

**Entry for Search for Excellence (max 1200 words):**

**Educational Objectives:**

Populations of North American grassland bird species have declined approximately 35-40% over the past 50 years. Among those birds that have declined is the northern bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*), a gamebird with an iconic status in the Southeast. The decline of bobwhites in SC mirrors the decline the species has suffered in much of its range. According to annual male bobwhite call count censuses, bobwhite numbers appear to have declined by as much as 85% between the years of 1979 and 2017. Many South Carolinians have fond memories of working bird dogs with their fathers and grandfathers and flushing coveys of quail and want to know, along with many others, why they don't hear nearly as many, or any, male bobwhites calling anymore. While many tend to blame this loss to factors such as coyotes and/or fire ants, most of that decline can be directly attributed to loss of habitat due to conversion of grasslands to agriculture and other uses, and also to changes in farming and land-management practices that leave little early successional habitat for nesting and rearing broods. There is great desire to bring back the bobwhite, but education is needed to help landowners understand how to create and restore critical habitat. Such habitat restoration would benefit not only bobwhites, but also other grassland birds such as meadowlarks and shrikes, as well as rabbits and other small mammals. The educational objectives of these workshops were to teach participants: 1) the life history of bobwhite quail, 2) critical habitat requirements for the life cycle of the bobwhite, 3) forestry and crop management practices that will enhance and/or restore bobwhite habitat, and 4) technical and financial assistance available to landowners through cost-share programs and other sources, including Cooperative Extension.

**Program Activities:**

In November 2017 and May 2018, Clemson Cooperative Extension Agents collaborated with SC Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), SC Bobwhite Conservation Initiative, Quail Forever, and Tall Timbers Research Station to conduct 4 workshops that focused on presenting the fundamentals of bobwhite quail biology, ecology, and habitat restoration and management. We presented the workshops in Hampton, Darlington, Orangeburg, and Edgefield Counties.

**Teaching Methods:**

Each workshop consisted of a morning of classroom instruction on topics including bobwhite biology and ecology, incorporating bobwhite management with agriculture and forest management, supplemental feeding, cost-share programs, use of prescribed fire, native vegetation management, and the SC Bobwhite Conservation Initiative. Speakers were selected based on their subject area expertise and their ability to communicate and transfer knowledge to an audience. Speakers included:

Dr. Cory Heaton (Clemson University), TJ Savereno (Clemson Cooperative Extension), Marion Barnes (Clemson Cooperative Extension), Susan Sullivan (SCDNR), Mike Hook (SCDNR), Breck Carmichael (SCDNR), Andy Krieg (SCDNR), Jordan Nanney (Quail Forever), and Paul Grimes (Tall Timbers). Presentations were given using PowerPoint and supplemental handouts given to participants. Instruction was kept informal, with participants being encouraged to ask questions throughout. Derrick Phinney (Clemson Cooperative Extension) and Parker Johnson (Clemson Cooperative Extension) were instrumental in handling the logistics of the workshops and conducting survey evaluations.

After lunch, participants and instructors traveled to nearby properties where agricultural and forest management practices beneficial to bobwhite quail were being conducted. Instructors identified native plant species important to bobwhites and discussed why they are important as well as management techniques that support habitat establishment and increase. Again, participant interaction and hands-on learning was encouraged throughout the tour.

**Results:**

A total of 109 registrants took part in the 4 workshops. Attendees included landowners, land managers, agency personnel, educators, and other interested stakeholders. Conversations with attendees immediately after the workshops and subsequently indicated high degrees of satisfaction and indications that the knowledge gained would greatly benefit them with future quail management efforts. Clemson Cooperative Extension works with SCDNR on a regular basis in research and education programs, and these workshops were further extensions of those collaborative efforts. Shared goals of working with landowners who have an interest in habitat management for bobwhites and other wildlife species brought Quail Forever and Tall Timbers together with Clemson Cooperative Extension for this series of workshops, and further collaborations with them and SCDNR are in the works. We are planning four additional bobwhite workshops for March-June, 2019 in new areas of the state.

**Evaluation Method:**

We sent electronic surveys to attendees following the workshops to gather demographic information, evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction presented in terms of knowledge gained as well as the likelihood of participants applying or incorporating that knowledge, and to

determine how future workshops could be improved. Of the 109 participants to whom we sent surveys, 38 (35%) responded.

**Impacts:**

Of the 38 survey respondents, 29 (76%) were over the age of 50, and 22 (58%) were over 60. Respondents were from 18 different counties in South Carolina. All responding participants reported gaining knowledge as a result of having attended the workshops, and 36 (95%) indicated that they planned to implement the knowledge and skills gained from the workshops. The combined acreage owned and/or managed by the respondents was 14,719 (13,051 forest/1,668 cropland). All respondents indicated that their preferred method of instruction was in-person and field tours. The majority (89%) also indicated that they would be willing to travel more than 25 miles for this type of workshop.









