

Westervelt™

OUTDOORS

life on the *hunt*



Under the direction of our first wildlife biologist, Ray Redmond, the foundation of our conservation program was built.

in this issue:

- ⊕ Double OO Hunting Club
- ⊕ Pine Management for Wildlife
- ⊕ Our Roots Run Deep
- ⊕ Hunting Safety Reminders

westervelt recreation STAFF

The staff at Westervelt Recreation is made up of people who share a great passion for the outdoors and hunting. Their work is not a job; it's what they live for. It is their lifestyle.

We appreciate you, our customer, and the opportunity to share our wildlife and wildlife habitat management expertise, knowledge, and experience.

Please don't hesitate to contact us at 800-281-7991 or visit westerveltwildlife.com or westerveltlodge.com.



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life on the *hunt*

Westervelt Recreation Staff	2
The Double OO Hunting Club	3
Hunting Safety Reminders	5
Our Roots Run Deep	7
Pine Management for Wildlife	10



Mark Bailey at age 10
with his first deer, with
unknown person.

The Double OO Hunting Club 70 Years of Sporting Tradition

ROBERT DEWITT

In the year that America elected Dwight Eisenhower to his first term as president, some guys at the Clow Pipe shop in Tarrant decided to form a hunting club.

"Our dues were \$15 a year," said Allen Bailey, who heads up the Double OO Hunting Club in Greene County.

Industrial Birmingham was booming in the post-World War II/Korean War years and a man could find a decent job in one of the many plants revolving around the steel industry then. But Birmingham had little to offer in the way of hunting. Anyone who wanted decent hunting had to be willing to drive south to Greene, Pickens Sumter, Marengo or one of the other Black Belt Counties.

That's what Earl Tidwell, the club founder, and his cohorts from Clow and others from the Birmingham area did in 1952. They went to Lewiston, a remote crossroads in Greene County and leased land from Allen Gubbs of Eutaw, Homer Carpenter and the Eatman Family. Today the club is still together and celebrating its 70th anniversary on land it leases from The Westervelt Company.

"We were originally paying 15 cents an acre for some and 20 cents an acre for others," Bailey said and laughed "Now we're paying much more than that."

Now 85 years old, Bailey is the club's last living charter member. The club has survived leadership changes, landowner deaths, land sales, club house and even hunting land changes. But its heart and soul remain intact.

"It's a family-oriented club with lots of fellowship," said Ed DeLorme, a member for more than 50 years, who served as the club's hunt master back in its dog drive days.

"It's not all about killing something. It's as much about fellowship as it is about killing deer."

DeLorme joined in 1967 or 1968, he's not sure which. The hunting has always been good. But he believes something else keeps it alive and thriving.

"Camaraderie," he says. "It's a bunch of good guys. We enjoy being together."

And the club's leadership believes in treating members equitably.

"We try to run the club based on what's good for the club, not what's good for any individual," DeLorme said. "Everybody's equal. Everybody's the same."

Originally known as Tarrant Hunting Club because so many members hailed from that Jefferson County Community, the club's purpose was to stage Saturday drives using dogs during deer season. Bailey was 15 years old when his Uncle, Tidwell, founded the club. His grandfather introduced him to hunting and brought him down to Lewiston for the weekly deer drives.

"My Granddaddy got me started in hunting," Bailey said. "He took me for years. When he got too old to take me, I took him."

In addition to the hunting land, the club rented a building from a local church that served as their clubhouse. There they gathered before the hunts and had their meals. They hired a local woman who cooked downhome meals for them.

Bailey said the hunters rose in the wee hours of the morning in Birmingham and made the two-hour journey in



Allen Bailey 1999



Allen Bailey with granddaughter, Ava Bailey.

the pre-Interstate days down the winding two-lane roads to Greene County. They brought groceries to the cook who had a big, country breakfast ready for them before daylight.

These were dedicated hunters.

"We'd get up at 2 a.m. and got there before daylight," Bailey said. "We ate three meals a day, put on three drives and then drove home."

They hunted rain or shine Saturday because they couldn't stay and hunt on Sunday. Greene County strictly enforced it's "blue laws" and it was illegal to fire a gun in Greene County on Sunday. The men all worked during the week, so nobody hunted during the weekdays.

But Bailey said they considered themselves to be fortunate. Prior to forming the hunting club, they'd driven all the way to York to hunt.

