

From: Gary Zimmer [mailto:rgszimm@newnorth.net]
Sent: Monday, July 06, 2009 3:14 PM
To: FAN Member
Subject: FAN UPDATE



Western Great Lakes Region FAN UPDATE

Volume 9, Issue 3

July 6, 2009

RGS Members Complete 28th Work Day in NE Wisconsin

Work day coordinator Dave Bartz (third from right in the back row in picture above) and other members of the NE Wisconsin (Green Bay) Chapter along with representatives of several Wisconsin RGS chapters and the US Forest Service gather for lunch at the conclusion of another successful habitat work day. Held on June 20th at one of the entry points to the US Forest Service's Goose Lake Hunter Walking Trail System south of Armstrong Creek, Wisconsin on the Chequamegon/Nicolet National Forest, the work crew cleared woody debris and widened a loop of this extensive hunter walking trail system. This was one of three separate field days that Bartz coordinated for RGS members in Northeastern Wisconsin in 2009 and the 28th Work Day he and other RGS chapter members have been involved in over the years. Photo by Scott Anderson, US Forest Service.

Regional Grouse and Woodcock Forecast

Illinois -

Ruffed grouse are not hunted in Illinois and no spring drumming surveys are conducted. US Fish and Wildlife Service woodcock singing-ground counts in 2009 showed a 1.72 percent increase in singing males with 0.67 singing males heard per route surveyed.

Iowa -

Terry Haindfield, Wildlife Biologist on the Upper Iowa Wildlife Unit of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources reports, "Although early successional habitat conditions for ruffed grouse have declined in Iowa over the past 20 years, recent efforts to restore these habitats have improved grouse numbers from last year. Favorable weather conditions along with the upswing in the cycle should give additional birds for die-hard hunters willing to kick the brush to experience the explosion of a flush. Continued habitat improvements on Iowa Department of Natural Resources public lands and the expansion of these efforts on private land will no doubt create the necessary conditions for future improvements for not only ruffed grouse but also woodcock."

Iowa is not included in the US Fish and Wildlife Services woodcock singing-ground surveys.

Michigan –

DNR Eastern Upper Peninsula Region Wildlife Biologist Terry Minzey reports, "In 2009, drumming routes surveyed in the EUP heard an average of 1.7 drums per sample point. This is a 6% decrease over the 1.8 drums per sample point heard in 2008. This spring has been cool and wet up to this point, conditions not entirely suitable for high brood production."

Flush rates for ruffed grouse reported for the 2008 early fall hunting season showed a statewide slight decrease from the 2007 season, In 2008, 2.4 ruffed grouse were reported flushed per hour of hunting across the state while in 2007 2.5 ruffed grouse were flushed per hour by hunters. Individual counties with the highest flush rates for ruffed grouse were Marquette, Gladwin, Ontonagon, Grand Traverse, and Crawford.

In terms of woodcock, Minzey reports, "The 2009 survey produced an average of 8.4 peenting woodcock/route in the Eastern Upper Peninsula. This is the highest number of peenting woodcock heard since 1999 and represents a 13% increase over the 2008 level (7.4 peenting woodcock/route)."

US Fish and Wildlife woodcock singing-ground counts in 2009 showed a 1.4 percent increase in singing males in Michigan with 4.08 singing males heard per route surveyed.

For woodcock, flush rates declined dramatically in 2008 with 0.9 woodcock flushed per hour by hunters compared to 2.4 woodcock per hour in 2007. Wexford, Allegan, Gladwin, Kalkaska and Mackinac Counties had the highest flush rates for woodcock.

Missouri –

Andrew Forbes, Missouri Department of Conservation Wildlife Biologist reported, "

"Grouse numbers are still low, and numbers of drumming males on standardized surveys on public land are similar to those of last year. This year, there have been more opportunistic sightings of grouse in the River Hills Focus Area of central Missouri (of mostly single birds) than in recent years, however the frequency of reports are still far lower than desirable. Weather conditions this spring have again been poor, with lots of rain and local flooding."

Missouri is not included in the US Fish and Wildlife Services woodcock singing-ground surveys.

