



Hunters were the first Conservationists
The Ruffed Grouse Society and its members continue that great tradition

**THE RUFFED GROUSE SOCIETY
2008 – 2009 “RUFF” CAPITAL CAMPAIGN
(Restoring Upland Forests’ Future)**

MISSION STATEMENT

Established in 1961, the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) is the only international wildlife conservation organization dedicated to promoting conditions favorable for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and related early forest wildlife in order to sustain our hunting tradition and outdoor heritage.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) has launched the RUFF Capital Campaign to raise \$5 million over the next two years. These funds, when added to RGS’ existing endowment funds of \$6 million, will fully



endow the Society’s team of six biologists (\$4 million) and fund the purchase of a headquarters building for the Society (\$1 million). This campaign will enable the RGS to expand projects and activities that further the RGS mission of enhancing habitat for wildlife that rely on early successional forests for survival.

WHO WE ARE

The Ruffed Grouse Society's membership consists primarily of grouse and woodcock hunters who support science-based conservation and management efforts to ensure the future of all wildlife species, both hunted and non-hunted, that depend upon early successional forests. The RGS, headquartered in Coraopolis, PA, employs a team of five wildlife biologists who work with private landowners and local, state and federal governmental agencies interested in improving habitat for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and other songbirds and wildlife that require similar habitat. The Society does this through individualized programs to help private and public landowners and by working with government agencies to develop a science-based body of laws, regulations and practices that encourage ecologically sound forest management practices.

The RGS team also includes regional directors who help organize and sustain local chapters whose members share a common interest and passion for these birds and other wildlife. These chapters not only provide a local focus and kinship for the sport; they also support land management projects initiated and supported by the Society. Local chapters sponsor banquets and other events that bring people with common interests together and raise funds that further the RGS' conservation, education, habitat management and research programs. These events help promote conservation and recruit new members, including youth and women.

WHAT WE ARE ABOUT

RGS activities focus on hunting ruffed grouse and woodcock and enjoying the environment in which they live and share with other wildlife. In order to preserve this legacy it is vital to secure the habitat that provides them with food, cover from predators, shelter and a place



to breed and rear their young. As part of its mission, the RGS

- (1) emphasizes active management of young forests or “habitats” by using tools, like controlled fire and forest cutting, recognized as being effective by Aldo Leopold, the American father of wildlife management.
- (2) educates the public about the habitat requirements of game and non-game birds explaining that the undergrowth provided by the young forests that they live in, unless actively managed, will give way to larger trees that shade out the plants that are home to ruffed grouse and woodcock, as well as many songbirds, rabbits and deer.
- (3) cultivates public support for active forest management demonstrating that clear-cutting as a forest management tool, when properly applied, is both necessary and ecologically sound.

RGS is also about enjoyment—walking in the woods and pausing at the sound of what seems to be an old John Deere tractor and realizing it is a grouse drumming in spring, going afield with the expectation of bagging a “partridge” or a “timber doodle,” or being overtaken with pride as your dog carries its head high as it moves into the wind, locks on point and waits for you to flush the bird. RGS members understand uttering an “aw shucks” and being completely surprised when the bird flushes across an opening and evades what they thought were well-placed number 8s. They appreciate opportunities to invite a friend to share a fine meal of grouse and all the trimmings and listening to stories of their hunting experiences. RGS members enjoy banquets where friends with a common interest in conservation come together to have fun and help provide the funding needed to make it all happen.

Perhaps most important of all: RGS is not just about its members today. It is also about our grandkids and their kids, for without the RGS’ work, these places will not be around for them or the birds to enjoy.



FULFILLING THE RUFFED GROUSE SOCIETY MISSION

The work of the RGS includes:

- *Helping* assure that the traditions and ethics of hunting that have been given to us are passed on to those who succeed us
- *Promoting* a “code of ethical behavior” characterized by respect for our game resources, expectations with regard to the hunting experience and an unwavering commitment to proper stewardship of that resource
- *Enhancing*, through ecologically sound wildlife management practices, the environment for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and other forest wildlife including at least 43 species of neotropical songbirds.
- *Conducting* and/or sponsoring research that will lead to a better understanding of the biology and ecological requirements of these species
- *Sponsoring* land management programs on private and public lands that will maintain or enhance the environment for these species
- *Engaging* shooting sportsmen and women and informing them of the past, present and future of the sport so as to enable our members to fully appreciate its values and the resources necessary to sustain it for future generations

