



Northeast Region

FAN UPDATE Spring 2014

The Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society is an international non-profit conservation organization dedicated to promoting conditions suitable for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and related wildlife to sustain our hunting tradition and outdoor heritage

Ruffed Grouse Society Members, Supporters and Friends:

Rumor has it that the Winter of 2014 is over, and judging by the bird song and bursting aspen catkins I suspect that Spring of 2014 may actually be here. Grouse are drumming, woodcock are singing, and the first nests of woodcock are hatching. The brown landscape is starting to green-up around the edges. While deer may have been knocked to their knees and turkeys may have taken it on the chin by deep and persistent snowpack in northern regions, grouse and woodcock weren't affected by the snow and cold. Spring, although slow in coming, has not been one of unduly harsh weather... so far.

This is a GREAT time of year to scout for grouse and woodcock coverts. As a biologist and bird hunter, I'm on the lookout for existing or potential grouse and woodcock habitat every day of the year, but spring is one of the most productive and enjoyable times to add to your hunting coverts inventory. The spring turkey hunter and stream trout angler need only listen for drumming grouse and the dawn and dusk sky dance of woodcock. Same goes for those hiking or mountain biking on forest trails. I've regularly been flushing a grouse or two on local trail runs, and have heard more drumming than

gobbling while in pursuit of the big bearded birds. Early anecdotal evidence points to an abundance of drumming and woodcock singing this spring; hopefully this notion will be confirmed by the Woodcock Singing Ground Survey and various state drummer surveys.

Below is a regional & state listing of newsworthy items. Again as in the past, we at the Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society THANK YOU for your help and support that make our work possible! Keep a watch, as before long you'll be seeing grouse and woodcock chicks! – *Andy*

You Made it Happen, Thank You Very Much!

Do you recall the email last December that we sent encouraging you to comment on the New York's Tug Hill North Unit Management Plan, specifically in regard to the proposed management of the Tug Hill WMA? Well, good news: the folks at NYS Department of Environmental Conservation thoughtfully considered what you had to say, and responded by inviting your regional biologist (me) to assist the NYS DEC Biologists in Region 6 in drafting a forest management plan that will do what many of you asked – improve significant amounts of forest for grouse, woodcock, snowshoe hares, and numerous other species of wildlife. Thank you!

Eastern Great Lakes Regional Biologist Retires

Dr. Larry Visser, RGS Eastern Great Lakes Regional Biologist covering most of Michigan, Indiana and Ohio retired on April 1st after several years with the Society. He handled a number of important items in his time with RGS including working through the Society's transition to the state Drummer Fund program. He worked closely with agencies, foundations and RGS volunteers to seek and support important habitat work across his region. While officially retired Dr. Visser continues to provide help and support to the Society to insure a smooth transition in this position. Work is already underway to replace him. We wish Larry the very best in his retirement and hope this allows him more hours in the grouse woods this fall.

Vermont Governor Announces Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Replacement Patrick Berry leaving post in May

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MONTPELIER, Vt. —Governor Peter Shumlin announced he will appoint Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs Louis Porter to replace outgoing Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Patrick Berry.

Berry will leave the post in May to work as the Vice President of Philanthropy at the Vermont Community Foundations.

"It has been the greatest honor of my career to serve as Commissioner of the Department," Berry said. "I am humbled by the commitment of the staff and their tireless efforts to protect and conserve Vermont's fish, wildlife, and plant resources."

Natural Resources Secretary Deb Markowitz says she is looking forward to the addition of Porter to the Agency of Natural Resources leadership team.

“Louis Porter’s devotion to Vermont’s tradition of hunting and fishing, and to making sure there is continued access to land and water for those that follow that tradition, will serve the Department well,” Gov. Shumlin said.

Porter has a bachelor’s degree in Zoology from the University of Washington and was a commercial fishing deckhand in Alaska.

“The Department works very hard to protect and improve our land and our wildlife,” Porter said. “I can think of nothing more important than making sure that hunters, anglers and others continue to have the opportunity to experience all that the Vermont outdoors has to offer, and I am honored to join the department in that mission.”

Change at the Helm of Small Game Program in New Hampshire

The bittersweet news is that New Hampshire Fish & Game biologist Julie Robinson retired this winter after 22 years of outstanding dedicated service; Julie set the standard for upland game bird program leadership in the region, incorporating an annual ruffed grouse drumming survey, a small game mail survey, a grouse wing and tail survey, and coordinating the woodcock singing ground survey for NH. Here’s to you, Mrs. Robinson! Good hunting, happy trails, and thank you.

