



Photo and Graphics by Heather Zimmer

Western Great Lakes Region FAN UPDATE

Volume 14, Issue 4

December 24, 2014

Happy Holidays!!

It's been quite the year for the members and staff of the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS). One of the highlights certainly was the announcement that we now had a sister organization, the American Woodcock Society (AWS)! Since most of us either weren't around in 1961 or like me were thinking more about playing with toys than worrying about wildlife conservation back then, I don't know anyone who is a charter member of RGS. With the arrival of AWS, we are given a onetime opportunity to be a charter member of this new fledgling organization. If you want to join me as one of the charter members you only have a short time left. Info on how to do that is found later in this FAN.

If 2014 was the bottom of the grouse cycle (we really won't know for a few years), this down cycle doesn't appear to be too bad. We survived the poor

hatching year of 2013 with what could be considered a fair to good hatch in 2014. Snows lingered well into April resulting in later initial grouse clutches than “usual”. Most of these birds hatched after our wet late May. Broods though low in numbers seemed to of good size with 8 – 10 birds seen by several observers. Fall harvest reports with some hunters running into decent numbers while others saw few birds seemed to bear this out. The grouse harvest at the National Grouse and Woodcock in Northern Minnesota held the second week of October were only one bird different than in 2013.

Woodcock harvest was down across most of the region and could in part be blamed on the late winter and its impacts to nesting birds. I received several calls in late October asking when the flight was going through as hunters were eagerly waiting. It certainly seemed to be quite spotty with no single big push occurring. Once the migration began the birds seemed to be constantly on the move with few reports in this region of birds in large numbers bunched up.

As 2014 winds down it brings with it a time to reflect on all those dedicated members and staff who have helped support the organization and my efforts along the way. It is because of you that RGS and now AWS are successful. We accomplished a lot in 2014 and I have listed some of them below.

Thank you all so much and Happy Holidays to all!

Gary

2014 REGIONAL BIOLOGIST REPORT

Highlights of 2014:

- The Society funded a record number of projects under the State Drummer Fund program. In Wisconsin alone, over \$62,500 in Drummer Funds was provided for 16 public land projects. The Drummer Funds were used as matching funds in most of the projects and total project costs for these 16 projects was over \$221,000.
- The Society was one of the driving forces behind the establishment of the Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership, a group of 12 agencies and organizations that have joined forces and resources to bring more young forest habitat to the state.
- The Michigan Grouse Enhanced Management Systems (GEMS) was launched with seven of 13 planned areas ready for business. The Society has been involved with this project, headed up by the Michigan DNR, since its inception. A number of the selected GEMS sites are long standing cooperative Ruffed Grouse Management Areas that RGS and agencies have partnered on, some since the mid 1980's.
- With the support of the Society, work continues on the Ottawa National Forest to develop a forest-wide aspen management project. We have

received word that a draft Environmental Analysis will be out for review just after the New Year. It will be important for Society members to provide comments and support for this effort. This proposal could provide as much as 30,000 acres of young forest habitat in the future in the western Upper Peninsula.

- RGS biologists put together three training workshops for forestry consultants and new wildlife biologists on ruffed grouse and woodcock ecology and management. Seventy-seven attendees from Michigan and Wisconsin participated in one of three workshops held in 2014.
- The Wisconsin Coverts Project, a woodland wildlife management program for private landowners supported by RGS, completed its 24th workshop in August with 27 attendees. Since its inception in 1994, 610 Coverts Cooperators have attended these workshops and own or manage over 359,000 acres.

FOLLOW THE AMERICAN WOODCOCK MIGRATION LIVE!

View the cutting-edge satellite research on GoogleEarth® conducted by the USGS Arkansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Unit, USGS Minnesota Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Unit and the USFWS. RGS and AWS are some of the project cooperators providing assistance and funding for this research. See the maps [here](#) that show the migratory locations of American woodcock outfitted with satellite transmitters (PTTs).

These solar-powered PTTs are small enough to fit on a woodcock's back during migration and powerful enough to transmit multiple locations to the ARGOS satellite network.

The solar PTTs transmit the woodcock's location every two and half days (10 hours on, 48 hours off) to conserve battery. During some cycles no locations are recorded. This can be due to problems charging the unit's battery or transmitting to the satellite as result of the thick cover used by woodcock. The recorded locations are represented by a colored dot. Clicking on the dots or along the migration path will display the date on which that location was recorded. The calendar can be used to see where each woodcock was on a given date. The points can be dragged along the migration path to see the relative locations of other woodcock, along with the date the locations were recorded displayed on the top of each map.

The location data from this project will be used to document timing of migration initiation, rate of migration, stopover length, routes taken, and final destination for both spring and fall migration. These data can then be used to identify priority areas to focus habitat management and conservation efforts for woodcock along migration routes.

Researchers deployed six transmitters in a pilot study during fall 2013 and late winter 2014. One woodcock was killed by an owl soon after its release, but the other five successfully migrated (see map below).

