



## **Ruffed Grouse Society Northeast Region FAN Update September 2013**

Hunting season 2013 is looking promising. As I write this, today is the first day of northern New York's grouse season. Full moon and frost here a couple days ago... I'm itching to get my dog out there. Vermont follows New York with a September 28 opener for grouse this year, and the rest of the states fall in line. This spring there was good drumming activity across the region and singing woodcock numbers were strong, similar to last year's counts. Spring came in like a lamb, but soon got squirrely. The effects on bird production of cool, rainy (some places snowy) weather were mixed, I think. We'll likely see good bird numbers in some places and not-so-good in others, but we'll only know by getting out there.

Unlike last year, this summer the woods were full of food in the form of berries and other fruits. Everywhere I've been this summer the crops of dogwoods, hawthorn, cranberry, viburnum, grape, mountain ash, and apple have been impressive. Also, I've been seeing a pretty good beech nut crop across the region. Grouse LOVE beech nuts, so if there are mature beech trees where you hunt, be sure to pay them a visit in October.

If at all possible, introduce someone new to hunting, or reunite someone with their hunting-past. Make some good memories.

Good hunting,

– *Andy*

# American Woodcock Population Status, 2013

By Thomas R. Cooper and Rebecca Rau, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Abstract: Singing-ground Survey data for 2013 indicate that indices for singing American woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) males in the Eastern and Central Management Regions are not significantly different from 2012. There was no significant 10-year trend for woodcock heard in the Eastern or Central Management Regions during 2003-13. This marks the tenth consecutive year that the 10-year trend estimate was not significant in the Eastern Region and the third year that the 10-year trend in the Central Management Region was non-significant. Both regions have a long-term (1968-13) declining trend (-1.0 for the Eastern Management Region and -0.8 for the Central Management Region). The 2012 recruitment index for the U.S. portion of the Eastern Region (1.65 immatures per adult female) was 1.9% less than the 2011 index and 0.8% greater than the long-term regional index, while the recruitment index for the U.S. portion of the Central Region (1.66 immatures per adult female) was 8.0% greater than the 2011 index and was 5.7% greater than the long-term regional index. Estimates from the Harvest Information Program indicated that U.S. woodcock hunters in the Eastern Region spent 137,800 days afield and harvested 86,400 woodcock during the 2012-13 season, while in the Central Region, hunters spent 276,900 days afield and harvested 193,100 woodcock.

*Andy's Note: Woodcock numbers in 2013 remained fairly close to 2012 levels across New York, New England, and the Maritimes. High note: Nova Scotia's count was the highest for the province since 1978... but they had awfully wet weather this spring during the typical hatch period. Low note: The woodcock survey index in Massachusetts this spring was the lowest since the survey began in the 1960s (we said the same thing last year -- must... cut...more...trees!). The entire report can be viewed at <http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/NewReportsPublications/PopulationStatus.html>*

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## A Look at Grouse Numbers

Looking into the crystal ball for a fall grouse forecast this year is like looking through an antique window pane of varying thickness with swirls and other “imperfections”. April was promising enough with lamb-like weather, but May touched most areas with excessive rain, and some areas suffered through untimely snowfall and low temperatures. June didn’t offer much relief from precipitation, and my lawn didn’t show any signs of slowing growth. Generally speaking, spring and summer were colder and wetter than we’d like for nesting grouse and woodcock. However, not all is doom and gloom, and in fact the pre-season reports of grouse and woodcock across the region are surprisingly good (although your mileage may vary locally!).



I’ve gotten very good reports from northern Maine (courtesy of Maine DIFW upland game bird biologist Kelsey Sullivan) and good indications from NH and northern NY, and have personally encountered a few grouse broods (what I’d consider normal) in upstate NY, VT, NH, and ME. I read that a very good number of grouse were encountered on the field trial courses at the North American Woodcock Championship in New Brunswick (two hops and a leap from the Maine border) in mid-September.

So, to sum it all up: I can’t wait to get out there!

# NH Ruffed Grouse Wing and Tail Survey

## *Statewide New Hampshire Survey*

New Hampshire Fish and Game conducts an annual grouse wing and tail survey throughout the state to help gain critical information about ruffed grouse in New Hampshire. Hunter participation is key to this effort -- we need your help!

**Win a gun!** All those who turn in completed and useable grouse study survey packets will be entered into a drawing for a quality shotgun donated by the Ruffed Grouse Society.



## **How to take part:**

Any grouse hunter can participate by picking up grouse sample packets, which include envelopes and survey cards for two grouse samples, from any of the participating locations listed below. Hunters are asked to remove all tissue from wing and tail samples and to let them dry completely before placing the samples in the envelopes. Do NOT place the samples in plastic of any kind. Hunters should place only one wing and tail in each envelope with the corresponding completed survey card. Completed packets must be returned to one of these locations.

