

# SAGE GROUSE NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Issue 1

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## Introduction

### *Getting Started*

Dwight Bunnell  
Coordinator

*T*he Sage Grouse Planning Team is anxious to facilitate information exchange among states, agencies, universities, and others involved in sage grouse conservation and conservation planning. Our strategy is to use an e-mail newsletter format. We foresee distributing the newsletter six times per year, generally on a bi-monthly schedule with the option of adding special issues if circumstances warrant. Our intention is to keep the newsletter brief by including brief reports and links to useful sources of information.

We are distributing the newsletter to all members of the sage grouse technical committee and team members with the expectation that each of you will forward it appropriately. Feel free to use the newsletter as best meets your needs. Forward it to administrators, biologists, local planning teams, state planning teams, local governments, etc. You may also reformat the newsletter to produce a state newsletter that fits your needs, print copies for distribution at meetings, and forward e-copies. We would appreciate a reference to this newsletter if you reformat it or select articles to move to other publications.

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We are soliciting suggestions for the name of the newsletter (see details below), standard content headings and so forth. Our purpose is to produce a product that will require a minimum amount of time on your part and in fact, save you time and keep you informed of big picture happenings in sage grouse country. We are open to your suggestions and recommendations as to where we go from here.

Please send me news of happenings in your area that you would like to see included in the next issue of the newsletter which will be published at the end of November. I will need to receive your suggestions and information by November 17<sup>th</sup>. Please report time sensitive, important information immediately and we will send out a special edition to our mailing list.

Thanks for your recommendations and support.

Dwight



## Name This Sage Grouse Newsletter

*W*e need a title for this newsletter! Send us your idea(s) on a title for this Sage Grouse Newsletter. There will be a worth while gift given to the person that sends in the best title (to be determined by the team). We would like to have all submissions sent to [celiabunnell@netscape.net](mailto:celiabunnell@netscape.net) by October 31, 2003. The winner will be notified and credited for their contribution to the newsletter. ☺

## Recent Literature and Publications

*B*elow is a list of new literature that is currently available. If you have not received and would like to receive the document, please contact Celia Bunnell at [celiabunnell@netscape.net](mailto:celiabunnell@netscape.net) and we will get a copy sent to you. Please list the document(s), your mailing address and e-mail address so that the information can be sent to you in the best possible way.

If you are aware of new publications that would be useful to those involved in Sage Grouse conservation please send the information to Celia at the above address or Dwight at [dwrightbunnell@earthlink.net](mailto:dwrightbunnell@earthlink.net).

- Beck, J.L., D.L. Mitchell, and B.D. Maxfield. 2003. Changes in the distribution and status of sage-grouse in Utah. *Western North American Naturalist* 63:203-214.
- Benedict, N.G., S.J. Oyler-McCance, S.E. Taylor, C.E. Braun, and T.W. Quinn. Evaluation of the eastern (*Centrocercus urophasianus urophasianus*) and western (*Centrocercus urophasianus phaios*) subspecies of sage-grouse using mitochondrial control-region sequence data. *Conservation Genetics* 4:301-310.
- Burkepile, N.A., J.W. Connelly, D.W. Stanley, and K.P. Reese. 2002. Attachment of radio-transmitters to one-day-old sage grouse chicks. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 30:93-96.
- Gutierrez, R.J., and J.W. Connelly. 2003. Sage-grouse listing petitions. *Grouse News* 25:10-12.
- Pedersen, E.K., J.W. Connelly, J.R. Hendrickson, and W.E. Grant. 2003. Effect of sheep grazing and fire on sage-grouse populations in southeastern Idaho. *Ecological Modeling* 165:230-47.
- Welch, B.L., and C. Criddle. 2003. Countering misinformation concerning big sagebrush. *USDA Forest Service Research Paper RMRS-RP-40*. 29 pp.
- Wik, P.A. 2002. Ecology of greater sage-grouse in south-central Owyhee County, Idaho. M.S. thesis, University of Idaho, Moscow. 141 pp.
- Zwickel, F.C., and M.A. Schroeder. Grouse of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1803-1806. *Northwestern Naturalist* 84:1-19. ©

## 2003 Sage Grouse Hunting Seasons

- Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division  
No Sage Grouse Hunting Season
- California Department of Fish & Game  
General Season September 13 – 14  
Bag/Possession Limit 1/3
- Colorado Division of Wildlife  
Sage Grouse  
General Season September 13 -19  
Bag/Possession Limit 2/4
- Idaho Fish and Game  
Area 1 Closed  
Area 2 September 20 – 26  
Bag/Possession Limit 1/2  
Area 3 September 20 – October 12  
Bag/Possession Limit 2/4
- Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
General Season September 1 – November 1  
Bag/Possession Limit 2/4
- Nevada Division of Wildlife  
General Season October 11 – 19  
Bag/Possession Limit 2/4  
Permit Areas September 20 – 21 and 27 – 28  
Bag/Possession Limit 3/6
- North Dakota Game and Fish  
General Season September 15 – 17  
Bag/Possession Limit 1/1
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Permit Only September 6 – 10  
Bag/Possession Limit 2/2
- Saskatchewan Environment and RM  
No Sage Grouse Hunting Season
- South Dakota Game Fish and Parks  
General Season September 24 – 25  
Bag/Possession Limit 1/1
- Utah Division of Wildlife Resources  
September 20 – 28  
Bag/Possession Limit 2/2
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Sage Grouse Hunting Closed Statewide
- Wyoming Game and Fish  
September 27 – October 5  
Bag/Possession Limit 2/4  
*Due to West Nile virus the following counties have been closed for this season: Johnson, Sheridan, and Campbell.* ©

## The Wildlife Society, Burlington, Vermont

Michael Schroeder  
Upland Bird Research Biologist

The annual conference of The Wildlife Society was held on 6-10 September 2003 in Burlington, Vermont. The meeting was attended by 1,400 people including students, professors, biologists, and other people interested in wildlife. Because of the large size of the meeting, up to 6 concurrent sessions were needed to accompany the numerous scientific presentations, symposia, and posters. In addition, there was a trade show, business meeting, and plenary session.

