

# ECOLOGY OF SYMPATRIC LAGOMORPHS IN BOTTOMLAND HARDWOOD FOREST ECOSYSTEMS: Implications for Wildlife and Habitat Management

A McIntire-Stennis supported project

The status of early-successional habitats and wildlife species associated with them recently has become a concern in the eastern U.S. Although federal farm programs have the potential to create early-successional habitats for wildlife, relatively few studies have assessed wildlife response to these land use changes. This project will expand upon previous research efforts by my research group to determine the extent to which swamp rabbits and eastern cottontails jointly use early-successional bottomlands and assess the influence of habitat and landscape characteristics on habitat use. Field techniques employed during this project include rabbit capture and fitting with radiocollars for radiotracking. Vegetation measurements will yield insight into rabbit use of early-successional habitats. This study will provide natural resource managers with a better fundamental understanding of lagomorph populations in bottomland ecosystems and habitat management recommendations to improve their status.



## TARGET AUDIENCE

- Interagency land managers at Cache River Joint Venture Partnership
- The Nature Conservancy
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Ducks Unlimited
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Interested members of the public, including hunters, woodland owners, and students at Southern Illinois University



## About McIntire-Stennis

The McIntire-Stennis program, a unique federal-state partnership, cultivates and delivers forestry and natural resource innovations for a better future. By advancing research and education that increases the understanding of emerging challenges and fosters the development of relevant solutions, the McIntire-Stennis program has ensured healthy resilient forests and communities and an exceptional natural resources workforce since 1962.



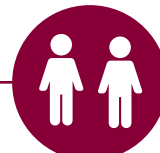
## IMPACT

Rabbits may be useful indicator species in bottomland hardwood forest ecosystems.



5 M

Inform management applicable to nearly 5 million acres of forest habitat in the southern and Midwestern U.S.



>11

Training for 1 Ph.D. students and 10 + undergraduates preparing for careers in wildlife management.



25+

Thus far, published 6 peer-reviewed scientific papers, presented at 19 professional meetings, and given numerous presentations at local meetings.