



## *Ruff Country News & Timberdoodle Times*

Covering the Northeast and South

December 15, 2015

Andrew Weik, Regional Wildlife Biologist for New York, New England, and Louisiana  
Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society  
Freeville, NY Tel: (607) 793-4832 Email: [andyw@ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:andyw@ruffedgrousesociety.org)

### Season's Greetings!

What a difference a year makes! Last December on this date, the upstate New York landscape was dominated by white – about a foot thick covering the ground and a frosting on the trees. Grouse hunting was all but over, no matter the number of days of open season remaining.

Today as I write, there's not a speck of white on the ground nor in the forecast. Not a good time to be a snowshoe hare (I saw one yesterday southern New Hampshire), but it's a great time to get out for some late-season grouse hunting. Successful hunters are noting the abundance of leafy greens in the crops, and many are finding grouse where there's still fruit among apple trees, hawthorn, and multiflora rose, or where acorns are abundant. This weather is certainly a grouse hunter's gift, and I hope you can take advantage of it and extend your season.

Although my kids are excited about decorating a tree, or a dog or two, and hanging stockings from the mantle, I like to think of this as my Thanksgiving newsletter, where I can try to express my gratitude to all of the RGS and AWS volunteers who give generously of their time, sweat, money, and passion to help improve our forests for grouse and woodcock, and to preserve our hunting traditions.

To all the chapter committees and sponsors – the work you do enables RGS staff to work with the state and federal conservation agencies, and to represent our interests on important national policy issues in Washington, D.C. – you rock my world. I also would like to thank everyone who has attended a banquet, shoot, hunt or other event – we appreciate your contributions. Many have taken the time to pen a letter to your state wildlife agency to comment on habitat issues – it makes a difference and I appreciate it. This past October, Massachusetts RGS volunteers wrote to MA Fish & Wildlife in support of a state-wide initiative to improve habitat for grouse – you’re making a difference. Additional RGS volunteers spent all or part of a Saturday in *October* to attend a habitat conference to promote the Massachusetts Initiative – believe me, as a passionate bird hunter I know what kind of sacrifice that is, and I can’t thank you enough, and it made a difference. Thanks to the many who have participated in habitat work days, or hosted a habitat workshop on their land. Volunteers represent the Society at sportsman shows, fairs, and National Hunting and Fishing Day events. We had a few youth events this past year – thanks to all who donated or instructed – that’s our future.



So, thank you all so much. I wish you and yours a happy and healthy holiday season, and best wishes in the New Year.