- *Educating* the public and legislative bodies about:
 - The need to manage forest lands scientifically and ensure that those who manage the land understand that nature is dynamic and that the plants that provide birds the cover, food, shelter from predators and a place to rear their young will, without active management, be replaced by plants that do not meet these requirements
 - Ways to provide incentives for landowners to manage for ruffed grouse and American woodcock and wildlife in general
 - Ways to encourage and provide public access to the places where ruffed grouse, woodcock, and other related wildlife live so that they can be enjoyed
 - The economic contributions associated with the recreational pursuit of these birds



CAMPAIGN GOAL

The goal of the 2008-09 Ruffed Grouse Society RUFF Capital Campaign is to raise \$5 million dollars. These funds will be used to

- Increase the RGS endowment by \$4 million to reach \$10 million and fully fund the RGS' biologists and their essential work
- Enable RGS to purchase a headquarters building for \$1 million.



At present RGS has about \$3.5 million in its endowment. It also has the timber rights on 2,300 acres of land donated by the R. K. Mellon Foundation worth between \$2.6 and \$3 million. Together these assets total about \$6 million. Therefore, to meet its endowment and property objectives, RGS must raise \$5 million.

STATEMENT OF NEED

The Problem: As a result of changing demographics people are becoming less rural and more urban and as a consequence there has been a loss of understanding about man's relationship with the land. We see society transitioning from a "conservation" ethic (implying "wise-use") to a preservation ("hands off") approach. At the same time, the public has a growing concern for the environment. That concern, coupled with the hands off approach, has created a media driven public perception that we are running out of trees and that the only good tree is a mature tree. Since perception often drives policy, new laws and regulations based on misperception and poor science make it increasingly difficult for natural resource professionals to manage forests in a scientifically based fashion.

As a result, the nation is losing its diversity of forested habitats as the young forests are replaced with taller tree species that shade out the young forest species. To the wildlife whose survival depends upon a range of age classes, including early successional or young forests, this situation is critical. (See Figures 1 -5) As an example of this negative trend, the ruffed grouse is listed as a “species of greatest conservation need” in *all* of the northeastern states except Maine - largely as a result of this trend toward more mature forests.

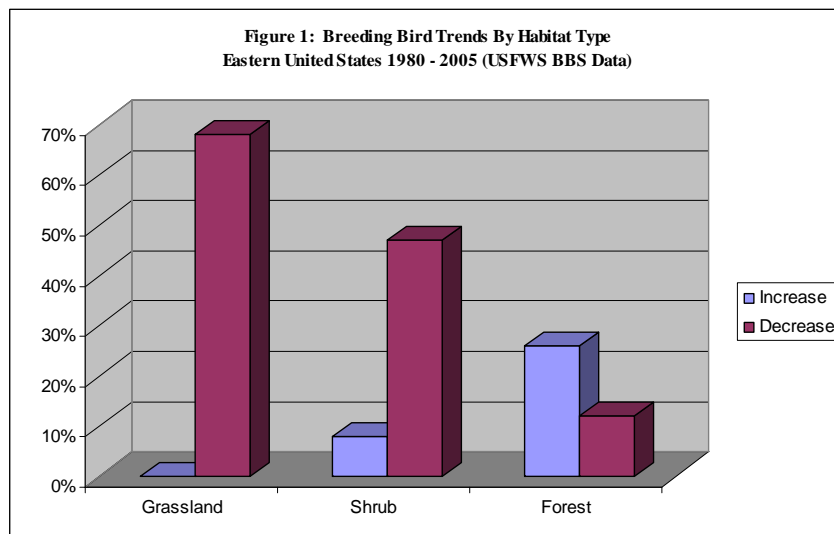


Figure 2: Breeding Bird Population Trends
Eastern United States 1980 - 2005 (USFWS BBS Data)

