



Photo by Gary Kraszewski

# Western Great Lakes Region FAN UPDATE

Volume 13, Issue 2

June 18, 2013

---

## **Changes in the Wind**

Without a doubt, a lot has happened since the March FAN Update was distributed to folks. The spring drumming season is past and we have just received the news on the results for Wisconsin. It shows the impact, especially in Northern Wisconsin, of last year's dry, warm spring and one of the better hatching years for grouse in recent times. Unfortunately the inverse appears to be happening this year and while drumming numbers are up slightly I and others expect fall grouse numbers to be down from last year.

As you most likely read either in the most recent RGS magazine or in newspaper reports I was honored to be selected as the newest member to the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board and began my 6 year term on May 1<sup>st</sup>. To

squelch some rumors this is not a change in jobs and I remain with the Ruffed Grouse Society in my current position. The Natural Resources Board position is a voluntary position that does require a significant time commitment. I appreciate my supervisor, RGS President/CEO John Eichinger, allowing me the time to accept this challenging position. I also appreciate the support that I have received from RGS staff and members since the announcement was made.

*Gary*

---

## **Wisconsin's Ruffed Grouse Population Shows Expected Decrease in 2012**

MADISON – Ruffed grouse populations in Wisconsin have shown another slight decline this spring, according to a recently completed roadside ruffed grouse survey.

Ruffed grouse populations are known to boom and bust over a nine- to 11-year cycle, according to Brian Dhuey, Wildlife Surveys Coordinator for the Department of Natural Resources. The index that Wisconsin uses to track ruffed grouse decreased 9 percent between 2012 and 2013. “This decrease isn’t the best news for grouse hunters, but it’s expected at this point in the population cycle,” Dhuey said.

“Spring arrived fairly late in Wisconsin in 2013, but conditions for the survey were still rated ‘excellent’ on 58 percent of the routes. This is only a 3.3 percent drop from the number of routes with excellent conditions in 2012, and is still above the long-term average,” Dhuey said.

The number of drums heard per stop was down 9 percent state-wide in 2013 from the previous year. While one of the primary regions for grouse in the state, the central region, showed an 18 percent drop in the number of drums heard per stop, the other primary region in the north showed a 2 percent increase (Table 1). Grouse numbers remain low in the southeast and southwest regions, due to maturation of southern Wisconsin’s forest community in recent decades and the resulting loss of the dense, brushy areas that grouse need for cover. Intensive surveys were also run on two research areas, with the Sandhill Wildlife Area in Wood County showing a decline of 5 percent and the Stone Lake Experimental Area in Oneida County showing an increase of 2 percent.

“This drop in breeding grouse was not unexpected, as grouse populations tend to be at their peak in years ending in a 9 or 0 in Wisconsin. In 2011 we had an increase in grouse and were probably at the cyclic peak, so the declines shown in 2012 and now in 2013 are inevitable,” Dhuey said.

The cold, wet weather experienced so far by much of the state may also impact the number of birds hunters can expect to see in the woods this fall, especially if it continues through the June brood-rearing period when chicks are susceptible to chilling. “While overall it seems there’s going to be fewer grouse in the north woods this year than last, we’re still well above the low point of the

cycle, and areas of good cover should still hold birds,” said Scott Walter, DNR Upland Wildlife Ecologist. “The drumming surveys are helpful for tracking population trends over the long term, but are not necessarily the best predictors of local harvest or hunting opportunities. The most successful hunters are still going to be those who spend the most time in the field and cover the most ground,” Walter said.

Ruffed grouse are closely linked to young forest habitats that develop following large disturbances, notably logging activities. “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 our ability to create the dense young cover they require,” added Walter. “Lacking significant, broad-scale forms of natural disturbance such as fire, we therefore need to ensure that intensive timber harvests remain a component of our forest management activities.”

**Table 1.** *Ruffed Grouse drumming results 2012-2013, drums per stop (routes run), % change, and number of routes with a change of greater than 2 drums per route from 2012 levels.*

<b>Region</b>	<b>Drums/Stop 2012 (routes run)</b>	<b>Drums/Stop 2013 (routes run)</b>	<b>% Change</b>
<i>Central</i>	1.04 (26)	0.85 (26)	- 18%
<i>Northern</i>	1.75 (42)	1.78 (38)	2%
<i>Southeast</i>	0.013 (30)	0.010 (30)	-25%
<i>Southwest</i>	0.32 (17)	0.21 (17)	- 35%
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>0.93 (115)</b>	<b>0.84 (111)</b>	<b>- 9%</b>

