

THE COVEY CALL E-NEWSLETTER
July - August 2017
METRO & SE QF CHAPTERS
“Helping To Bring Back The Bobwhite Quail”



IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

- **Metro QF Banquet JULY 27TH Registration form attached to email**
- **August 5th Quail Field Day Information**
- **Part II Article on the Benefits of Giant Ragweed for Quail**
- **January – June 2017 Quail Count**

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!!

Metro Quail Forever Banquet

Thursday, July 27, 2017

At Tinucci's Restaurant

396 21st Street, Newport, MN 55055

5:30 pm to 9:30 pm

This Banquet is a special event that benefits Youth and Wildlife



SCOTT JAMES

THIS YEAR'S QUAIL FIELD DAY GUEST SPEAKER

Scott gave an excellent speech at the Pheasant Fest/Quail Classic back in February 2017 on Quail Habitat.

Scott James is a Farm Bill Biologist working for Quail Forever and Pheasants Forever in NW Illinois. He assists landowners in designing, developing, and funding wildlife habitat improvements on private lands. He works closely with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources. A native of Illinois, Scott graduated from Southern Illinois University in 2010. Scott began working as a Farm Bill Biologist for Quail Forever in Missouri in 2012, where he impacted nearly 12,000 acres of wildlife habitat over 3.5 years. He then migrated to Pheasants Forever in Illinois in 2015 and was promoted to Farm Bill Biologist III. He continues to conserve quail habitat through his work in the NW Illinois landscape. In his free-time, Scott enjoys chasing quail, pheasants, and waterfowl in Illinois and Iowa but hopes to hunt his relatives' farm in southern Minnesota some day! Scott can be contacted at (309) 660-3147 or sjames@quailforever.org

Quail Field Day

Minnesota Quail Field Day will be held

Date: **Saturday, August 5th**

Place: **Houston Nature Center** in Houston, Minnesota. The address is 215 W Plum St, Houston, Mn 55943

Refreshments will be served

Time: **Registration will be 8:30 a.m.**

Welcome will be at 9:00 a.m. - Sue Wiegrefe, director at the Nature Center

Speakers:

Paul Schutte, President of the Southeast Quail Forever Chapter

Thurman Tucker, coordinator of The Metro and Southeast Quail Forever Chapters

Scott James, the main speaker

After the speeches and the questions and answers, everyone is invited for lunch and a tour of the

Paul Schutte Farm address is:----- 8656 Co. Rd. 25, Houston, Mn 55943

The Six Month Quail Count from Houston County, MN

The January – June Quail count.

Last year (2016) at this time we had received 37 different quail sightings in 7 townships in Houston County. This year (2017) we have received 23 sightings in 5 different townships in Houston County.



The Positive Impact That Ragweed Has On Quail

Back in the days when I did a lot more hunting than I do now, I frequently flushed quail in fields of ragweed, and other quail hunters have mentioned the same thing.

I remember talking to a farmer in Missouri, and she told me when the ragweed increased on their farm, so did the quail. She said she and her husband loved the quail so much they didn't try to get rid of the ragweed. On another trip to Missouri, I met a farmer, at that time, who won the Quail Unlimited, "National Quail Habitat Builder of the Year Award." This farmer was allergic to ragweed; but, because he knew that his quail LOVED ragweed, he encouraged it on his land. I will have to say that I have never seen or heard so many quail on a farm. We were on his farm in June, and the quail whistling was heard on a frequent basis.

These examples show that quail really respond well generous amounts of ragweed in their environment. For people who are serious about increasing quail on their land, I am suggesting that those that want quail should become aggressive toward increasing the amount of ragweed on their land. In short, treat it like a food plot. A half acre, or an acre next to a couple of nice brushy sites, makes a big difference for quail. By the way, ragweed provides good food and cover for quail, and quail use it for brood rearing as well.