Packets will be available as of **September 28, 2013**, check the following website for locations:

[http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/Hunting/hunt\\_ruffed\\_grouse\\_survey.html](http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/Hunting/hunt_ruffed_grouse_survey.html)

**Win a gun!** All those who turn in completed and useable grouse study survey packets will be entered into a drawing for a quality shotgun donated by the Ruffed Grouse Society.

Please let other ruffed grouse enthusiasts know about this survey and help us increase participation this year, and say thanks to these business owners for their effort, as well.

For more information on the grouse survey, call Julie Robinson, N.H. Fish and Game Small Game Project Leader, at Fish and Game's Region 3 Office in Durham at 603-868-1095.

# New York Grouse and Woodcock Hunting Log

**Grouse and woodcock hunters needed!** (for more info visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/9351.html>)

This survey asks hunters to record their daily grouse and woodcock hunting activities in a "hunting log", including the number of grouse and woodcock flushed, the number of hours hunted, the number of birds killed, and if a dog was used to hunt. The primary purpose of the log is to monitor the number of birds flushed per hour. Grouse and woodcock share many of the same habitats, so the information you provide will help monitor populations of both of these great game birds as habitats change both locally and on a landscape scale.



Print or download the [2013-14 Ruffed Grouse and American Woodcock Hunting Log \(PDF\)](#) (621 kB), or contact us to get on our mailing list (see contact information below).

Completed survey forms can be sent to:

Grouse Log, NYSDEC

625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4754

Phone: (518) 402-8886

e-mail: [fwwildlf@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:fwwildlf@gw.dec.state.ny.us) (Please include "Grouse Log" in the subject line.)

After you have completed your hunting log, you can contact the Department at the address above for a postage-paid envelope to send in your data sheet(s).

After data have been analyzed, your hunting log will be returned to you along with a report of this survey (full reports from previous seasons can be found in the links in the left-hand column). In subsequent years, you will receive a hunting log in the mail just prior to the hunting season. The personal information you provide (e.g., name, address) will be kept confidential.

Thanks and good luck!



*Grouse log cooperators arm patches*

## Bird Hunting Opportunities to Support RGS

Join RGS for the **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Northern Maine Grouse and Woodcock Benefit Hunt** October 2-5, 2013 in Millinocket, ME. Hunt two days (Thursday & Friday) with Maine



huntsmen in one of the most beautiful areas in the Northeast. Lodging is in modern cabins on the shore of Millinocket Lake, with breath-taking views of Katahdin – Maine’s tallest mountain. We’ll have a lobster and steak dinner Friday night. Hunter numbers are limited to 10. Contact Mark Gray 207-299-4172, Tripp Way 607-743-0760, or me.

And, we’ve got the **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual NY Grouse and Woodcock Benefit Hunt** October 18-20, 2013 based at On The Wing Grouse Camp in Ellenburg, NY. This is a two-day guided hunt - Saturday and Sunday – and includes a banquet dinner. Hunter numbers are limited to 20. Contact Bruce Bennett 413-237-1054 ([bbennett82@comcast.net](mailto:bbennett82@comcast.net)) or Tripp



Way.



## **Tickets Available for the RGS 2013 Fall National Raffle**

Entry tickets are now available for the 2013 RGS Fall National Raffle. This raffle is covering a short time span as the three winners will be drawn on December 31, 2013, so enter early. Please help support RGS and maybe win one of the three fantastic prizes, each of which would make a great surprise Christmas present for anyone. Purchase tickets by calling RGS HQ at (888) 564-6747 or contacting Andy Weik at 607-793-4832 or [AndyW@ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:AndyW@ruffedgrousesociety.org). The donation is \$20.00 per ticket. Winners are responsible for applicable taxes.

**Three chances to win. WINNER'S CHOICE! - First winner selects choice of 3 prizes, second winner selects from remaining 2, and the third winner gets the remaining prize.**

Prizes include:

**First prize: Orvis Endorsed Northern Maine Grouse Hunt for Two in the 2014/15 hunting season at Libby Camps; includes 4 nights, 3 days of hunting. \$3,350 value. Libby Camps, Donor.**

**Second prize: Grand Traverse, Michigan Fishing, Golf and Wine Tour for Four; includes 4 nights, 5 days in Traverse City, Michigan during 2014. \$2,400 value, Fairfield Inn & Suites, Traverse City, Fish Hunter Charters, LochenHeath Golf Club, Celtic Shuttle & Tours, Donors.**

**Third prize: Northern Minnesota Fishing and Resort Stay for Two. One week stay at Driftwood Lodge Resort and Boat Rental on Lake Kabetogama during 2014/2015. \$2,000 value, Driftwood Lodge Resort, Donor.**

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## **9th Circuit Resuscitates Legal Quagmire on Forest Roads**

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in an order issued August 30th in *Northwest Environmental Defense Center (NEDC) v. Decker* gave litigators another chance to seek federal Clean Water Act (CWA) permits on forest roads through a new round of litigation. The court essentially breathed fresh life into the legal quagmire.

