



# Southeastern Region Winter Newsletter

## Winter 2009

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## **National News**

### **Have you seen us lately?**

#### *Brand New Website Generates Growing Interest*

RGS recently launched a complete revision of our website, [www.ruffedgrousesociety.org](http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org). News updates, regional sporting events, exciting raffles and detailed information about habitat work are now in a format that is easier to read, navigate and explore. Great RGS merchandise, along with special deals on high-end shotguns, are available by clicking the "Shop RGS" tab on the homepage. Check us out today – and take your grouse hunting to the next level.

### **Centurion Member Wins Kimber**

Charles Hulbert of Tewksbury, Massachusetts recently became a Centurion member and won a Kimber Valier Grade II shotgun.

For every 10 new Centurions that join the Ruffed Grouse Society a raffle is held and a Kimber – or comparable shotgun – is awarded to the winner. To learn about becoming a Centurion, which begins at the \$1,000 donation level, call our membership department at 412-262-4044.

### **2010 National Raffle**

#### *Win a Model 21 "Baby Frame" 28-Gauge Shotgun*

This one of a kind gun features 28" barrels, choked IC/M with two beads, a straight English stock crafted from AAA fancy feathercrotch walnut to a checkered butt, and a 14 ½" LOP. The approximate retail value is \$32,000.

If you're interested in a chance to win this gun, tickets are \$100.00 and can be purchased through your local Regional Director or by contacting RGS headquarters at 412-262-4044. Up to 1,500 tickets will be sold.

Last year's National Raffle winner, James Farrell, won the upland bird dream hunt, which included attending the National Grouse and Woodcock Hunt in Grand Rapids, Minnesota this past October.

## **New England Wildlife Biologist Joins RGS Team**

Andrew P. Weik joined the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) as New England regional wildlife biologist, and will begin his work in the new year. Weik will be responsible for implementing on-the-ground forest management, landowner and land manager education programs throughout New England.

Weik's extensive experience includes five years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Northeast Region at Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge. Moosehorn is the only national wildlife refuge dedicated to woodcock management. His work at Moosehorn, along with his lengthy work history in various wildlife programs, makes Weik a superior fit for the RGS position.

One specific project that Weik hopes to see through to conclusion this year is the revision of the RGS publication, "A Woodcock in the Hand" (Sepik, 1994). The booklet is unique in that it details tips on examining, aging, and sexing American woodcock as well as information on population monitoring and conservation. Though currently out of print, the need and interest in the booklet have not waned.

## **Regional News**

### **Smoky Mountain Inaugural Banquet Huge Success**

The Smoky Mountain Chapter in Franklin, NC held their inaugural banquet on October 24<sup>th</sup> and it was a huge success. The committee set a goal of 75 attendees, on banquet day we were planning for 90, and actual attendance was 109! Along with the great merchandise provided by National, the committee worked hard to get donated items, one of which included a laminated map of the Nantahala Ranger District with all timber cuts marked by age class. The final result was a net revenue of over \$8,000. Their success proves that a dedicated committee that works hard to sell tickets and solicit donations leads to a successful banquet. Thanks to all the committee members who worked hard to make the banquet successful.

### **RGS Represented on Cherokee NF Steering Committee**

Parker Street of the Appalachian Highlands Chapter (Tri-Cities TN/VA) has been asked to serve on a Landscape Restoration Initiative Steering Committee for the Cherokee National Forest in Tennessee. Parker is Chapter Habitat Chair. Tom Speaks, Cherokee NF Supervisor, asked RGS for a representative to serve on the Committee to represent conservation groups. The committee will be chaired by the TN Nature Conservancy and has members from several stakeholder groups. Another RGS member, Steve Henson of the Southern Appalachian Chapter, will represent the Multiple Use Council, a timber industry group. The committee will review Forest Service plans for the northern region of the Cherokee NF and make recommendations to the Forest Supervisor on how to best restore the region to a balanced environment to include wildlife habitat. We are glad that the Forest Service has recognized RGS's leadership role in forest wildlife habitat and know that Parker and Steve will represent us well.

### **RGS Historic Stewardship Agreement with USFS**

What started as a simply coordination meeting in July in Murphy, NC led to something historic. In September 2009, the Ruffed Grouse Society took an historic first step by signing Master Stewardship Agreements with Regions 8 and 9 of the USFS to do habitat work. Those regions essentially cover the entire mid-Atlantic and Southeastern region of the US. Although other

organizations have similar agreements, this is the first that encompasses both Regions 8 & 9. This Agreement will allow RGS to more rapidly implement Supplemental Project Agreements although other USFS regulations, including environmental assessments, must be observed. As Mark Banker, our Regional Biologist said, "We really appreciate the work of Forest Service Staff to get this agreement done so quickly. Now it's up to those of us in the field to get something done." Those folks in the field not only include our biologist, state agencies, and USFS personnel, it includes all our members. We must get active in supporting USFS planning through the comment period. We must also be prepared when projects are identified to volunteer our time for work and also to raise money for habitat projects.

## **Upcoming Spring Events**

Currently we have two fundraising banquets planned in the region for Spring. The kickoff will be the Appalachian Highlands Chapter banquet on March 13<sup>th</sup> at the Holiday Inn in Johnson City, TN followed closely by the Volunteer Chapter banquet on March 20<sup>th</sup> at the Airport Hilton in Alcoa, TN (south of Knoxville). Both committees are in planning stages and flyers will be going out in January. You will see or here more information about it later or at a banquet planning meeting, but this year all chapters will share in banquet revenue earning anywhere from 10 – 20 percent based on net revenue. This is a great year to grow your banquet to have some money for that upcoming habitat project we'll be doing in your state.

## **New Business Model**

Based on feedback from RGS chapters throughout the country, RGS will implement a new business model in 2010. For the first time, all chapters conducting a Sportsman's banquet will share in the net revenue from that banquet. Depending on net revenue, chapters that hold a successful banquet will have anywhere from 10 to 20% go into a state "Drummer Fund". This fund will be used to support habitat projects within the state. This is an excellent opportunity to work together within a state to have a significant impact on grouse and woodcock habitat.

Another change we will be instituting in 2010 is a major emphasis on membership and attendance numbers. An increase in membership will ensure our success, assist us in securing grants, increase advertising rates and give us a bigger pool of potential volunteers, donors, and future leaders. To accomplish this we will now require that all banquet attendees become RGS members. We will be offering a new family membership where each family member becomes a member with one magazine going out to the family. Instead of \$25 each for all family members attending an event the cost will be \$40 and cover all family members. Those attending will also need to pay for their dinner. Hopefully this will lead to an increase in attendance as well membership numbers. We need to emphasize the cost savings and benefits to the family membership as we solicit attendees to our events.

All of these new ideas will dovetail with our current banquet fundraisers and allow us to fund more projects nationally and locally through our chapters working to raise the funds. We will be discussing these changes in more detail at planning meetings over the next few months. Stay tuned for more news and please share any new ideas you may have as we meet to start the planning for our 2010 banquet season.