



## Mid-Atlantic / S. Appalachian Ruff-Country News Fall 2015



*Fall is approaching. Leaves are showing color, mornings are cooler, nights are clear and crisp. Blackberries, huckleberries, apples, plums and grapes all have been tops this year. Acorns a little wavy but hickories filling in many of the voids. Brood flushes seem high in numbers and of equal size. It does not appear many second attempts in nesting were required. This all points to a rather promising year throughout most of the region. Hey hindsight is everything!*

*Spend the last summer nights sitting by a fire and listen for the calls of various migrating thrushes just over the tree tops. You might catch the glimpses of doodles silhouetted against the nearest hilltop. Twilight, the shortest time of the day but the most spectacular. Casting that peculiar but beautiful tone that reflects where we have been and projects us into those places we have yet to venture. I look forward to seeing many of you this fall at RGS events, in the woods, or just sharing a cup of coffee along the way. May you all have many safe ventures, wherever they take you this fall!*

*Linda*

### **RGS Builds the Biologist Staff**

***Welcome Meadow Kouffeld-Hansen (Minnesota and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan) and Dr. Scott Walter (Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa) to the RGS / AWS staff.***

**Meadow Kouffeld-Hansen** joins RGS and AWS from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources where she worked as an assistant area wildlife manager and wildlife habitat contracts administrator. She attended graduate school at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, where she earned her master's degree in wildlife ecology and management and was given an excellent opportunity to study ruffed grouse habitat selection in northcentral Minnesota. She developed a deep appreciation for ruffed grouse and American woodcock in Minnesota during her graduate school studies. She earned her bachelor's degree in wildlife conservation biology and vertebrate ecology at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California, where she began spending more time hunting waterfowl and upland game. After Humboldt, she worked on a variety of wildlife and fisheries projects in New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, California and Washington.



"I am excited for the opportunity to represent the Ruffed Grouse Society and American Woodcock Society in northern Minnesota and Upper Peninsula of Michigan to promote the future of my favorite pastime, pursuing the upper Midwest's most popular game birds," said Meadow Kouffeld-Hansen.

You can contact Meadow at [MeadowK@ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:MeadowK@ruffedgrousesociety.org).



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**Dr. Scott Walter** comes to RGS and AWS from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WI DNR), where he served as the upland wildlife ecologist and farm bill coordinator from 2011 through 2015. This position engaged many partner groups on harvest and habitat management-related issues for a suite of upland game birds. During his time with the WI DNR, he gained experience with program and policy development and the importance of collaborative conservation efforts. He has his master's and doctorate degrees in wildlife ecology from University of Wisconsin – Madison and bachelor's degree in biology from Beloit College.



Walter was a professor of biology at the University of Wisconsin – Richland from 1999 through 2011, where he collaborated with a series of students on a four-year study of ruffed grouse with the goal of explaining the long-term population decline in the hardwood-dominated forests of the driftless region in addition to development of many future wildlife biologists, fisheries biologists and foresters.

"I am truly humbled to be an RGS and AWS regional wildlife biologist for Wisconsin, Iowa and Illinois," said Scott Walter. "I'm looking forward to continuing the strong partnerships developed by Gary Zimmer and in exploring new ways to expand the habitat base for grouse and woodcock and enhance opportunities for our region's upland bird hunters."

You can contact Scott at [ScottW@ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:ScottW@ruffedgrousesociety.org).

*"We are extremely excited to add Meadow and Scott to our respected team of wildlife biologists," said RGS and AWS President and CEO John Eichinger. "They are dedicated professionals who bring documented experience and leadership in wildlife habitat development within their respective regions," added Eichinger.*



Available at [www.ruffedgrousesociety.org](http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org)



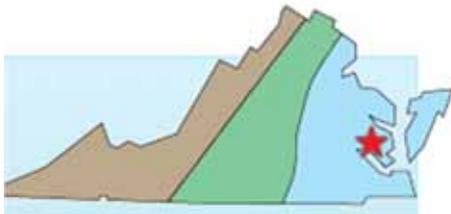
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### American Woodcock Project in Development for Chickahominy WMA VA

*This may not seem exciting for some but here is why it should be:*

- Supported by James River (Richmond Area) and Rappahannock (Fredericksburg area) RGS / AWS Chapters
- Supported by State Drummer Fund (SDF)
- First project in the Coastal Plain region to date
- Along Atlantic Flyway migration route
- Partners include Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VA DGIF), Wildlife Management Institute (WMI), National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF).
- Located on only public land in the county!



