



Wildlife Division

Creating Outstanding Grouse, Woodcock and Turkey Hunting in Michigan

Expanding our ability to implement our Guiding Principles and Strategies (GPS)

Why

Ruffed grouse, American woodcock and eastern wild turkeys are found throughout the forested regions of the state and are very popular game birds. Many people mark the arrival of spring with the gobble of a turkey, the drumming of a grouse or the sky-dance of a woodcock. Hunters actively pursue upland game birds and many people travel from around the country to hunt these birds in Michigan. Nearly 60% (230,000 hunters) of all small game hunters pursue upland game birds and spend over 1.5 million days afield. Michigan is one of the top producers of woodcock and grouse in the nation, and ranks 6th in the nation for turkey harvest. Though grouse and woodcock can be found statewide, they are most prevalent in the northern Lower Peninsula and the Upper Peninsula, while wild turkeys can be found in almost every county in the state. Upland game birds have a strong contingent of stakeholders who support their management including the Ruffed Grouse Society and the National Wild Turkey Federation.



Eastern wild turkey populations have grown over the last 20 years but have plateaued in recent years. Ruffed grouse and woodcock populations nationally have experienced significant declines since the mid-1960s. Loss and degradation of early succession forest habitat is believed to be the primary factor responsible for these declines. Changes in land use and societal attitudes towards even-aged forest-management practices that create early succession habitat (such as clearcutting) will likely contribute to continued declines in grouse and woodcock populations.

What

Ruffed grouse, woodcock and wild turkeys can be found in many different types of forest, deciduous forests, such as aspen, birch, maple or oak with an understory of fruit-bearing shrubs are preferred. Young aspen forests support many more grouse and woodcock than other types of forests. National grouse and woodcock plan objectives call for no net-loss of the aspen cover type by 2014 and an increase in aspen by 2022. Grouse and woodcock populations will be increased through efforts to maintain and expand early successional forest with emphasis on aspen, maintenance and creation of forest openings and planting fruit bearing shrubs.

Wild turkeys have a preference for oak with acorns providing a highly nutritious fall and winter food. In the northern range, deep snow limits the availability of winter food and is the primary limiting factor that restricts population expansion. A secondary limiting factor throughout turkey range is good brood cover. Openings with grasses and forbs and little or no overstory trees are preferred. Efforts will be increased to generate oak, openings and grassland meadows.

Where

Habitat efforts will be increased statewide with emphasis on the northern two-thirds of the state and special emphasis on State Game Areas (SGA) in southern Michigan counties (Co.) with blocks of forest greater than 1,0000 acres. Some specific sites include:

- Allegan SGA (Allegan Co.)
- Barry SGA (Barry Co.)
- Crane Pond SGA (Cass Co.)
- Deford SGA (Tuscola Co.)
- Edmore SGA (Montcalm Co.)
- Flat River SGA (Ionia and Montcalm Co.)
- Gratiot-Saginaw SGA (Gratiot and Saginaw Co.)
- Langston SGA (Montcalm Co.)
- Lapeer SGA (Lapeer Co.)
- Lowell SGA (Kent and Ionia Co.)
- Maple River SGA (Gratiot, Ionia, and Clinton Co.)
- Middleville SGA (Barry Co.)
- Minden City SGA (Sanilac Co.)
- Muskegon SGA (Muskegon Co.)
- Rogue River SGA (Kent Co.)
- Sanilac SGA (Sanilac Co.)
- Stanton SGA (Montcalm Co.)
- Three Rivers SGA (St. Joseph Co.)
- Tuscola SGA (Tuscola Co.)
- Vassar SGA (Tuscola Co.)
- Vestaburg SGA (Montcalm Co.)

How

Working on public lands and private lands, the DNR will work with partners to maintain and develop forest and grasslands that are key to grouse, woodcock and wild turkeys. Habitat practices will include:

- Increasing oak management to replace loss of beech and ash
- Increasing clear-cutting to benefit grouse and woodcock
- Increasing number of openings and food plots
- Expanding grouse walking trails
- Controlling invasive species that are poor food and cover for wildlife
- Promoting fruit bearing shrubs.



Beneficial Impacts

Additional benefits to wildlife include creation of habitat for:

- snowshoe hare
- forest songbirds
- black bear
- deer
- wood duck

Management of forests for wildlife will help improve Michigan's timber industry by increasing harvest on public and private lands. Forest product companies will experience an increase in volume, allowing them to sustain their business, improve rural economies and keep jobs in Michigan.

Local communities reliant on forest-based economies will experience an improvement to commerce, tourism, recreation and quality of life. Increased hunting opportunities provide local communities with an expanded consumer base, spending on lodging, meals and supplies. Ruffed grouse hunters alone contribute over \$500 million to local economies each year nationwide. Improvement to these forest habitats will ensure Michigan retains its national status as a destination spot for top notch upland forest bird hunting.