



Photo and Graphics by Heather Zimmer

Western Great Lakes Region FAN UPDATE

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Merry Christmas and a Happy 2014 to You!!

I'm not sure why it is but the years do seem to fly by faster as I get older. Seems like only a short time ago that I put together my end of the year holiday FAN Update and sent it out. A lot has happened in 2013, most of it good, and I look forward to the challenges and opportunities that 2014 might bring. As usual I'm including a look back at some of the year's regional accomplishments and have included them below.

The late spring of 2013 was definitely not appreciated and the hatching success was far less than in 2012. Fortunately there appeared to be a decent number of second nesting attempts as there were many reports of small grouse in the September bags. During the National Grouse and Woodcock Hunt in Northern Minnesota held the second week of October we were able to determine, via feather molting patterns, that a few of the birds harvested had hatched around

the third week of July!! Woodcock numbers seemed pretty good but adult birds dominated the bags. Once the migration began the birds seemed to be constantly on the move with few reports in this region of birds bunched up for very long in the same area.

The end of the year brings with it a time to reflect on all those dedicated RGS members who have helped to support RGS and my efforts along the way. While I hesitate to start naming folks because I know I will miss someone, I have to send out a special appreciation to a few of those members. Mike Riggle of Medford has worked tirelessly to keep the RGS equipment in Wisconsin operating. He has volunteered hundreds of hours repairing and running the machine and making some great habitat for the birds; Dave Bartz of the NE Wisconsin Chapter continues to coordinate three RGS habitat work days every year in NE Wisconsin and puts together a tremendous volunteer work force. Jim Teal, chairman of the Flambeau River Chapter, sets up an annual habitat work day in the Price/Taylor County region; Tim Anderson, of the Nicolet/Wild Rivers Chapter provides valuable assistance with all the US Forest Service projects in NE Wisconsin; Jamie Nack who coordinates the outstanding WI Coverts Project; and Al Mendini, of Iron Mountain, who represents RGS on the Iron/Dickinson Sportsman's Coalition. I also want to thank all those chapter members who help out at booth events, work days, youth events or helping raise the funds that support the RGS mission. THANK YOU, THANK YOU!!

I also need to thank the tireless efforts of my fellow RGS staff who work very hard on your behalf. While we remain one if not the smallest staffs of a national conservation organization, this group remains steadfast at working hard to support the RGS mission. As you look around at other conservation organizations, many have or are in the process of changing their mission and goals. RGS remains firm in its commitment to create healthy forest habitat for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and other wildlife.

The united support of our members and staff has enabled us to accomplish a lot in 2013. Thank you all so much and Happy Holidays to you and yours!

Gary

2013 REGIONAL BIOLOGIST REPORT

Highlights of 2013:

- RGS funded a record number of projects under the State Drummer Fund program. In Wisconsin alone, over \$60,000 in Drummer Funds was provided for 16 public land projects.
- Dedication of the new 2,045 acre David V. Uihlein Sr. Ruffed Grouse Management Area on the Forest County Forest in NE WI took place in October
- Completed the restoration of 18 miles of trails and 10 acres of openings on the Porcupine Lake Hunter Walking Trail System near Tipler, WI on

the Chequamegon/Nicolet National Forest; a trail system that had not been cleared and open for over a decade

- Harvesting began on several of the cooperative ruffed grouse and woodcock habitat management areas on the Chequamegon/Nicolet National Forest identified in the Early Successional Habitat Improvement Project. Over the next ten years up to 6,000 acres of mainly aspen habitat will be regenerated as a result of this project on 11 of these areas designated in the 1980's and 90's under a partnership between RGS and the US Forest Service.
- A two year cooperative position was funded on the Ottawa National Forest under a partnership with the US Forest Service, Michigan DNR, National Wild Turkey Federation and RGS to conduct field reviews of wildlife openings and mature aspen stands. The aspen stand review is an important component of a forest-wide aspen management project currently in the planning stages that has the potential to provide thousands of acres of young forest habitat in the future.
- RGS biologists put together a training workshop for forestry consultants on ruffed grouse and woodcock ecology and management. Fourteen consultants from Michigan and Wisconsin attended one of the first workshops this summer in Tomahawk, WI.
- The Wisconsin Coverts Project, a woodland wildlife management program for private landowners supported by RGS, completed its 23rd workshop in August with 30 attendees. Since its inception in 1994, 583 Coverts Cooperators have attended these workshops and own or manage over 355,000 acres.