This wildlife management area (WMA) is located in Charles City County VA, roughly 30 miles southeast of Richmond. Support from RGS and other conservation organizations will assist District Biologist Aaron Proctor and WMA Supervisor David Garst and crew, in focusing the management of the over 5,000 acre WMA for woodcock areas defined in the project description. This project will

also function as a demonstration site for successful woodcock management and an opportunity for viewing their spring display. Work may begin as early as winter 2015-16.

Located within the Coastal Plain region (represented by the star), this project has high importance to migrating woodcock in spring and fall, and holds many winter birds when conditions are right. This WMA is along the Atlantic Coastal Flyway. Any habitat work done will positively influence not just woodcock but other migrants such songbirds and we could attract other partners through our efforts.

Once again I would like to extend my appreciation to the chapters for expressing their desire to develop a local project and to DGIF personnel for 1) already managing for woodcock and 2) taking the time to work with RGS / AWS to develop a management project that would fit all aspects of our mission. I anticipate plenty of education and outreach possibilities, additional partners and growth in support from current partners. This is truly an exciting beginning in Coastal Virginia. Thank you for kicking it off!



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### RGS / AWS Meeting with Region 8 and 9 USFS Personnel

We would like to inform our members that RGS will meet this fall with the U.S. Forest Service at the Eastern Region Regional Office in Milwaukee WI to address the petition for rule making filed earlier this year. RGS will be represented by Ryan Woody, John B. Eichinger, Dan Dessecker, and Linda Ordiway. We will be meeting with R9 Regional Forester Kathleen Atkinson and Tony Tooke Regional Forester in R8 as well as associated line officers and staff. We would like to thank you for your continued support and we will keep you informed of the outcome.



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### PA West Nile Virus (WNV) Update

Fifty six wild grouse eggs were collected. There was a nice north/south gradient in the sample. Eggs were collected from Chautauqua Co., NY (just one mile over the Erie Co. border), Potter Co., Lycoming Co., Centre County, Cambria Co., and Somerset Co. Lisa Williams' (PA upland bird biologist) goal was to collect an over-count to make up for poor hatching and/or chick mortality. But at the same time, she did not want to collect too many more than needed. Thus, nests were also located in Warren, McKean, Cameron, Carbon, Tioga and Sullivan counties – but not collected.



There was 100% survival during transport (to Idaho), which was far better than expected. However, hatch was relatively poor, perhaps due to transport stress on the developing embryos. All in all, 29 chicks (out of 56 eggs) hatched successfully in the propagator's facility in Idaho. After two to four weeks of quarantined brooding, 20 chicks were transported to the laboratory at Colorado State University. Two of those chicks were excluded from the study due to health issues. Of the 18 remaining in the study, 10 were inoculated with West Nile Virus, three non-infected chicks were housed with the inoculated

chicks to test for direct bird to bird transmission, and five were given a WNV vaccine to test whether the vaccine was protective.



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As far as results, everything is still pretty preliminary. Some chicks died and at least one sickened and recovered (note that recovery is unlikely in the wild), some did not sicken. Final numbers, along with serology, virology and necropsy findings should be available by the end of October.

The Game Bird Section of the PA Game Commission thanks the Ruffed Grouse Society for its financial and logistical support of this study! Remember these sample numbers are very small and this study is to determine if pursuing a larger scale study is worth the investment based on initial findings.