---

## **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.

*Gary's Note: Regionally woodcock singing males numbers in 2013 varied by state compared to 2012 levels with Michigan showing a 5.73% increase, Minnesota a 12.89% decrease and Wisconsin a 2.06% increase. The entire report can soon be viewed at: <http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/NewsPublicationsReports.html> , click on population status under annual reports.*

---

## **Michigan DNRE Invites Public Input on Forest Plans for Baraga Forest Management Unit**

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment will also host an open house from 3 – 7 PM on Wednesday, June 26th at the Baraga Operations Service Center at 427 US 41N in Baraga, MI to provide information and receive public comment on proposed forest management treatments for 2015 Year-of-Entry compartments on the Baraga Forest Management Unit, which includes Baraga, Houghton, Ontonagon and Keweenaw counties in the UP.

Maps and information regarding the proposed treatments will be available at the open house. The information can also be found at [http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-30301\\_30505-66155--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-30301_30505-66155--,00.html) .

On Wednesday, July 17 at 9:30 AM, the DNR will complete its formal compartment reviews to decide on final treatment plans for these areas also at the Baraga Operations Service Center.

This is a good opportunity for ruffed grouse/woodcock hunters to express their interests in maintaining habitat for their favorite birds on these public lands.

---

## **Only 10 Days Left to Enter the RGS 2013 National Raffle**

The June 28<sup>th</sup> deadline is quickly approaching for a chance to enter the 2013 RGS National Raffle and help support the organization and maybe win one of four fantastic prizes. Purchase tickets by calling RGS HQ at (888) 564-6747 or contacting Gary Zimmer at 715-674-7505 or [garyz@ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:garyz@ruffedgrousesociety.org) . The donation is \$20.00 per ticket. Four winners will be drawn on June 28, 2013.

**Four chances to win. WINNER'S CHOICE! - First winner selects choice of 4 prizes, second winner selects from remaining 3, etc.**

Prizes include:

**First prize: Orvis Uplander Deluxe;** a 20-gauge over-and-under with 28" barrels, produced in a limited edition of 10. \$7,995 value. **Orvis Company, Donor.**

**Second prize: South Dakota pheasant hunt at Pine Shadows Daybreak** lodge near Frederick. During the 2013-14 season two people will enjoy three days and four nights hunting pheasant on Orvis-endorsed wingshooting grounds. All meals, lodging, ammunition, dogs, guides, and bird-cleaning included as well as airfare up to \$1,000; upon arrival, transportation to and from airport and hunting grounds provided. The value of this package is over \$7,000. **Pine Shadows Daybreak, Hunt Donor.**

**Third prize: Kansas quail hunt with certified Orvis wingshooting guide Steve Grossman.** Two hunters will spend three days and four nights during the 2013-14 season in southcentral Kansas near Medicine Lodge, hunting wild bobwhite over English setters on over 22,000 acres - including open prairie, river bottoms and draws of cedar. Two hunters per guide, double guns only and fresh dogs will be on the ground all day long. All meals and airfare up to \$1,000 is included. The value of this package is \$5,800. **Double Gun Bird Hunts, Hunt Donor.**

**Fourth prize:** Attendance for two people at the **2013 National Grouse and Woodcock Hunt** in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. Three days/4 nights October 8-11, 2013 at the Sawmill Inn, Grand Rapids, Minnesota. Deluxe, guided hunt includes double occupancy lodging at the Sawmill, Outdoor Festival at the local gun club and two full days of grouse and woodcock hunting with experienced guides and trained bird dogs. All meals, bird cleaning, transportation to and from hunting areas, many extras and airfare up to \$1,000 included. The value of the hunt is \$3,450. The winner of this prize has the option of waiving the hunt in lieu of \$2,500 cash - your choice! All raffle participants will receive a free issue of *Orvis News*. Winners responsible for applicable taxes.

---

## **U.S. Supreme Court Reverses Devastating Decision to Forest Wildlife Habitat**

Coraopolis, PA – The Ruffed Grouse Society applauds the U.S. Supreme Court in its decision to reverse a 9th Circuit Court ruling to further regulate forest management -- Decker v. Northwest Environmental Defense Center, U.S. No. 11-338 (March 20, 2013) -- a judgment that was potentially devastating to forest wildlife habitat. The reversal makes a strong statement against additional and unnecessary permitting of forest management practices and is good news for forest wildlife.