Wisconsin –

Brian Dhuey, Wisconsin DNR Wildlife Researcher reports, “Statewide ruffed grouse population indices increased 3 % between 2008 and 2009 based on the number of drumming grouse heard during roadside surveys. Final tallies show .94 drums per stop across the state.” The central and northern regions showed improvements in drumming activity over last year with 14 percent and 6 percent increases, respectively. The southeast region showed a decrease of 58 percent while the southwest region showed a decline of 24 percent fewer drums than in 2008. Drummer densities on the Sandhill Wildlife research census area in Wood County increased 21%, while drummers on the Stone Lake Experimental Area in Oneida County decreased 8% from 2008 levels. Dhuey goes on to say that, “This is the fourth increase in the ruffed grouse index in the last 4 years. It would appear that Wisconsin is still on the upswing of the current grouse cycle.”

Overall spring brood rearing conditions have been somewhat favorable for ruffed grouse across the state so far with a short cool, wet period across the north during the last week of May, just as the first broods were hatching. The first two weeks of June were much more favorable for broods with dry, warm weather.

US Fish and Wildlife Service woodcock singing ground surveys from 2009 were up 1.15% from 2008 numbers for Wisconsin with 2.57 singing males heard per survey route. Conditions were generally favorable for nesting and brood rearing of woodcock once lingering remnants of winter disappeared in mid-April.

It is likely that both ruffed grouse and woodcock populations in northern and central Wisconsin this fall will be similar or slightly higher than in 2008.

Minnesota Drumming Counts Up 44%

Report by Dan Dessecker, RGS Director of Conservation Policy

The ruffed grouse drumming survey results released from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources indicated 2.4 drums per stop this spring across the northern part of the state. This represents a 44% increase over last year’s counts. The bulk of Minnesota’s ruffed grouse habitat is in the northern areas. Central Minnesota had 1.1 drums per stop, and the Southeast had 0.5 drums per stop. These results are similar to last year’s numbers. Spring brood-rearing conditions were cool and wet, which is not

the ideal weather for chick survival. However, there were no significant weather events that could be expected to elevate chick mortality.

Results from the US Fish and Wildlife Service woodcock singing ground survey showed an 11% increase from 2008 in the statewide woodcock population. These results are somewhat surprising due to the severe snow storms that struck northern Minnesota in early April of both 2007 and 2008. These storms may not have had as dramatic an impact on local woodcock populations as was anticipated.

American Woodcock Population Status, 2009

By Thomas R. Cooper and Keri Parker., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Abstract: Singing-ground Survey data for 2009 indicated that indices for singing American woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) males in the Eastern and Central Management Regions are not significantly different from 2008. There was no significant 10-year trend for woodcock heard in either management region during 1999-2009. This represents the sixth consecutive year that the 10-year trend estimate did not indicate a significant decline in the Eastern Region. The 10-year trend in the Central Region returned to stability after showing a significant decline last year. Both regions have a long-term (1968-09) declining trend of -1.1 % per year. The 2008 recruitment index for the U.S. portion of the Eastern Region (1.8 immatures per adult female) was 11.1 % greater than the 2007 index and 7.6 % above the long-term regional index, while the recruitment index for the U.S. portion of the Central Region (1.6 immatures per adult female) was 6.3 % greater than the 2007 index and was 1.1 % lower than the long-term regional index. Estimates from the Harvest Information Program indicated that U.S. woodcock hunters in the Eastern Region spent 169,000 days afield and harvested 104,700 woodcock during the 2008-09 season, while in the Central Region, hunters spent 369,800 days afield and harvested 174,300 woodcock.

Editors note: The complete 2009 Report can be viewed at <http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/NewReportsPublications/PopulationStatus/Woodcock/AMWO%20status%20report%202009.pdf>

Wanted - 1 Ton Truck

RGS is still in need of a 1 ton pickup truck, preferably with a gooseneck hitch, to haul the new Michigan ASV machine around to work sites. Anyone with any leads on a used truck in good condition please notify

Gary Zimmer at 715-674-7505 or by email at rgszimm@newnorth.net. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is providing a truck to tow the Wisconsin unit.

New Chief Named for US Forest Service

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that Tom Tidwell will serve as the new Chief for the U.S. Forest Service. "Tom Tidwell's 32 years of experience in our forests and impressive track record of collaboration and problem-solving will help us tackle the great challenges ahead," said Vilsack.