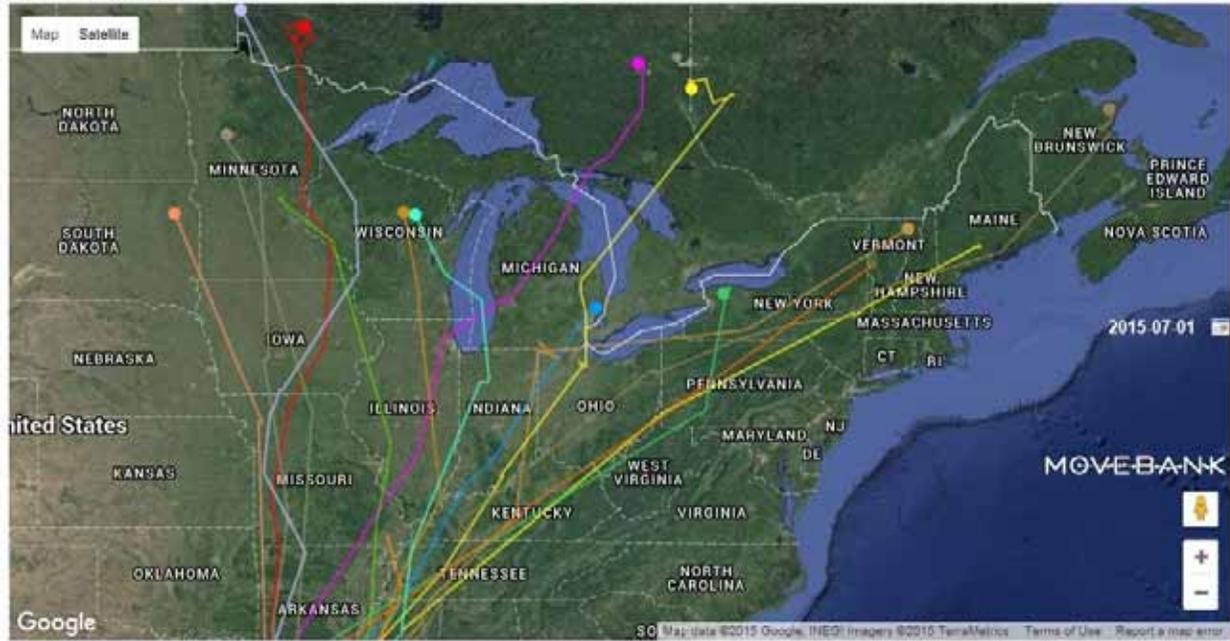
– *Andy*

## Update on Woodcock Migration Satellite Telemetry Study



Woodcock migration has become even more interesting since this satellite telemetry study began. My early morning ritual this spring and fall has been to sit down at computer, pull up the RGS website (<http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/woodcockmigration>) and sip coffee while I catch up on the latest peregrinations (ouch!) of the telemetered timberdoodles. Last spring's northward migration, emanating from a fairly small but important part of the wintering range in Texas and Louisiana, revealed a wide breadth of breeding ground affinities all across the north country from South Dakota and the eastern border of Manitoba, clear over to eastern New Brunswick. All but one woodcock made its nesting season home in Canada or the northern tier of states, supporting our understanding that the core breeding range of woodcock is the twin tiers of U.S. and Canada.