This all began in 2006 when NEDC sued the Oregon state forester claiming that logging roads in Oregon's Tillamook State Forest were point sources of pollution requiring federal CWA permits. Not accepting the outcome of the Oregon court upholding the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 37-year successful regulations that these roads are nonpoint sources that should be regulated through state best management practices, NEDC appealed to the Ninth Circuit, which sided with the litigators in 2010. The Supreme Court overturned the Ninth Circuit last March. In typical form, the Supreme Court upheld EPA's rule that forest roads don't require permits without opining on whether they were point sources. Quite simply, the Court did not rule on the point source question because it didn't have to. Once the Court overturned the permit decision, it considered its work done.

Now the litigators are trying to revive their argument for permits by arguing that forest roads are still point sources and that there *must* be some new basis out there for requiring a permit. The Ninth Circuit helped them do that by remanding the case back to the district court after restating its ruling that forest roads must be treated as point sources. The litigation wheels are turning again and it is only a matter of time before the legal quagmire thickens.

It was a long and costly seven years leading up to the Supreme Court's decision. Now, notwithstanding opposition to the litigation from a broad spectrum of interests including the National Governors Association; Attorneys General from 31 states; the National Association of Counties; EPA; forestry, agriculture, business, academic and non-profit organizations including the Ruffed Grouse Society; and, most recently, the U.S. House of Representatives that passed by a *voice vote* an amendment to the Farm Bill declaring that forest roads are nonpoint sources, the litigators are at it again. They simply won't quit so long as they have a legal theory to pursue. In the meantime, economic recovery and jobs in the forestry sector nationwide will continue to hang in the balance while the next case winds its way to the Ninth Circuit. All this in pursuit of a permit requirement that experts, including the Chief Forester of the United States, have said won't improve water quality.

Congress must now complete the work on legislation and end the forest roads legal quagmire once and for all. The support is there and the end is in sight. Seven years is enough. It's time to focus on policies to preserve working forests and not get stuck again in the mire of litigation.

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## **Database Yields Insight into Bird Movement Patterns**

Ithaca, NY--For centuries people have marveled at the migratory abilities of birds, but new research is now putting numbers on those seasonal feats-for more than a hundred species at a time-using data contributed by thousands of amateur bird watchers.

In all, more than 2.3 million sightings were summarized to reveal migratory routes of 102 species in North America, in a paper published August 1 in *Ecology* magazine. The results provide a fascinating glimpse at an astonishing range of species: for instance, the tiny Calliope Hummingbird crosses the continent almost three times as fast as the Northern Shoveler, which outweighs it more than 300 times. They also highlight the scientific value to be gained from bird watchers' sightings when they can be combined into a single database.

"Up to this point, migration theory has really only been examined at the individual level," said Frank La Sorte, a research associate at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and lead author of the new study. "But in the end, you want to conserve populations-you want to maintain their migration corridors, flyways, or stopover habitats. And that's why there's so much potential here."

The new study plots the average route and speed of each species as it moves north and south each year. "Where the speeds slow down, the population is likely at a stopover location," La Sorte said. "That's a valuable patch of habitat where migrating birds can rest and refuel. With results from a study like ours, we can start to make very specific recommendations that we can be confident will impact a large component of the population."

The researchers also tested basic aspects of migration theory that have proven nearly impossible to address until now. The typical method was to use expensive satellite tracking devices. But most birds are too small to carry these, forcing researchers to study larger species just a few individuals at a time, rather than learning about the behavior of a whole population.

With a single study, La Sorte's team learned that larger-bodied birds tend to migrate more slowly than smaller species, confirming a long-held but untested idea. They also found that species migrating longer distances tend to travel faster. Birds also tend to migrate faster in spring than they do in fall.

La Sorte and his colleagues did no field work at all to arrive at their results; instead, they analyzed the sightings of thousands of bird watchers who contribute to an online checklist program called eBird, run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Using some 2.3 million records from 2007-2011, the researchers calculated an average location for each species on each day of the year.

Though the resulting measurements of speed and direction are coarser than for individuals tracked by satellite, they represent major shifts by thousands or millions of birds that would be impossible for any one scientist or bird watcher to detect on their

own. For example, they found that the population of Bobolinks moves across North America at about 43 miles per day; Black-billed Cuckoos are similarly fast; whereas Rock Wrens (the slowest of all) shift their distribution at a comparatively glacial 5 miles per day.

