



SUMMARY

Armed with knowledge of the bobwhite's life requirements, reasonable habitat measures can be introduced into current forest and farm landscapes to elevate quail populations from their depressed status. The practices not only have the potential to increase quail, they also have utility in soil and water conservation, land use economy, forest productivity, general wildlife habitat quality, as well as aesthetic and recreational enhancement.

Quail habitat management practices recently employed on a central Alabama cattle ranch demonstrate the positive response that can occur when low quail populations are presented a favorable environment.¹³ A 1,800-acre portion of a 5,500-acre ranch, typical of much of the current Alabama landscape, was 54 percent pasture, 10 percent cropland, 23 percent planted loblolly pine, 13 percent mature natural pine, and supported only two known coveys of quail. After six years of major habitat renovations including eradication of pasture grasses and conversion to fallow fields, longleaf pine establishment, aggressive thinning of natural and planted pine stands, establishment of permanent openings and intro-

duction of prescribed fire in the woodland, and supplemental feeding, a landscape that was inhospitable to quail is now quail friendly. The ranch area developed for quail is now 24 percent managed weed fields and rotationally disked fallow fields, 10 percent cropland, 10 percent annual and perennial food plantings, 20 percent planted longleaf, and 36 percent open pine forest with 15 percent of this area in small fields. In 2003 the ranch area managed for quail supported a fall population of 74 coveys of quail or about 0.55 quail per acre, as estimated by autumn covey call counts.

Bobwhites can again flourish given the simple habitat types they need: a field bordered with native grasses and weeds, a landscape with fallow fields, a shrubby hedgerow or tree corridor through a field, and open forests with natural grass cover and weedy clearings. Where we provide more of these habitat requirements, especially those used for nesting and raising broods, the bobwhite's summer call will ring frequently. We can again experience the days when a hunter will leave the field listening to a scattered covey's soft whistles at dusk.



Bobwhites can again flourish given the habitat types they need. A covey of quail utilizes this area because it includes the necessary elements of bobwhite habitat: nesting cover, brood habitat, protective cover and feeding areas. No quail existed here three years earlier when the site was a field of fescue.

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Appendix

CULTURAL PRACTICES FOR SELECTED PLANTS IN BOBWHITE MANAGEMENT

Species	Method	Planting Rate	Planting Dates	Planting Depth (in)	Fertilizer (lb/ac)	Culture/Comments
Partridge Pea	Broadcast	15 lb/ac	Feb-Apr	1/4-1/2	200 (0-20-20)	Grows best on moist bottoms, does well on uplands except deep sand. Plant in strips or patches of at least 1/8 ac. Re-seeds well. Burn in Feb. each year; disk lightly but thoroughly in Feb. every other year. Provides excellent brood habitat in summer and seed in winter.
Kobe Lespedeza	Broadcast	30 lb/ac	Feb-Apr	1/4-1/2	200 (0-14-14)	Grows best on moist bottoms, will grow on infertile clay soils. Plant in strips or patches of at least 1/8 ac. Will re-seed if annually burned or disked, and fertilized in Feb. before seeds sprout. Provides excellent brood habitat in summer and seed in fall-winter.
Browntop Millet	Broadcast	20 lb/ac	Apr-Jul	1/2-1	300 (10-10-10)	Does best on well drained soils. Plant in strips or patches of at least 1/4 ac. Provides a good seed source for young quail in late summer-early fall.
Grain Sorghum	Broadcast Rows	20 lb/ac 8-15 lb/ac	Apr-Jul	3/4-1	300 (10-10-10)	Plant on well drained productive soil in strips or patches of at least 1/4 ac. Rotate planting to an adjacent location the following year and leave previous site in undisturbed weeds for 1 or 2 seasons.
Egyptian Wheat	Broadcast Rows	20 lb/ac 8-15 lb/ac	May-Jun	1/2-1	300 (10-10-10)	Plant on well drained productive soil in strips or patches of at least 1/4 ac. Rotate planting to an adjacent location the following year and leave previous site in undisturbed weeds for 1 or 2 seasons.
Bicolor Lespedeza Thunburg Lespedeza	Seedlings	500 plants/ plot	Dec-Feb		300 (0-20-20)	Plant on well drained soils, avoid deep sands. Establish a patch 5 rows wide, 150 ft. in length, seedlings 1.5 ft. apart in rows 3 ft. apart (100 seedlings per row, 500 seedlings per plot). Mow plants and fertilize in Feb. every 3-5 years. Thunburg less subject to deer damage. NOTE: Shrub lespedezas are non-native perennials that become invasive when burned, especially on clay soils. To minimize spreading, exclude from fire with a disked lane, control sprouts outside of patch with herbicide (Escort XP, metsulfuron methyl), and clean seed from tractor and mower within the patch after mowing.
Chickasaw Plum	Seedlings		Dec-Feb			Grows on variety of soils, does well on sandy land. Plant seedlings 3 ft. apart in rows 4 ft. apart. Establish patches with minimum of 30 ft. dimensions, spaced 100-200 yards apart. Exclude fire. Provides excellent protective and loafing cover.



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