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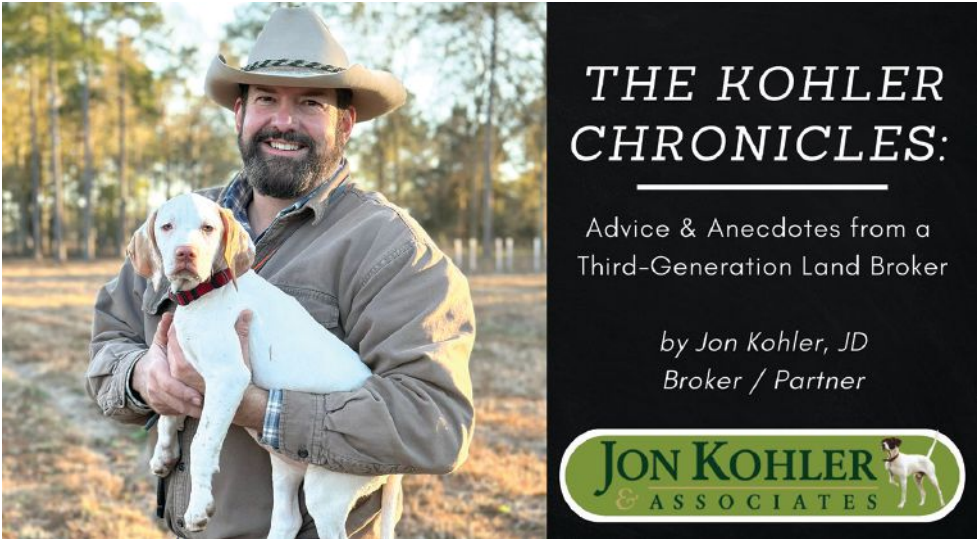
**Raising  
Quail**

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# Raising Quail: A Family Tradition

*by Christiana Roussel*  
Jon Kohler will be the first to tell you that he is a self-professed Florida Cracker. While that assessment might surprise some – after all, Kohler is the pre-eminent plantation and land broker in the Red Hills Region and beyond – he takes it as a point of pride. To him, saying he is a Florida Cracker means he takes pride in his roots, in his connection to the land and his innate ability to see its value. He'll be the first to tell you that value is more than the purchase price. It is the health of the flora and fauna of a property. It is the commitment to invest

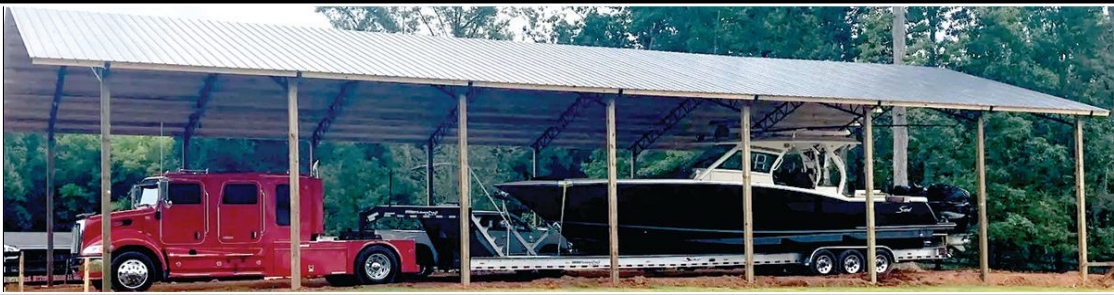
again and again and again in the gifts that God has given us and being good stewards of this majesty. Always practicing what he preaches, at his Lick Skillet homestead, Kohler and his family spend as much time as possible putting back what they harvest and enjoy. This is especially true in the hours he spends with his sons, Ashton and Greyson, raising quail. "I see this as something of a Biblical mandate," Jon says. "Starting in Genesis, we read, 'And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the



**GREYSON KOHLER DISPLAYS THE PROCESS OF HATCHING AND RAISING QUAIL -** At Lick Skillet, Jon Kohler and his boys can turn out up to 4,100 Bobwhite chicks every 25 days!

birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." "I take that to heart in the work we do. I feel called to live this way. Erica

and I raise our boys this way," he said. At Lick Skillet, Kohler still uses two of the same incubators he used as a boy, and today he and the boys can turn out 4,100 Bobwhite chicks every 25 days. "Raising quail is really a numbers game. You know, it has been said that 'it is not nice to fool Mother Nature,' (Continued on next page)



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Proverbs 22:1 A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold.





# 'Change is a Biblical concept'

(Continued from previous page)  
but it sure is fun," Jon says. "Of those 4,100 eggs, we probably hatch out about 90%."

Most of those birds are released on his property, where, he notes, "The better habitat I have for them here, the longer they will survive in the wild."

Kohler's Lick Skillet quail hatchery is a re-purposed horse trailer.

"This is the first year it was actually too hot in the trailer for the incubating eggs. That's saying a lot when 100 de-

grees is ideal and 102 degrees will kill them," Jon said.

As a backup, he bought a small A/C unit to maintain ideal temperature. For the naysayers who turn climate change into a political construct, Kohler has a few thoughts, "God created this world to change. In fact, if the climate stopped changing, I would be concerned. For some reason, one of mankind's biggest fears is change. We will give up a lot over this fear. The loss of personal freedoms come to mind first."

He goes on to say, "I read recently that now natural gas stoves are the next culprit. Change is a Biblical concept." Ever strong in his faith, he adds, "The Bible makes it very clear that we should turn to God as we navigate the changes and obstacles this world has for us. It explicitly states that he gave mankind dominion of the Earth and to steward over it. We certainly haven't done a good job for the most part, but leaving God out of the solution to any problem doesn't make any sense."

Beyond the lessons of conservation and returning value to the land, Jon sees raising quail as an essential part of how his boys are learning about the world around them, imparting important aspects to their character.

"When we candle the eggs to track the maturation process, I am teaching Ashton and Greyson about when life begins. They can hear the chirping of the birds before they ever hatch."

When asked what they like about raising quail, Ashton and Greyson are quick to respond with how much they enjoy the whole process – start to finish.

"They are so cute," Ashton says, while Greyson adds, "I like petting them and picking them up."

Jon and Erica enjoy having the boys' friends over to later hunt these quail, a regional pastime that builds community and fosters a firm foundation of stewardship. The two boys talk

over each other in their excitement about which of their four hunting dogs – Buck, River, Lilly and Pax -- has the most fun on a quail hunt.

Hearing that, Jon's face breaks into a wide Florida Cracker grin: "The number one thing we raise here is kids – strong, healthy, happy outdoor-loving kids. Raising quail together is just a means to an end."



ASHTON KOHLER, ACCOMPANIED BY THE FAMILY'S ENGLISH COCKER, said he loves tending to the baby birds in the Kohler hatchery on the family's property, Lick Skillet.



*Christiana Roussel is a Birmingham-based award-winning food + travel + lifestyle writer whose work has appeared in Garden & Gun, Covey Rise, Good Grit, Sporting Classics, Bourbon+, as well as a number of regional publications.*

*She is a proud member of the Birmingham chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier as well as the Industry Advisory Board of Auburn University's Horst Schulze School of Hospitality Management.*

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