Tidwell has spent 32 years with the Forest Service in a variety of positions. He began his Forest Service career on the Boise National Forest, and has since worked in eight different national forests, across three regions. He has worked at all levels of the agency in a variety of positions, including District Ranger, Forest Supervisor, and Legislative Affairs Specialist in the Washington Office.

Tidwell's field experience includes working from the rural areas of Nevada and Idaho all the way to the urban forests in California and the Wasatch-Cache National Forest in Utah, where he served as Forest Supervisor during the 2002 Winter Olympics. He also has extensive fire experience, beginning as a firefighter, and accumulating nineteen years as an agency administrator responsible for fire suppression decisions.

Josh Stevens Named North Central Regional Tree Farm Inspector of the Year

Josh Stevens, resource forester for the Missouri Department of Conservation and RGS member of the Mid-Missouri Chapter, was named 2008 Regional Tree Farm Inspector of the Year by the American Tree Farm System. Josh is an integral part of the success of the cooperative River Hills Forest Habitat Project, a project that is promoting early successional forest management in east central Missouri. Congratulations, Josh.

Compartment Review for Baraga Forest Management Unit on July 9th

A formal compartment review to finalize proposed activities on state lands in Baraga, Houghton and Ontonagon Counties in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan is scheduled for July 9th at 9 AM at the Michigan Technological Universities Ford Forestry Center in Alberta, Michigan.

Michigan DNR Hosts Open Houses in Gaylord Forest Management Unit

The Department of Natural Resources will host open houses on Wednesday, July 8 and Thursday, July 9, to provide information and receive public comment on proposed forest management treatments for 2011 in the Gaylord Management Unit. The July 8 open house will be held from 3 to 7 p.m. at the Gaylord Field Office for Antrim, Charlevoix and Otsego counties. The July 9 open house will be held from 3 to 7 p.m. at the Indian River Field Office for Cheboygan and Emmet counties.

The open house is an opportunity for the public to review proposed treatments and to provide input toward final decisions on those treatments. It also provides the public an opportunity to talk with foresters and biologists about issues of interest. Maps and information regarding the proposed treatments will be available at the open house, and can be accessed at www.michigan.gov/dnr; click on Forests, Land & Water, and then on the map of the Gaylord Forest Management Unit.

Each management unit is divided into smaller units or compartments to facilitate better administration of the resources. Compartments under review this year are in Charlton, Bagley, Elmira townships in Otsego County; Mentor, Wilmot, Beaugrand, Koehler, and Aloha townships in Cheboygan County; Pleasantview, Wawatam, McKinley, and Springvale townships in Emmet County; Melrose and Peaine townships in Charlevoix County; and Warner and Chestonia townships in Antrim County.

The formal compartment review to decide on prescriptions for these areas is scheduled for 9 a.m. Thursday, July 23, at the Northland Sportsmen Club on Old Alba Road in Gaylord.

Michigan DNR Sponsors Seminars on the Future of Hunting and Shooting Sports Participation

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources invites the public to attend one of three seminars conducted by renowned researcher, speaker, and writer Mark Damian Duda. The seminars are being hosted by the DNR to discuss the future of hunting and shooting sports participation in the United States.

Duda will address hunting and shooting participation in the United States, trends in participation, the American hunter, the hunting culture, reasons for hunting cessation, hunter satisfaction and ex-hunter dissatisfaction, public opinions on hunting and programs that can be utilized to increase hunting participation.

Each seminar will be conducted from 7 to 9 p.m. July 8-10 at various locations throughout Michigan. The locations are as follows: July 8, the Lansing Center, 333 East Michigan Ave., Lansing; July 9, the Ralph A. McMullan Conference Center, 104 Conservation Dr., Roscommon; and July 10, the Citizens Forum at Lakeview Arena, 401 East Fair Ave., Marquette. There is no charge to attend the seminars, which are being made possible in part by Safari Club International.

“We are honored to have Mark Duda and his wealth of experience and knowledge come to our state to discuss the important national trends in hunting and shooting sports,” said DNR Director Rebecca Humphries. “I encourage anyone interested in sustaining the hunting heritage of our state to attend these presentations.”

Duda has been conducting research on hunting and shooting participation for more than 20 years. He was a columnist for North American Hunter magazines for seven years and has authored three books including The Future of Hunting and the Shooting Sports in 2008. Mark holds a master’s degree from Yale University with a concentration in natural resource policy and planning.

