



Western Great Lakes Region FAN UPDATE

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Welcome Catkins!!

To many of us, one positive sign of spring to folks in the north is seeing the first aspen catkins (flower buds) popping (see picture above). It has been a long time coming in the Upper Great Lakes area this year. Record snows and record colds really made the winter of 2013-14 one to hopefully soon put completely behind us. However, as I say that I am looking out the office window and observing more snowflakes falling to the ground as winter still has not given up its hold.

Many folks have asked me about this winter's impact to grouse numbers. Fortunately, unlike deer and turkey that were impacted quite a bit by the long winter, ruffed grouse really did pretty well. These birds are made to survive even the toughest of our winters. As long as tree buds are available to feed on and snow is deep and fluffy to snow roost in, ruffed grouse can survive very well. Very little ice or hard crust was present through the coldest weather periods that could have caused problems for the birds.

Besides telling us spring is upon us those aspen catkins are a very important food source for our grouse in the spring. As the birds transition from their rather dormant winter condition into the spring breeding season, they need food sources that provide the energy needed to ramp up their activity. Catkins from male aspen trees across much of the northern range of the ruffed grouse provide them with a highly nutritious and available food source.

Here's hoping for a great spring for grouse and woodcock nesting and brood rearing and that we can look forward to a fine fall hunting season.

Gary

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.

Ottawa Forest Supervisor Moves On

Tony Scardina, Forest Supervisor on the Ottawa National Forest and RGS member, will be transferring to a similar position on the Wayne National Forest in Ohio in early May. We will miss Tony as he was a strong supporter of wildlife management on the Ottawa NF and helped move forward some very important projects that should benefit ruffed grouse and woodcock populations on the Ottawa NF in the near future.

Ottawa National Forest Redboat Project Gets Approval

Bessemer District Ranger, Norman Nass, announced on January 13th that the Final Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (DN/FONSI) for the Redboat Resource Management Project has been completed and is available upon request at the Bessemer Ranger District office, as well as the Ottawa National Forest's website: <http://fs.usda.gov/goto/ottawa/projects> .

The Decision Notice for this management area located in Gogebic County, southwest of Marenisco, Michigan was signed on January 6, 2014, and can be implemented immediately. Alternative 2 has been selected for implementation, which includes 11,400 acres of timber harvest in northern hardwood, aspen and conifer to enhance health, quality and composition of forested stands. Of this 1,841 acres of mature and over-mature aspen is slated for regeneration and will provide improved habitat for ruffed grouse and woodcock populations.

This Final Decision also includes wildlife, fisheries, and riparian habitat improvements, as well as refinements to the transportation system and motorized public access. Additional information regarding this project can be obtained from Marlanea French-Pombier, Environmental Coordinator, at 906-358-4031 or e-mail: mfrenchpombier@fs.fed.us .

Update on Iowa Young Forest Habitat Efforts

By Greg A. Schmitt and Terry Haindfield, Iowa DNR

Iowa Chapter members of the Ruffed Grouse Society along with Iowa Department of Natural Resources personnel have worked for many years on public and private land to promote habitat management that improve early successional forest wildlife populations. In 2009, the Iowa DNR, was able to leverage funds from RGS funding and other Non-Government Organizations to receive a \$190,000 State Wildlife Grant (SWG) from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These funds were used to develop young forest habitat on private lands in NE Iowa. Specific habitat work included aspen management, edge feathering, tree planting, and timber stand improvement.

A unique component of this SWG funding was the emphasis on working with private landowners within ruffed grouse dispersal distance of certain state owned Wildlife Management Areas (WMA). These WMAs have Forest Wildlife Stewardship Plans that included ruffed grouse and American woodcock habitat management objectives.

Some NE Iowans recall tremendous ruffed grouse populations in NE Iowa in the 1970's and 1980's. This population surge was a result of a major land use change. The change in cattle markets and the decrease in cattle herds resulted in less pasturing in NE Iowa. This resulted in the natural conversion of pastured woodland openings to early successional habitat. Early successional habitat occurs when shrubs and young trees create a high stem density (8,000 to 12,000 stems/acre) that is essential to ruffed grouse survival.

Beginning in 2005, WMAs have new Forest Wildlife Stewardship Plans (FWSP) that

include Ruffed Grouse and Woodcock habitat management.