In 2010, the 9th Circuit Court in California ruled that rainwater runoff from forest roads caused by timber harvest and other forest management activities was an “industrial pollutant”, and therefore subject to permitting regulations under the Clean Water Act authorized by the Environmental Protection Agency. This overturned 35 years of existing harvesting practices and regulatory interpretation.

If allowed to stand, the decision would require that all landowners, including private individuals, spend considerable amounts of time and money to apply for

appropriate permits through the EPA. This process would greatly discourage private individuals from implementing management practices on their lands. Such a decision would drastically reduce the habitat availability for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and other forest wildlife that thrive on the young forest habitat created only through forest management. Undoubtedly, the regulations would expand to a nationwide mandate.

Because of the potential negative impacts on forest habitat development, the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) filed an Amicus Curiae brief with the Supreme Court prior to its decision. Oral arguments were heard in December 2012, and the final decision came down March 20, 2013.

The Supreme Court determined that the EPA has been historically consistent in interpreting its own rule to not require such permitting for forest road runoff, and therefore, the agency's interpretation should receive deference unless plainly erroneous or inconsistent. In addition, multiple states have existing best management practices for addressing rainwater runoff on logging roads, so additional federal regulation would simply be duplicative or counterproductive. The attorneys general for 31 states joined with RGS to file briefs with the Supreme Court in opposition to the 9th Circuit ruling.

---

## **Government Proposes to Remove Gray Wolf from Endangered Species List**

The federal government took steps on June 14th to remove [endangered species protections for gray wolves](#) in the lower 48 states, contending that the population of the apex predator has recovered from decades of unregulated hunting and trapping that drove it to virtual extinction.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service formally proposed removing the gray wolf from the list of threatened and endangered species, noting that 6,100 wolves now roam the contiguous United States, the vast majority of them in the northern Rockies and western Great Lakes regions. Protections were removed for wolves in those areas in 2011 and 2012; the new rule would end protection everywhere else.

Some state officials have complained that uncontrolled growth of wolves threatens ranching, hunting and other animal populations. In March, [72 members of Congress sent the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service a letter](#) requesting the end of endangered species protections for the wolf.

“Our analysis suggests the gray wolf no longer faces the threat of extinction and no longer requires the protection of the Endangered Species Act,” Dan Ashe, the wildlife agency's director, said during a telephone news conference.

At the same time, Ashe's agency proposed giving Mexican wolves protection as a distinct sub-species. Despite efforts to revive that population, there are only 75 Mexican wolves in Arizona and New Mexico to date.

Publication of the new rule in the Federal Register will trigger a 90-day comment period. If the rule goes into effect, the wolves would be subject to the management policies of individual states.

---

## **Minnesota Pine County Forest Trail Review - Public Comments Due June 24th**

The Minnesota DNR is accepting comments through June 24<sup>th</sup> on the Forest Trail Review Process for the Pine County State Forests (Chengwatana, General Andrews, St. Croix, and Nemadji) in Eastern Minnesota.

Minnesota DNR staff reviewed initial public comments, held a number of internal working meetings, and developed a set of recommendations for public review. The recommendations are displayed on the DNR website, along with summaries for each forest. The link to the information is:

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/mgmtplans/ohv/designation/revisions.html>

In summary, there would be little overall change in net motorized trail miles – some Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) trail segments will be undesignated and about an equal mileage of new OHV trail is proposed for designation. The DNR believes the new designations will improve trail connections, provide a greater variety of riding opportunities, and improve the trail systems overall. The most significant change in motorized trail opportunity is designation of around 20 miles of trail for ORV use.

Of interest to RGS members are that approximately 50 miles of hunter-walking trails are proposed, and nearly 33,000 acres would be included in designated “areas with limitations” where the hunting and trapping exemptions for off-trail and undesignated trail use would not apply.

The focus of this effort is to complete the motorized trail systems that were designated in the 2003 to 2008 forest classification and trail designation process. The DNR is not proposing new trails for dogsledding, horseback riding, mountain biking or skiing as these uses are generally allowed anywhere in these forests. Additional snowmobile trail designations are not proposed.

Send comments to Rebecca Wooden, Minnesota State Parks and Trails, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4039, by fax at 651-297-1157, or by e-mail to [Rebecca.Wooden@state.mn.us](mailto:Rebecca.Wooden@state.mn.us) .

---

## **Tick Borne Disease Update Available**

The University of Minnesota Extension and Department of Forest Resources recently [updated their tick-borne diseases](#) page to include a very good UMN Sustainable Forests Education Cooperative presentation on risks from Lyme and other tick-borne diseases.