For more information, contact Kevin Frailey at 517-373-7306 or fraileyk@michigan.gov

Comment Period Open for Flambeau River State Forest

The public comment period for the Preferred Alternatives and Options of the Flambeau River State Forest in North Central Wisconsin will run from June 12, 2009-August 1, 2009. Once the public comment period is closed, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will begin compiling comments, considering any changes and develop a Draft Plan and Environmental Analysis.

For info on this Plan, visit the DNR website at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/stateforests/SF-Flambeau/> to obtain a copy of the *Preferred Alternative and Options* and to provide your comments electronically.

Please send letters, emails, or other comments on the *Preferred Alternative and Options* by August 1, 2009 to:

**Jim Halvorson, State Forest Superintendent
W 1613 Co. Rd. W
Winter, WI 54896
Telephone 715-332-5271
jim.halvorson@wisconsin.gov**

Two RGS Publications Now Available on the Internet

Articles explain the importance of forest restoration

In its continuing efforts to educate sportsmen and other conservationists on the importance of proper forest stewardship and the need for a diversity of both young forest and old forest species, the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) has made available two of its highly regarded publications in a PDF format.

In each of the articles, the authors skillfully explain in laymen's terms and easily understood color graphics, what has happened to our forests and the wildlife species, both hunted and non-hunted, that depend on early successional stages of what will eventually become mature forests.

The first is a reprint of *The Other Silent Spring: Disappearing Birds of Young Forests* by Steven Backs, a wildlife research biologist, with the Indiana Fish and Wildlife Department of Natural Resources. The article

was featured in the Summer 2009 edition of the Ruffed Grouse Society magazine.

In the article Back's writes: "*These three birds [the American woodcock, the ruffed grouse and the whip-poor-will]...are "coal mine canaries" telling us by their absence that young forest habitats are quickly disappearing. Are we listening? Do we hear the emptiness? Will we listen?*"

The second is a new publication *Placing Wildlife at Risk by Ignoring Ecological Principals: The Need to Manage Public Lands*, by Dr. Michael Zagata, RGS Executive Director and CEO. Its original format is a four-page tabloid size paper publication, in which Dr. Zagata references the "State of the Birds" report issued in 2009 by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative.

In a passage from the manuscript Dr. Zagata explains: "... *many Eastern forest birds dependent on disturbed or early-successional forest or natural disturbance (including pine barrens) are suffering consistent and troubling declines. Those birds in decline include golden-winged warbler, whip-poor-will, prairie warbler, Eastern towhee, and field sparrow, and popular game species such as Northern bobwhite and American woodcock.*"

The RGS urges every upland bird hunter, bird watcher and conservationist to take the time to learn the principals as they relate to the species we care so much about. Too often well meaning individuals and organizations favor mature trees over seedlings and saplings without understanding the consequences.

Both of these "must read" documents should be digested and the principals passed along by grouse and woodcock aficionados, bird watchers, conservationists and educators teaching others about nature.

A direct link to the Steven Backs article PDF is: www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/pdf/RGS_Summer09p40-42Sm.pdf . For the publication by Dr. Zagata the web address is: www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/pdf/PlacingWildlifeAtRisk.pdf .

For Internet distributions, both documents have been converted into a printable 8 1/2" x 11" PDF that can be downloaded and e-mailed to hunting partners, school ecology teachers and others.

RGS Can't Support "America's Wildlife Heritage Act" As Written

Well intended legislation will do more harm than good

Recently Representative Ron Kind (D-WI) introduced legislation to the 111th Congress in Washington, that would sustain the diverse fish, wildlife, and plants that depend on our nation's federal public lands. But as well intended as bill HR2807 is, it may well do otherwise.

Since its formation in 1961 the Ruffed Grouse Society has always supported legislation that would benefit fish and wildlife, and the restoration of habitat needed for their survival; but after reading the language in the "America's Wildlife Heritage Act", we cannot, in good conscience, support this bill as written.

The bill would require that all activities on the 449 million acres administered by the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management work toward enhancing the survival and health of all native plants and animals that exist on these federal lands. Although this is indeed a laudable goal, as with most things, the devil is in the details; and the detail of the bill language that would mandate that these federal agencies survey literally hundreds of species of plants and animals prior to implementing any activity makes this otherwise well-intentioned legislation unworkable.