The hunting was all done with dogs and drivers pushing the deer through the woods toward lines of "standers," spread just enough distance apart to remain safe. The hounds ranged from big black and tans, walkers and red bones to beagles. Any hounds that would chase a deer was good enough, DeLorme said.

Everybody carried shotguns and the

Browning Auto 5 was the gun of choice. 00 buckshot was the preferred shell and as the club's membership diversified, they chose that as the club's name.

Clothes were a far cry from the garb hunters wear today. The men donned thick canvas briar pants, plaid wool shirts and canvas coats with shell pockets regardless of weather. They usually had a brown cap on their head and rubber Wellington boots on their feet.

"I got my first pair of boots from Sears and Roebuck," Bailey said. "I thought I was really something with those."

Missing a deer was frowned upon.

"I was almost afraid to have the deer come by me," Bailey said. "I was afraid I'd miss a deer and they'd cut off my shirt tail. I knew it would make my momma mad."

Unfortunately, it happened one day, and it was Uncle Tidwell that administered the punishment. Then one day, they tables were turned, and Bailey made sure his uncle did not get away unscathed.

"I cut it off halfway up his back," Bailey said with a laugh.

Everybody drove down in their family sedans because few of the men could afford a pickup as a second vehicle. The club owned a Jeep pickup that pulled a big trailer. That's what they used to put the hunters out on their stand lines.

"On a really good day, we'd kill three or four deer," Bailey said. "But some years we wouldn't kill more than a half a dozen the whole year. We got some big deer though."

The church eventually wanted it's building back and the clubhouse moved to a house provided by landowner Homer Carpenter at no charge. The Landowners died and the land was sold, The club had been hunting Gulf States Paper Company land with a \$10 open permits. But Gulf States started leasing land and those changes eventually moved it onto the company's land. That is where it is today on 3,200 acres of Westervelt land.

The club held dog drives until the early 1980s but transitioned to a stalk hunting club that uses rifles in the 1980s. It is now a "no-alcohol" club and members keep campers and cabins near the club house. It isn't a bunkhouse but has a full kitchen and a living area with satellite TV. The clubhouse keeps the tradition of meals and fellowship alive.

Back in the old days, any deer that ran

by the standers was good enough. Now its 24 members are a bit more choosy. They are shooting for 3.5-year-old deer. A deer should have 18-inch main beams, be 4 inches at the base or weigh 180 pounds or more to be a shooter. People who violate the rules pay a \$200 find.

The exception is, if a deer is enough of a "trophy" to the hunter that he has a shoulder mount done from it, he will be reimbursed the fine.

"What's a trophy to one person might not be a trophy to someone else," Bailey said.

There was a time when some members threatened to get out of the club if the dues when from \$15 a year to \$20. Now members pay \$2,400 a year. Anybody who wants to use one of the cabins built around the clubhouse pays an additional \$300 a year for utilities.

Members hunt out of stands in the woods and shooting houses over greenfields. Members sign out areas with stands and they have 51 stands to choose from. They are limited to three bucks and two does per membership and members usually kill about 30 deer a year, including bucks and does.

The membership is now from all over, Birmingham, Huntsville, Tuscaloosa, Aliceville and even Tampa, Fla. The membership is a mix of young and old.

"You have to get some young members in the club to do the work," Bailey said.

While it's changed land and clubhouses and members have come and gone, it's the members who make the club enjoyable Bailey said

"We have a real good club," Bailey said. "We have real good people. We have first-class sportsmen. I'm really proud of the quality of sportsmen in our club."



Deer Harvested in 08-09 at Double OO Hunting Club.



Hunting Safety Reminders

BARTLEY ROBERTSON, TWC SAFETY MANAGER

It's that time of year again, the first "cold" front is passing through and every retailer in town is stocking up on Halloween and Thanksgiving décor. For hunters, it's time to brush off your gear and prepare your favorite hunting spot for that hunt of a lifetime. While most hunters go straight to work hanging stand, planting fields or clearing roads, it is important to remember that all work is for naught if you are unable to enjoy your hunt in a safe way. That's right, one mishap while preparing or partaking in your favorite past time could have you sitting at home, or worse, during this next hunting season if the appropriate safety precautions are not considered. Below are some tips while in the field.

Preseason Safety: For some, this is the time they enjoy most. Whether it's putting out cameras, hanging stands, or planting fields there are many hazards in the field that can hinder your success this season. This time

of year snakes are very active preparing for winter. Be sure to watch your step and if you want to take the best approach, order a pair of snake chaps or wear a pair of snake boots.

