UPPER MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY PARTNERSHIP
Project Portfolio

Oak Bluff Savannah Bird Habitat Improvement

BACKGROUND
Oak Bluff savannah is a 4 acre native savannah remnant that needs thinning and exotics control.

LOCATION
Oak Bluff is part of the Oak Bluff Savannah Nature Preserve owned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. While a small site, it is adjacent to other woodlands to the south and east within a 400 acre drainage.

ISSUES BEING ADDRESSED
Habitat fragmentation in the Upper Mississippi River Basin had led to a large decline in songbirds populations. Contiguous forests, such as Oak Bluff, are need for many songbirds to nest successfully. Due to its location adjacent to existing woodlands, the Oak Bluff complex will provide a variety of habitat: prairie, forest, and riparian systems.

GOALS
Increase habitat for neotropical migrants and other forest and savannah bird populations.

- Reduce the number of trees per acres by thinning existing forest; oaks and hickories will be retained.
- Restore existing degraded oak savannah by prescribed burning and invasive species control.
- Continue surveying bird populations.
- Conduct a plant survey of treated area.

RESULTS
Bird surveys found an increase in both the number of birds sighted and number of species. Eleven species increased their numbers post treatment and two species has lower numbers. Two bird species with increased numbers prefer an open, savannah habitat: Eastern Towhee and Baltimore Oriole. The treatment effects on plant diversity were inconclusive, most likely because the planned prescribed burn was not conducted.

OUTCOMES/ACCOMPLISHMENTS
- 12 acres of overstocked oak forest was thinned.
- Prior to thing volunteers removed shrub invasives.
- Plant and bird surveys were conducted before and after treatments.
- Planned prescribed burn not carried out due to unfavorable weather conditions.

PARTNERS
- **Peoria Audubon Society**
- **Illinois Department of Natural Resources**

FUTURE PLANS
Plant and bird surveys will continue until 2008. A prescribed burn will be conducted when weather conditions are favorable.

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The USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry and the Midwest State Foresters have joined in partnership to build a watershed-wide approach to forestry efforts in the Upper Mississippi watershed in order to improve water quality.