According to Dan Dessecker, Director of Conservation Policy for the Ruffed Grouse Society, "While we support efforts to enhance coordination between federal land management agencies and state fish and wildlife agencies to sustain wildlife populations, it is simply not possible to meet the species-by-species monitoring requirement imposed by this legislation - the federal agencies affected have neither the expertise nor the funds to do so," Dessecker said.

Others are of the same conviction and until they have done what they aren't capable of doing, much needed management for all wildlife on public lands could be halted with one frivolous lawsuit after another.

HR 2807 requires that the federal agencies monitor all wildlife identified by the state fish and wildlife agencies as "species of greatest conservation need", as well as various classifications of plants. In Wisconsin alone, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has identified over 650 such species of wildlife. And although not all of these species are found on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in the northern portion of the state, a substantial number undoubtedly are. Obviously, when one includes plants, the list becomes even longer.

“The hundreds of millions of dollars required to count every beetle, butterfly and bird of concern across the nation could be far better spent on managing the forest to provide habitats for the many species of wildlife that are becoming more rare every day; or perhaps to protect imperiled forests, rangelands and rural communities from catastrophic wildfires,” said RGS, Executive Director and CEO Mike Zagata.

The Ruffed Grouse Society will continue to work with Representative Kind, other members of Congress and our partners in the wildlife conservation community to modify the language of HR 2807 to meet its intended objective in a reasonable and responsible manner.

Upcoming RGS Events in the Region

July 8 - Michigan DNR Future of Hunting Seminar at the Lansing Center, 333 East Michigan Ave., Lansing, MI.

July 8 - Michigan DNR Gaylord Management Open House for Antrim, Charlevoix and Otsego Counties, 3 to 7 p.m. at the Gaylord Field Office.

July 9 - Michigan DNR Gaylord Management Open House for Cheboygan and Emmet Counties, 3 to 7 p.m. at the Indian River Field Office.

July 9 - Michigan DNR Future of Hunting Seminar at the Ralph A. McMullan Conference Center, 104 Conservation Dr., Roscommon, MI

July 9 - Baraga Forest Management Unit Compartment Review, Alberta, MI.

July 10 - Michigan DNR Future of Hunting Seminar at the Citizens Forum at Lakeview Arena, 401 East Fair Ave., Marquette, MI

July 18 - 7th Annual West Central Wisconsin Chapter Four Person Golf Scramble at the Riveredge Golf Course, Marshfield, WI. For info contact Bull's Eye Sports at 715-384-6580.

July 23 - Formal DNR Compartment Review for the Gaylord Management Unit, 9 a.m. at the Northland Sportsmen Club on Old Alba Road in Gaylord, MI.

August 1 - Comments due on the Flambeau River State Forest (WI) Plan Preferred Alternative and Options.

August 13 - John M. Keener Chapter 30th Anniversary Sportsmen's Banquet, Madison, WI. Contact Robin Marohn at 608-212-8877 for info.

August 13 to 16 - WI Coverts Workshop, Contact Jamie Nack at 608-265-8264 or email at jlneck@wisc.edu. All slots filled, apply for 2010 workshop.

August 14 to 16 - Stop by the RGS Booth at the Chippewa Valley Outdoor Games, Eau Claire, WI.

August 22 - 17th Annual Iowa Chapter Sportsmen's Banquet, Dubuque, IA. Contact Eric Van hook at 319-447-1095 for info.

August 27 - 3rd Annual Chain O' Lakes Chapter Sportsmen's Banquet, St. Germaine, WI. Contact Jed Lechleitner at 715-479-6466 for info.

August 27 to 30 - WI Coverts Workshop, Contact Jamie Nack at 608-265-8264 or email at jlneck@wisc.edu. All slots filled, apply for 2010 workshop.

September 10 - 28th Annual NE Wisconsin Chapter Sportsmen's Banquet, Green Bay, WI. Contact Jim Schuettpelz at 920-469-0751 for info.

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 Regional Biologist, Ruffed Grouse
Society
P.O. Box 116, Laona, WI 54541
Phone: (715) 674-7505 email: rgszimm@newnorth.net

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.