---

# **Volunteers help Michigan DNRE Biologists Band Woodcock**

## **Michigan DNRE Press Release**

For the majority of pointing-dog enthusiasts, nothing compares to autumn, when hunting season is open and hunters can spend their days with their best friends in pursuit of upland birds. But for a small minority of bird-dog aficionados, there's even more fun to be had in spring.

Spring is the other bird season: banding season, when hunters exchange their firearms for landing nets and pursue woodcock with the express purpose of capturing them, only to release them as soon as they've been festooned with small metal leg bands.

From April until June, a small contingent of dedicated bird-dog owners takes to the wood lots of Michigan to locate and band the needle-nosed migrants. The bands that are returned by hunters provide important information to wildlife managers about the population, distribution and life history of woodcock.

Mottled brown birds with long beaks that they use to feed by probing the moist earth for invertebrates, woodcock are so well camouflaged that their first instinct, when approached, is to freeze. That makes them perfect for pursuit with pointing dogs.

Michigan leads the nation in woodcock banding, largely because of its volunteer army of woodcock banders. Every year, volunteers spend more than 1,000 hours in Michigan wood lots, banding 1,000 or more woodcock.

Michigan has been in the forefront of banding since 1960, when federal wildlife officials asked state natural resources agencies in woodcock production states to help band large numbers of woodcock for a population study. Michigan wildlife biologist G. A. "Andy" Ammann participated in the banding effort and helped refine the technique of using pointing dogs to locate woodcock broods.

By 1965, six people, mostly professional wildlife biologists, were actively banding woodcock in Michigan. But as time progressed, Ammann and others trained volunteers to join the effort. By the mid 1990's, there were about 100 volunteers banding woodcock in the state.

The drill is fairly simple: Volunteers take to the forests with their dogs. The dogs point nesting or brooding woodcock hens. Using long-handled nets, the volunteers capture the hens -- if they can - which they'll band before they release them. But they also look for nests or chicks on the ground.

The mottled brown and yellow chicks blend perfectly into the early spring vegetation; it takes eagle eyes to spot them as they remain motionless, waiting for the perceived danger to pass. The banders work quickly to minimize stress to the chicks, measuring the chick's beak to help determine its age. (Woodcock are born with a 14 mm beak and it grows 2 mm a day). They attach a thin metal band with a serial number to the chick's leg and record all relevant data. Then they release the chicks. The hen and chicks soon re-unite.

Not just anyone can band woodcock. Would-be woodcock banders must attend a mandatory workshop, study under the guidance of an experienced bander, and have their dogs certified as able to perform the task without jeopardizing the birds' safety. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment issue permits to allowing individuals to band woodcock.

---

## **TruckVault to Support RGS Again – Vote Often!**

TruckVault Cares ... for conservation, canines & kids 4th annual initiative, the third involving RGS, is ready for takeoff. [Voting](#) begins June 25 and every vote counts to determine the percentage of the \$10,000 that RGS will receive. Add the [TruckVault Cares...](#) and [TruckVault Cares facebook](#) pages to your Internet browser home pages and vote every day. Use the **Forward this email** link at the bottom to spread the word to your family and friends.

Scott Linden's TV show Wingshooting USA will launch the [promotion](#) on July 1. Major sponsor of the promotion TruckVault is joined by Filson, Happy Jack, Royal Flush Adventures, Webley & Scott, Kent Cartridge and Pursuit Channel to offer the money to the organizations and prizes to the voters. Thank you to all of the sponsors.

New this year is an effort to mobilize even more support (and funds) via Facebook. In addition to simply "Liking" the TruckVault Cares Facebook page, everyone is encouraged to vote for their favorite group there in addition to the voting at the TruckVault web page. It allows each voter to spread the word on Facebook by clicking on "Share" and "Rally" buttons generating even greater reach. Use both methods for voting - there are separate prize packages on each. And of course, voting yourself then hitting those "Share" and "Rally" buttons won't hurt either!

---

## **New RGS Email Addresses**

It's easier than ever to contact RGS staff as we are now using a corporate email address, [ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:ruffedgrousesociety.org) . Just place the RGS staff person's first name and first letter of their last name followed by the corporate connection and a message can be on its way. For example, my new email address is [garyz@ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:garyz@ruffedgrousesociety.org) . Please update your address books to reflect these changes as soon as possible in order to keep in contact with us.

---

## **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 Senior Biologist,  
Ruffed Grouse Society

PO Box 116, Laona WI 54541

Phone: (715) 674-7505; email: [garyz@ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:garyz@ruffedgrousesociety.org)

The Ruffed Grouse Society is the one international 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](http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org).