

Restoring the **Forgotten Ecosystems** of the **Central Hardwoods Region**

It's not too late to restore the forgotten landscapes of the past for the benefit of future generations, using prescribed fire and careful thinning of over-stocked forests. Seedbanks and rootstocks of long-dormant native grasses, forbs, and shrubs have a great ability to rebound if encouraged by proper management, but could lose that ability if left dormant for many more decades.



Using fire to restore a glade-woodland complex

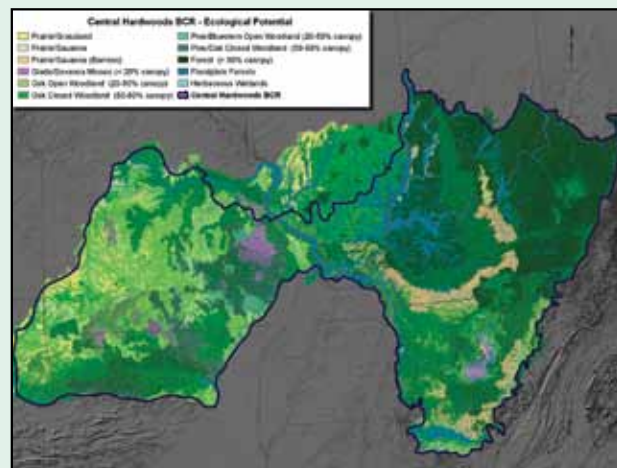
Missouri Department of Conservation



Fire rejuvenates the native grasses and flowering plants that add diversity to native ecosystems

Rob Chapman

Partners associated with the Central Hardwoods Joint Venture (CHJV), a public-private partnership for conservation in the Central Hardwoods Region, have set a goal of restoring over one million acres of barrens, glades, and open woodlands throughout the region. High-value areas for restoration have been mapped by the CHJV, whose scientists predict dramatic increases in currently declining bird populations once native landscapes are restored.



The formal partners of the CHJV include American Bird Conservancy, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Missouri Department of Conservation, The National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and USDA Forest Service, plus many other agencies and organizations that engage in individual projects.



This brochure designed and printed by American Bird Conservancy

What You Can Do

Let your state and federal wildlife and land-managing agencies know you support the restoration of native ecosystems such as barrens, glades, and open oak and pine woodlands. Donations for habitat work can be made at www.abcbirds.org/donate-chjv.html. For more information, contact Jane Fitzgerald, jfitzgerald@abcbirds.org

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Barrens

Myla Payne, NatureServe



Glades

Paul Nelson



Open oak woodlands

Steve Duan/U.S. Forest Service



Open pine woodlands

Paul Nelson

A project of the Central Hardwoods Joint Venture, a Public-Private Partnership for Conservation

When settlers arrived in Kentucky and Tennessee, then moved west into what is today called the Ozarks region, the look of the lands that they encountered was vastly different from modern times. Upland forests were more open than today, and in many landscapes, both patches and vast expanses of prairie-like “barrens” and rocky glades were interspersed with the woodlands.



An expanse of barrens in full bloom



Glades typically occur on dry hilltops, slopes, and rocky soils

Today, however, the kinds of natural communities that once greeted Native Americans and settlers alike are rare, primarily due to the suppression of fires that once burned throughout the region as a result of lightning strikes and setting by Native Americans. Our landscapes are now largely homogeneous, closed-canopy forests interspersed with over-grazed pastures, hayfields, and cropland.



Google Earth images from the Central Hardwoods region show today’s “hard edges” between closed-canopy forest fragments, pastures, and cropland. Nearly all the pasture in the region has been converted to tall fescue, a non-native grass that is much less bird- and wildlife-friendly than the diversity of native grasses and flowering plants and shrubs that once blanketed open areas and the understory of open woodlands.

As a result of the loss of ecosystem diversity, many native bird species that used the native grass and shrub understories are now in decline, including many on the U.S. WatchList.



Prairie Warbler: Bill Hubick

Northern Bobwhite: MDC

Blue-winged Warbler: Peter LaFaurate

Bachman's Sparrow: Greg Lowry

Threatened and endangered plants and animals that may benefit include:

- Indiana bat
- Hine’s emerald dragonfly
- Mead’s milkweed
- running buffalo clover
- Tennessee coneflower
- Tennessee milk vetch
- Price’s potato bean
- Eggert’s sunflower

Other species of conservation concern associated with barrens, glades, and open oak and pine woodlands:

- red bat
- eastern woodrat
- giant swallowtail
- lichen grasshopper
- eastern gray treefrog
- collared lizard
- Diana fritillary
- dusky gopher frog