The FWSP initial inventories of tree species and their ages on these WMAs produced some astounding results. Back dating the ages of some of the forest areas, data showed that during the peak of high ruffed grouse populations in the 1970-1980s, 20-25% of each of these WMAs were ruffed grouse habitat (trees and shrubs 5-15 years old). Terry Haindfield, a public land wildlife biologist for the IDNR says, "After allowing those WMA forests to mature beyond the critical 5-15 year old tree and shrub habitat, these same areas now only have 1-3% ruffed grouse habitat. It's no wonder grouse populations have plummeted."

Iowa DNR staff is using these new FWSP to guide their early successional restoration efforts on WMAs, not only for ruffed grouse but for other bird species such as golden-winged warblers, American woodcock, and eastern towhees.

Iowa Outdoors, a series produced by Iowa Public Television in partnership with the Iowa DNR, did a segment on this public/private partnership to help restore ruffed grouse habitat. You can watch it here:

http://www.iptv.org/iowaoutdoors/story.cfm/clip/10547/iao_20130419_302_grouse/video

Using the components of the \$190,000 SWG, Iowa DNR Private Land staff contacted all landowners within a 3 mile radius of WMAs with current or historic ruffed grouse populations in 3 Northeast Iowa counties. Some of these private lands still have grouse present and were given priority for SWG funding. IDNR then held workshops where these landowners could learn about early successional species and financial assistance options.

Follow-up landowner visits by Private Land's staff and Iowa DNR Foresters were then conducted where further technical assistance was provided and a Management Plan was developed. Aspen management and edge feathering to create young forest habitat was emphasized with this grant, but tree planting and Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) was also completed on some properties. \$366,000 dollars of the State of Iowa's Resource Enhancement And Protection (REAP) funds were used as a match for TSI and tree planting. This resulted in an additional 287 acres of tree planting and 1,078 acres of TSI for ruffed grouse and other forest wildlife species between 2009 and 2011.

After 3 years of promotion, planning, and hard work by 75 landowners, with the help of private forestry contractors, 775 acres of habitat exclusively for young forest species was established. This included 332 acres of edge feathering and 296 acres of aspen management on private lands. In addition, 376 different landowners received technical assistance on how to manage their land for Species of Greatest Conservation Need, including ruffed grouse and American Woodcock. One hundred and twenty-one of those landowners had a comprehensive wildlife management plan written for their property.

Iowa DNR Natural Resources Technician Brian Sauer emphasized the 100% cost share as critical to the SWG success. "Landowners had very little, if any, out of pocket expense. This made it possible to sell them on habitat improvements that offered no financial return, unlike other forest management practices that promote lumber production." Since

Iowa is on the southern fringe of the big tooth and quaking aspen range, there is less of it, and therefore no wood pulp market.

The Iowa DNR public and private lands staff continues to look for programs and funding to increase young forest habitat in Northeast Iowa. Ruffed grouse and woodcock won't be the only species to benefit from this effort. Deer, turkey and a host of nongame species, use young forest habitat during some part of their life cycle.

For more information about the Iowa DNR's efforts to increase grouse and woodcock populations in NE Iowa, contact Terry Haindfield at Terry.Haindfield@dnr.iowa.gov, 563-546-7960, or Brian Sauer at Brian.Sauer@dnr.iowa.gov, 563-880-3363.

Michigan DNR Director Approves Regional Plans for State Forests

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources announced that DNR Director Keith Creagh has approved the final Regional State Forest Management Plans (RSFMPs), which were designed to help the DNR sustainably manage Michigan's nearly 4 million acres of state forest land. The plans and other information are posted on the DNR website at: www.michigan.gov/regionalforestplans.

The DNR developed the three plans – which cover the eastern Upper Peninsula, the western Upper Peninsula and the northern Lower Peninsula – using an inclusive planning effort and input from a diverse group of stakeholders representing non-governmental organizations, outdoor recreation, the forest resources industry, conservation agencies and everyday citizens. The plans will provide resource managers with long-term, landscape-level direction that will guide DNR decisions about forest management activities and treatments on state forest land. The plans also ensure the protection of wildlife habitat and opportunities for recreation.

Bill O'Neill, chief of the DNR's Forest Resources Division, said the feedback the department received during the public review period (October 2012 through March 2013) was invaluable to the completion of the plans.