If you are going to put up or relocate a stand, be sure you check the structure for wear and tear or defects. Replace ratchet straps or other securing devices that can become weathered and fail causing a nasty injury if you were to fall. While we are discussing falls, if you are using an elevated stand to hunt, be sure to wear fall protection anytime you leave the ground. "According to Glen Mayhew, president of the Tree Stand Safety Awareness Foundation (TSSA), there were approximately 3,000 tree stand-related accidents in 2018 that resulted in injuries. And while that number seems astonishing, it is actually down nearly 50% from 2010. The graphic below contains details on incident type by stand."

Lastly, when preparing for hunting season you must make sure you are operating tools and equipment as intended. Whether you are using a tractor with implements or a side-by-side to get the job done, think about the task at hand and be sure you are using the right tool for the job. While the bucket of the tractor is a handy tool, it's not intended for someone to take a ride up in the air to cut a limb or repair that shooting house roof. Stop and think about the consequences of your action prior to starting the work. If it feels unsafe, it is.

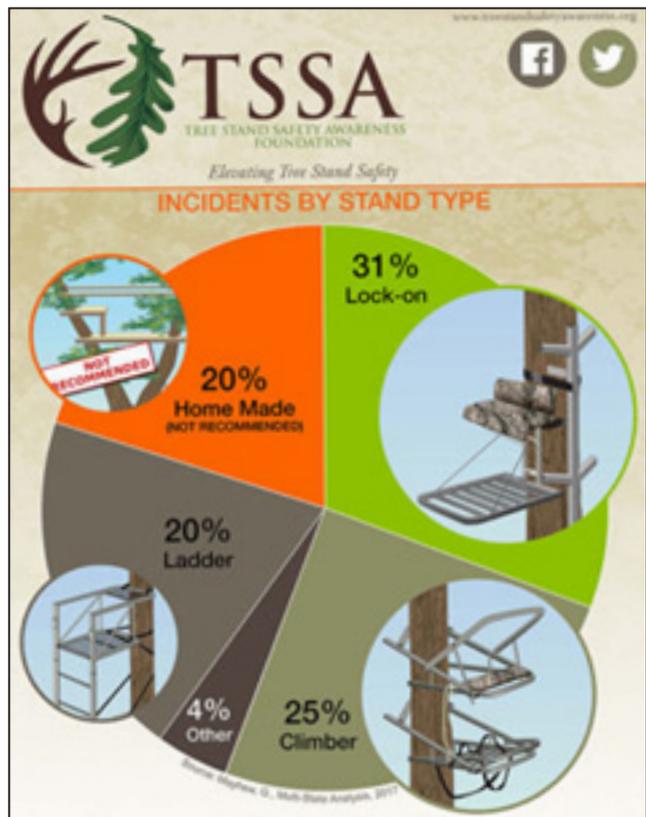
Hunting Safety: Now comes the time where you get to enjoy the fruits of your labor. But before you can capitalize on the harvest, you must be sure you are taking the safety precautions needed to get you to and from the field. Be sure you are taking the appropriate precaution with weapons. Having your weapon unloaded until you are secure in your stand as well as unloading before you leave the stand helps prevent accidental discharge. Be sure you identify your target before taking the safety off. Avoid taking a shot in low light. While this can not only prevent the accidental shooting of another hunter, it can prevent bad shot placement on the game you are attempting to harvest.

Be sure someone knows where you are hunting. Anything can happen while in the field and having a friend or family member know the area you are hunting is important. We previously discussed wearing fall protection while using an elevated hunting platform. In most cases you will likely need help to get down should you fall. Be prepared and have someone check on you periodically to ensure your safety.

Hopefully you have harvested the game you are after. If it is large game, be sure you are getting help to lift into

a truck or ATV. Also, be sure you are taking the correct safety precautions when processing game. Use knife safety to prevent cuts and if you have someone helping you process, be sure you are working on opposite sides of the harvested deer. Have plenty of soap, water, rubber gloves and towels to wash and dry your hands to keep the knife from slipping.

Hunting is not only a past time but a way of life for many people. Please use these tips to ensure a safe and successful hunting season.



Game Management Group
around the late 1960s.



