



Ruff Country News Minnesota

Fall Edition October 2016

Meadow Kouffeld and Ted Dick



Ace, Ted Dick's setter pup, has it figured out this fall. This is a time of the year for dog owners to bumble behind a new pup, chase the points of a dog in its prime, or to honor the declining dog in what may be their last trip out...

The leaves are mostly gone, the woodcock are trickling through, and the grouse are teaching us all lessons; new and old. The frost has returned and the ground is sure to freeze soon. They keep talking of an abnormally wet and cold winter which should mean lots of fluffy snow akin to the polar vortex we experienced

a couple of years back. Ted and I have been busy since the last newsletter and are looking forward to ending the 2016 hunting season with friends and good dogs and hopefully a few birds. In this edition of the newsletter we will cover some of the highlights of the past couple of months including the results for the

Women's Intro to Wingshooting pilot course, updates on funding opportunities and awards, and other information gems. We hope that you enjoy it and maybe we will see you in the near future at some of the planned events including at the 2016 Pheasant Fest to be held in

Minneapolis, MN. Until then we hope you get to enjoy the last couple of weeks of fall.

**Message from Meadow Kouffeld, RGS
Regional Biologist**

Another \$2.4 Million Forestland Acquisition Grant for RGS!

Healthy Forests, Abundant Wildlife, Sporting Traditions: that's the motto of the Ruffed Grouse Society. And we can't have abundant wildlife or sporting traditions without healthy forests. The Ruffed Grouse Society and partners The Conservation Fund and Minnesota Deer Hunters Association announce a second major Minnesota acquisition grant to protect thousands of acres of MN forests from parcelization and agricultural conversion. This latest grant of \$2.4 million received preliminary approval this month. The money will be used to purchase land from Potlatch Corporation that will then be donated to St. Louis County. This is the second major grant

received by RGS and partners since June. The earlier award was for \$3.6 million for a similar effort in Cass and Hubbard Counties: that's a total of **\$6 million** making RGS a major player in the forest health protection realm.

Acquiring these parcels and gifting them to a land management agency will ensure that they continue to provide both good grouse habitat and timber products but also enhanced water quality and access to many additional acres that grouse hunters would otherwise be unable to reach. Thanks to all Minnesota RGS members for supporting RGS and enabling these types of major habitat initiatives!

RGS Receives RAC grant for Chippewa National Forest Hunter Walking Trails

On October 20, 2016, The Ruffed Grouse Society received a \$12,000 Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) grant to maintain grouse/woodcock hunter walking trails on the Chippewa National Forest. In recent years, United States Forest Service budgets have not allowed for funding of maintenance and mowing of hunter walking trails. RGS

volunteers from Grand Rapids have provided time and equipment to mow these popular trails. Now RGS will pay private contractors to get this work done. Hopefully some of the same RGS members will be interested in bidding on the work. Contact Ted Dick in Grand Rapids if you have interest or questions on this effort.

RGS Submits Large Habitat Enhancement Grant Application.

In September, RGS biologists in Minnesota submitted an application for young forest improvements to the Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) program. This program is part of the Lessard/Sams Outdoor Heritage Constitutional Amendment that provides funding for protection or enhancement of wildlife habitat. Management objectives for this project are to improve young early-successional forest conditions to benefit woodcock, grouse and many other species. Using RGS Drummer Funds and in-kind contract administration time as the 10% match, the total value of the grant, if received, will be \$270,000. Project sites are located across the forested region of the state from Whitewater WMA in southeastern MN to Carlos Avery WMA near the Twin Cities to the Superior National Forest near Grand Marais to Roseau River WMA in Northwestern MN. The project at Whitewater WMA will serve as a

demonstration site for young forest management and species diversification. The recent RGS Young Forest Symposium in the Driftless Region of SE MN, SW WI and NE Iowa cited the critical need for more disturbance management in the region and also the need for demonstration areas on public land that could be used to educate private landowners on the many benefits of harvesting their timber (this symposium was attended by 100 resource professionals in LaCrosse, WI in August). Partners on this statewide CPL project include resource managers from a number of agencies. This project is particularly important this year because some land management agencies, including DNR Wildlife have little or no habitat project money available this year. If awarded, this grant will allow RGS to step in and work with managers to ensure important forest habitat work can continue.

Women's Intro to Wingshooting 2016

September 25, 2016 marked the end of the Women's Intro to Wingshooting pilot program in Grand Rapids, MN. Ladies culminated the six month course with a pheasant hunt at Pheasants Plus in Warba, MN. The course participants were excited to use the skills they developed during the course to take some pheasants and all had a great time. In total six volunteer guides and their dogs took the ladies out to hunt pheasants and all had ample opportunity to take birds. Overall the course was a great success and we are currently

planning on offering it again in 2017 and expanding to Duluth/Superior.

One of the most critical aspects to the success of this program and potential expansion is dedicated volunteer instructors. Course participants developed friendships with each other and instructors over the six class meetings. This familiarity helped put the ladies at ease when shooting on the range and later in the field. Please consider volunteering for WIW or the Hunter Mentor Program; without your help the programs will not be a success. Let's work to ensure the future of hunting!

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12 of 15 ladies that participated in the 2016 WIW pilot program are pictured after their morning pheasant hunt. Everyone had a great time including the volunteer instructors!

2016 Driftless Young Forest Symposium

The interstate Driftless Young Forest Symposium organized by RGS/AWS took place August 16-17 in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. This multi-state meeting brought together agency professionals from Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa to focus on landscape-scale goals to enhance future young forest habitat in the Driftless Region. The Driftless Region encompasses southwestern Wisconsin, southeastern Minnesota, northeastern Iowa and northwestern Illinois and is unique for its forested landscape, deeply carved valleys and streams resulting from the region

escaping historical glaciation. A major challenge for the Driftless area is that the landscape is 90 percent privately owned, and therefore, it is necessary to help private landowners understand that healthy wildlife populations result from healthy forest management. The RGS thanks partners who provided additional support and resources for the Symposium including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Cabela's Outdoor Fund, National Wild Turkey Federation, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.



Thank You!

RGS will continue to work to improve our forests for ruffed grouse and woodcock as well as promote the future of hunting.

Look for Meadow or Ted at upcoming events!



*Like other wildlife, grouse take advantage of fall mushrooms as they appear. This mushroom has been partially consumed by a grouse that was flushed nearby. Note the perfect beak shaped chunks that are now missing!
Northern Minnesota.*

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The Ruffed Grouse Society is North America's foremost conservation organization dedicated to preserving our sporting traditions by creating healthy forest habitat for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and other wildlife. For information on the Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society, please call 888-564-6747 or check out the RGS website at www.ruffedgrousesociety.org.