

EAST GULF COASTAL PLAIN JOINT VENTURE

NEWSLETTER, SPRING 2015



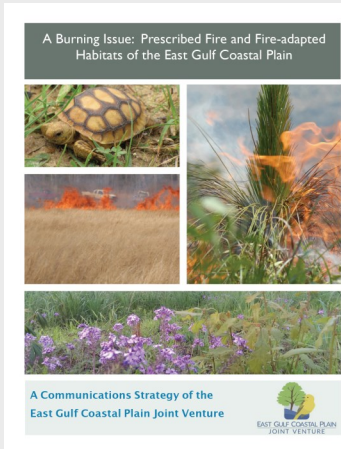
Greetings, East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture (EGCPJV) Partners! Since our meetings in Apalachicola and Covington, we have made a great deal of progress by hiring a science coordinator, publishing our Prescribed Fire Communications Strategy, developing a conservation delivery framework, and forming our first conservation delivery initiative. And our partners have been very active planning, writing, planting and burning. Our partnership has had a busy and productive year.

New Science Coordinator

After a nationwide search and a careful review process, the hiring committee is pleased to have selected Dr. Pete Blank as our Science Coordinator. Pete has over 15 years of experience conducting research on bird populations and a record of developing partnerships with federal, state, and private conservation organizations. He earned a Bachelor's degree from the Johns Hopkins University, and his Master's and Ph.D. in Ecology from the University of Maryland, where he studied bird community response to Conservation Reserve Program habitat in Maryland. Following his Ph.D. work, Pete studied the potential impacts of grassland bioenergy production on bird communities in Wisconsin at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Pete has been an avid birder since he was a teenager and also enjoys a variety of sports including biking, tennis, squash, and kayaking. He brings a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to our partnership and is already making strides with our EGCPJV grassland bird planning and working closely with the Technical Advisory Team. Welcome aboard, Pete!



EGCPJV Releases Prescribed Fire Communications Strategy



In Fall 2014, the EGCPJV released its prescribed fire communications strategy, "A Burning Issue: Prescribed Fire and Fire-adapted Habitats of the East Gulf Coastal Plain". Written by Gregg Elliott and developed with input from more than forty-five prescribed fire and resource management experts throughout the southeast, the Strategy focuses on achieving overarching policy, outreach, and education goals to address current impediments to the use of prescribed fire. Board member Amity Bass of Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries led our prescribed fire subcommittee and summarized by saying, "Prescribed fire is a priority conservation issue for the East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture. We see the Prescribed Fire Strategy as an important tool in guiding efforts to educate others

about how critical prescribed fire is to the health and continued existence of our natural heritage in the Southeast - so much of which is fire dependent." The EGCPJV plans to begin implementation of several communications projects in the summer of 2015, including the development of a pocket guide to birds of fire-maintained habitats in the South and a Power Point presentation to share with agencies for their use in promoting awareness of this issue. To download a copy of the plan, visit: [A Burning Issue](#) or contact Catherine Rideout at Catherine.Rideout@fws.gov.

“Fire on the Forty” Brings Technical Expertise and Cost-share to Landowners

Joint Venture partners in Mississippi continue to make great strides in delivering prescribed fire on private lands with the *Fire on the Forty* campaign. *Fire on the Forty* seeks to promote and increase the use of prescribed fire on privately owned lands through a combination of outreach to educate landowners about the proper application of prescribed fire, hand-on workshops, and financial support. Funding from multiple partners including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Mississippi Forestry Commission is allocated to the highest priority forestlands and grasslands in the state to maximize benefits to fire-dependent wildlife species. The program is administered by a committee of resource professionals from seven state, federal, academic, and private organizations. To learn more visit the *Fire on the Forty* website at <http://www.mdwfp.com/wildlife-hunting/private-land-habitat/fire-on-the-forty.aspx>



*Prescribed Burns on Private Lands in MS,
Photo by Melissa Moore*



Private landowner workshop, Photo by Melissa Moore

Upcoming Training Opportunities with the Longleaf Alliance

Since its origin in 1995, The Longleaf Alliance (LLA) has used education, outreach, research, and delivery to provide the best available information and support to landowners, resource managers, policy makers, educators, scientists and the public. The organization is well known for its Longleaf Academy series that have been instrumental in transferring technical knowledge to anyone with an interest in restoring longleaf pine across its historic range. From April through May, Longleaf Academies are scheduled to occur in Florida, Alabama, South Carolina, and Mississippi. Multiple other training opportunities are available. For more information about academies and membership to the LLA, go online to www.longleafalliance.org. Training opportunities can be viewed on the calendar available on the website.



Black Belt Prairie Restoration Initiative

The Black Belt Prairie Restoration Initiative (BBPRI) continues to grow with participation from 8 private, academic, state, and federal organizations. In addition to JV board organizations, several new partners have engaged with the EGCPJV through this initiative including University of West Alabama, Alabama Wildlife Federation, Wildlife Mississippi, and Mississippi State University. The BBPRI seeks to restore native upland and aquatic communities within the Black Belt region of Alabama and Mississippi to enhance associated terrestrial and aquatic wildlife populations, watershed health, sustainability, recreation, and public enjoyment.

Additional goals include recruiting new partners and funding sources for restoration efforts, providing a forum for information sharing among science, delivery, and outreach specialists, and promoting the unique natural, cultural, and recreational values of the Black Belt region to the larger conservation community and the general public.



Native wildflowers colonized this prairie in Dallas County, AL following restoration, Photo by Claude Jenkins



Kristine Evans birding in Hawaii



Andrew Cox in the Galapagos Islands

EGCPJV Technical Advisory Team Welcomes New Members

The Technical Advisory Team (TAT) provides scientific support and guidance to the EGCPJV by continually refining the biological foundation of bird conservation in the East Gulf Coastal Plain. We are excited to welcome two new members to the EGCPJV Technical Advisory Team. Dr. Kristine Evans of Mississippi State University is the Geomatics Coordinator for the Gulf Coast Plains and Ozarks LCC and is based in Starkville, MS. Dr. Andrew Cox serves as the Avian Research Administrator for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's research institute in Gainesville, FL. Kristine and Andrew join current members Dr. Mark Woodrey, Dr. Barry Grand, and Dr. Jeff Gleason. They are a welcome addition to the team and will help the TAT fulfill its role. We are fortunate to have such a diversity of expertise and experience on the TAT and are looking forward to great work from this team.

Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency Awarded NAWCA Grant

Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) was awarded a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant for the Forked Deer River – Miller Tract Acquisition proposal. This funding will help to acquire 124 acres of forested wetlands, and represents a key section of the largest relatively intact bottomland hardwood forest in the region. This project will contribute towards long range plans to acquire and restore wetlands and will be managed as part of a new Wildlife Management Area in west Tennessee. Congratulations to TWRA for their continued success in acquiring NAWCA funds for conservation in the East Gulf Coastal Plain!



Opportunities for restoration of channelized portions of Forked Deer River, Photo by Tim Churchill

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Rob Holbrook, Assistant Coordinator

Rob_Holbrook@fws.gov

251-441-5830

Catherine Rideout, Coordinator

Catherine_Rideout@fws.gov

404-679-7091

Dr. Pete Blank, Science Coordinator

pblank@abcbirds.org

251-441-5857