

Comment on proposed ptarmigan regulation change:

RC22

Comment:

Favorable.

I am not in attendance today because I am ... ptarmigan hunting.

To many people, a ptarmigan hunt means a snowmachine and a .22 rifle.

To others, perhaps fewer in number, a ptarmigan hunt is a thrilling but hard-working experience.

It means strenuous hiking, with a day trip that can last 12 hours from the time we park the car, work our way above timberline, "side-hilling", or moving up and down steep grades, to making our way back down again. It means cramps and heavy day packs.

Or it means spending a lot of money to hire a float plane and set up a camp on an alpine lake.

Or it means several days on the trail with a heavy pack that includes, tents, guns, ammo, food.

Then there is buying an expensive upland hunting dog; the work of disciplining the dog, training it to point and retrieve, purchasing beepers, e-collars, clothing and other accessories.

In winter, we snowshoe or cross-country ski, and risk avalanches.

Then there is the skill of learning ptarmigan habitat and habits.

I just recently took 5 ptarmigan and was exhausted after 4 hours of heavy work with snowshoes, crossing creeks, scrambling up banks and mountain benches. There was no way I could continue, nor did I need to. The experience was an exhilarating one.

To compare all that to a zipping snowmachiner who spots his birds from a hundred yards and picks them off one by one without the aid of a dog ... well, you can see why some of us consider it less sporting.

Gunning for these birds that way is no doubt fun, and it can be family oriented, and it does have its place. But if the proposed new regs hopes to reign in on this kind of sport, many upland hunters would applaud it. I am one.

If, however, the goal is to conserve the resource, it would seem that extending the season would defeat its purpose. I must admit that I like the idea of an April hunt, but would suggest ending it after the second Sunday in April.

Submitted by Jesse Bjorkman  
for Bob Bird

There is one troubling aspect of upland hunting regs in this state, and would like to opportunity to address it here: the NO LEAD regs in GMU 26. It has been the historic practice concerning regs that once they begin in one area, they only spread to others. Since Unit 26 is lightly hunted in a largely empty wilderness, with very little upland hunting pressure, the concerns of lead would seem misplaced and overzealous.

NO LEAD has already driven many sportsmen away from waterfowl hunting. NO LEAD has made its way into upland hunting in Europe. NO LEAD increases the costs, making it more and more a sport for the financially elite.

Please, do not entertain any such regs for upland hunting in Alaska; consider ending it in GMU 26; and work to end it in waterfowl hunting statewide as well.

Sincerely yours,  
Robert M. Bird  
[bob.bird@hotmail.com](mailto:bob.bird@hotmail.com)  
776-5898