The conference included at least 11 presentations on grouse, including 5 on greater sage-grouse. Symposia included "Assessing Risks to Wildlife", "Population Dynamics of Birds", and "Modeling and Decision Making". One of the most useful aspects of the conference was the accumulation of expertise. This included many grouse experts and those with information on disease testing, risk assessment, and conservation planning. The next meeting of The Wildlife Society will be in September, 2004 in Calgary, Alberta. Preliminary plans include a proposal to have a symposium on sage-grouse. ☺

## Energy Tour of Wyoming

Michael Schroeder  
Upland Bird Research Biologist

A tour of energy development in Wyoming was conducted during 17-20 August 2003. Jack Connelly, Mike Schroeder, and Steve Knick were the primary attendees of the tour as they conducted research for the rangewide assessment of sage-grouse populations and their habitats. Experts from Wyoming (Tom Rinkes, Tom Christiensen, Joe Bohne, Greg Hiatt, and Matt Holloran), provided local information on sage-grouse distribution and populations, energy development, and land-use history.

Key points-of-interest on the tour included the Pinedale Anticline (gas), Jonah Field (gas), Wamsetter 2 (gas), Foote Creek Rim (wind), Sinclair (refinery), Midwest (oil), Eagle Butte (coal), Powder River Basin (coal-bed methane), and Atlantic Rim (undeveloped so far). The development issues observed and discussed included well spacing, pipe lines, power lines, roads, fences, windmills, water impoundments, development corridors, noxious weeds, auditory disturbances, fragmentation effects, and restoration potential. The tour also provided an opportunity to discuss the recent occurrence of West Nile Virus in Wyoming sage-grouse. ☺

## WEST NILE VIRUS

Compiled by: Dwight Bunnell  
Coordinator

The following PRESS RELEASE, from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, is the latest in a series of information articles designed to inform the public about West Nile Virus in Wyoming. At this time, WMV has also been confirmed in samples from dead sage grouse tested in Alberta and Montana.

### WYOMING GAME AND FISH COMMISSION CLOSES SAGE GROUSE SEASON IN JOHNSON, SHERIDAN AND CAMPBELL COUNTIES

CHEYENNE - Concerns about the potential impact of West Nile virus on the sage grouse population in northeast Wyoming have prompted the Game and Fish Commission to close the 2003 hunting season for the species in Johnson, Sheridan and Campbell counties. Since August, the Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory has diagnosed 11 sage grouse in the Spotted Horse and Gillette areas infected with the virus. Because the infection is much higher in northeast Wyoming than the rest of the state and the area is on the fringe of sage grouse range with marginal, fragmented habitat, the G&F Department recommended closing the season. "Northeast Wyoming has comparatively small sage grouse populations that are semi-isolated," said Tom Christiensen, G&F sage grouse biologist. "When combined with all the other limiting factors these populations face, we thought it was best to close the area to hunting as a precaution." All other areas originally open for hunting will remain open for the Sept. 27 - Oct. 5 season. The limit in the open area will continue to be two daily and four in possession. Christiensen added, "The discovery of the virus in sage grouse is not surprising, but early indications suggest a higher mortality rate than has been observed in other game birds." The infected birds in the Powder River Basin were part of a study being conducted by the University of Montana and the Bureau of Land Management researching the impacts of coalbed methane development on sage grouse.

Spring monitoring will determine if overall mortality was as high as indicated by the birds in the study. If the counts do not show a significant loss, the hunting season will likely be reopened in 2004 for these counties.

Since the virus was discovered in northeast Wyoming sage grouse, expanded surveillance has also diagnosed one positive case each in Carbon, Fremont, Park, Natrona and Sweetwater counties. Monitoring of over 100 radio-collared birds in studies near Lander, Pinedale and Kemmerer has not detected any unusual mortality associated with West Nile virus.... The G&F estimates that about 150 hunters

bagged approximately 75 grouse in Johnson, Campbell and Sheridan counties in 2002.

Contact: Tom Christiansen (307) 875-3223  
Written by Jeff Obrecht ☺

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### GENERAL PUBLIC GUNNISON SAGE GROUSE MEETINGS

PLACE: GLADE PARK

DATE: OCTOBER 7

PLACE: HODKISS

DATE: OCTOBER 8

PLACE: MONTICELLO

DATE: OCTOBER 15

PLACE: NORWOOD

DATE: OCTOBER 28

PLACE: PONCHO PASS

DATE: OCTOBER 29

PLACE: GUNNISON

DATE: OCTOBER 30

### GUNNISON SAGE GROUSE TEAM MEETING

PLACE: GRAND JUNCTION

DATE: OCTOBER 7 – 8

## Sage Grouse Conservation Planning Framework Team

Tony Apa, Colorado Division of Wildlife  
Joe Bohne, Wyoming Game and Fish  
Jack Connelly, Idaho Department of Fish and Game  
Terry Crawford, Director Nevada Department of Wildlife

Pat Deibert, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Mark Hilliard, USDI, Bureau of Land Management  
Clint McCarthy, U.S. Forest Service, Intermountain Region  
Dwight Bunnell, Team Coordinator