Spring 2015 Migration

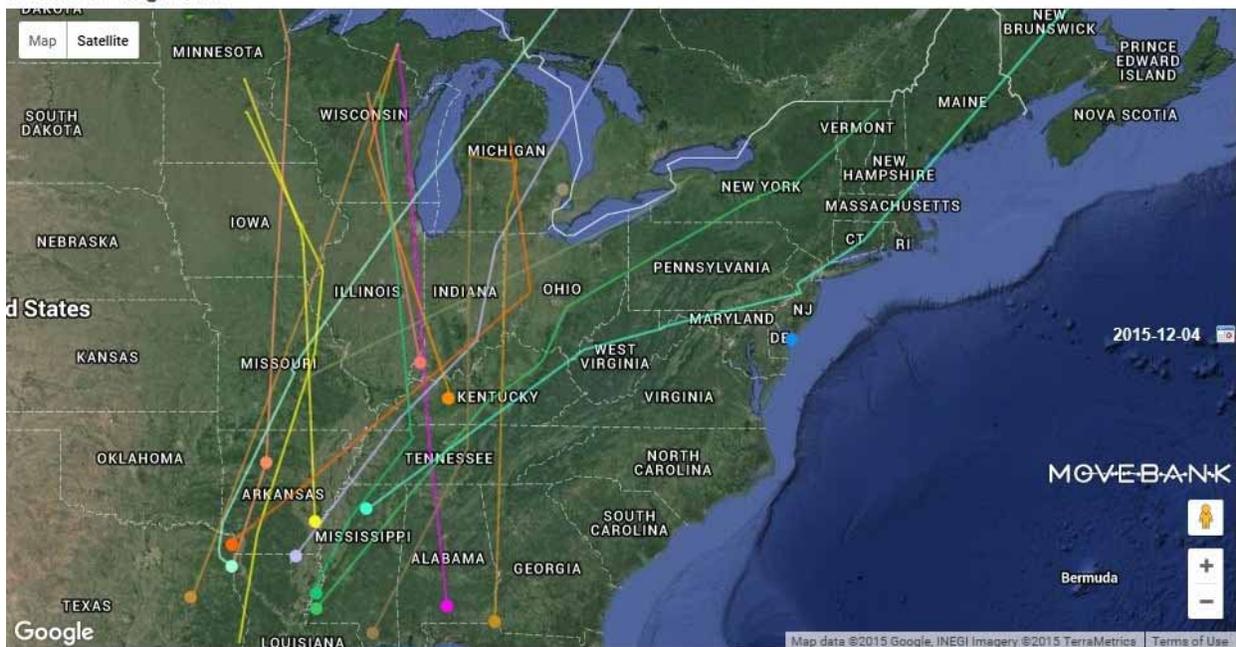


One bird, 15LA03 whom we captured last January in northern Louisiana, raised some eyebrows when she left Michigan in early May and was a good 700 miles away in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont three days later. Female woodcock in the northern states typically are nesting or rearing chicks in May, so I suspect 15LA03 lost her nest or brood, prompting her to relocate to “greener pastures”. In November, coincidentally, on her way back south, 15LA03 spent several days on a farm not far from where I live in the Finger Lakes area of New York.

This fall additional woodcock were fitted with satellite radio transmitters in Minnesota (2 birds), the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (3), central Michigan (3), and Cape May, New Jersey (2). A different pattern is emerging from the migratory travels of these northern-caught woodcock, as southern destinations thus far span from Texas, east to

the Alabama-Georgia line. The two Cape May birds haven't yet had a cold front to inspire them to move south.

Fall 2015 Migration



In January, additional woodcock will be captured and fitted with transmitters in Texas and Louisiana in what is likely the final field season for this phase of the study; movements of the woodcock will be tracked as long as the transmitters are able to send signals, which could be a year or more. This study is being conducted by researchers from the University of Minnesota Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, the University of Arkansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Migratory Bird Management, with assistance from state agency and RGS/AWS wildlife biologists. For more information, check the RGS website.

## RGS Youth Program Activities



This past August, the Ruffed Grouse Society partnered with the Sebasticook Chapter of the North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association (NAVHDA) and the University of Maine 4-H Camp at Bryant Pond (<http://umaine.edu/bryantpond/>) to introduce a dozen youths to upland bird hunting and bird dog



handling. The youth participants learned gun safety and shooting skills, along with many outdoor skills, as part of the normal "Sports Afield" program at the 4-H camp. RGS and NAVHDA added the game birds and dog handling aspect to the program.



Early in the camp week, RGS presented a multi-media presentation “Game Birds and Gun Dogs of North America” to give an appreciation of the great diversity of game bird species and landscapes available to us, and an introduction of the types of dogs used to hunt these birds. We took a closer look at our native upland game birds, the ruffed grouse and American woodcock, with the hands-on dissection and study of grouse, woodcock, and other game birds modeled after the successful Pennsylvania Drummers Leadership Academy (see article on PA Drummers in Fall 2014 *Ruffed Grouse Society* magazine). The youth campers were able to compare and contrast muscle, skeleton, feathers, and organs of migratory woodcock, resident grouse, and aquatic migratory dabbling and diving ducks. After the campers had become experts on the anatomy and ecology of game birds, the day concluded with an introduction to gun dogs from volunteers from NAVHDA and RGS, and a few canine companions, on the basics of how we train and work with our dogs to

find and hunt birds.

The introduction to game bird hunting and dog handling came full circle a few days later on the last day of camp when the youth participants were transported to the Seabasticook NAVHDA dog training grounds. Youth participants got a more in-depth education on gun dogs and gun dog handling. Campers were paired with a NAVHDA volunteer mentor and his or her dog for the day to learn dog handling in the field and water for bird searching, tracking, and retrieving. After lunch, safe shotgun handling was reviewed and youths shot a few clays. The culmination of the experience was a mentored hunt for chukar partridge with the adult mentor over the dog the youth had been working with all day. The youths cleaned their game, which became part of their supper that evening. Participants reflected on their experience around a campfire that night before turning into their tents for some well-deserved Zs.

The Seabasticook NAVHDA chapter put together a very nice video of the field day which can be seen by following this link:

<https://vimeo.com/143003028>

The combination of RGS, NAVHDA, and 4-H Shooting Sports proved to be an excellent partnership for putting on an upland bird hunting youth program, and we plan to continue and hopefully expand on this effort.



