging and dozer work on forest roads and trails, many of which are utilized as linear food plots. Fallow areas are also bush hogged to keep them in early successional stages for wildlife. Ponds are maintained as needed. A variety of wildlife plantings are sown annually throughout the property, as well as reserving a portion of the row crops grown (corn and soybean) specifically for wildlife.

With the mountains and river presenting a unique "access" challenge, over 47 miles of road have been constructed over the years. In another consideration of environmental issues, the family recently received assistance under Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) to protect endangered species in the Paint Rock River. Through this partnership, a bridge was built over the river, replacing the old ford that had been in place since the 1960s. Removal of this ford allows better access for fish and other aquatic animals using this stretch of the river.

Passing the Blessings on to the Next Generation

While environmental protection and conservation practices have been of major significance to these landowners throughout the 50 or so years of evolution from cattle farm pastureland to croplands and forests, Ray Sr. feels the greatest improvements have come about in the last 15-20 years with the focused emphasis on wildlife. Looking back, he says he would not change their path as to how they have cared for and preserved the land for the future . . . looking forward, he hopes the wildlife will continue to thrive for the next 50 years.

Will the next generation of the Jones family have the same enthusiasm for this TREASURE Forest as prior and current generations? Raymond believes the answer to that question is yes, the sustainability will go forward. "We were entrusted to improve this land – God's creation – for future generations. This family has always been passionate about wildlife – from my grandfather to my father, on down to me and my sisters – and now the fourth generation is already exhibiting interest in and love for the land and wildlife. The girls as well as the boys enjoy being outdoors, riding four-wheelers, and hunting. We've got great natural resources here in Alabama . . . it's a wonderful place to be."



Landowner Raymond Jones, Jr. with AFC Forester Lynn Washington

2013 Regional Events & Forestry Field Days

Sponsored by the
Alabama Natural Resources Council and Alabama's Tree Farm Committee

North Region
Cleburne County - Cane Creek Farm
Thursday, October 17, 2013
RSVP: Cindy Beam
Phone: (256) 463-2620

Central Region
Hale County - Lochicohi Farm
Thursday, October 10, 2013
RSVP: John Ollison
Phone: (334) 624-8710

South Region
Escambia County - Magnolia Branch Wildlife Preserve
Thursday, October 3, 2013
RSVP: Ken Kelly
Phone: (251) 867-7760

Registration 8:00 am for all events.

ALABAMA NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL

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Alabama TREASURE Forest Association Conference and Tour

October 4 & 5, 2013
Ozark, Alabama

Conference ~ Friday, October 4, 2013
Ozark Civic Center

- 9:00 am – Registration
- 11:45 am - 12:45 pm – ATFA Luncheon
- 1:00 - 5:00 pm – Educational Sessions: Cloning of Pine Tree Seedlings / Wild Hog Biology & Ecology (follow-up demo on the tour) / Sustainable Living Presentation / Comparison of Four Major Pine Species
- 6:30 - 9:00 pm – ATFA Banquet & Auction

Forestry Tour ~ Saturday, October 5, 2013
Cedar Creek Lodge, owned by Donald and Linda Strickland

- 8:00 am – Prayer Breakfast
- 9:00 am – Wagons load for tour

Tour Topics: How to Merchandise Your Timber / Wild Hog Trapping Demo / Pine Straw Baling for Profit / Summer Food Plot Demo

Hotel Information for Ozark:
Hampton Inn (334) 443-6669 / Microtel Inn and Suites by Windham (334) 774-2771 / Baymont Inn and Suites (334) 774-0233

For more information, call ATFA at (251) 675-7481 or toll free at (888) 240-4694
Register online at www.atfa.net

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TREES OF ALABAMA

Eastern Hophornbeam

(Ostrya virginiana)

By Fred Nation, Environmental Services, Baldwin County

Eastern hophornbeam is a small-to-medium size deciduous hardwood tree in the birch family. It is frequently seen throughout Alabama and in the understory of forests in a huge area from eastern Canada, south to Florida, west to Texas and northern Mexico. It often reaches 30 feet in height, with a straight trunk, up to 10 or 12 inches in diameter. The crown is conical or irregular, sometimes with persistent small branches nearly to the ground.

The leaves are oblong or elliptical, to about 5 inches long, with rounded, sometimes unequal bases and sharply pointed tips. The margins are singly or doubly serrate. The bark is brown, with a reddish cast, finely divided into long narrow plates that give it a shaggy or shredded appearance. The flowers of hophornbeam are unisexual (monoecious), with the female flowers developing interesting-looking clusters of nutlets in papery "sacks" that resemble hops – the flowers of an unrelated northern European vine used to flavor beer.

Like most of our native trees, hophornbeam has several interesting common names, including "hardhack" and "leverwood," and it is one of several plants that are called "ironwood." The genus name, *Ostrya*, is from a Greek word that means "bone-like," in reference to the hard wood. American hornbeam, *Carpinus caroliniana* is a closely-related tree in the same family and it is also often called "ironwood." The similar wood is heavy, hard, and durable, and both species have been used for the same purposes, such as tools and tool handles, levers, geared wheels, and golf club heads. They take a fine polish, and their density and resistance to compression make both woods good choices for longbows.

Photos by Fred Nation

The heartwood of *Ostrya* is quite bitter tasting. Called the "bitter principal," historically this astringency was thought by herbalists to be an effective treatment for fevers, including "intermittent fever" which we know today as malaria. The usual treatment was the powdered or chipped heartwood of hophornbeam, boiled and taken as a medicinal tea called a "decoction."

Hophornbeam provides valuable nesting shelter and forage for a variety of wildlife species. The leaves are larval hosts for moths, including the large walnut sphinx moth. Many songbirds, such as robins, finches, cardinals and catbirds feed on the ripe nutlets, and they are a preferred winter forage for ruffled grouse and wild turkeys.

Because it is a trouble-free understory tree that is not particular about the site, hophornbeam is becoming more popular and more readily available from growers. The small stature, attractive fruits, and distinctive shaggy bark all make it a good choice for home landscapes, parks, and street plantings.

The largest *Ostrya virginiana* known to exist in Alabama is 37 inches in circumference, 63 feet tall, with a crownspread of 42 feet. This giant hophornbeam makes its home in DeKalb County.