In fall 2014, researchers have deployed PTTs on three woodcock at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, Minnesota, and the migratory paths of those woodcock can be tracked below. By February 2016, researchers plan on deploying up to 45 PTTs on woodcock on both their breeding and wintering grounds in the Central Management Region.

Because of this importance, RGS/AWS is actively raising funds to purchase 20 satellite transmitters for this cutting-edge research. A number of RGS chapters have contributed funds to purchase transmitters. Anyone wishing to make a donation to help purchase transmitters in support of the woodcock migration study may do so online at www.ruffedgrousesociety.org or by contacting headquarters (412) 262-4044.

For more information on the specifics of the research please contact [Joe Moore](#), graduate assistant at the University of Arkansas.



Charter Memberships Available to the American Woodcock Society

Those who join the newly formed American Woodcock Society (AWS) through January 30, 2015 will become an AWS Charter Member, a special group who joined AWS during its inaugural year. Charter members receive a commemorative decal, patch and certificate to proudly display. To join, contact the membership department by toll free phone at 888-564-6747.

Also new or renewing members can join both RGS and AWS as a dual member for the discounted rate of \$60 (regular \$35 for each or \$180 for three years).

Let's Grow Wisconsin!

RGS/AWS Membership Services Coordinator Shirley "Sam" Rice reports that Michigan currently has the highest number of RGS/AWS members of any state in the country. Way to go Michigan! However, Wisconsin is not far behind; at last count only 219 members separate the two states. Michigan has issued a challenge to the Badger State to catch them if they can.

What better opportunity to meet this challenge than now with the ongoing RGS and AWS Member-Get-A-Member Campaign. You can help us increase support for habitat and hunting by recruiting a fellow grouse or woodcock hunter to become a member and also receive a reward. Under this campaign both current and new members receive a \$20 Orvis gift card. The participating current member is also placed in a drawing for a chance to create habitat by contributing additional funds to the state Drummer Fund of the winner's choice. To participate, see the rules and regulations at <http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/201408%20Drive>

GEMS Hunters Get Great Discounts

Hunters, don't forget – when visiting one of the seven GEMS in Michigan – to take a picture of yourself with the GEMS sign to get great discounts from area businesses.

GEMS (Grouse Enhanced Management Systems) are excellent areas to hunt ruffed grouse because of their perfect habitat, large blocks of land and hunter walking trails. They offer easy access for hunters of all varieties and opportunities for snowshoe hare, deer and woodcock as well.

Just take a selfie in front of a GEMS sign and visit one of the [participating businesses](#) listed on the [GEMS website](#) or on the information kiosk at the GEMS site. Show the participating business your GEMS selfie, and the discount will be awarded. Local businesses recognize the impact hunters have on local economies.

This year the new base license, which also serves as a small game license, is required for every hunter. So if you are a Michigan hunter, you now have the license to give a GEMS site a try. Along with the base license, a free woodcock stamp (which can be picked up anywhere licenses are sold) is also needed to hunt woodcock.

Visit the [GEMS website](#) to learn more.

Hunting Access Program and Mi-HUNT Application are Invaluable Tools for Hunters

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources reminds hunters to consider two helpful tools for finding hunting land in Michigan – the Hunting Access Program, which provides private-land hunting opportunities in southern Michigan; and the Mi-HUNT Web application, which creates custom maps for Michigan’s public hunting lands.

Michigan's Hunting Access Program was created in 1977 to increase public hunting opportunities in southern Michigan, where 97 percent of the land base is privately owned. In this program, private landowners receive financial incentives for allowing hunters access to their lands. HAP is one of the oldest dedicated private-lands public access programs in the nation, providing access to quality hunting lands close to urban properties.

According to DNR wildlife biologist Mike Parker, “Providing access to hunting lands that are close to home is critical for supporting Michigan’s strong hunting heritage. Our commitment to providing access has more than tripled the number of farms enrolled in HAP the past three years. We now have over 140 farms and nearly 16,000 acres available for public hunting.”

Using funds from the recent license restructuring and a new federal grant, the DNR plans to continue expanding the program over the next three years.

Visit www.michigan.gov/hap to learn more and to see a current list of private lands available for hunting in Michigan. The HAP webpage includes details about enrolled properties, including types of hunting allowed and aerial photos of the properties.

To find public hunting land in Michigan, the DNR also encourages hunters to try Mi-HUNT, a cutting-edge, Web-based application that helps hunters to plan their next hunting trip. Mi-HUNT allows users to navigate through a variety of map layers to create their own custom maps or download premade maps to meet their specific hunt-planning needs.

The interactive layers of Mi-HUNT allow hunters to view select private land open to the public for hunting; all state game and wildlife areas; 7 million acres of vegetation cover types; aerial imagery in a variety of formats covering the entire state; recreational facilities such as forest campgrounds, trails and boat ramps; and street maps and directions to hunting areas.

To experience Mi-HUNT, visit www.michigan.gov/mihunt.