Chapters that are interested in putting on a youth hunt program should contact regional director Tripp Way ([trippw@ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:trippw@ruffedgrousesociety.org)), myself, or Mark Fouts, director of member relations and outreach ([markf@ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:markf@ruffedgrousesociety.org)). RGS/AWS is starting a Mentored Youth Hunt Program this year, so there will be resources available to support our youth programs.

Check the NAVHDA website ([navhda.org](http://navhda.org)) for a chapter near you; NAVHDA supports youth hunting programs and local NAVHDA chapters may be interested in partnering on activities. There's a lot of overlap in membership between RGS and NAVHDA – many of us are NAVHDA as well as RGS members.

4-H is another excellent partner, not only for the 4-H camps that may have an existing youth program and venue with which to partner, but also as an instructor training resource. 4-H Shooting Sports regularly conducts instructor training workshops in various regions. Maine 4-H Shooting Sports has an instructor training workshop in the fall at the Tanglewood 4-H Camp and Learning Center, and in the spring at the Bryant Pond 4-H Camp; the dates of the spring workshop are:

April 15-17 – SPRING INSTRUCTOR WORKSHOP Location: Bryant Pond, ME. Contact: Scott Olsen ([scott.olsen@maine.edu](mailto:scott.olsen@maine.edu)).

The New York 4-H Shooting Sports instructor workshops typically draw participants from most of New England and New Jersey as well as New York. The New York workshop dates are:

**February 26-28** -. WINTER INSTRUCTOR WORKSHOP Location: Ballston Spa, Saratoga County, NY. Disciplines include: Archery, Air Pistol, Coordinator, Hunting/Wildlife, Living History, Muzzleloading, Rifle, and Shotgun. Contact: Marilyn Preissler at: [mkp2@cornell.edu](mailto:mkp2@cornell.edu) regarding payment and lodging questions or John Bowe at: [jfb32@cornell.edu](mailto:jfb32@cornell.edu) for all other questions.

**June 3 – June 5** – SPRING INSTRUCTOR WORKSHOP. Location: Wyoming County, NY. Disciplines typically offered include: Archery, Rifle, Air Pistol (Shotgun & Coordinator) as needed. Contact John Bowe at: [jfb32@cornell.edu](mailto:jfb32@cornell.edu) for more information.



One more thing – if your chapter is considering a youth program that includes getting to know grouse from outside in, i.e. necropsying game birds, I suggest chapters BYOB – Bring Your Own BIRDS! – as I can't supply grouse to very many of these programs. You'll need just a few, as you can augment

with pheasant, ducks, etc. The best way to keep a grouse in good shape (this goes for saving a bird for mounting, too, by the way) is to slip it head-first into a knee-high stocking (e.g. Leggs brand) and put it in the freezer. Once it's frozen, seal the stockinged bird in a plastic bag and keep frozen). Thanks!

## What Do You Get for the Grouser Who Has it All?



This holiday season you're probably stuck on your gift shopping list with that hard-to-shop-for guy or gal that seems to have all the gear, seems to have it all, right? Well, have I got a one-of-a-kind deal for you!

*This Season Give the Gift of RGS & AWS Membership!*

**\$35.00**

Gift any **NEW** membership and they'll also receive a **FREE** copy of **Ruffly Seasonal!**

*Ruffly Seasonal* available while supplies last. Offer expires December 31, 2015. To join, contact the membership department by toll free phone at 888-564-6747.

## Upcoming RGS Events in the Region

January 27, 2016 Central NY Chapter Annual Meeting, Dewitt Fish & Game Club; food and drinks @6:00pm, meeting @6:30pm. For more information contact Mike Walter ([mrwalter2400@gmail.com](mailto:mrwalter2400@gmail.com))

February 27, 2016 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Mid-Hudson Valley Chapter Banquet, Kingston, NY. [http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/banquets\\_events](http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/banquets_events) or contact Tripp Way ([trippw@ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:trippw@ruffedgrousesociety.org)).

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions:

Andy Weik

RGS/AWS Regional Biologist

New York, New England, Louisiana, Eastern Canada

607-793-4832 or [andyw@ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:andyw@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).