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### **RGS Co-Sponsors the Resilient Federal Forests Act**

RGS co-sponsored and spoke at a congressional briefing for United States House of Representative members and staff on Wednesday, June 24, 2015. The briefing was hosted by the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation and highlighted proposed legislation that would dramatically enhance the ability of the U.S. Forest Service to sustain the young forest habitats required by ruffed grouse, American woodcock and many other species of game and nongame wildlife. **The Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015, HR 2647**, includes language that would establish a streamlined planning process for projects designed to establish young forest wildlife habitats.

In his comments, Dan Dessecker, RGS director of conservation policy, stated, *"Clearly, we must work to increase the abundance and the distribution of young forest habitats throughout our Eastern forests, including our national forests. The Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015 would enhance the ability of the U.S. Forest Service to play its essential role in the conservation of forest wildlife and the protection of our nation's hunting heritage."*

Dan will be on the Hill next week working the Senate side for potential passage. This legislation will allow the creation of the much needed wildlife habitat under the project designation of categorical exclusion for areas up to 5,000 acres. This does not equate to 5,000 contiguous acres of management but total project area and within that area would be differing types of management determined by need and forest structure.

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### **Nantahala and Pisgah Forest Plan Revision Meetings**

The USFS will be announcing the next round of public comment meetings for continuing the Plan Revision. Please visit the following web site for meeting announcements and to receive or request any updated materials. <http://www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc>.

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### PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources State Parks Projects

As we get closer to hunting season. I want to remind you that we have four SDF projects on PA State Park lands. They are all focused on woodcock habitat and are looking very good. The locations are Swatara, Bald Eagle, MK Goddard and Pymatuning State Parks. Pymatuning was just worked on this September. You are permitted to hunt PA parks; just check for any local shooting or area restrictions. Thank you, PA DCNR, for managing our public lands.

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### 2015 Habitat Sponsors of the Wildlife Leadership Academy

Contact Michelle Kittell, Director Wildlife Leadership Academy [mkittell@picweb.org](mailto:mkittell@picweb.org), 570-245-8518 for more information or to nominate an interested student for the 2016 PA Drummers School. To take a virtual tour visit the web site below <http://picweb.org/drummers-tour/>

Feel free to contact me for further PA Drummer School information.



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### RGS Events Within The Mid-Atlantic Southern Appalachian Region

For detailed information on these and other events, please go to the [RGS events page](#) on our website.

**October 30 – Northeastern PA Annual Conservation and Sportsman Banquet.** Shawnee Inn and Golf Resort, 1 River Rd, Shawnee-on-Delaware, PA 18356. For more information, please contact George Nichols, 35 Parish St, Dallas PA 18612; 570-406-6044 [georgenichols3@gmail.com](mailto:georgenichols3@gmail.com).

**November 6 – 35th Annual Thunderbird Chapter Conservation & Sportsmen's Banquet.** The Casino at Lakemont Park, 300 Lakemont Park Blvd, Altoona PA 16602. For more information contact Samuel J. Marino c/o Hess and Marino 127 Lexington Avenue Altoona PA 16601; 814-946-4349 [smarino@hessandmarino.com](mailto:smarino@hessandmarino.com).

**November 12 - 10th Annual Covered Bridge Chapter Conservation & Sportsmen's Banquet.** Bella Sera By Greco's, 414 Morganza Rd, Canonsburg PA 15317. For more information, please contact Lisa M. Rossi, 215 Marshall Rd, Oakdale PA 15071; 724-693-9032 [LisaR@RuffedGrouseSociety.org](mailto:LisaR@RuffedGrouseSociety.org).

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Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions and notify me of any email address changes:  
Linda D. Ordiway, Regional Biologist Mid-Atlantic Southern Appalachian Region.  
412-720-6034 Email: [lindao@ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:lindao@ruffedgrousesociety.org).

*The Ruffed Grouse Society is North America's foremost conservation organization dedicated to preserving our sporting traditions by creating healthy forest habitat for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and other wildlife. For information on the Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society, please call 888-564-6747 or check out the RGS website at [www.ruffedgrousesociety.org](http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org).*