



Western Great Lakes Region FAN UPDATE

Volume 12, Issue 2

June 19, 2012

2012 – A Different Year in the Western Great Lakes

We are definitely experiencing an “unusual” weather year so far in this region and its effects on wildlife are being noticed. A lack of winter left most resident wildlife in great shape. Researchers have noticed a significant increase in sizes of newborn fawns this year. Woodcock arrived a month earlier than “usual” and some broods were fledged by May 1st, way ahead of “normal”. Grouse even got things going a little earlier this year with the first broods appearing a week to 10 days ahead of schedule. For grouse broods that came off early they did encounter a cool, wet period and that had some impact on the young birds. However, that weather quickly changed and any broods hatching closer to “normal” appear to be doing well. Also the early spring resulted in a quicker flush of vegetation and better cover for nesting hens and young broods. The first drumming reports and woodcock counts are in and those reports follow.

Gary

Wisconsin Grouse Entering Downside of Population Cycle

MADISON – Ruffed grouse populations in Wisconsin appear to be entering a downswing, 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 25 percent between 2011 and 2012. “While this is a bit of bad news for grouse hunters, it should not be too big of a surprise,” Dhuey said. “We were overdue for the expected downturn.”

A roadside survey to monitor the number of breeding grouse has been conducted by staff from the DNR and U.S. Forest Service, and numerous grouse enthusiasts and volunteers since 1964. Surveyors begin 30 minutes before sun rise and drive along established routes, making 10 stops at assigned points and listening for four minutes for the distinctive “thump, thump, thump” drumming sounds made by male grouse. Results from this survey have helped DNR biologists monitor the cyclic population dynamics of ruffed grouse in the state.

“Spring arrived early in Wisconsin in 2012, and conditions for the survey were rated ‘excellent’ on 60 percent of the routes. This was about the same as last year’s 62 percent and above the long-term average,” Dhuey said. The number of drums heard per stop was down 25 percent in 2012 from the previous year. Both of the primary regions for grouse in the state, the central and northern forest areas, showed declines of 21 and 26 percent, respectively. The only area to showed an increase was the southeast, where grouse exist in only isolated areas of suitable young forest habitat and are not common.

The number of routes that showed a decline in the number of drums heard outpaced those that showed an increase by better than 2:1 margin. Results from the survey matched declines seen on two research areas, with the Sandhill Wildlife Area showing a decline of 11 percent and the Stone Lake Experimental Area showing a decline of 18 percent. Complete survey results can be found on the DNR website (search [Wildlife Reports](#)).

“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. Last year we had an increase in grouse and were probably at the cyclic peak, a decline was inevitable,” Dhuey said.

“Early weather conditions are excellent for nesting and brood rearing, if we can stay normal or above for temperatures and have a bit of dry weather, we should have a pretty good brood year. I would expect that hunters will see a decline in the number of birds they see afield this fall, but areas of good cover should still hold birds. In years with low grouse numbers, hunters who find success are generally those willing to explore new coverts, as grouse will tend to occupy only the best habitat available and may not be found in the same areas where hunters found them in recent years,” he said.

American Woodcock Population Status, 2012

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

Abstract: Singing-ground Survey data for 2012 indicate that indices for singing American woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) males in the Eastern and Central Management Regions are not significantly different from 2011. There was no significant 10-year trend for woodcock heard in the Eastern or Central Management Regions during 2002-12. This marks the ninth consecutive year that the 10-year trend estimate was not significant in the Eastern Region and the second year that the 10-year trend in the Central Management Region was non-significant. Both regions have a long term (1968-12) declining trend of -0.8 % per year. The 2011 recruitment index for the U.S. portion of the Eastern Region (1.68 immature per adult female) was 13.7% greater than the 2010 index and 2.5% greater than the long-term regional index, while the recruitment index for the U.S. portion of the Central Region (1.53 immature per adult female) was 0.8% lower than the 2010 index and was 2.6% lower than the long-term regional index. Estimates from the Harvest Information Program indicated that U.S. woodcock hunters in the Eastern Region spent 156,000 days afield and harvested 77,000 woodcock during the 2011-12 season, while in the Central Region, hunters spent 350,500 days afield and harvested 231,700 woodcock.

