

## Project Portfolio



### Shawnee Open Grasslands Project

Grant Source: Illinois State Wildlife Grant

#### BACKGROUND

The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) will convert existing openlands dominated by tall fescue back to native warm-season grasses (NWSG). The Shawnee National Forest has approximately 2,640 acres of large nonforested areas that will be managed as openlands. Many of these areas are fescue-dominated pasturelands and old abandoned farm fields. Most of these acres have not been managed in the last 10 years and are becoming early successional stands of brush and saplings. Where it will not interfere with openland dependent species, some areas will be maintained as brush/thicket habitat. This project will plant 100 acres in food plots and 150 acres in NWSG during each year of the grant period. As part of this two-year project, 500 acres will be managed as grasslands with foraging areas. Due to the availability funding, it will take a phase approach to ultimately restore the 2,640 acres of openlands on the Shawnee National Forest.

#### LOCATION

Shawnee National Forest - Illinois

#### ISSUES BEING ADDRESS

During the past quarter century, grassland birds have experienced more widespread population declines than any other avian guild in North America. While some grassland species are Neotropical migrants, most are short-distance migrants that winter primarily in the southern U.S. and northern Mexico. Several bird populations have dropped by more than 80 percent. Recent decades have seen declines of 25% to 65% in both migrant and resident bird species of the grassland: Henslow's sparrow, lark sparrow, dickcissels, grasshopper sparrows, and even the eastern meadowlark are losing ground fast.

In Illinois, there have been dramatic declines in grassland birds. During the 25-year period ending in 1984, grassland songbirds (e.g., Henslow's Sparrows, Grasshopper Sparrows, Savannah Sparrows, Bobolinks, Eastern and

Western Meadowlarks, and Dickcissels) in Illinois declined by 75 - 95%.

#### OBJECTIVES

The long-term goal is to convert the fescue dominated pasturelands and old farm fields to NWSG. Conversion to NWSG will minimize long term maintenance costs and improve habitat for both non-game and game species such as bobwhite quail and Henslow's sparrow, whose populations have declined as much as 80% since 1966.

#### PARTNERS

NWTf  
USDA Forest Service - Shawnee NF  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
Quail Unlimited  
Heartland Utilities

#### FUTURE PLANS

Project is just beginning

#### TIMEFRAME

Project Start Date: August 2006  
Project End Date: October 2008

#### NWTf PROJECT STAFF

Project Manager: Jay Jordan  
NWTf Staff: Loran Brinkmeier  
John Burk

#### TOTAL GRANT AMOUNT

\$ 27,550