



Ruffed Grouse Society Minnesota and U.P. of Michigan News

Fall Edition September 2015

Meadow Kouffeld-Hansen



*Scoter, one of my Deutsch-Drahthaars,
on a spruce grouse project.*

Greetings! My name is Meadow Kouffeld-Hansen and I am the Ruffed Grouse Society

Wildlife Biologist in Minnesota and the Western Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Night time temperatures are good for sleeping, the air has cleared and carries a chill, fall colors are starting to show and buck velvet has been shed. In less than a week we will begin entering the woods and putting some boot leather on the ground pursuing a common passion; grouse and woodcock. Since starting with the Ruffed Grouse Society mid-July, I have been on a whirlwind tour of my work area meeting as many members as possible at banquets, meetings, and events. Ted Dick, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Forest Game Bird Coordinator, and I have been busy getting habitat and infrastructure work initiated and completed using Minnesota's Drummer Funds and partnering with a wide range of organizations. In addition, the Ruffed Grouse Society has been represented in the realm of current game bird research. I

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had the chance to participate on a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources spruce grouse research project in the north with my two female Deutsch-Drahthaars. We have also committed Drummer Funds to purchase transmitters to be deployed on Minnesota woodcock as a part of a nationwide research project. Lots to share this time around and hopefully some future full length stories in the magazine representing happenings in Minnesota!

As you have likely heard, all unofficial reports indicate that things are looking up for this season. Although our drumming counts in Minnesota were about average with last year's counts, spring and summer were quite favorable for young grouse in Minnesota. Reports of large broods of well-developed chicks continued to come in through July and early August. I personally look forward to getting in the field with my dogs and doing a little unofficial sampling myself. I hope you are too!

I will be in Michigan on several occasions this fall and plan on attending the Ironwood Banquet. I will certainly be at the Gold Mine GEMS dedication in the Iron River area. I hope to meet a bunch of western U.P. members at those events.

Ted and I are always looking for more opportunities to further involve chapters and members in using state Drummer Funds to create more grouse and woodcock habitat. If you have an idea for a habitat project or infrastructure project in your area please connect with us and we might be able to make a very meaningful

project out of it. It is an excellent opportunity to see the money that you raise spent locally to benefit members and promote grouse and woodcock production. Both Ted and I are always happy to talk about any of your questions, comments, concerns or as Ted puts it "just want to talk bird hunting". Joining the Ruffed Grouse Society has been an extremely positive experience and I am very happy to say that things are very good. Our favorite season is here! Meadow



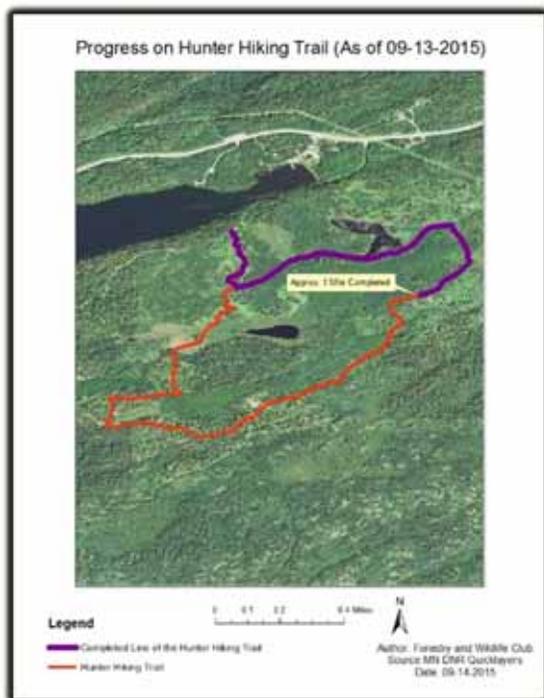
Message from Ted Dick: Fall is here, bird season is here and things are busy. Perfect timing now that Meadow Kouffeld-Hansen is on board as the new RGS Regional Biologist for Minnesota and the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan. We've got access to RGS Funds and Lessard/Sams Outdoor Heritage funds and we're putting them to work. We are currently partnering with other groups and agencies on many

grouse habitat/hunting improvement projects. You can read more in this newsletter, but I don't think RGS has ever had more projects underway than we have right now. This month the Lake of the Woods Chapter in the Warroad area took delivery on a new mower they are donating to the trail mowing effort at Red Lake WMA, they are also working on creating an improved 50-mile hunter trail system in the Northwest. We are involved in invasive species control programs in several areas, creating forest access hunter walking trails in multiple counties, and habitat improvement projects all over grouse range. We are also working on acquisitions and other major forest habitat

conservation proposals. We are planning major expansions to our private land timber management seminars and training sessions. As I write this just prior to the grouse opener, we are working feverishly with web designers and State of Minnesota technology staff on a webpage providing access to maps and information on 45 Ruffed Grouse Management Areas across the state. Check out the [RGS Facebook](#) page, read more about these new projects below, watch for email alerts, recruit a new member, but most of all, get out in the woods and enjoy autumn while it's here and take a kid along when you do it.

