MILLIONS OF ACRES OF PINE WOODLANDS ONCE COVERED A LARGE PORTION OF THE MIDWEST. HOWEVER, DUE TO HUMAN MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, THE WOODLANDS GAVE WAY TO DENSE FORESTS WITH THICK GROUND COVER MADE OF LEAVES, LEADING TO HABITAT LOSS FOR MANY SPECIES OF BIRDS.

NOW, RESEARCH FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI HAS SHOWN THAT RESTORING PINE WOODLANDS THROUGH THE COMBINED USE OF INTENTIONAL FIRES AND THINNING OF TREE DENSITY HAS HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT ON BIRD POPULATIONS. IN FACT, SPECIES THAT HAVE BEEN IN DECLINE ELSEWHERE, SUCH AS THE RED-HEADED WOODPECKER AND PRAIRIE WARBLER, HAVE BEEN ABLE TO THRIVE IN THIS RESTORED ENVIRONMENT.

FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE PROFESSOR FRANK THOMPSON SURVEYED SIXTEEN BIRD SPECIES THROUGHOUT WOODLANDS IN MISSOURI, ARKANSAS AND OKLAHOMA.

“I think the most important thing we found was that many of the birds in Missouri, for which there is already conservation concern, actually respond quite favorably and positively to woodland restoration.”

THOMPSON ADDED THAT RESTORING PINE WOODLANDS CREATES WIDELY-SPACED TREES FOR CANOPY-NESTING BIRDS AS WELL AS GRASSES AND SHRUBS FOR GROUND AND SHRUB-NESTING BIRDS.

“Birds are important parts of communities and play many different ecological roles. Birds are predators of insects, they are dispersers of seeds, they pollinate plants, so they do all these different roles in ecosystems.”

I’m Brian Consiglio, with a Mizzou Spotlight on Science.