



Mid-Atlantic / S. Appalachian Frest Action Network Summer 2015



Spring was full of blossoms and drummers in the Mid-Atlantic and Southern Appalachians. The beginning of summer is off to being very cool and moist in the northern part of this region. Thus far the broods of grouse and woodcock seem unaffected and the moisture is adding to the mounting mast production. This could be one of the most productive soft mast years in the past four. Time will tell if mast and initial brood sightings will contribute to a more productive 2015 season. It certainly will be a very dense and lush early season.

Linda

Gary Zimmer Says Goodbye to RGS.

After dedicating 14 ½ years of service to the Ruffed Grouse Society Biologist Gary Zimmer retires from RGS. Gary served as supervisor to the team of Biologists for RGS. His leadership and knowledge will be missed within RGS. I am sure Gary will remain active in the conservation community within Wisconsin and he will take advantage of the habitat he has worked at creating.

Thank you Gary!



2015 Pennsylvania WNV (West Nile Virus) Study Continues Phase 3

As the study continues and interest seems to be peaking I would like to provide a very brief summary of the protocol followed to evaluate the resiliency of PA grouse to WNV. I wish to emphasize that this is being explored as a possible factor in grouse population declines and we still recognize habitat loss as a primary contributor and the need for active forest management to ensure viable populations of this species.



Mid-Atlantic / S. Appalachian Forest Action Network Summer 2015



***This is intended to be strictly a generalized outline**

- Clutches found within PA were transported to an Idaho 'mosquito free facility' Naïve to WNV
- Chicks are reared at the Idaho facility to 6 weeks of age.
 - This is a quarantined facility and propagator is the only USDA approved facility as he ships birds internationally.
- Chicks will be air-shipped to the top WNV lab in the country located in Colorado
- Acclimated for approximately 1 week
- Inoculated with WNV
- Observed to determine:
 - Susceptibility of grouse to WNV (i.e. when exposed, what % if any get sick?)
 - Mortality rate (of the birds that get sick, what % die?)
 - Antibody 'fingerprint' of WNV on filter paper strips from survivors developed (i.e. is filter paper an accurate way to look at WNV history in fall-harvested grouse from blood samples?)
Potentially a quick and dirty way of detecting presence absence of WNV in harvested grouse for hunters to collect and then send off for analysis.
 - Vaccination effect – a small portion of chicks will receive a vaccination against WNV to see if it is successful. Though not feasible in the wild the info could be valuable if future propagation of populations is ever required.
- At end of the study all grouse will be euthanized and necropsied. Federal law prohibits the release of animals into the wild following intentional exposure to a disease in a Biosecurity Level 3 facility. Approximate age will be 10-12 weeks at this time.
- Once the filter paper strips are determined as accurate tests for WNV antibody tests these can be mailed to PA hunters (and possibly other states) to determine a % of harvested grouse exposed to WNV and survived. This would provide a rough estimate of % of the population we could be losing before the season opens. The % would be based on the survival rates from the initial study used to develop a standard number. These numbers would be 'in the ball park' but could provide us some insight.

WNV kills primarily in Aug/Sept. There would be a lab cost in analyzing the filter paper strips if this is deemed a potentially feasible test. Local Chapters or state agencies could be looking at budgets for assisting with that!

This preliminary study is based on a small sample size and is considered a challenge or pilot study to determine if further investigation is warranted. The efforts of the PGC, donation of time of researchers in CO,



Mid-Atlantic / S. Appalachian Forest Action Network Summer 2015



Propagators in Idaho, and numerous RGS volunteers demonstrates the dedication and the interest in establishing what possible impacts WNV might be having on PA grouse populations. RGS will provide updates as they become available through the PGC.



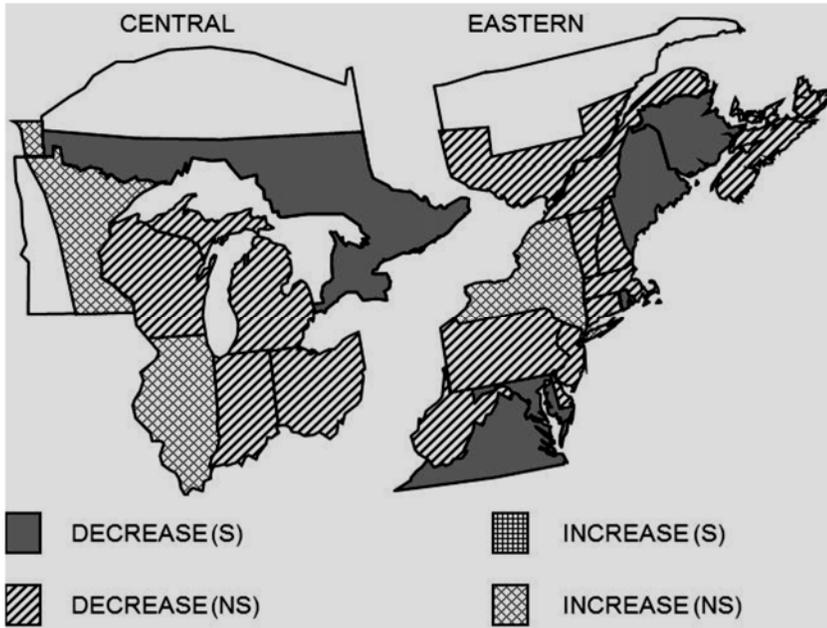
Candling of viable embryo in a collected grouse egg from PA. Photo Courtesy
Lisa Williams PGC

