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NEWS RELEASE

Habitat Specialists Join Newly Launched Crew in East-Central Missouri

The habitat specialist crew will conduct habitat management work with an emphasis on prescribed fire on cooperating lands

GRAY SUMMIT, Mo. – January 19, 2022 – Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever are excited to announce the hiring of Abbey Ward and Benjamin Clevenger to brand-new habitat specialist positions in Missouri. These positions and the Habitat Specialist Crew are part of a unique partnership between the Missouri Department of Conservation, Shaw Nature Reserve and Quail Forever, and are supported by generous donations from Nestlé Purina, Steve and Jeanne Maritz and Roeslein Alternative Energy. Ward and Clevenger started on January 3.

In their new role, Ward and Clevenger will be members of the habitat specialist crew and work with partners to coordinate and conduct wildlife habitat management practices on cooperating lands, with an emphasis on the application of prescribed fire.

“Abbey and Benjamin bring with them a strong background in habitat management and boots on the ground conservation,” said Dylan Jacobs, the

Missouri habitat specialist crew lead for Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever. “Bringing experience from multiple agencies and considerable time spent working with natural communities they will form a strong foundation for the newly formed habitat crew.”

Ward and Clevenger are eager to work on the newly established crew to enhance habitat and sustain a healthy environment on priority geographies in Gray Summit and the surrounding area.





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Ward was born and raised in High Ridge, Mo. She graduated with her B.S. in Biology from Southeast Missouri State University and started her career with the Missouri Department of Conservation working as a chronic wasting disease technician, where she found her passion for working with wildlife in Missouri. She also worked as an assistant natural history biologist and a resource management technician at MDC and has spent time working on prescribed burns, invasive plant species management, wildfire suppression and more. Ward enjoys being out in nature, trail running with her dog and kayaking Missouri's scenic waterways.

“I look forward to being a part of the new habitat specialist crew for Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever in Missouri,” Ward said. “I’m excited about using prescribed fire and other management practices for the ecological restoration of natural communities in Missouri and applying management practices to help improve wildlife habitat.”

Clevenger received his B.S in Forestry from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale where he was introduced to prescription fires as part of the Firedawg Burn Cadre, and he has worked with The Nature Conservancy seasonally for six years. Born and raised in northwest Illinois, Clevenger recalls cutting firewood with his father, the smell of white pines, the soft duff beneath his shoes as they scouted for fallen or damaged hardwoods. He was brought up on three-wheelers, often with a bow in hand. He was infamous as a child for bringing home every creature that would allow, but as an adult he restricts his collecting to plants and fungi.

“Coming in from out of state, I joined up with a solid team - strengthened by some new additions,” said Clevenger. “We have blown it up with habitat work in our first week I believe this is only the beginning.”

If you have questions about the habitat specialist crew in Missouri, contact crew leader Dylan Jacobs at djacobs@quailforever.org or 419-346-3139.

About Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever

[Pheasants Forever](#), including its quail conservation division — [Quail Forever](#) — is the nation's largest nonprofit organization dedicated to upland habitat conservation. Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever have more than 120,000 members and 760 local chapters across the United States and Canada. Chapters are empowered to determine how 100 percent of their locally raised conservation funds are spent; the only national conservation organization that operates through this truly grassroots structure. Since creation in 1982, Pheasants Forever has spent over \$975 million on 560,000 habitat projects benefiting 22 million acres nationwide. Visit the [Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever in Missouri website](#) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

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