“We're pleased that the final Regional State Forest Management Plans – the result of years of collaboration and hard work by the DNR and its partners – have been approved,” said O'Neill, who also serves as state forester. “Thanks to the support and feedback from the public, the final products are thoughtful and comprehensive. These plans will help to guide the sustainable management of Michigan's state forest land.

“The plans also ensure a greater contribution of timber from the state forest to the forest products industry, while also protecting recreation opportunities, wildlife habitat and future forest needs.”

The three regional plans are now ready for implementation, which will occur

through the department's compartment review process beginning in the summer and fall of 2014. The first prescriptions will hit the ground in 2016.

O'Neill said that while these are the final plans they will be reviewed at least every 10 years and revised as needed.

For more information about the plans, contact [Scott Jones](#), DNR forest management planning specialist, at [517-284-5873](tel:517-284-5873), or visit www.michigan.gov/regionalforestplans.

For more information about the compartment review process and when open house meetings will be held in your area, visit www.michigan.gov/forestplan.

Signup By June 15th for 2014 Wisconsin Coverts Project

The next Wisconsin Coverts Project workshop targeting private landowners with an interest in managing their lands with a wildlife emphasis will be held August 21 - 24 at the Kemp Natural Resources Station near Woodruff, WI. These 3-day sessions have had rave reviews from past attendees that have become Covert Cooperators through past workshops and are open to folks from Illinois, Upper Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Now starting its 20th year, 583 cooperators have attended these workshops. Sharing with others what they have learned these Coverts Cooperators have influenced the management of over 810,000 acres of land in the region. This workshop is highly recommended for those landowners interested in better understanding their role as stewards of their property. For additional information on the workshop contact Jamie Nack at 608-265-8264 or by email at jlneck@wisc.edu. Attendance is limited. More information is available on the Coverts Project website at http://forestandwildlifeecology.wisc.edu/wl_extension/wicovertsproject.html. Deadline for applications is June 15th.

RGS Announces 2014 Wisconsin Drummer Fund Projects

Record 16 Projects Approved For Funding

Sixteen projects benefiting ruffed grouse and American woodcock habitat in Wisconsin have been selected by the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) to receive over \$62,000 during 2014 through its Wisconsin Drummer Fund program. Partners receiving RGS funding for projects in Wisconsin in 2014 include county forestry departments in Ashland, Douglas, Eau Claire, Florence, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Price, and Wood Counties, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the U.S. Forest Service. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through its Partners in Fish and Wildlife Program is also providing funding support for several of these projects.

According to John Eichinger, RGS President and CEO, “RGS is pleased that in 2014 the Society will be supporting another record year, both in the amount of funds provided and the number of projects conducted under the Wisconsin Drummer Fund program. Our ability to fund these important wildlife management projects is due to the dedicated efforts of the volunteer members of our Wisconsin RGS chapters.”

The Wisconsin Drummer Fund was initiated in 2010 and is the direct result of funds being raised at Wisconsin RGS chapter fund raising events and through direct member donations. Since its inception, nearly \$219,000 has been made available through the Wisconsin Drummer Fund to support 56 Wisconsin grouse and woodcock projects. These funds have been matched by other agencies and organizations and have resulted in over \$616,000 worth of projects being funded in Wisconsin since 2010.

Wisconsin Drummer Fund Projects approved for 2014 include:

Augustine Creek Hunter Walking Trail Bridge Replacement/Ashland County – Ashland County Forestry Department & WI DNR

Burma Road Hunting Trail Development/Florence County – Florence County Forestry Department & WI DNR

Cylon Wildlife Area Aspen Regeneration/St. Croix County – WI DNR

Douglas County Grouse Management Area Signage – Douglas County Forestry Department

Eau Claire County Aspen Regeneration and Hunting Trail Development – Eau Claire County Forestry Department

Empire Swamp Management Area Access Improvement/Douglas County – Douglas County Forestry Department

Kubisiak Ruffed Grouse Management Area Alder/Aspen Regeneration/Wood County – WI DNR & Wood County Forestry Department

Marathon County Alder Regeneration – WI DNR & Marathon Cty. Forestry Department

Medford/Park Falls District Hunting Trail & Opening Maintenance – US Forest Service