New Hampshire’s Small Game Program will be ably led by Habitat and Pheasant Project Leader Karen Bordeau. Welcome, Karen, we look forward to working with you!

2014 Woodcock Wingbee

Winging It – (left to right) Tom Cooper (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Game Bird Coordinator), Al Stewart (MI DNR), and Andy Weik (Ruffed Grouse Society) examine woodcock wings at the annual Woodcock Wingbee last March hosted by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department at Caddo Lake State Park in eastern Texas. About 20 biologists from across the range of the woodcock gathered at the annual meeting to determine the age and sex of woodcock represented by over 12,800 wings submitted by woodcock hunters the previous hunting season.



Information gleaned from the wings gives us a picture of production by woodcock during the previous breeding season. By knowing the age and sex of the woodcock harvested, a ratio of immature woodcock (hatched in spring 2013) per adult female can be calculated, termed the “recruitment index”. Thinking back to the inclement weather of spring of 2013, one might expect the woodcock recruitment index to be lower than average last year... and one would be right. The preliminary estimate of productivity for 2013 is 1.41 juveniles per adult female, which is a bit lower than the long-term average (about 1.64 in the Eastern Region and 1.57 in the Central Region), and lower than the 2012 recruitment index (about 1.65 in both regions).

Turkey Hunters Needed for New York State DEC Ruffed Grouse Drumming Survey <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/48169.html>

Turkey hunters in pursuit of that wary gobbler in the spring are ideally suited for monitoring ruffed grouse during the breeding season. The characteristic sound of a drumming male grouse is as much a part of the spring woods as yelping hens and gobbling toms.



DEC currently monitors grouse populations in the fall through the [Cooperator Ruffed Grouse Hunting Log](#) where hunters record the number of birds flushed per hour of hunting effort. The Ruffed Grouse

Drumming Survey provides a harvest-independent index of grouse distribution and abundance during the critical breeding season in the spring.

If you would like to participate, you can print or download the [2014 Ruffed Grouse Drumming Survey form](#) (PDF) (30 kB). You can use this form to record the number of drumming male grouse you hear while turkey hunting this spring. Please record every turkey hunting trip whether you observe grouse drumming or not. When you do hear a grouse, be sure to record each drumming male only once. More detailed instructions can be found at the bottom of the data sheet. You can also view, print, or download a [map of Wildlife Management Units](#) to assist you in completing your survey.

Please return your completed survey to:
NYSDEC

Grouse Drumming Survey
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4754

Thanks for your help!

More about the NY Ruffed Grouse Drumming Survey:



- [2013 Drumming Survey Results](#) - A summary of results for the grouse drumming survey for 2013.

Find Shooting Ranges in Every State

Want to know where to practice target shooting, find a safety course or learn how to get started in shooting? Find what you're looking for at a range near you. The National Shooting Sports Foundation is providing a state-by-state shooting range directory as a resource to find where to shoot. Get started. Stay active. Find a shooting range near you: http://wheretoshoot.org/Find_Range/index.asp.

Be on the Lookout for Giant Hogweed

Giant toxic weed invading Ohio, By Annette Palmer for Ohio Country Living Examiner, April 17, 2014

(this is an emerging problem across the Northeast, not just Ohio)

Giant hogweed is a large weed that is toxic to humans and is taking up too much space in our backyards and Ohio countryside. It is invading northern parts of the United States and requires a hazmat team to remove it from your premises.

Now the giant hogweed's flowering season is upon us, it's time to bring attention to this obnoxious plant that causes human and environmental suffering. Most hikers haven't a clue how dangerous this plant is to humans and don't even know it exist.

The weed oozes a poisonous sap that causes severe burns and if it gets in the eyes and mixes with sunlight you can go blind. The Ohio State University says,

"Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) is on the federal and Ohio noxious weed lists making it unlawful to propagate, sell, or transport....because of its ability to crowd out native plants and because of its potential human health hazard."



One of these weeds can create 20,000 seeds and can spread fast if not controlled. The sap causes blisters and severe burns when exposed to sunlight. It is joked that this weed resembles a giant Queen Anne's Lace plant on steroids but is a royal pain in the derriere.



According to Discovery.com, people choose to put giant hogweed in their gardens, even though the plant is very dangerous it doesn't hinder some gardeners from adding it to their landscape and reports that the poison is located in the weeds stalks.