Time is Running Out!! Vote for RGS and Win Prizes!!

Seven groups will share in the funds and national publicity provided via Scott Linden's Wingshooting USA television series in the fourth annual "TruckVault Cares ... for conservation, canines & kids" initiative. Wingshooting USA viewers are urged to vote online at <https://www.truckvaultcares.com/> for their favorite organization. Voting ends on December 31, 2013.

Each vote directs funds on a proportional basis so that all organizations receive dollars for their treasury. This year's beneficiary groups include: AKC Canine Health Foundation, Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation, American Brittany Rescue, Ruffed Grouse Society, National 4H Shooting Sports, International Hunter Education Association, and the U.S. Sportsman's Alliance Foundation Trailblazer Adventure program.

Voters can win prizes throughout the effort, ranging from a South Dakota hunting trip to a "sport utility building," Webley & Scott shotgun, Filson apparel, Happy Jack dog care products, Kent ammo, Scott Linden dog training gear and the grand prize, a TruckVault.

One Week Left to Enter the RGS 2013 Fall National Raffle

Three winners to be drawn on December 31st

Get your tickets now. Odds are good as this raffle is only covering a short time span. Three winners will be drawn on December 31, 2013. Please help support RGS and maybe win one of the three fantastic prizes, each of which would make a great end of the year present for anyone. Purchase tickets by calling RGS HQ at (888) 564-6747 or contacting Gary Zimmer at 715-674-7505 or garyz@ruffedgrousesociety.org. The donation is \$20.00 per ticket. Winners are responsible for applicable taxes.

Three chances to win! WINNER'S CHOICE! - First winner selects choice of 3 prizes, second winner selects from remaining 2, and the third winner gets the remaining prize.

Prizes include:

First prize: Orvis Endorsed Northern Maine Grouse Hunt for Two in the 2014/15 hunting season at Libby Camps; includes 4 nights, 3 days of hunting. \$3,350 value. **Libby Camps, Donor.**

Second prize: Grand Traverse, Michigan Fishing, Golf and Wine Tour for Four; includes 4 nights, 5 days in Traverse City, Michigan during 2014. \$2,400 value, **Fairfield Inn & Suites, Traverse City, Fish Hunter Charters, LochenHeath Golf Club, Celtic Shuttle & Tours, Donors.**

Third prize: Northern Minnesota Fishing and Resort Stay for Two. One week stay at Driftwood Lodge Resort and Boat Rental on Lake Kabetogama during 2014/2015. \$2,000 value, **Driftwood Lodge Resort, Donor.**

Below is an abstract of an interesting paper from Michigan on the economic benefits of public land for ruffed grouse hunters. The entire paper can be seen in the Journal of Wildlife Management, volume 77(7) on pages 1294-1300.

Economic Benefits of Publicly Accessible Land for Ruffed Grouse Hunters

By Scott Knoche and Frank Lupi, Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Michigan State University,

ABSTRACT Although numerous studies have focused on estimating economic benefits associated with big game hunting experiences, economic valuation efforts examining small game hunting have largely been neglected. This is especially surprising with respect to hunting grouse, a family of widely distributed upland game birds targeted by about 800,000 hunters in 2011. Furthermore, despite efforts by federal and state agencies directed at improving and increasing public land for recreational hunting purposes, a dearth of studies exist regarding the economic benefits of public land to hunters.