Ted Dick (MN DNR/RGS Forest Game Bird Coordinator)

Partners: Vermillion Community College and the Minnesota DNR for Ely, MN HWTs



Map of up-to-date progress on Echo Lake HWT (Purple)

In August, the Ruffed Grouse Society provided \$5,000.00 in Minnesota Drummer funds to the Vermilion Community College Natural Resources Department for the purchase of chain saws, brush saws and hand tools to be used to create and maintain hunter walking trails in the immediate Ely area. The terrain in the Ely area makes maintenance using tractors difficult due to the amount of exposed rock. Damage to machinery while operating under these conditions is cost prohibitive and unsafe. For a minimum of the next ten years surveying classes will be tasked with selecting appropriate locations for trails and their paths and Natural Resources Club members will be responsible for

putting the trails in and maintaining them. This unique partnership will provide the Ely community with an important recreational resource while providing an important hands on educational experience. Lori Schmidt, an instructor in the Natural Resources Department will be

overseeing students as they work through this process. If you have an idea on a location that may be suitable for a future hunter walking trail in the Ely area, you can contact her via email using the following address: l.schmidt@vcc.edu



Vermilion Community College students use RGS-purchased hand tools to create the Echo Lake Hunter Walking Trail North of Ely, MN.

Rum River Fun Shoot



Fun Shoot Team B! Top: Ted Dick, Nick Larson, James Govednik, Bob Svare. Bottom: Meadow Kouffeld-Hansen, Donna Amdahl.

In August the Rum River Chapter hosted their 2nd annual fundraiser Fun Shoot at Wings North in Pine City, MN. It was an enjoyable day with RGS staff and members participating in some preseason polishing on the sporting clays range. Shooters ranged from seasoned to beginner and a good time was had by all. It was a great opportunity for members to meet each other, make new friends and give a gentle ribbing when needed. Dick and Judi Huempfner are a big part of this event. Dick even brought some of his woodworking talents to the table with

beautiful handmade trophies made from cedar for those skilled enough to place in the top three shooters. After the shoot was over everyone gathered for lunch, a raffle and silent auction. It was a family-friendly event and was well worth the drive to attend and participate. I think I speak for many when I say that I hope this is an event that continues in the future and grows in success. If you didn't attend this year, I hope you think about it next year. The additional funds raised at these events go directly to on-the-ground work here in

Minnesota. Fun and beneficial to your home state birds, what is not to like!?



James Govednik shoots while the B team looks on.

Coverts Program Coming to Minnesota

Ruffed Grouse Society staff recently attended a meeting at the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) to discuss private forest management in Minnesota. One of the possible contributions to Private Forest Management that would benefit future forest management on private lands is the development of a Coverts program in Minnesota. Both Ted Dick and I are looking to initiate a Coverts program in Minnesota. The Ruffed Grouse Society Coverts programs are an excellent educational opportunity for private forest land owners. The programs are already established in

other states, including Wisconsin, and are designed to educate private forest land owners on using sound ecological principles to enhance wildlife abundance and diversity. Coverts programs typically consist of a free, 3-day workshop and materials. Participants agree to become Coverts Cooperators in exchange, sharing what they have learned with their communities. Stay tuned as we expect to announce more regarding this development in the coming months and offer a date for the first Minnesota Coverts program some time in spring 2016.

RGS participates in the Minnesota Logger's Education Program Forest Wildlife Program

This August Ted Dick and I attended the Minnesota Logger's Education Program (MLEP) Forest Wildlife Training Day in Palisade, MN. This training day was part of

an education requirement for Forest Certification and an excellent opportunity to have direct contact with those who make the final decisions in forest

management: loggers. We discussed grouse, woodcock and golden-winged warbler ecology and landscape-scale forest

management. This event was held at the Deep Portage Learning Center, an excellent venue for future events.



Ted Dick presents on Grouse, Woodcock, and Golden-winged Warbler Ecology at the Deep Portage Learning Center.

