



Western Great Lakes Region FAN UPDATE

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Mosquitoes are Good!!

From the heading above many of you are already thinking that this RGS/AWS biologist has gone bonkers but let me explain. After a long tough winter in the Great Lakes Region, spring and summer have arrived almost simultaneously; And with their arrival an overabundance of mosquitoes have shown up to welcome in the warm weather. How can that be good? It's really quite simple. Mosquitoes that you are pestered by in early June indicate that the weather conditions are favorable for them to be out but also all the other bugs crawling on the ground that young grouse need to eat. As the first grouse broods hatched from the nest, the bugs were readily available. From field reports it appears that the late snow cover pushed back egg laying a week or more in this region as the first reports of grouse chicks being seen did not start arriving until the first week of June.

Below you will find the Wisconsin drumming report that was just released. While we are on the low end of the cycle the deep, fluffy snows of this past winter in northern Wisconsin seemed to aid in grouse survival. The numbers could have been a lot lower, especially with the below average chick production of 2013.

While it has only been a short time since my last FAN Update, a lot has been happening. The Society replaced its habitat machine in Wisconsin with a new Terex forestry loader with Fecon mulcher attachment (shown above with primary operator Mike Riggle) and Eric Ellis was hired as the new biologist/grant writer by the Society (see write-up below) replacing the retired Dr. Larry Visser. We wish Eric the best in his new adventure and welcome him to RGS/AWS.

Gary

Welcome Eric Ellis!

The Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) recently named Eric J. Ellis as the new regional biologist for the Eastern Great Lakes region (Michigan, Ohio and Indiana). In his new position, Ellis will support the Society's management efforts to create healthy forest habitat for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and other wildlife and help preserve our rich sporting traditions.

As part of his duties, Ellis will work with state and federal wildlife agencies, private landowners and chapters on habitat projects and initiatives. He will also focus on grant writing and fundraising efforts to help the organization further enhance young forest habitat.

"With his experience with habitat development and fundraising, we are excited to add Eric to our team of wildlife biologists. We feel he has a great combination of education, on-the-ground experience, leadership and enthusiasm to help us grow in all areas of habitat enhancement," said RGS President and CEO John Eichinger.

Prior to becoming part of the RGS team, Ellis worked as a wildlife habitat biologist and project manager for the Conservation Resource Alliance in Traverse City, Michigan where he facilitated fundraising and implementation of habitat management projects by working with public and private landowners, foresters and contractors. He also led the Wild Link Program assisting volunteer landowners in managing private property along regional wildlife corridors. He received his Master of Science degree in resource recreation and tourism from the University of Idaho in 2007 and his Bachelor of Science in resource ecology and management from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 1997.

"I am excited to be joining an organization with a long history of working with local, state and national partners to implement on-the-ground wildlife habitat improvement projects. I look forward to maintaining this tradition and working with partners and our dedicated members to fulfill the mission of preserving

our sporting traditions by creating healthy forests habitat for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and other wildlife,” Ellis said.

A grouse and woodcock hunter and bird dog owner, Ellis grew up in southern Michigan and has always enjoyed the outdoors from hiking, backpacking, hunting and fishing. Following his time at the University of Michigan, he worked as a parks and wildlife Peace Corps volunteer and fly fishing and horse trip guide in Mongolia before attending the University of Idaho. He and his family reside in Traverse City, Michigan. Eric can be reached at EricE@ruffedgrousesociety.org.

WI Ruffed Grouse Survey Indicates Minor Decline

MADISON - Ruffed grouse populations in Wisconsin have shown another slight decline this spring, according to a recent roadside ruffed grouse survey. Results from this survey help DNR biologists monitor the cyclic population trends of ruffed grouse in the state.

"The index that Wisconsin uses to track ruffed grouse decreased 1 percent between 2013 & 2014," said Brian Dhuey, DNR wildlife surveys coordinator. "This decrease is quite minor, and isn't unexpected at this point in the population cycle. Ruffed grouse populations are known to rise and fall over a 9 to 11 year cycle. The last peak in Wisconsin's cycle occurred in 2011. We are headed to the low point in the cycle, which usually occurs in years ending in a 4, 5, or 6, so we are either at the low point or getting close; only time will tell."

The number of drums heard per stop in 2014 was down 1 percent statewide from the previous year (Table 1). One of the primary regions for grouse in the state, the central region, showed a 24 percent drop in the number of drums heard per stop. A second primary region in northern Wisconsin showed a 3 percent increase.

Table 1. Ruffed Grouse drumming results 2013-2014, drums per stop (routes run), % change, and number of routes with a change of greater than 2 drums per route from 2013 levels.

| Region | Drums/Stop 2013 (routes run) | Drums/Stop 2014 (routes run) | % Change | # of Decreasing Routes | # of Increasing Routes | # of Routes with No Change |
|------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Central | 0.85 (26) | 0.65 (27) | -24% | 8 | 3 | 15 |
| Northern | 1.70 (41) | 1.76 (43) | 3% | 15 | 18 | 8 |
| Southeast | 0.01 (30) | 0.02 (30) | 100% | 0 | 0 | 30 |
| Southwest | 0.21 (17) | 0.19 (17) | -10% | 3 | 2 | 12 |
| Statewide | 0.84 (114) | 0.83 (117) | -1% | 26 | 23 | 65 |

According to Scott Walter, DNR upland wildlife ecologist, maturation of southern Wisconsin's forest community in recent decades and the resulting loss of dense, brushy areas that grouse need for cover has led to a lower ruffed grouse population.