Our Roots Run Deep

CADE WARNER AND KEVIN MCKINSTRY

Our modern wildlife conservation and management program is now widely known and established, but few actually know how it all began. Thankfully, we have an extensive set of corporate archives that reveal our history and beginnings. In the mid-1920's Herbert Westervelt, our company's founder, decided to construct a new modern paper making and bag folding facility in Tuscaloosa. It was during this time that the early phases of our land acquisition program began. There was a need to train experienced sawmill logging crews to efficiently and economically transition to harvesting pine pulpwood to meet the new raw material needs of this state-of-the-art papermill. Our earliest land acquisitions provided the training areas needed for these woods crews. Strategic land acquisition continued in west Alabama over the next twenty years and our ownership grew to approximately 100,000 acres spanning over seven counties. Forest management during this time was primarily wildfire control. By 1942 the Company was positioned to begin an intensive multiple-use forest management program,

but those plans were placed on hold to support the demanding military and civilian needs of the nation during World War II.

By 1950, the wild game populations had begun to increase because of improving habitat conditions associated with Company management activities and an increased presence of law enforcement for the state



Under our permit system of the 1960's a hunter who wanted to hunt small game, rabbits, squirrel, etc., on our lands in the county of his residence, could pay a one-dollar annual fee.



Just as important as habitat improvements, state wildlife regulations and enforcement played key roles in the recovery of our wildlife populations.

game laws. The Company implemented a standardized permit system for hunters and fishermen, that resided in the county of our ownership, providing local citizens access to recreation opportunities that were safe and sustainable. Our employees were also granted permission to hunt and fish all Company lands irrespective of the location of the land.

In 1956, Ray Redmond was hired as Chief of the Wildlife Management Program. To our knowledge, he was the first

graduate game management forester hired by a forest products company in the southeast. The wildlife management and restocking work that Ray and his team initiated allowed us to devote more time to planning and establishing “game refuges”, each tract ranging in size from 3,000 to 6,000 acres in several west Alabama counties. These refuges were a precursor to our modern conservation efforts and were developed to provide recreation opportunities and were stocked with native deer and wild turkey, where they had previously been depleted. These tracts were located in Pickens, Marengo, Shelby, Bibb and Tuscaloosa counties, within a reasonable distance from one of our manufacturing facilities (now located in Tuscaloosa and Demopolis). Some were reserved for employees and guests of the Company, while others were for local recreation events sponsored by civic groups. Their names, Westervelt Game Preserve, Pioneer, Bogue Preserve, North River Refuge, and the Kingdom Game Refuge, still having meaning in most of those communities.

Around 1961 a permit system was established and was coined “the largest hunting club in Alabama”, because purchasing

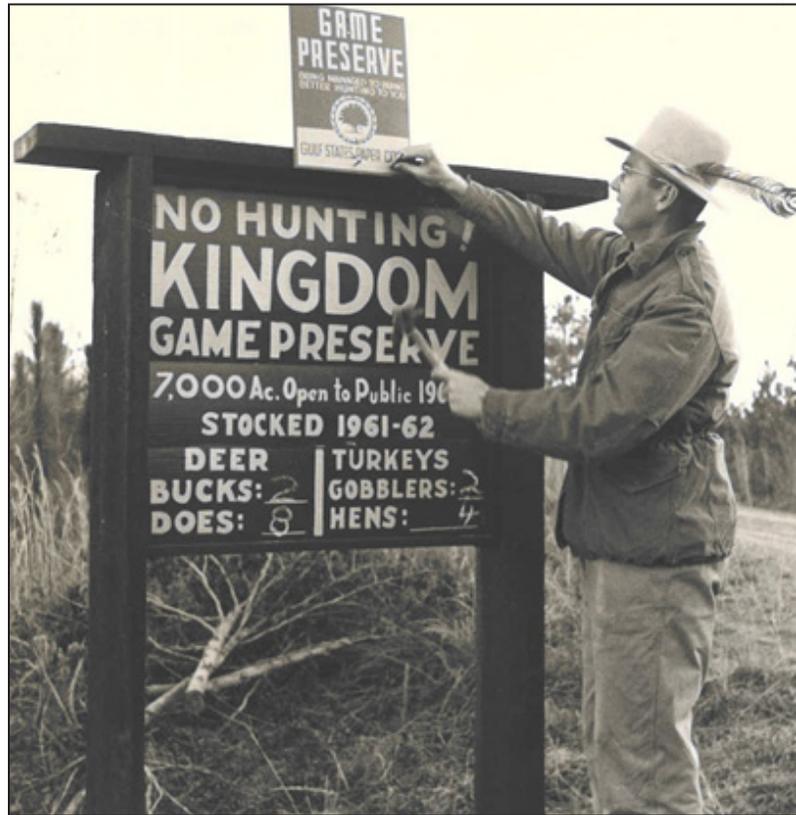


Hunting leases began in the early 1970's.

