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Thomas V. Dailey
Missouri Department of Conservation

Ronald A. Reitz
Missouri Department of Conservation

Heather J. Scroggins
Missouri Department of Conservation

William T. White
Missouri Department of Conservation

Thomas B. Treiman
Missouri Department of Conservation

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Thomas V. Dailey, Ronald A. Reitz, Heather J. Scroggins, William T. White, Thomas B. Treiman, and Nigel Hoilet

ROWING AGAINST THE TIDE: GETTING LANDOWNERS TO MANAGE HABITAT FOR THEIR FAVORITE WILDLIFE SPECIES, BOBWHITES

Thomas V. Dailey^{1,2}

Missouri Department of Conservation, 3500 Gans Road, Columbia, MO 65201, USA

Ronald A. Reitz

Missouri Department of Conservation, 3500 Gans Road, Columbia, MO 65201, USA

Heather J. Scroggins

Missouri Department of Conservation, 3500 Gans Road, Columbia, MO 65201, USA

William T. White

Missouri Department of Conservation, 2901 West Truman Boulevard, Jefferson City, MO 65109, USA

Thomas B. Treiman

Missouri Department of Conservation, 3500 Gans Road, Columbia, MO 65201, USA

Nigel Hoilet³

The School of Natural Resources, 103 Anheuser-Busch Natural Resources Building, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211, USA

ABSTRACT

A primary cause of the decline of northern bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*) is that landowners often lack adequate motivation for the arduous task of creating and managing habitat. We gained insight into some of these motivations through survey questionnaires and focus groups in Missouri, and report findings from 3 studies containing 3,057 survey responses during 2004–2007. One of the surveys targeted Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands ('CRP survey'), another lands with potential for bobwhite restoration ('bobwhite survey'), and the third focused on grassland bird restoration. Landowners in each survey identified bobwhites as the most popular (>80% of respondents chose 'somewhat' or 'very' 'important' to have bobwhites 'on my land') natural resource among a list that included deer, turkeys, prairie-chickens, native plants, grassland birds, rabbits, hawks/owls, etc. Bobwhites were highly valued by landowners, but other answers in these surveys revealed many obstacles to habitat management including economics, time, knowledge, skill, and equipment. For example, only 39% of respondents in the bobwhite survey were interested in joining a habitat restoration cooperative, and <50% of respondents in all surveys were willing to adopt quail-friendly habitat management (prescribed fire, disking, herbicides, moderate grazing, native vegetation, presence of weeds, etc.). Bobwhite restoration programs, because of the gap between landowners' fondness for quail, but being less willing to take action, must include a comprehensive approach, ranging from local community involvement by agency biologists and non-government organizations to resource-use policy in Washington, D.C.

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Key words: *Colinus virginianus*, Conservation Reserve Program, habitat management, landowners, northern bobwhite

¹ E-mail: tdailey_NBCI@utk.edu

² Present address: National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996, USA.

³ Present address: School of Environment and Natural Resources, Ohio State University, 210 Kottman Hall, Columbus, OH 43210, USA.