"Toxic sap lies inside its bamboo-like hollow stalks. If the sap gets on your skin, the exposed area becomes unable to protect itself from the sun's rays, leading to terrible, blistering burns, followed by skin discoloration and darkening that can persist for years." says Discovery's Emily Sohn.

Giant hogweed identification: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/72766.html>

Giant hogweed in the news in MI: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYQE_U2j4ZU

Giant hogweed and look-alikes: <http://extension.psu.edu/pests/ipm/resources/pdfs/giant-hogweed-and-look-a-likes>

Habitat Work Days



Several RGS chapters organize work days to accomplish small habitat improvement projects on public land. The Central New York Chapter annually has at least one outing of their Project Appleseed, where RGS members roll up their sleeves and work on apple tree release and pruning. Most recently CNY RGS members gathered on April 12 for the day to improve the health of an area of wild apple trees on Morgan Hill State Forest in the upstate town of Fabius, NY.

The following day, April 13, members of the RGS Nutmeg Chapter along with representatives of the Northwest Connecticut Sportsmen's Council convened on the Goshen WMA in Goshen, CT to remove several hundred feet of

livestock fence that had remained since the state took ownership of the land. Future projects at the Goshen WMA will include more fence removal as well as apple tree release and pruning; work at Goshen will likely be an annual event....and you won't want to miss the lunch at the end!



The Mid-Hudson Valley Chapter (NY) is coordinating with the NYC Department of Environmental Protection as well as NYS DEC in Region 4 to schedule habitat work days on NYC Watershed land and state WMAs in the region. Several members have taken a chainsaw safety and skills course in preparation for reviving apple trees that are becoming over-topped by surrounding forest.

In March 2013 the RGS Triple Flush Chapter (Elmira, NY) came out with chainsaws, heavy equipment, aspirin and ice packs during a cooperative RGS-U.S. Forest Service 4-acre aspen regeneration harvest on the Finger Lakes National Forest (FLNF) in Hector, NY (left photo, below). By the following November, birds were already using the habitat that resulted (right photo). NY RGS members Ron Hinchey and Jim Cuthbert pause to listen for their dog's bell as they hunt woodcock in the lush growth of young aspen



that resulted from the Triple Flush Chapter's cut in March on the FLNF. The same white pine can be seen in the background of both photos.





RGS 2014 National Raffle "12 Days of Christmas"

Donation: \$10 per ticket or 3 for \$20

Winners to be drawn at RGS Headquarters in Coraopolis, PA and posted on ruffedgrousesociety.org

Ticket sales end at 8:00 a.m. EST on Tuesday, December 9, 2014.

Void where prohibited by law. Winners are responsible for all taxes.

For full details, go to www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/2014 National Raffle



December 11: GoPro HERO3+ Black Edition
December 12: Stevens 512 Gold Wing O/U 20-Gauge Shotgun

December 13: Steiner Merlin Binoculars: 8 x 32

December 14: Tristar Hunter Ex O/U 28-Gauge Shotgun

December 15: YETI Tundra 65 All-Purpose Cooler

December 16: CZ Bobwhite SxS 20-Gauge Shotgun

December 17: SportDOG TEK 1.0 GPS & E-Collar (TEK-V1LT) -- SportDOG, Donor

December 18: Webley & Scott 900 Sporting O/U 28-Gauge Shotgun -- Webley & Scott, Donor

December 19: Samsung 51" Wide Screen Television

December 20: CZ Canvasback O/U 20-Gauge Shotgun

December 21: L.L. Bean \$500 Gift Certificate -- L.L. Bean, Donor

December 22: Fausti DEA SxS 20-Gauge Shotgun



To purchase raffle tickets, mail coupon to: **Ruffed Grouse Society -- 451 McCormick Road -- Coraopolis, PA 15108**
or call **888-564-6747** or buy online at ruffedgrousesociety.org

Name _____ Phone _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Tickets @ \$10 Each or 3 for \$20 = \$ _____ Total Enclosed CHECK (Payable to RGS) CREDIT CARD
 CC # _____ Exp. _____ Signature _____
 Billing Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

And Don't Forget...

to check out the RGS website for all things grouse and woodcock at www.ruffedgrousesociety.org, and to check out www.timberdoodle.org for a great summary and description of many RGS and other woodcock projects in the Eastern U.S. The website keeps growing as the Wildlife Management Institute (via Chuck Fergus) continues to compile info about woodcock, grouse and songbird habitat.

Thanks for your generosity, enthusiasm, and support! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me – *Andy*

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