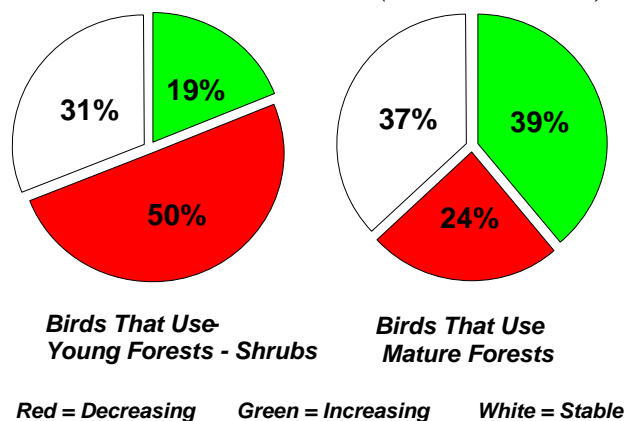


Figure 3: Ruffed Grouse habitat is decreasing in most states in the eastern United States
 Adopted from USDA Forest Service FIA Data

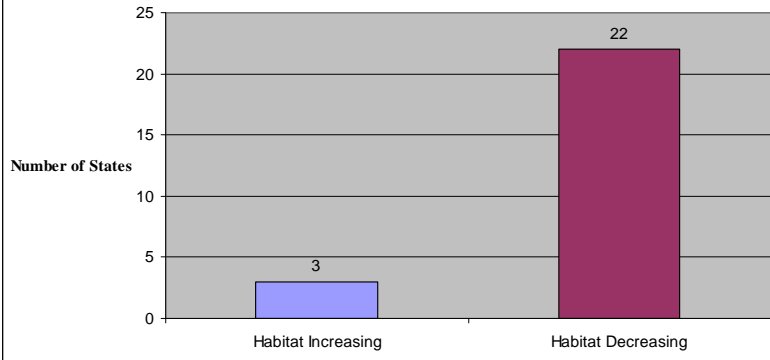


Figure 4: Young (1-20 years old) deciduous forest habitat trends (1985 – 2005) – USDA Forest Service FIA Data

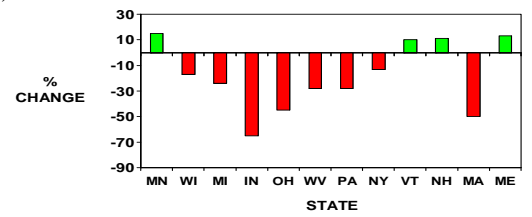
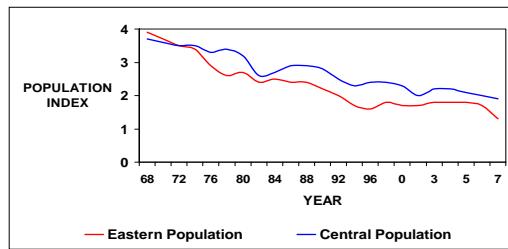


Figure 5: American Woodcock population trends – by Survey Region - US Fish & Wildlife Service Data 2007



THE SOLUTION: Biologists Who Address the Problem: The Ruffed Grouse Society currently has five professional wildlife biologists assigned to those states representing the primary ruffed grouse and woodcock habitat. (The Michigan biologist position is currently unfunded and vacant.) Their work is essential to the Society’s mission. Serving as biologists, conservationists, and wildlife consultants they

- (1) Assist the Regional Directors in educating chapters and committee members about:
 - Sound forest management practices
 - Ways to conduct a local habitat management project
 - How to engage in the legislative and regulatory processes at the local, state and federal levels in order to promote ecologically sound forest management practices on both public and private lands

- (2) Educate the general public about the need to properly harvest trees to produce the early successional forest habitats needed by a variety of wildlife.
- (3) Conduct and support research that furthers the RGS' mission
- (4) Engage in the legislative and regulatory process to educate legislators and policy makers about the benefits of providing incentives for landowners to manage for wildlife and the positive economic consequences that accrue to communities when they do.
- (5) Provide science-based advice and testimony in litigation over forest management plans and practices
- (6) Comment on forest management plans developed by public land management agencies
- (7) Assist private landowners who wish to manage their property for wildlife, including supporting the RGS' educational program, called "Coverts", which is specifically designed to serve private, non-industrial forest landowners
- (8) Serve on advisory boards for both public and private forest management bodies
- (9) Secure grant funding to support the mission
- (10) Partner with other organizations who share the mission
- (11) Assist in building the RGS membership base

Funding the Biologists: Each biologist costs the Ruffed Grouse Society approximately \$100,000 for salary, benefits, office, communications, vehicle and travel. By increasing the RGS endowment to \$10 million and using a 6% spending rate, the Society can fund all six biologists and their work. As a result RGS will be in a stronger position to grow its programs and expand its services, with clear benefits to forest habitat management and the wildlife that flourish in early successional forests.