a permit for \$10 gave you access to hunt most of our ownership which now had reached the 300,000-acre mark. The already established game reserves were excluded. The Company would take the revenue generated from the permit system and reinvest it back into the wildlife management program. An expanded game management service brought increased restocking, food plot development and new game law enforcement on company lands. "It does little good to let people hunt on the land if there's nothing there to hunt" explained Ray Redmond, Chief of the Company's game management service. "We want to bring the best possible balance between timber and game on company lands and feel hunters are willing to have a part in it."

Habitat improvements and thriving populations of wild game resulted in increased demands for our access permits. This increased demand and use resulted in various problems and, unfortunately, in some cases abuse of the resource. In 1973 we began to end the permit hunting program and began the transition to a hunting lease business model. We were the first timber company in Alabama to write a hunting lease and the primary goal was to gain control over who was using our property. This provided an opportunity to lease tracts of land to clubs or individuals for sole access. In many cases the groups that had traditionally been hunting specific tracts, could now lease and hunt them exclusively with their friends and family.

We are now closing into 50 years of leasing our land to the hunting public. We have seen many variations in our wild game resources and significant changes in how and where people prefer to recreate. Undoubtedly there are many more significant changes that will come over the next 50 years and we will continue to evolve with them. Still, we will hold true to our original values of conservation and proliferation of our game resources and creating lifelong recreation memories for our lease holders. We continue to balance the needs of active timber management with wildlife management. Our foresters and wildlife biologists are trained to balance the needs of both when making decisions. While the last 50 years have been rewarding in ways that words cannot describe, we look forward to the next 50 years with the same level of excitement that we had when our game management and conservation activities began in the 1950's.



These game preserves were developed to provide big game hunting in several west Alabama counties in close proximity to company facilities



Early on with the idea of planting forages just for wildlife, Ray Redmond is observing a food plot.



Fire suppression and exclusion promotes a dense forest structure.

Pine Management for Wildlife

This article appeared in the Fall 2020 issue of the *Alabama Wildlife* magazine, courtesy of Alabama Wildlife Federation.

CLAUDE L. JENKINS

AWF Senior Resource Stewardship Biologist

According to the 2015 Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA), there are 23.1 million forested acres in Alabama. Of these forested acres, 6.5 million acres are in pine plantations, including loblolly, shortleaf, longleaf, and slash. Plantation and non-plantation pines combined equate to nine million acres that occupy over one-third of the forested acres in Alabama. That's a lot of potential wildlife habitat! Of course, not all landowners are interested in managing their pines for wildlife; income derived from the pines is the sole interest for many landowners. However, there are many landowners who are interested in managing their pines for wildlife or incorporating wildlife habitat into a pine production system.

It is widely accepted that lightning strike and anthropogenic fires were primarily responsible for shaping the historic pine forest that consisted of a pine-dominated overstory, grassy/herbaceous understory, and very sparse midstory. These forest conditions occurred on a very large scale that provided an abundance of high quality habitat and usable space for hundreds of wildlife species. Of course, this does not describe the modern pine forest. Although pine forests have drastically changed over time, the habitat needs of wildlife species that depend on pine forests have not. Therefore, having knowledge of historic and modern pine management, and their influence on wildlife and wildlife habitat, is important for understanding wildlife management opportunities and limitations in a vastly different landscape.

Modern pine forests are on a different ecological trajectory (a negative trajectory for many wildlife species) because of fire suppression and exclusion. Fire suppression and exclusion have promoted a forest structure that

consists of a dense hardwood midstory and essentially no herbaceous ground cover. When considering the extent of fire suppression and exclusion, it's not a surprise that northern bobwhites and grassland birds are declining. The net effect of extensive fire suppression and exclusion is the loss of early successional plant and wildlife communities, reduction in landscape diversity, and loss of usable space.

