



Southeastern Regional Newsletter

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Doubles Club Announced

Have you accomplished that rare feat of shooting a double on grouse or woodcock? RGS is announcing a brand new Doubles Club program. When you become a member you'll receive an exclusive honorary pin and an official certificate commemorating your achievement.

What is a double?

RGS defines a double as the occurrence of two grouse, two woodcock, or a grouse and woodcock (a mixed double) that are in flight at the same time, and are successfully harvested by one hunter. Please note: the birds must be in flight at the same time when harvested to qualify as a true double.

Applications will appear in the Summer issue of RGS, or you may also contact our membership department directly to apply at **412.262.4044**.

Grants to Grow Habitat Management Capabilities in Midwest

RGS recently received three grants, totaling \$182,000, to purchase heavy equipment for managing habitat in the Midwest. Two ASV/Terex PT-100 Forestry loaders with mulching heads will be purchased with grant funds from the R.K. Mellon Foundation, the Frey Foundation of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the Charlevoix County Community Foundation in East Jordan, Michigan.

The new pieces of equipment will service Michigan, Wisconsin and surrounding states. The versatile equipment will allow RGS to help public and private partners aggressively manage neglected aspen, alder and brush habitats for ruffed grouse, woodcock and many other species. Cooperative projects with similar equipment have been in progress in the Northeast for several years with excellent results.

"These pieces of equipment are important tools to help the Ruffed Grouse Society target habitat improvements for woodcock in habitat, like alder, that is not being managed by commercial harvests," says Gary Zimmer, RGS Senior Biologist in the

Western Great Lakes Region. “With this equipment RGS will be one of the primary implementers of the Upper Great Lakes Woodcock and Young Forest Habitat Initiative.”

Welcome to new Corporate Sponsors: New Page and Browning. Also thank you to Johnson Lumber in Wisconsin for providing paper to our headquarters office.

REGIONAL NEWS

Change in Regional Director Status

Effective April 1st, I became a part-time employee of RGS. First let me say, this was my choice as I will explain later. It is something I’ve been considering for several months and discussed with Mike Zagata and Mark Fouts in late March. They both support my decision and reasoning and are fully committed to growth of RGS in the region, which is really what my decision is all about. I will now have 11 chapters: Roanoke, VA, Bristol, VA/TN; Asheville, Franklin, Raleigh & Charlotte, NC; Bristol, Knoxville, & Chattanooga, TN; Atlanta, GA; Mt. Sterling, KY; and Lafayette, LA.

When I took this job I felt that RGS’s success in the deep South was directly correlated to its leadership role in influencing National Forest policy. My reasoning for this decision is to allow me to focus more on that correlation and work with Mark Banker more closely in developing strategic plans with state and NF staff for wildlife habitat. I don’t want to bore you with the details, but we think we’ve got a pretty good approach to doing this. With a full-time focus on fundraising, and a large geographical area I felt I just couldn’t affect that correlation. In my travels among you I continue to hear, “There’s just no more birds.” Well, we must make an effort to reduce that trend. Our leadership role will both increase grouse habitat and numbers, as well as increase RGS’s support in the region.

I also plan to get on the road doing public presentations. We (Sportsman’s groups) have been preaching to the choir about habitat on public land. Unfortunately, that has allowed preservationist groups to gain support among that large majority of folks in the middle who don’t understand the facts about wildlife habitat. We will try some events in my home state of NC and expand from there and do this by getting chapter Habitat Chairs and members involved in spreading the message. Again, reducing my geographic area will allow me to focus more of my effort on one region.

Anyway, there’s a brief explanation of my decision. Since I am part time, hope you understand and will work with me on scheduling events and meetings to allow me to do other things, like my passion for writing (and getting paid for it) about our environment.

National Raffle

If you, or a friend, have not purchased a ticket for the RGS National Raffle time is getting short! There are only two months left before the drawing on June 30th. This is a great opportunity to take the bird hunt of a lifetime for you and a hunting buddy as well as get a new shotgun out of the deal. There are still plenty of tickets available at \$50 each. You can contact me at 828-279-1763 or rgsdonm@outdrs.net to purchase them.

Forest Action Email Alerts

A few months ago we started sending email alerts to members to solicit comments on USFS scoping notices and environmental assessments in the area. We have had moderate success by overwhelming the preservationist on a project in NC's Nantahala NF. Several members have told me they did not receive the email alert. You can help us there.

Please insure that you have an updated email address with National and encourage your friends to. The best way to do that is update your membership profile on the RGS website (www.ruffedgrousesociety.org). You can do this in the upper left corner by logging in and you will see a place to change member information. Secondly you can call in to National and simply give the Membership Department your new address.

The second thing we need to be aware of is the USFS rules/structure for providing comments. Written comments must be specific and include your name and address. I've seen a few emails that simply state "I support project XXX" with a name. That's not good enough for this to succeed. If your name & address are not included the comment cannot be counted. The more specific your comments, the greater weight they carry. To do that we need to educate ourselves and members on the facts of grouse habitat and management. Our email alerts will contain a link to the USFS notice so members can familiarize themselves with the project which should help make specific comments.

Believe me, the District Rangers have said they appreciate our support in commenting on projects. It shows support for their management plans and gives them substance to fight the inevitable appeals.

Spring Banquet Season

We completed our Spring Banquet season with Roanoke on April 17th. Results were mixed. We had one banquet that grew revenue and got some money for a local habitat project. Most were around the same net revenue as last year or a little less. Given the tough economic conditions that's not too bad. What is important is that to a large degree attendance was about the same as last year. That shows that our members and supporters still consider RGS and its mission as important and want to continue their support. We will, as always, get through this recession and when we do that continued support will help us grow in the South.