

THE WILDLIFE EXTENSION PROGRAM AND HOW IT WORKS IN GEORGIA

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In order to understand the Extension Wildlife program, one must first examine the purpose of any Extension program. The Extension Service is engaged in the business of helping people to help themselves, by diffusing among the people of Georgia useful and practical information on subjects related to agriculture and home economics, and by encouraging the application of same. The field is education, and education is "the production of changes in human behavior." The student is potentially every landowner and operator in the state. The Extension program serves the people in their own backyard instead of the classroom, and is the bridge between discovery of new facts or research and the application of these facts in an accepted agricultural practice.

Almost every county in Georgia employs a County Agricultural Agent, the man who is responsible for the Extension program in that County. He deals directly with the people, using information gathered by various technical agencies and presented by proven techniques in a manner which will be acceptable and usable by the people whom he serves. His program is based on the needs and desires of these people.

Behind the County Agent stands the specialist, who furnishes him with usable information in a specialized subject matter field. The specialist serves, on a state level, all County Agents who include his subject matter in their program. Behind the specialist stands the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the Extension Specialists that serve on a national level, the various experiment stations, colleges and universities, and other research agencies in his field. By this method, the Extension Service puts information into the hands of landowners which might not otherwise be obtained as quickly or in as usable a form.

The County Agent actually has two programs going simultaneously, the youth work and the adult work. Different teaching and methods must be adapted and subject matter must be presented in a slightly different manner. The 4-H organization is the means employed to reach rural and small town youth. Projects are set up by the specialist-agent team which will teach better methods of doing things. Competition is encouraged on a County, District and State level with awards added as further incentive. For instance, Georgia 4-H'ers have a Wildlife Conservation Project. It includes work designed for youngsters from the ages of 10 to 20, and the activities run from bird box building and insect collecting to the establishment of a game management area for the older boys. Records are kept on the project work, and scrap books and collections are made. This year, and for the past several years, the Extension Service has sponsored a Wildlife Conservation Camp which is held at Camp Wahsega in the Chattahoochee National Forest. Sixty boys and girls are selected on the basis of their interest and project records by the State office and are given scholarships to the one week camp by the Federal Cartridge Corporation. During the week, an intensive program of instruction is given. This year the campers were rotated among four study groups: Mammals,

Birds, Trees and Plants, and Fisheries. The mornings were spent in class or in the field, learning identification, habits, conservation and management. Representatives of the Georgia Game and Fish Commission were present to explain some of the phases of law enforcement and the reasons behind game laws. Mr. Arno C. Fuller, fisheries biologist of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, gave instructions on the Farm Pond program by using lecture, colored slides and aquaria with live specimens. Mr. L. A. Hargreaves, Extension Forester, taught native trees and plants and their relationships to wildlife. Early morning bird hikes helped campers to learn identification, habits and calls of birds. Each group made a trip to the Mill Creek Trout Rearing Station to learn more about the mechanics of fisheries management, and the problems and cost involved. In the evenings, campers built their own programs around material which they had obtained during the day. The theme throughout emphasized relationships of the various natural groups to each other and to man. The program attempted to give material which could be used back in the home counties and clubs from which the campers had come. We felt that this program was valuable, but must be followed up by the Agents at home. At present, the lack of teaching aids is slowing the work, and untrained County leaders find it difficult to encourage work in a subject about which they know so little.

This year we again cooperated with the Georgia Game and Fish Commission in the distribution of quail eggs to 4-H Club members. This activity gives the individual credit on his or her Wildlife Conservation Project. We realize that artificial stocking of game birds is a costly and only partially successful method of teaching conservation and interest in game management. Fifty-six Georgia counties have tried this activity. Very few have had good success, but most agents agree that it can be a valuable addition to the program if properly handled. When supplemented by a planting program, it becomes more valuable. County Agents obtain Bicolor Lespedeza plants for those boys and girls who are interested in planting field borders. These are produced by the Soil Conservation Service and paid for by the Game and Fish Commission through one of its Pittman-Robertson projects. Information on raising quail and planting of field borders is furnished the County Agent by the specialist.

The adult program has many phases. Fish pond construction and management has become a part of the agricultural program in some counties. The County Agent assists in location of damsites, provides information on construction, fertilization and weed control, stocking and management. Most of the agents are untrained in pond management and plans for next year call for a training course for those agents who desire and need work in that field.

Rodent and predator control work is also carried out on a cooperative basis with the Fish and Wildlife Service. We constantly encourage community and county-wide rat campaigns in the interest of public health and grain conservation. The technique was developed by the Rodent and Predator Control Division and the county agent carries it to the people. Last winter a number of successful campaigns were carried out, and this winter the same work will be emphasized.

Occasionally, specialized control problems come to the county agent. On one farm, beaver cut down a considerable amount of corn and the landowner asked the county agent how to get rid of the animals. The county agent referred the question to the specialist, and the specialist contacted the state Game and Fish Commission who carries on a live-trapping and restocking program. During the recent rabies

outbreak in fox, county agents worked closely with predator control agents of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Rabid animals caused loss of livestock and created a health hazard. Farmers called for help and when the situation became serious, county commissioners on advice of the government agent employed a local trapper to work full time on fox control. In some cases it has been the duty of the county agent to give trapping instruction and demonstrations, where the services of the Fish and Wildlife service agent could not be obtained.

The organization of Sportsmens Clubs has been encouraged. This, at present, is considered extra-curricula work by some of the county agents, but others have been responsible for arousing interest in such an organization. Newspaper releases and talks to civic clubs have been used by the specialist. A program of activities for a sportsmans club has been prepared and furnished all county agents. It is built around The Cooperative Game Management Area, a perennial demonstration of various proven game management practices and their result. This program will be pushed, as it provides both a method and result demonstration that will be helpful in spreading the program.

The wildlife conservation specialist provides information that the county agent would not find time to gather. He keeps in close touch with all agencies engaged in game conservation and management, and relays new information on in the form of prepared newspaper releases, bulletins, circular letters, radio transcriptions and by personal contact. He works with civic and farm groups and by newspaper stories stimulates public interest. It has been the pleasure of the specialist to supply information to potential students of Game Management at the University of Georgia regarding institutions providing training in this field. Work with negro 4-H members was begun this summer and plans made to get the program before adult groups in the near future.

The Extension Service employed a specialist in wildlife conservation on January 1, 1948. Much time has been spent by the specialist establishing contacts with the various agencies and familiarizing himself with past and present work in the southeast. The program at present is not completely organized, nor has it been thoroughly presented to all Extension Service personnel. Much teaching material is needed, and the specialist is at present preparing some of this for the use of the agents. Some time must be spent arousing more public interest and making people over the state cognizant of advances in this field and the possibilities of improvement. There is sufficient interest among landowners, but at present many do not realize that game can be managed as a crop. Rather, their energies are bent toward making what game that is left last just a little bit longer. As soon as we are able to give them a good, sound program of management practices that bear visible fruit, our program will become part of theirs.

In summation, the Extension wildlife program is the transmission of tested and proven information from the source of origin to the scene of application. The specialist obtains the information, transmits it to the county agent, who in turn gives it to the man on the farm. Thus it endeavors to educate and bring about changes *on the soil* that will prove beneficial. To date, the program has just begun to develop in Georgia. It is a permanent long range plan that will depend on cooperation and assistance from all agencies. It is proven in other states and should, in the near future, prove its value to Georgians who are interested in the perpetuation of one of our greatest natural resources.