Purchasing a Building: The Ruffed Grouse Society presently rents about 7,000 square feet of office space and 2,500 square feet of contiguous warehouse space for storing banquet merchandise. The monthly rent is about \$9,500 (not including utilities). If RGS were to purchase a similar building, it would realize an annual savings of about \$100,000 that could be used for mission specific projects.

CURRENT RGS PROGRAMS:

Management Area Program (MAP) Acreage



The ultimate goal of the Ruffed Grouse Society is to create quality habitat for ruffed grouse and American woodcock and provide quality hunting in as

Over the past 20 years, the RGS has improved approximately 495,570 acres of forests and shrubland for grouse, woodcock and 43 species of songbirds and other wildlife across 28 states.

many places as possible. The intensive nature of managing for grouse and woodcock often means that months or years of work by the RGS biologists may be required before effective habitat management results. No other nonprofit conservation organization focuses on grouse and woodcock, and very few actively manage for the other wildlife species that occupy grouse and woodcock habitat. Thus, none of the other conservation organizations have been able to match RGS' successful Management Area Program (MAP) in terms of creating new and improved habitat for grouse, woodcock and other early successional forest wildlife.

Education Programs

“Coverts”: The vast majority of forests that support grouse and woodcock habitat are in private hands. Under its “Coverts” program, RGS has worked to establish university extension education programs for private landholders in 11 states. Although some states have renamed the program to give a more local flavor, the concept remains the same: intensive training in forest and wildlife management for private landowners with the expectation that they share their knowledge with others. These programs are run with an impressive amount of expertise and passion and are audited regularly by our biological staff. The RGS biologists often participate as lecturers at these training sessions.



Coverts: A Wildlife Management Program For Private Landowner

Workshops and Seminars: RGS is widely recognized as the best source of information on grouse and woodcock ecology and management. The biological staff addresses dozens of professional, civic, private landowner, hunter, academic, and conservation groups every year in nearly every state



across the range of grouse and woodcock. They provide a mixture of practical advice on habitat management and the sound science supporting effective land management. Many times RGS biologists step in to train state and federal biologists on the specifics of managing for grouse and woodcock.

Conservation Plans: The “Ruffed Grouse Conservation Plan” was published in September, 2006. The Society coordinated the work of over 50 natural resource professionals in the United States and Canada to complete this range-wide assessment of ruffed grouse habitats and populations. This plan outlines the clear relationship between ruffed grouse and young forests and the very real danger to grouse, song birds and other early-forest wildlife when young forest habitats begin to disappear.

The “American Woodcock Conservation Plan” was coordinated by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service, and the RGS wildlife biologists contributed their expertise by authoring several important chapters. This plan identifies specific habitat management steps required to restore American woodcock populations to levels found in the 1970s. The “American Woodcock Conservation Plan”, viewed in concert with the “Ruffed Grouse Conservation Plan,” paints a clear picture of the actions required to secure the future for ruffed grouse and woodcock as important elements of our wildlife heritage.

Local Projects

The most tangible evidence of the RGS’ efforts to fulfill its vision are

RGS has nearly 490 habitat/conservation projects to its credit.



local habitat projects on public lands that increase the number of grouse, woodcock and other wildlife. RGS chapters consider such local projects as positive proof that their volunteer efforts are

worthwhile. RGS biologists work closely with local chapters and state and federal agencies to plan and



implement meaningful habitat projects on public property. Recently, the acquisition of heavy Caterpillar tree-harvesting equipment, made possible by a grant from the R. K. Mellon Foundation, has greatly enhanced the RGS’ ability to implement management projects across the Eastern US and energize chapters that get involved. Nothing is more rewarding than

personally making a significant positive impact on wildlife habitat.

Consulting

USDA's Forest Service: The USDA Forest Service administers vast tracts of national forest throughout the range of grouse and woodcock. In some states, particularly in the Appalachian Mountains, the majority of public land is National Forest, and its management is extremely important to the RGS' membership. RGS biologists spend countless hours attending public meetings and providing professional expertise on National Forest planning and management efforts. They often work for years with the Forest Service before a project is implemented or a plan is completed. It requires a tremendous amount of commitment to work so intensively with one agency. The eventual benefits are widespread and long-lasting, however, and very important in reaching the RGS' objectives.