Federal Court Decision Relists Gray Wolves in Western Great Lakes Region as Endangered Species

From Wisconsin DNR Press Release

In response to a lawsuit brought against the United States Fish and Wildlife Service by the Humane Society of the United States, the Federal District Court for the District of Columbia has vacated a 2012 decision, which delisted wolves as an endangered species. This decision returns wolves in the Great Lakes Region, including Wisconsin, to the Federal Endangered Species List

Immediate implications of this ruling include the following:

- Permits which allow lethal removal of wolves issued to landowners experiencing wolf conflicts are no longer valid. The department will contact permit holders to alert them.
- The department is not authorized to use lethal control as part of its conflict management program. Non-lethal tools and depredation compensation remain available. Those experiencing conflicts with wolves should contact the United States Department of Agriculture - Wildlife Service for conflict investigation and management assistance.
- Wisconsin's law allowing landowners or occupants of the land to shoot wolves that are in the act of depredating domestic animals on private property is no longer in force. Landowners may not kill wolves in the act of attacking domestic animals.
- Under Federal Law, you cannot use dogs to track and train on wolves.
- Wisconsin is not authorized to implement a wolf harvest season.

While the department is disappointed by this decision, we will continue to support the USFWS and their original decision to delist and remain confident in the State of Wisconsin's ability to manage our wolf population.

Twelve Days of Christmas National Raffle

Congratulations to the Following Winners:

- Dec. 11, 2014: GoPro HERO3+ Black Edition -- **Jon Anderson, Williamsburg, MI**
Dec. 12, 2014: Stevens Gold Wing O/U 20-Ga. Shotgun -- **John Hamilton, Ligonier, PA**
Dec. 13, 2014: Steiner Merlin Binoculars: 8 x 32 -- **Chad Houde, Ely, MN**
Dec. 14, 2014: Tristar Hunter EX O/U 28-Ga. Shotgun -- **Larry Keller, Neillsville, WI**
Dec. 15, 2014: YETI Tundra 65 All-Purpose Cooler -- **Michelle Jennings, Hermon, NY**
Dec. 16, 2014: CZ Bobwhite Side-By-Side 20-Ga. Shotgun -- **Rob Bondy, Rockford, MI**
Dec. 17, 2014: SportDOG TEK 1.0 GPS & E-Collar -- **Ray Samson, Sunderland, MA**
Dec. 18, 2014: Webley & Scott 900 O/U 28-Ga. Shotgun- **DeWayne Royer, West Decatur, PA**
Dec. 19, 2014: Samsung 51" Wide Screen Television-- **Donald McDougall, Solomons, MD**
Dec. 20, 2014: CZ Canvasback O/U 20-Ga. Shotgun -- **Joe Maher, Grand Rapids, MN**
Dec. 21, 2014: LL Bean \$500.00 Gift Certificate -- **Adrian Ryan, Anchorage, AK**
Dec. 22, 2014: Fausti DEA SxS 20-Ga. Shotgun -- **Richard Sturtevant, Free Union, VA**

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SUPPORTED THE RAFFLE!

Woodboro Lakes Wildlife Area Master Planning Begins

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is providing the public an opportunity to review and comment on what activities they would like to be allowed at the [Woodboro Lakes Wildlife Area](#), a 3,600-acre property located 10 miles west of Rhinelander, WI in Oneida County, at an upcoming open house and through a public comment period. RGS has provided funding over the last few years to establish a ruffed grouse management area on this property.

The DNR is initiating master planning efforts for the wildlife area following a request earlier this year from a local all-terrain vehicle club to establish an ATV trail across a portion of the wildlife area.

The purpose of the public meeting is to announce the planning process and invite public participation, provide information about the process and the property, and receive input about the property's future direction or issues that should be addressed in the master plan. Anyone with an interest in the property is encouraged to attend this meeting.

The meeting is on Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2014 from 6-8 p.m. at the Northwoods Community Elementary School, 9086 County Highway K, Harshaw. In the event of bad weather, the meeting will take place on Thursday, Jan. 22 from 6-8 p.m. at the same location.

The draft Regional and Property Analysis, maps, and other background information will be available for viewing at the public meeting. They can also be found by searching the DNR website, dnr.wi.gov for "[Woodboro master plan](#)".

Comments or questions about these documents can be offered at the public meetings, online, or submitted to: Jeremy Holtz by mail at 107 Sutliff Ave., Rhinelander, WI 54501, by phone at 715-365-8999, or by email at jeremy.holtz@wisconsin.gov; or Yoyi Steele, WM/6, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707-7921, by phone at 608-266-8169, or email at yoyi.steele@wisconsin.gov.

The deadline for receiving comments is Friday, Jan. 30, 2015.

**Rib Mountain Chapter
Inaugural Winter Grouse Hunt for Habitat**

BOOTLEGGERS SUPPER CLUB
2001 Indian Pine Point Road F Tomahawk, WI 54487

Saturday, January 10, 2015

Cocktails & Raffles: 4:30 p.m.

Dinner: 6:00 p.m.

\$25 per person

Contact Jon Long at 715-966-2251 for info.

All proceeds to be used to benefit wildlife habitat in the region.

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.