RGS Sponsors and Presents at House Congressional Briefing

Dan Dessecker, Director of Conservation and Policy for RGS presented at a recent House congressional briefing re HR 2647. The proposed legislation includes language that would establish a Categorical Exclusion (CE) for projects where the sum of the harvest units does not exceed 5,000 acres if the purpose of the project is to establish early successional wildlife habitat. Currently a CE can be used if the project is less than 3,000 acres and similar projects have been done in the past without objection from public user groups. The key in this section 104 of HR 2647 of the Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015 is in explicitly naming the creation of Early Successional Wildlife Habitat within the project. CEs can be considered a ‘fast track’ and may not require NEPA, and environmental assessment, or an environmental impact statement and therefore decreases all the public comment periods prior to implementation of the project. This would enable the USFS to more efficiently plan and implement the projects designed to provide the necessary habitat for sustaining viable populations within this ephemeral habitat.



Mid-Atlantic / S. Appalachian Forest Action Network Summer 2015



2005-2015 Singing Ground Survey



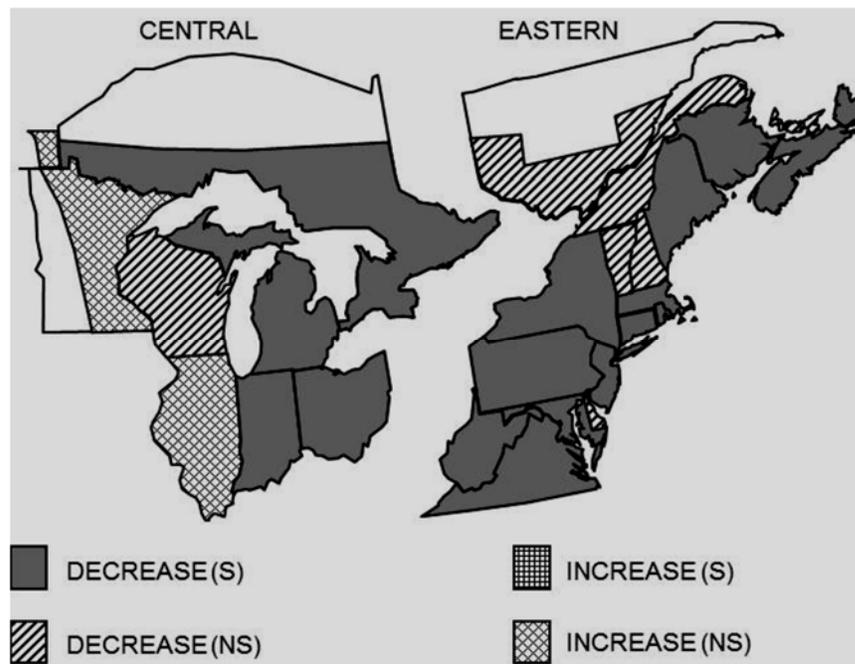
American Woodcock Population Status 2015

S = Significant

NS = Not Significant

A significant trend indicates a true change in population either decreasing or increasing depending on pattern on the graphic. **No S increases in population, there are S decreases in both 10 year and long term survey.**

1968-2015 Singing Ground Survey





Mid-Atlantic / S. Appalachian Forest Action Network Summer 2015



RGS Events Within The Mid-Atlantic Southern Appalachian Region

August 7 – 20th Annual Neshannock Creek Chapter Conservation and Sportsmen's Banquet – New Castle PA – Contact Lisa Rossi 724-693-9032

August 8 – Allegheny Northwoods Chapter Fun Shoot and BBQ – New Castle PA-Contact Lisa Rossi- 724-693-9032

August 8- French Creek Valley Chapter Fun Shoot – Waterford PA – Contact Bonnie Orr 814-825-5863

August 15- Allegheny Chapter Fun Lunch- Clermont VFD-Mount Jewett, PA- Contact Mary Hosmer 814-512-2101

August 15-3rd annual Southern Mountains Chapter Cocktail Party Fundraiser-Larkins on Main Street – Greenville SC- Contact-Myron Gregory – 864-809-7141

August 20- 21st Annual Georgia Chapter Conservation and Sportsmen's Banquet- Alpharetta- Contact Roy Smith 678-975-0746.

August 22-29th Annual Southern Appalachian Chapter Conservation and Sportsmen's Banquet – Asheville NC – Contact Dale Pennell. 828-231-7050.

August 25- 7th Annual Backbone Mountain Chapter Conservation and Sportsmen's Banquet- McHenry MD. – Contact Harold Harsh 301-334-5814

August 29th -9th Annual Sporting Clays Event – Dilliner PA- Contact 724-324-2738 (lodge)

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

-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.