Using the travel cost method and data from a 2008 survey of Michigan ruffed grouse hunters, we examine relationships between hunting site choice and publicly accessible hunting land. We find that federally owned land, state-owned land, and publicly accessible, privately owned Commercial Forest Act (CFA) land are positive predictors of hunter site selection ($P < 0.001$). Given this relationship, we then estimated the economic benefits of different types of publicly accessible land to ruffed grouse hunters by examining the willingness of hunters to incur increasing travel costs to hunt in counties with greater amounts of publicly accessible land. We estimated the economic benefits of publicly accessible hunting land for ruffed grouse hunters in Michigan to be over \$20 million in 2008, with economic benefits of CFA land comprising about \$6.9 million of this annual total. Estimating the economic benefits of publicly accessible hunting land for outdoor recreationists provides a useful metric for policy makers to use in evaluating how changes in the amount and nature of publicly accessible hunting land affects these individuals.

New Forest Webinar Series Starts in January

The University of Minnesota Sustainable Forests Education Cooperative will be starting a new monthly webinar series in January. Topics include adaptive forest management for climate change, an update on tick-borne illnesses, the status of logging business, current forest health issues to watch for and much more. You can watch from a personal computer for \$20 per presentation or \$50 for the twelve monthly webinars or attend one of the Minnesota broadcast sites at no charge. For more details click

<http://www.myminnesotawoods.umn.edu/2013/12/2014-webinars-from-extension-and-sfec/> .

Volunteers Needed for Research on Spring Migration Ecology Study of American Woodcock in Four States

Cari Sebright, a graduate student with the University of Arkansas, is starting a research project on the spring migration ecology of American woodcock across four states of the central management region (Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, and Iowa). She is looking for volunteer citizen scientists to collect some abundance data and general habitat data (observational). If you are interesting in helping with this project please contact her at the following address:

Cari Elizabeth Sebright, Graduate Assistant
Arkansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit
SCEN 601
1 University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201
Phone: 479-575-4427

Clark County Forest Expands by More Than 1500 Acres

The Clark County Forestry Department announced the recent acquisition of the Norwegian Creek block located west of Greenwood. These 923 acres in the Town of Mead formerly owned by Plum Creek Timberlands and 590 acres of regular county lands are being entered into the County Forest Program to become part of the Clark County Forest. This tract is located west of the town of Greenwood.

According to Forest Administrator Rick Dailey, "These properties will be a wonderful addition to the Clark County Forest, providing a sustained yield of forest products and multiple use benefits for the citizens of Clark County and the State of Wisconsin to enjoy in perpetuity. These properties are heavily used by hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts. The Forestry Department is honored and excited to be the stewards of these lands."

Many individuals, groups, and organizations including RGS were involved in the process to make this transaction happen.

New Atlas of Public Access Lands of Wisconsin Available Online or in Print

A new Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Public Access Lands Atlas is now available online and in a printable format. The atlas highlights the significant increase in public access to Wisconsin lands made possible through the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, as well as other lands open to the public for outdoor recreation.

"If you are looking for a place to fish, hunt, trap or enjoy any of Wisconsin's outdoor activities this atlas will help you find public lands to do so," said DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp. The atlas contains 441 maps, two indexes, a glossary and extensive contact information to help you connect with land managers to learn more about the properties.

The Wisconsin Legislature created the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program in 1989 to preserve valuable natural areas and wildlife habitat, protect water quality and fisheries, and expand opportunities for outdoor recreation. Since its inception the program has added more than 500,000 acres of land through direct purchase or easement that is open to public recreation. These lands are owned by the Department of Natural Resources, non-profit conservation organizations and local governments. In addition, the atlas shows the location of other state, county forest and federal lands open to the public.

For more information, visit <http://dnr.wi.gov/> and type the keyword "atlas" in the search bar. To order the Public Access Lands Atlas, simply click the "buy" tab. You can also download and print the maps from your home computer.

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.