The continental scale of the analysis revealed another intriguing pattern: many species make looping migrations that take them on a more easterly route in fall than in spring. Some species, such as the Blackpoll Warbler and the Black-billed Cuckoo, leave land altogether-launching themselves out over the Atlantic Ocean for their southward migration. The finding suggests that environmental factors such as wind patterns may have played a role in the evolution of migratory routes. They also yield important insights for conservation planners striving to maintain habitat for migrants.

The study was funded by the Leon Levy Foundation, Wolf Creek Foundation, and National Science Foundation. A PDF copy of the paper is available from Pat Leonard, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 607-254-2137, [pel27@cornell.edu](mailto:pel27@cornell.edu).

## **Ruffed Grouse Society Magazine Wins 2013 APEX Award For Publication Excellence**

Coraopolis, PA – The *Ruffed Grouse Society* magazine has been awarded a 2013 APEX Award of Excellence in the "Magazines & Journals – Print Over 32 Pages" category for the Spring 2013 issue. This issue was the first for Editor Matt Soberg and was constructed with the help from Paul Carson, a prior editor of the magazine. The design and layout was created by Brittney LaCoste of Campbell LaCoste, Inc. in Black Earth, Wisconsin. The Apex Awards included over 2,400 total entries this year.

The Spring 2013 magazine cover highlighted *The Fall Shuffle*, a painting by Chris Smith that was the RGS Print of the Year. The issue featured a woodcock sky dance article by Tim Flanigan and other features from longtime RGS contributors Art Wheaton, Nick Sisley, Lisa Price, Bob West, and Doug Forsythe. RGS President and CEO John Eichinger provided a message about the Drummer Fund, and RGS Director of Conservation Policy Dan Dessecker included an article about working lands for wildlife.

"We are honored to be awarded a 2013 APEX Award. The Society works hard to create a quality magazine that effectively communicates our mission and provides engaging articles and beautiful photographs for our members," said Eichinger. RGS won the APEX Grand Award in 2011 for its 50th Anniversary Issue and two APEX Awards in 2012.

In its 25th year, the APEX Awards for Publication Excellence is an international competition open to writers, editors, publications staff, and business and nonprofit communicators. The awards are based on excellence in graphic design, editorial content and the ability to achieve overall communications excellence. The Apex

Awards are sponsored by Communications Concepts, Inc., a leading publisher of business communication reports.

### **RGS to Once Again Provide Woodcock Migration Mapping**

The Ruffed Grouse Society is pleased to once again provide the American woodcock migration mapping system. Accessible on the Society's website at <http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/migration-map>. The site, used by hunters and bird watchers to monitor the woodcock migrations will be active from September 2013 through April 30, 2014.

This page displays current month, prior daily and weekly maps, which when compared will show the general movement of the birds during migration.

### **TruckVault Supports RGS – Vote Daily and Win Prizes!**

Seven groups will share in the funds and national publicity provided via Scott Linden's Wingshooting USA television series in the fourth annual "TruckVault Cares ... for conservation, canines & kids" initiative.

Lead sponsor TruckVault is joined in the effort by co-sponsors Filson, Kent Cartridge, Happy Jack, Webley & Scott, Royal Flush Adventures, Scott Linden's Signature Series of dog gear and Pursuit Channel television network. Wingshooting USA viewers are urged to vote online at <https://www.truckvaultcares.com/> for their favorite organization.

Each vote directs funds on a proportional basis so that all organizations receive dollars for their treasury. This year's beneficiary groups include: AKC Canine Health Foundation, Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation, American Brittany Rescue, Ruffed Grouse Society, National 4H Shooting Sports, International Hunter Education Association, and the U.S. Sportsman's Alliance Foundation Trailblazer Adventure program.

New this year will be a voting component on the TruckVault Cares Facebook page in addition to the <https://www.truckvaultcares.com> web page. Voting ends on December 31, 2013. Voters can win prizes throughout the effort, ranging from a South Dakota hunting trip to a "sport utility building," Webley & Scott shotgun, Filson apparel, Happy Jack dog care products, Kent ammo, Scott Linden dog training gear and the grand prize, a TruckVault.

## Upcoming RGS Events in the Region

**October 2-5** – 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Northern Maine Grouse and Woodcock Hunt, Millinocket, ME. Contact me, or Mark Gray 207-299-4172

**October 18-20** – 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Northern New York Grouse and Woodcock Hunt, Malone, NY. Contact Bruce Bennett 413-237-1054 or [bbennett82@comcast.net](mailto:bbennett82@comcast.net)

**November 8** – Central New York Chapter Annual Banquet. 6:00 pm, Genesee Grand Hotel (new location!), Syracuse, NY. Contact Norm Webber 315-697-3377, [lutherwebb@earthlink.net](mailto:lutherwebb@earthlink.net)

**November 11** – Triple Flush Chapter Annual Banquet. Elmira, NY. Contact Walter Booth 607-733-9121

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

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