Gary's Note: Regionally woodcock numbers in 2012 remained fairly close to 2011 levels with Michigan showing a 1.75% increase in singing males, Minnesota a 2.03% decrease and Wisconsin a 9.34% increase. The entire report can be viewed at

<http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/NewReportsPublications/PopulationStatus/Woodcock/2012%20American%20Woodcock%20Population%20Status,%202012.pdf>

Wisconsin VPA Program Continues to Expand

A total of 197 lease agreements with private landowners covering a total of 34,573 acres are now open for hunting, fishing, trapping and wildlife viewing under the Voluntary Public Access (VPA) program offered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. This program, authorized under the 2008 Farm Bill provides financial incentives to private landowners who open their property to these recreational activities.

With the grant period ending on September 30, 2012, the state needs to enroll additional lands into the program. Nearly every county in the southern 2/3rds of Wisconsin is included in this program. To learn more about this program or obtain maps of these open lands go to

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/vpa.htm>

Only 10 Days Left to Enter the RGS 2012 National Raffle

The June 29th deadline is quickly approaching for a chance to enter the 2012 RGS National Raffle and help support the organization and possibly win one of three quality shotguns.

1st Prize: Connecticut Shotgun A-10 American Deluxe (Retail: \$9,400)

2nd Prize: Caesar Guerini RGS Unique APEX Grade (Retail:\$8,495)

3rd Prize: Ithaca Grade III Model 37 Featherlight (Retail: \$3,500)

Buy your ticket now!

Click <http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/shoppingcart/magento/guns/rgs-national-raffle-ticket-2012.html> for information or to enter online

or call

1-888-564-6747

***Online orders must be placed by 8 am Eastern DST June 29, 2012. Phone orders (1-888-564-6747) end at 5 pm Eastern DST June 28, 2012 ***

Donation for each ticket is \$100.

Drawing is on June 29, 2012 at RGS Headquarters.

Michigan DNR Upgrades MI-Hunt Internet Tool

Mi-HUNT, originally released in 2010, is a cutting-edge internet application that displays multiple layers of information, which can be customized to fit specific outdoor interests and trip planning needs. This sophisticated application allows hunters and outdoor enthusiasts to view, print, measure, and create custom routing to their desired destinations.

Improvements to Mi-HUNT were important in order to address the need for increased functionality, which provides additional information for hunt planning. This upgrade simplifies the experience while simultaneously increasing the amount of information and tools available to the user. Additionally, there is interactive help for the user through video tutorials.

New or enhanced features to Mi-HUNT now make it possible to:

- View 7 million acres of DNR and United States Forest Service (USFS) lands and printable hunting maps highlighting the vegetation of most interest to hunters;
- View detailed information on Hunter Access Program (HAP) lands and

- view or print downloadable maps for all HAP lands;
- View detailed information on State Game and Wildlife Areas, including information on wildlife species and Wildlife Division management activities, and view or print detailed maps;
- Target specific types of habitat, create waypoints and load this information directly into your personal GPS;
- Use simplified and enhanced legends as well as complete instructional videos where you can watch and learn how to use all of the Mi-HUNT application features.

For more information on MI-Hunt go to

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10371_14793_55471-231810--,00.html

Iowa Sportsmen, Retailers, and Business Leaders Join Forces to Promote Hunting

(Des Moines, IA) – A broad group of local and regional leaders representing Iowa chambers of commerce, convention and visitors bureaus, sporting organizations (including the Ruffed Grouse Society), small businesses, and retailers announced the launch of the Hunting Works for Iowa partnership. Stressing the major impact hunting has on Iowa’s economy, the organization pointed to sportsmen and women as key drivers of in-state commerce.

“Governor Branstad and I are both excited to see a group like Hunting Works for Iowa come together. Every industry that helps Iowa grow and prosper is important to us, and make no mistake that includes hunting,” said Lt. Governor Reynolds. “The economic benefit that hunting brings to our state is far too important to be overlooked, and we are pleased that this group has been formed to highlight how important hunting is to our local and state economies.”

According to the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation, each year 251,000 people hunt in Iowa. Iowa hunters spend over \$288 million each year and the resulting economic impact translates to \$23.4 million in state and local taxes, 6,200 Iowa jobs and a \$359.5 million ripple effect on the state economy.

The Hunting Works for Iowa partnership will monitor public policy decisions and weigh in on hunting-related issues that impact Iowa’s economy and any jobs derived from the sport. Hunting Works for Iowa will serve as a vehicle to facilitate important public policy dialogue and to tell the story of how Iowa’s hunting heritage positively effects conservation and jobs throughout the state.

For more information on Hunting Works for Iowa check out the organization’s website at <http://huntingworksforia.com>

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: rgszimm@gmail.com

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.