Effective pine management should aim to provide quality habitat and increase usable space. Quality habitat includes all the essential resources that are consistent with a species' adaptations required for survival and reproductive success, while usable space is the proportion of the landscape that provides all the essential resources at a given time. To create and maintain quality habitat and usable space, landowners and managers must understand wildlife-habitat relationships and develop a pine management plan based on those relationships. The old adage, "good forest management is good wildlife management" is applicable in some instances; however, for landowners whose priority is wildlife habitat, the old adage must be replaced with a more deliberate plan.

Timber thinning is a commonly applied practice that is used to reduce stocking levels and allow sunlight to reach the forest floor to stimulate the growth of ground cover. I'm sure that most of us have heard and/or read about the benefits of thinning timber, maybe to the point of monotony. Even so, many forest managers struggle to work outside the typical silviculture box when wildlife habitat is the only goal for pine management or if wildlife habitat is such a high priority that it requires a different management approach (i.e. different than an economic-driven approach). I've observed thousands of acres of pine plantations that



The density of this loblolly pine plantation was significantly reduced to accommodate quail management.



This natural pine stand was burned in June to reduce the occurrence of hardwoods and enhance turkey habitat quality.



A combination of herbicide and fire were used to remove hardwood brush and significantly increase habitat quality and usable space for deer, turkeys, and quail.

were not thinned consistent with landowner goals; instead, they were thinned as if economics were the only consideration. Reading about the wildlife benefits of thinning timber may be monotonous; nonetheless, we are missing the mark when applying this practice in many instances. If managing pines for wildlife is the priority, then it is okay to manage outside the typical silviculture box...really, it is.

Prescribed burning is another familiar and commonly applied management practice. To achieve the desired benefits, however, managers should consider fire frequency, season of burn, extent of burn, and burn pattern when developing a management plan. Forest conditions, site productivity, and wildlife habitat requirements will largely determine the fire frequency. Regarding season on burn, fire can be applied during all seasons of the year. Late winter to early spring (February-April) burns are ideal for many management scenarios, while other scenarios (e.g. hardwood control) may require growing season burns (May-June). Burns in late summer (July-August) can produce fresh food resources for wildlife (e.g. insects for birds and forage for deer). Sadly, many landowners are not getting a return on their fire investment. Monitoring the effects of fire (frequency and season) should be an integral part of a pine management program to ensure a return on investment. Extent of burn is an important consideration when managing for northern bobwhites and wild turkeys. Mortality can increase if large-scale fires force birds to utilize poor or sub-optimal habitat while the burned habitat recovers. Burn patterns are generally described as "complete" and "patchy." As the name implies, all vegetation is consumed with a complete burn pattern, whereas, unburned vegetation remains with a patchy burn pattern. Like extent of burns, the burn pattern largely depends on the wildlife species being managed. For northern bobwhites, a patchy burn pattern is usually best, especially if circumstances require burning on a relatively large scale. If a property is divided into many relatively small burn units, then a complete burn pattern can be used for bobwhites. A burn pattern is usually not an important

consideration for a highly mobile species such as the white-tailed deer.

Hardwood competition is a major problem in pine forests; this is usually due to no fire or inadequate fire regimes. Unwanted hardwood vegetation out competes and displaces grasses, forbs, and legumes that provide food and cover resources for so many game and non-game wildlife species. Where hardwood competition is advanced, fire alone will not remove the competition and restore the preferred habitat conditions. In such instances, a combination of mechanical, herbicide, and fire treatments are often necessary to achieve the desired conditions. Where hardwood competition is less advanced, desired conditions can be achieved with herbicide and fire. It is important to reiterate that frequent fires will be essential to sustain desired habitat conditions post hardwood removal. Scientific research has demonstrated the profound benefits of using a combination of herbicide and fire to remove hardwood competition. Such benefits include a substantial increase in deer habitat quality and quantity, an increase in total bird species, an increase in the number of plant species, and many more.

The millions of acres of pines in Alabama offer a lot of potential for wildlife habitat; however, pine management for wildlife must be intentional to be successful. Intentional management requires an understanding of wildlife-habitat relationships, the ability to identify limitations and management regimes to correct limitations, and the wiliness and ability to monitor the effects of management. An intentional management plan incorporates flexibility to change management if necessary to accomplish habitat goals. If you would like technical assistance for managing your pines for wildlife, contact the AWF wildlife biologist in your area. 🌲



You can find Claude L. Jenkins' contact information at www.alabamawildlife.org/land-stewardship-assistance

Westervelt™ OUTDOORS

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Continuing *our legacy* and *tradition* in
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