RGS Policy Efforts in Minnesota

We frequently mention in this newsletter that while RGS-funded habitat projects are important, an equally important aspect of the RGS effort in Minnesota is influencing policy at all levels of resource management. We are in constant communication with State, Federal, County and private resource managers and administrators. We educate through seminars and field tours on the value of young forest. We communicate the importance of sound timber management. We get involved. Here in Minnesota, we work with the State forest planning process to push for areas of more intensive forest management that benefit the suite of species that thrive in younger forests. RGS works hard to improve your grouse hunting by advocating for policies that benefit grouse hunters. Influencing wildlife and forest management policy at every level is the most effective way to maintain healthy forests and abundant wildlife populations on a large scale. We continue to monitor legislative initiatives that could influence grouse hunter opportunities and we advocate for policies that would serve to increase grouse hunter satisfaction such as the recent trapping regulation change proposals regarding body gripping traps. Ted Dick

RGS Assists with Michigan State Wildlife Action Plan Update

Ruffed Grouse Society staff has been providing comments to the Michigan DNR on their State Wildlife Action Plan which is updated every 10 years. These action plans

are submitted to the USFWS and are required in order for state wildlife agencies to receive federal financial assistance for implementing wildlife

management projects. When the initial plan was released for stakeholder review it did not contain young forest species, including the golden-winged warbler and whip-poor-will. In addition, young forest habitat was no longer listed as a priority habitat type in the plan. Eric Ellis, the Ruffed Grouse Society Eastern Great Lakes Wildlife Biologist, worked with partners to draft comments regarding the lack of young forest species on the wildlife action plan. Since the submission of comments he has been working closely with the Michigan DNR Wildlife Division and partners to update the plan to ensure that young forest wildlife species and their habitat needs are represented. This is

another example of how the Ruffed Grouse Society and partners continue to advocate for management of young forest habitats and the species dependent upon them. Currently, the new proposed plan includes several young forest dependent species as well as listing young forest as a priority habitat in the state. The final draft of the State Wildlife Action Plan is currently available online for review. The final comment period ends September 25th, 2015. Take a moment to review the plan and provide input to Eric Ellis (EricE@RuffedGrouseSociety.org; 231-360-7712): www.michigan.gov/dnrwildlifeactionplan.

Habitat Project Updates

RGS has a number of habitat improvement projects currently planned or underway this fall. Two that may not have been mentioned previously in the newsletter are woodcock roosting area projects in Itasca/Cass Counties. Two Conservation Partner Legacy (CPL) grants (one a partnership with the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association) will provide funds to hire contractors to mow vegetation on several wildlife openings on state, federal (Chippewa National Forest) or county lands. Woodcock survival is improved when they have sites with short vegetation for roosting in proximity to their feeding

sites. This work will continue into next year and we anticipate more funds will be available for this work in the future.

We are also setting up plans for a CPL project in the Grand Marais area. As mentioned in earlier issues of the newsletter, Ed Zieroth of the Grand Marais Chapter, won a Drummer Fund contribution in an RGS Membership drive and this \$2,500 will be used as a match in a \$25,000 grant to fund brush/young forest work on state (and hopefully county and federal land) in Cook/Lake counties. Ted Dick

Private Lands Initiatives

As we've mentioned in previous issues, private land habitat management is important and a priority. RGS has been

working with other groups (like the American Bird Conservancy) to encourage and assist landowners to manage their

land for wildlife that require young forests. In late June, I attended an organizational meeting for a private lands initiative. While some of the agencies have been continuing the pace of their timber harvests, private landowners have cut back in the past five years. The organizations attending this meeting (timber industry, loggers, conservation groups and resource managers who work

with these groups like Soil and Water Conservation Districts) hope to reach out to private landowners through education, advertising, consulting and other outreach means to let them know that there are many benefits to harvesting their timber and there are ways to get help navigating the process. RGS plans to stay heavily involved.

Update on Minnesota Deer Hunters Association Acquisition Partnership

Ruffed Grouse Society staff continue to work with the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association (MDHA) as a full partner in the proposal for large land acquisition in Cass, Wadena, and Hubbard Counties. As you may recall, this is a \$19 million dollar proposal for the acquisition of approximately 10,000 acres of timber industry land slated for sale. One of the concerns is that this land would be purchased by a large potato producer and converted from forest to center pivot potato fields. This would mean the end of

forest wildlife habitat on these lands and the loss of hunting opportunity. Ruffed Grouse Society staff recently attended the Northern Counties Land Use Coordinating Board (NCLUCB) meeting in Chisholm, MN to provide support for MDHA in their request for support for the acquisition project. At the meeting, MDHA received support from the board and there was healthy interest in potentially expanding a similar acquisition project in other northern counties. Ted Dick

Aitkin Area Hunter Walking Trail Development and Maintenance

Recently the Ruffed Grouse Society capitalized on another great opportunity to use Drummer Funds to put in over 6 miles of new hunter walking trails in association with the Little Willow WMA west of Aitkin MN. A contractor created a series of new trails into a one year old aspen stand. Current discussions are underway regarding maintenance of the new trail miles to ensure grouse and woodcock hunters enjoy using them long

in to the future. In addition to new miles, the Ruffed Grouse Society funded the mowing of several miles of hunter walking trails on the Ripple River WMA. These freshly mowed trails are ready to go with the opening of grouse season. Hunter walking trails provide an excellent opportunity for grouse hunters new to the sport as well as those that are well seasoned.



