

# WILDLIFE TRENDS

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## Prescribed Burning: Safely and Legally

*By Wes and Leslie Burger*



A half dozen billowing white plumes hang above the pine trees on the horizon. The acrid smell of burning pine straw fills the air and a gray haze hangs low over the woods. It's early March and the prescribed fire season is in full swing in the areas around Tallahassee, Thomasville, Albany, and throughout the southeast on properties managed for quail. Fire is the most important ecological process, responsible for the creation and maintenance of the southern pine grassland that once dominated the uplands of the Southeast Coastal plain. Prescribed burning is an essential management tool in southern pine forests, particularly where bobwhite are the focal species. Human use of fire to manipulate plant and animal communities predates European settlement by several thousand years and was readily adopted by those European settlers who first inhabited these southern pine forests. In this century, it was Herbert Stoddard who first fully

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By Wes and Leslie Burger

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