

Ruffed Grouse Society & American Woodcock Society

Northeast Region



FAN UPDATE December 2014

Season's Greetings!

The view from where I sit in the middle of December is dominated by white – about a foot thick covering the ground and a frosting on the trees. For many in the Northeast, grouse season comes to a close at the end of the year. New York still has two months left on the books, but it could be academic if we don't lose some of this snow – at least in my neck of the woods.

Oh, but I've got other things besides snow keeping Brody and me from setting off to the woods in search of the King. The firewood pile that I didn't get finished before bird season won't cut and split itself, and of course there's the holiday shopping to be done.

And high in importance is writing cards and letters of thanks to friends and supporters, none of which is more important than thanking all of you for your time and support in our work to improve the environment for grouse and woodcock, and, ultimately, we people. So, thank you all so much. I wish you all a happy and healthy holiday season, and best wishes in the New Year.

- *Andy*



Good News from Maine!

The ballot initiative this past November to eliminate the use of dogs, bait, and cable-restraints for hunting bears in Maine was defeated, signaling another victory for sound wildlife management and for hunting. However, the victory came at a high price. According to a November 4, 2014 article in the Portland Press Herald by Deirdre Fleming, opponents of the ban initiative raised approximately \$2.8 million dollars, 39% of which came from within Maine, with the remaining 61% coming from at least 41 states. Proponents of the bear hunting ban raised over \$2 million, 97% of which was from the Humane Society of the United States, based in Washington, D.C.

Mister, Can You Spare a Grouse?



As you may recall from the Fall 2014 FAN, I've been working with staff from the 4-H Shooting Sports program (ME and NY so far) to offer a program for youth on grouse ecology and hunting within the Shooting Sports program at a couple 4-H conservation camps in summer of 2015. The key component will be the hands-on dissection and study of ruffed grouse, modeled after the successful Pennsylvania Drummers Leadership Academy (see article on PA Drummers in Fall 2014 *Ruffed Grouse Society* magazine).





I checked my freezer, and we need just a few more grouse to reach our goal. If you can spare JUST ONE grouse in good condition we'd be so grateful (my kids are mad at me because the only birds they've been able to eat this season were two that Brody brought back tail-less).

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 stocking'd bird in a plastic bag and keep frozen until you can get it to me – call or email me (andyw@ruffedgrousesociety.org). Thanks!

Woodcock Migration Research Via Satellite Telemetry

(excerpted from article in Fall 2014 *Ruffed Grouse Society* magazine)



Bird migration has long fascinated conservationists, and we've learned much about the timing and routes of migration over many years of observation as well as banding and recovery of banded birds. However, our learning from band returns is limited by the fact that we have to kill or recapture a banded bird to obtain information, and usually we only have two data points – the capture (date and location), and recovery (harvest date and location).

Now, timberdoodle enthusiasts are on the eve of enlightenment in regards to the migration behavior of American woodcock. Beginning this winter, 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 will capture up to 40 woodcock on wintering grounds in the Central Woodcock Management Unit (lower Mississippi River Valley) and fit them with miniature satellite radio transmitters. The radio signals transmitted by the marked woodcock are received by the ARGOS satellite network and relayed back to earth and ultimately to the Arkansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit.

This cutting edge research technology will enable the researchers to gain important insights into woodcock migration, including the timing and duration of the spring and fall migrations, location and duration of important stopovers for feeding and resting, and where individual woodcock breed and spend the winter. A pilot field season in which 6 woodcock were fitted with satellite transmitters demonstrated that the research methods are sound and yielded encouraging results (Figure below). One adult female, captured during fall 2013 on Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge in MN, successfully migrated south through Iowa, Missouri, and Arkansas to spend the winter in east Texas; come spring she migrated back up to MN. During late



Woodcock stopover locations from pilot study – Birds 3 and 6 believed dead. (Bird 3 by owl predation after release)

winter, additional woodcock were captured and similarly fitted with transmitters in Arkansas and Louisiana, and subsequently moved north in the spring to Nebraska, New York, Vermont, and Maine, with substantial time spent enroute in Alabama, Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.

The Arkansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and RGS/AWS have developed a web-page where the public can follow individual radio-equipped woodcock as they travel through their annual migratory cycle.

<http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/woodcockmigration> [update: 3 woodcock were captured and fitted with transmitters in Minnesota this past fall; woodcock captured on the southern wintering grounds this winter will be added to the web-page in late January or early February.]

RGS and AWS recognize the potential of this research, as it will identify key areas for woodcock wintering, migration and breeding. “This ground-breaking study will enable RGS and AWS to locate areas in which to focus our American woodcock habitat efforts for all migratory routes from the South to the Great Lakes and Northeast regions,” said RGS and AWS President and CEO John Eichinger.

Because of this importance, RGS/AWS is actively raising funds to purchase 20 satellite transmitters for this cutting-edge research. A number of RGS chapters have contributed funds to purchase transmitters. Anyone wishing to make a donation to help purchase transmitters in support of the woodcock migration study may do so online at www.ruffedgrousesociety.org or by contacting headquarters (412) 262-4044.

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! There's only one chance to become a charter member, and that's at the start – give a charter membership to the American Woodcock Society.

Charter Memberships Available to the American Woodcock Society

Those who join the newly formed American Woodcock Society (AWS) through January 30, 2015 will become an AWS Charter Member, a special group who joined AWS during its inaugural year. Charter members receive a commemorative decal, patch and certificate to proudly display. To join, contact the membership department by toll free phone at 888-564-6747.

And if that weren't good enough, give a membership in either RGS or AWS to someone who isn't already an RGS member, and you'll both get a \$20 gift certificate from Orvis. Now that's what I call value added! Read on for details:

Help RGS & AWS Increase Support for Habitat and Hunting

Participate in the RGS and AWS Member-Get-A-Member Campaign – Help us increase support for habitat and hunting – recruit a fellow grouse or woodcock

hunter to become a member and both current and new members receive a \$20 Orvis gift card.

Also new or renewing members can join both RGS and AWS as a dual member for the discounted rate of \$60 (regular \$35 for each or \$180 for three years).

Upcoming RGS Events in the Region

The next RGS fund-raising event in the Northeast is the 9th Annual New York City Dinner on Wednesday, January 28, 2015 at *The Racquet and Tennis Club*, 370 Park Avenue, New York City, NY. Cocktails and silent auction begin 6:15 p.m., dinner is served at 7:30 p.m., with a live auction to follow. For more information check http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/banquets_events or contact Tripp Way (trippw@ruffedgrousesociety.org).

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

Andy Weik

RGS/AWS Regional Biologist

New York, New England, Eastern Canada

607-793-4832 or 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.