Advisory/Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI) Review Boards: In 2008 the RGS' Executive Director was invited to serve on the Board for the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. The RGS' biological staff represents the organization and its membership on numerous public and private advisory boards and steering committees that help chart the future of forest and wildlife conservation in North America. As an example, in 2006, a Society biologist was asked to serve on the newly formed Sporting Conservation Council. The 12-member Council is a fully sanctioned federal advisory committee designed to provide input to the Secretaries of the US Departments of Agriculture and the Interior on issues related to wildlife conservation and sport hunting. In addition, Society biologists have been utilized as third party auditors during forest certification reviews, another testament of the scientific expertise of this group.



Private Land Consultations: When individual and corporate forest landowners are interested in managing their land for grouse, woodcock and other wildlife, they often turn to

the RGS' biologists. The RGS currently does not charge for this service, which normally includes a personal visit and assistance connecting the landowner to the proper resources, but landowners often make a donation to help defray the cost. Since private lands contain the vast majority of the potential habitat, our biologists take the time to walk and talk with private landowners whenever asked.

Research

National Ruffed Grouse and Woodcock Hunt (NGWH) provides longest running study:

The National Ruffed Grouse and Woodcock Hunt in northern Minnesota provides an unparalleled opportunity to research the population ecology of these two important upland game birds. Because the NGWH is conducted in the same locale, at the same time each year and using the same methods, it provides an outstanding opportunity to study



the annual variation of the local ruffed grouse population and how that variation relates to the birds' 10-year cycle. In addition, the NGWH gives natural resource professionals a first glimpse of the sex and age composition of the year's woodcock harvest which can provide insight into the reproductive success enjoyed by woodcock the previous spring. In 2006, a summary of the data collected during the hunt's first 25 years was published. Additional research findings from this important longitudinal study will be published in the scientific literature in 2008.

Partnerships

Partnerships with Government Agencies: The biological staff works closely with federal, state and county agencies on projects of mutual interest. Often funds from the RGS are matched, sometimes several times over, by individuals and organizations to increase the impact on the ground. Our biologists

coordinate numerous such projects, many of which would not move forward without the involvement and persistence of the RGS staff.

Partnerships with Conservation Groups: In August 2000, representatives from 36 of the nation's leading wildlife conservation organizations met in Missoula, Montana, to discuss a shared vision. That vision—to build unity and harness the collective strength of sportsmen and women to address present and future wildlife conservation challenges—became the mission of the newly formed American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP). The Ruffed Grouse Society, a founding member, led this consortium in 2003. The Society plays an active role in AWCP, regularly developing positions on issues of national importance to forest wildlife management. Leadership positions are shared with the other partner organizations to garner additional support, resulting in a broad coalition of wildlife conservation groups providing the influence needed to turn these positions into policies. The success of this networking was witnessed by the passage of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 and the 2007/08 Farm Bill.

Fundraising

Grants for Conservation: RGS currently has no formal development staff. Society biologists have taken on the task of submitting numerous grants to support on-the-ground habitat management, the acquisition of land management equipment and educational outreach to resource managers, private landowners, the media and the general public. In recent years RGS biologists have raised more than \$20,000 in Missouri for habitat management, over \$200,000 for equipment acquisition in the Northeast, \$25,000 in Minnesota for woodcock habitat development, \$8,000 to print and distribute the Ruffed Grouse Conservation Plan, and \$57,000 for youth education in Pennsylvania.

\$443,000 in grant money was obtained in 2007 to support the RGS mission in nine states.
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Chapter Relations: Each year, RGS chapters host fundraising banquets. Often it is the work of the



biologists that makes the difference between a chapter that merely survives and one that thrives. RGS biologists cover many states and chapters, with each chapter having diverse interests and expectations. It requires tremendous time management and people skills to maintain chapter interest, energy, and

involvement. And all of this is done with an eye on the RGS' ultimate goal: *improving the environment for ruffed grouse, woodcock and other wildlife of young forest habitats.*

PLEASE JOIN THE RGS BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF IN THE EXCITING 2008-09 RUFF CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TO RAISE \$5 MILLION TO FULLY ENDOW THE SOCIETY'S BIOLOGIST POSITIONS AND PURCHASE A HEADQUARTERS BUILDING.

To make a donation, please contact The Ruffed Grouse Society at 888.564.6747.