New Hunter Walking Trail through aspen regen. A Fecon Mulching Head made short work of woody debris.

Cloquet Buckthorn Removal Project Update

This August, Ruffed Grouse Society staff, the Minnesota Deer Hunter's Association (MDHA), the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) and Minnesota DNR Wildlife staff met at the Sandstone WMA unit to tour the buckthorn removal and monitoring efforts on the ground. The Ruffed Grouse Society partnered with the MDHA and other conservation organizations to fund this effort through a Conservation Partners Legacy Grant. This site was one of several where removal and monitoring work had recently taken place

in addition to large scale aerial monitoring for infestations of European Buckthorn, an aggressive invasive species of shrub that dominates native understory species. Bruce Anderson, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Assistant Area Wildlife Manager in Cloquet, presented on the loss of wildlife habitat to the encroachment of this invasive species as well as removal and monitoring efforts while in the field. This field tour provided first hand exposure to efforts on the ground and demonstrated results of efforts in the area.



Cloquet Buckthorn Partners at the Sandstone WMA. Represented: St. Louis County, National Wild Turkey Federation, Ruffed Grouse Society, Minnesota Conservation Corps, Minnesota Deer Hunter's Association, and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and Aix the Deutsch-Drahthaar puppy representing ugly dogs everywhere.

American Bird Conservancy Partnership and Private Land Tour

Ruffed Grouse Society Staff met with the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) as well as Tribal and Government Agencies to tour the Pine Ridge Grouse Camp golden-winged warbler private land habitat

management work. Afterward staff met with Kevin Sheppard, an American Bird Conservancy forester, and discussed future ABC projects and partnerships.

Grouse Enhanced Management Sites in Michigan: "Gold Mine" GEMS

Grouse Enhanced Management Sites (GEMS) continue to be a popular location for grouse hunters to focus their efforts. Like Ruffed Grouse Management Areas (RGMAs) in Minnesota, GEMS are areas managed for grouse and woodcock habitat that often contain infrastructure like walking trails to improve access. I will be attending the "Gold Mine" GEMS dedication in the Iron River, MI area on

September 24. Many of you have received an email invitation and I hope to see you there! If you would like to know more about Michigan's GEMS use the link below or use the search phrase "GEMS grouse" and that should get you to a link for the Michigan DNR GEMS site.

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10363_10958_10967-334352--00.html

Launch of the Ruffed Grouse Management Areas Online Application and Grouse Hunter Information

One of the more exciting developments set to make its debut is the RGMA (Ruffed Grouse Management Area) web application. Ted Dick has been working with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Information Technology staff to make this project a reality and provide the hunting public access to important management area information. A hunter reading this page on the DNR website will be able to point and click on 45 RGMAs

across grouse range and pull up information on area, size, location, most convenient access point as well as a printable map of the area. They can also get downloadable digital map content that they can use on their own computers or other electronic devices. Look for this page to launch in late September. The Ruffed Grouse Society in part funded this major effort to produce this new page-Thanks to RGS members! Ted Dick

Upcoming RGS Banquets

Please see the RGS website [Banquets & Events](#) page for additional banquets and events and complete details.

28th Annual Superior Chapter Banquet
September 22, 2015
American Legion Hall, Hurley, WI

11th Annual North Woods Chapter Banquet
October 1, 2015
Pine Mountain Golf and Ski Resort, Iron Mountain, MI

15th Annual Crazy Flight Chapter Banquet
October 15, 2015
Grand Ely Lodge, Ely, MN

Thank You

That's all we have for you this time! RGS continues to work to improve our forests for ruffed grouse and woodcock as well as promote the future of hunting. I hope you read this newsletter with a tired dog at your feet and something in your cup after a long day in the field. If not, you should do

something about that! Regardless of whether or not you are a die-hard-every day-in-the-woods grouse hunter or the weekend warrior that makes it out for a few precious days, ruffed grouse hunting is one of those things that makes life rich. It is the fall days with the crisp air, brilliant

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blue skies contrasted by warm fall colors set to the rhythmic sounds of the hunt that will warm our memories come February. It is support from people like you, our members that will ensure that these are the same memories that the next generation will cherish in the grip of winters to come. Keep in touch by checking out the [RGS website](#) for more information about additional efforts RGS is making to improve our young forests and your grouse hunting. It won't be long and

we will start to see woodcock migration updates showing up on the website as well. If there is anything Ted or I can help with, please feel free to get in contact with either of us. I feel pretty fortunate to have Ted as a coworker and so far my time here at RGS has been excellent. We have it pretty great here in the upper Midwest, make a point to share it with someone new this year. The future of our sporting tradition depends on bringing new hunters to the grouse woods.

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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.



Aix vom Himmelwasser at four months, Grouse Specialist Intern and one of the Grand Rapids office mates.