"Ruffed grouse are closely linked to young forest habitats that develop following disturbances, notably logging activities," Walter said. "While we often focus as hunters on grouse numbers in a single year, it's important to remember that the long-term health of grouse and other early-successional wildlife is dependent upon the availability of the dense young cover they require. In Wisconsin, we need to ensure that enough timber harvests are occurring to meet the habitat needs of ruffed grouse and other early-successional dependent wildlife."

In regard to the slight increase in northern Wisconsin, Gary Zimmer, coordinating biologist for the Ruffed Grouse Society, points to this past winter's harsh weather.

"While cold temperatures and deep snow are generally hard on resident wildlife populations, ruffed grouse often thrive in winters like the one we just experienced," noted Zimmer. "Grouse roost under the snow, which can effectively serve as a blanket to hide them from predators' view and keep them warm even during very cold periods. It might be well below zero out in the open, but under even a few inches of snow the temperature might only be a few degrees below freezing. Grouse also utilize tree buds as food during winter, so snow cover doesn't reduce food availability."

Zimmer continues, "Weather conditions, especially during the brood rearing period in late May and early June, also play an important role in the fall ruffed grouse numbers. Newly-hatched grouse chicks are very sensitive to chilling, and warm, dry conditions allow high survival during the first few weeks of life."

"Grouse hunters are used to the cyclic nature of ruffed grouse populations, and know that during low periods grouse can still be found in the best cover. Hunters might have to work a bit harder to flush birds, but sunny October days with your dog in the north woods are tough to beat, and Wisconsin still has some of the best grouse hunting in the country," Zimmer said.

Complete survey results can be found by visiting dnr.wi.gov and searching for "[wildlife reports](#)."

Ottawa NF Announces Draft Decision for Pori Junction Vegetative Management Project

Kenton District Ranger, Barbara C. Van Alstine, announced on May 28th the availability of the Draft Decision Notice for the Pori Junction Vegetation Management Project (VMP)) selecting Alternative 2 as the preferred alternative. The project area is located on the Ottawa's Kenton Ranger and Ontonagon Ranger Districts in the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The project area lies about five miles east of Mass City, Michigan, while the southern portion of the project area begins about eight miles northwest of Kenton, Michigan. The project area encompasses approximately 30,000 acres, of which about 28,000 acres are National Forest System lands.

Alternative 2, which has been supported by the Ruffed Grouse Society during its development, includes the regeneration of 1838 acres of mature or over-mature aspen habitat and the maintenance or creation of 65 acres of wildlife openings along with the maintenance of up to 124 acres on the Kits Creek large opening.

The project is subject to the Forest Service's pre-decisional administrative review process and is currently in its 45 day objection period. We look forward to seeing this project move forward.

Additional information on this and other on-going projects on the Ottawa National Forest can be found at the Forest's website: <http://fs.usda.gov/goto/ottawa/projects> or by contacting Victoria Hahka, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, at the Watersmeet-Iron River Ranger Districts' office (telephone: 906-358-4049 or e-mail: vhahka@fs.fed.us) or Marlanea French-Pombier (telephone: 906-358-4031 or e-mail: mfrenchpombier@fs.fed.us)

A Passion for Grouse – Top Sports/Rec. Book of 2013

A Passion for Grouse, a 560-page book focused on everything grouse from hunting to habitat in all grouse regions across the nation, has won the Gold Medal Award from Independent Publisher as the best sports or recreation book of 2013. That's pretty cool if you are a grouse hunter.

RGS Director of Conservation Policy Dan Dessecker is featured with a chapter, and you can also support RGS by purchasing limited edition versions of this classic grouse book, which will be available at RGS banquets throughout 2014.

A Passion for Grouse can be purchased directly from the publisher by visiting www.wildriverpress.com or by telephone at 425-486-3638. Wouldn't it make a great Father's Day present for that special grouse hunter in the family?

Fun Quiz on Poison Ivy

The University of Minnesota Extension has provided a link to a fun quiz on identifying poison ivy; something forest users like grouse and woodcock hunters should want to learn to identify. Take the photo quiz yourself by clicking the following:

[How reliably can you identify poison ivy?](#)

Last Chance to Sign up 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.

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 contact Jamie Nack at 608-265-8264 or by email at jlnack@wisc.edu . Attendance is limited. More information is available on the Coverts Project website: http://forestandwildlifeecology.wisc.edu/wl_extension/wicovertsproject.html . **The deadline for this year's applications is June 15th.**

Upcoming RGS Events in the Region

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 17 – John Keener (Madison) Chapter Shoot/Banquet at Milford Hills Sportsmen's Club, Johnson Creek, WI. See RGS website for details.

August 20 – Twin Cities Minnesota Chapter Banquet, Earl Browne heritage Center, See RGS website for details.

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

August 23 – Iowa Chapter Banquet, Holiday Inn, Dubuque. See RGS website for details.

August 28 – Chain O'Lakes Chapter Banquet, Whitetail Inn, St. Germaine, WI. See RGS website for details.

September 9 – Northeast Wisconsin Chapter Banquet, Rock Garden Supper Club, Green Bay. See RGS website for details.

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:
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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.