By Thurman Tucker

The Irony of Giant Ragweed – part II



*Article courtesy of Gene Logsdon
Garden Farm Skills.*

The seeds of giant ragweed are 47% crude protein. That is very, very high, much higher than any cultivated grain. What's more, these seeds, which the plant produces in prodigious amounts, provide, in the words of Roger Wells, a certified wildlife biologist and national habitat coordinator for Quails Unlimited, "the highest amount of metabolizable calories, more even than corn, soybeans, wheat, or any other grain that we know." What that means is that the seeds are very digestible. Quail or pheasants, in a good stand of giant ragweed will double and triple in population. (You can find all this and more at QuailRestoration.com on the Internet.) And what is the corn and soybean farmer's second worst dream? Now you can actually buy giant ragweed seed by the bag if you want to plant some to increase wildlife on your farm.

Primitive Americans must have known something we don't about giant ragweed. They nurtured it some 2000 years ago. (Giant ragweed is native to America.) They seem to have quit about 600 years ago and so far anthropologists don't know why. It is probably because, like modern man, they found maize (corn) easier to handle.

I emailed Dr. Deborah Stinner, a scientist at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center at Wooster, who works with organic grain farmers. Without herbicides, organic farmers are at the mercy of giant ragweed. I was not too surprised that she already knew what I had just learned. "You should come to our meeting tomorrow on this subject," she emailed back. "And bring your sheep!" One of the topics under discussion was how to incorporate sheep into a giant ragweed control program.

I did not make it to the meeting and just as well because what I would have said would probably not have set well with corn and soybean farmers. If quail and pheasants proliferate on giant ragweed, so would chickens it seems to me, as well as sheep. Goats like it too. I know that cows and horses eat it. Seems to me on a garden farm at least, if giant ragweed won't come to Mohamed then Mohamed should come to giant ragweed. That's what I would have suggested at the meeting after making sure there were no rotten tomatoes available to throw at me.

But, seriously, is not giant ragweed worth more scrutiny? Why did the ancient Romans give ragweed the name, ambrosia? (Even Thoreau wondered and decided it was because of the golden color of the seeds.) Might the old herbalists have known that the seeds really are a high protein food or a good medicine, and not just for birds? In the sense of homeopathic medicine, which sometimes is effective, perhaps an ingredient in giant ragweed can control the hay fever that the plants seem to cause. Has anyone tried that lately? Perhaps we are looking at the ultimate irony of over-civilized humankind. We are trying to kill a plant, an ambrosia, that is actually beneficial.

Out of curiosity, I ate a handful of giant ragweed seeds. I thought sure they would be bitter. Instead, they tasted sort of like wheat bran. I fed some to the chickens while they were penned in the coop. At first they were indifferent, but when I came back an hour later, they had cleaned up all the seeds and foliage I had offered them. What an irony. Here I have been feeding high priced protein supplement to them when they are probably getting all they need from the ragweed growing around the coop. I wonder if that is why they lose interest in eating domestic grains in the summer time.

Perhaps we should be growing fields of giant ragweed and grazing livestock and chickens on it. No mechanical planter, harvester or tanker truck of fuel would be necessary. Just turn farm animals in and let them have at it. Since the plants produce huge amounts of seed, enough would fall to the ground to grow a crop the next year. Since the seed heads stick up above the foliage, this new “grain” with its 47% very digestible crude protein would also stick up above the snow, making possible the great dream of the northern husbandman: year-round grazing.

I can see a problem if a demand for giant ragweed “grain” increased. I defy John Deere to build a harvester that could thresh its way through a really good stand of the stuff. Barring something on the order of a helicopter equipped with a vacuum sweeper, this “grain” would have to be harvested manually. But is that really a problem? It sure doesn't stop marijuana growers.

WEEKLY FACEBOOK

Visit our Facebook Weekly for Information on Quail and Other Birds:

<https://www.facebook.com/Quail-Forever-Minnesota>

MN QUAIL FOREVER WEBSITE

The Website for our two QF Chapters in Minnesota has been hacked. We are looking for someone, preferably a volunteer that has the skills to rebuild the site.

<http://www.mnquailforever.com/>

Thurman Tucker, Metro & SE QF Chapters Coordinator