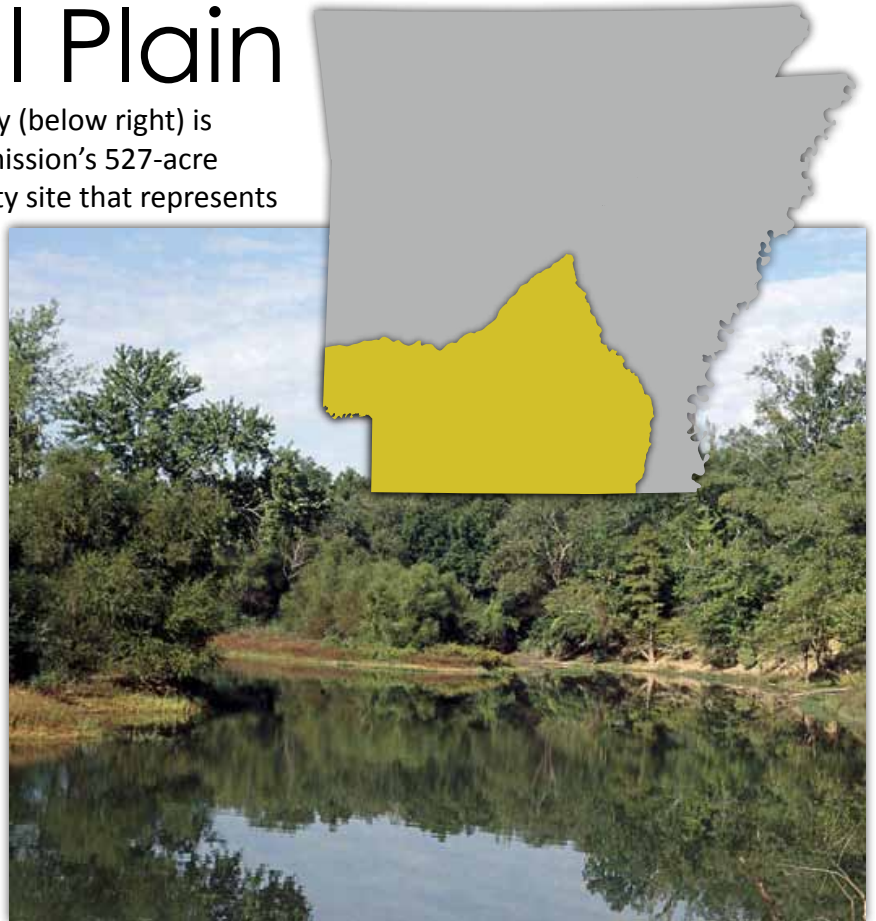


# ...in the Coastal Plain

Longview Saline Natural Area in Ashley County (below right) is the newest addition to the System. The commission's 527-acre acquisition is part of an 8,000-acre high-quality site that represents the mosaic of rare natural communities that occur in Arkansas's Coastal Plain. This new natural area lies along the Saline River and supports a population of the federally endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker as well as federally endangered winged mapleleaf and pink mucket mussel species. This new pursuit benefits game animals such as deer, quail, and turkey, and offers easy public access along its eastern boundary. Longview Saline Natural Area also provides habitat connectivity as it is located within 25 miles of more than 85,000 acres of publicly-owned land managed for conservation. State funding for acquisitions at this site allows the commission to pursue federal grants for stewardship and future acquisitions, and conservation partnerships provide for effective cost sharing.



Before sunrise on October 6, 2010, commission staff and conservation partners (left) released five pairs of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (below) at Warren Prairie Natural Area after 27 years of conservation work at this site. This is the first relocation west of the Mississippi River approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the birds were brought in from private timberlands in Union County and from Fort Polk in Louisiana. Stewardship of this 4,555-acre natural area has restored much of the pine flatwoods ecosystem, the favored habitat of these endangered birds.



During their first breeding season, after enduring floods, then drought, and unseasonably high temperatures, two of three nesting pairs fledged three nestlings (left). Videos of commission staff placing identifying bands on the tiny legs of the baby birds were featured on our website, in e-newsletter articles, and on the commission's Facebook page.



Fire is one of the major lacking ecological processes across today's landscape. When used as a part of an integrated management plan, prescribed fire can be a very effective natural resource management tool. Results are fast, sometimes showing increased biodiversity as quickly as one growing season after a burn. By working with the Office of State Procurement, the commission now has new opportunities to work with qualified contractors to address the need for more fire on natural areas. Four professional and highly motivated contractors, in addition to the commission's in-house burn crew, applied prescribed fire to more than 5,525 acres throughout the System of Natural Areas in FY2011.

Commission staff conducts inventory to determine where species and natural communities of conservation concern exist in Arkansas. In FY2011, aquatic surveys along the lower Saline River indicated the presence of the rare crystal darter, and botanical inventories produced new locations for rare plants such as barbed rattlesnake root and earleaf false foxglove (right).



The records of the commission's biological inventory work become part of an international network called NatureServe. This network connects the commission's data with conservation organizations, government agencies, corporations, academia, land-use planners, and others in Arkansas and beyond our borders. In FY2011 the Commission took extra steps to modify our recordkeeping methods so the data can be more functional for our work in Arkansas.



Years of research, collaboration, and record keeping have earned the commission recognition as the principal source for the

locations and distributions of rare plants, animals, and natural communities in Arkansas. This includes rare species designated as threatened or endangered. In FY2011, the commission worked with large private timber companies to provide the information required to maintain their certification through the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. Certified forests are managed so that all forest values, including the environment, are considered. Products derived from these forests are labeled and marketed so that consumers, whether they are purchasing paper, lumber, or other fiber products, are aware of the certification.



Management plans guide the commission's stewardship activities and allow ANHC to document successes. Terre Noire Natural Area in Clark County is one of the highest-quality examples of the blackland prairie ecosystem remaining in Arkansas. Specific management objectives at this natural area call for the removal of eastern red-cedar trees and the reintroduction of fire to the landscape. With the help of conservation partners, the commission's extensive efforts to restore this habitat are benefitting Arkansas's state butterfly, the Diana fritillary (left). This rare species requires fire-maintained ecosystems with high native plant diversity. Flowers such as violet, purple coneflower, and butterfly weed are increasing in numbers. Surveys led by researchers from UALR show the Dianas are responding positively, and populations continue to increase across the natural area.