North Central Wisconsin Young Forest Management/Langlade & Lincoln Counties – Langlade & Lincoln County Forestry Departments and WI DNR

Northwest Sands Unit Landowner Outreach – WI DNR

Pershing Wildlife Area Opening Development/Taylor County – WI DNR

Price County Aspen Age-Class Distribution – Price County Forestry Department

Wild Rose Aspen Regeneration/Waushara County – WI DNR

Woodboro Lakes Area Hunting Trail Development/Oneida County– WI DNR

Young Forest Partnership Program/Statewide – Multiple Agencies & Organizations

Nine of the sixteen approved projects in 2014 are taking place on Wisconsin's county forests. According to Jane Severt, executive director of the Wisconsin County Forests Association, "Wisconsin County Forests Association truly values continued conservation efforts and fiscal resources directed toward county forest lands by the Ruffed Grouse Society. Together, county forests and RGS have completed countless outstanding projects benefiting our environment and sportsmen and women alike. The partnership between our county forests and RGS clearly demonstrates the importance of ensuring that the ecological benefits and sporting opportunities provided by young forest communities remain a part of our forested landscape across Wisconsin."

"Though the Wisconsin Drummer Fund originated in 2010, RGS has been very active supporting habitat work in Wisconsin since 1985. Since that time, RGS has contributed over \$900,000 to fund over 110 projects in 44 of Wisconsin's 72 counties," reports RGS Biologist Gary Zimmer.

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.](#)

Upcoming RGS Events in the Region

May 1 – Duluth/Superior Chapter 34th Annual Conservation Banquet at the Elks Club, Superior. Contact Greg Johnson at 715-392-0688 for info.

May 1 – Lakeshore Chapter 24th Annual Sportsmen's Banquet at Range Line Inn, Kohler, WI. Contact Trent Hake at 920-458-5595 ext. 311 for info.

May 3 – Eastern UP Chapter 12th Annual Sportsmen's Banquet at the Little Bear East Community Center, St. Ignace, MI. Contact Steve Rodock at 906-477-6717 for info.

May 8 – T. Stanton Armour Chapter 35th Annual Sportsmen's Banquet at the

Hilton Chicago/Northbrook, Northbrook, IL. Contact Beth Burnson at 312-330-7506 for info.

May 17 – Habitat Work Day on the Eagle River/Florence District of the Cheq/Nicolet National Forest. Contact Dave Bartz at 920-743-6004 for info.

May 17 – West Central Wisconsin Chapter Youth Outdoor Education Day, Lindsey, WI. Contact Richard Chronquist at 715-305-0420 for info.

May 22 – Chippewa Valley Chapter 29th Sportsmen's Banquet at the Eau Claire Rod and Gun Club, Eau Claire, WI. Contact Dave Johnson at 715-492-5858 for info.

May 31 – Habitat Work Day on the Lakewood/Laona Ranger District of the Cheq/Nicolet National Forest. Contact Dave Bartz at 920-743-6004 for info.

June 14 – RGS Dunbar Sportsman's Club Grouse Shoot, Dunbar, WI. Contact Mark Grandaw at 715-324-6395 for info.

June 15 - Sign Up Deadline for 2014 WI Coverts Workshops

August 9 – Habitat Work Day on the Oconto County Forest. Contact Dave Bartz at 920-743-6004 for info.

August 16 – Habitat Work Day near Park Falls on the Chequamegon/Nicolet National Forest. Contact Jim Teal at 715-339-4346 for info.

August 21 to 24 – 2014 WI Coverts Workshop, Kemp Natural Resource Station, Woodruff, WI. Contact Jamie Nack at 608-265-8264 or email at jlneck@wisc.edu.

Reminder

To insure that you continue to receive timely FAN updates please notify me of changes in your email address.

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

Gary Zimmer, Sally B. Searle Coordinating Biologist,
Ruffed Grouse Society

PO Box 116, Laona WI 54541 Phone: (715) 674-7505

Email: garyz@ruffedgrousesociety.org

The Ruffed Grouse Society is the premier wildlife conservation organization dedicated to promoting conditions suitable for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and related wildlife to sustain our sport hunting tradition and outdoor heritage. For information on the Ruffed Grouse Society, please call 888-564-6747 or check out the RGS website at www.ruffedgrousesociety.org.