Statewide Small Game Program

Region IV
Board of Game Meeting
February 8-15, 2013

Rick Merizon
Division of Wildlife Conservation
Palmer, AK.
907.746.6333
richard.merizon@alaska.gov
Overview

1. History - How we got here…

2. Core Components of the Program
   a. Education
   b. Research
   c. Management

3. Proposal 88 – Unit 13B ptarmigan
History

1. 1960s and 70s:
   R. Weeden – rock and willow ptarmigan in Interior

2. Late 1980s:
   Ruffed grouse transplant (Mat-Su and Kenai)

3. Mid-1990s – 2011:
   - Research – sharp-tailed grouse (Delta Junction)
   - Springtime abundance surveys

4. August 2011:
   Begin current program
Education

Small Game Hunting in Alaska

Overview

Small game hunting provides a wonderful opportunity to introduce young and new hunters to the heritage of hunting. It offers an easy, cost-effective, and accessible opportunity to begin a friendship, tradition, and outdoor activity that can last a lifetime. Small game hunting tends to be much more casual than big game hunting, does not require special permits, tags, or stamps, and a group can enjoy aad, hunt, and be home for dinner. A child introduced to hunting through flushing hares out of a local willow grove or making a gravel road for spruce grouse will become hooked on the tradition and friendship that going outdoors with friends and family provides. Small game hunting in Alaska offers abundant opportunities to work with or train a hunting dog and experience the thrill of watching your dog hold a point on a resting grouse.

In Alaska, small game includes hares, grouse, and ptarmigan. We are extremely fortunate to have diverse and abundant small game populations throughout the state. Alaska has four species of grouse (ruffed, sharp-tailed, spruce, and rock), all three world-wide species of ptarmigan (willow, rock, and white-tailed), and two species of hare (snowshoe and blacktail). All of these species are native to Alaska and can be legally hunted by both residents and non-residents under liberal season dates and bag limits. A hunter can travel anywhere in the state and have an opportunity to observe and harvest at least one if not four or five of these species in one location.

ADFG Small Game Program

This Department’s Small Game Program was created to promote the conservation of Alaska’s small game resources for future generations. Biologists are not only working to study and understand the grouse, ptarmigan, and hares of Alaska but also develop educational opportunities through courses and seminars for interested individuals to become better informed on the hunting opportunities that are available. There are also numerous handouts and even a poster to help identify and understand these dynamic animals.

Get Involved

Are you interested in getting involved and helping small game biologist? Here are some ways you can help.
Research
Management

1. Springtime abundance surveys

2. Statewide wing collections

3. Statewide small game hunter survey
Management

Spring Surveys

- sooty grouse
- sharp-tailed grouse
- ruffed grouse
- ptarmigan
- snowshoe hare
Management

Spring Surveys
Management

Grouse:

1. Ruffed Grouse:
   - Increasing in Interior
   - Low but stable in Mat-Su

2. Sharp-tailed Grouse:
   - Low but stable in Delta Jct.

3. Spruce Grouse:
   - Low near population centers

4. Sooty Grouse:
   - Low near population centers
Management

Ptarmigan:

1. Willow Ptarmigan:
   - Moderate abundance, generally stable
   - Most popular small game species

2. Rock Ptarmigan:
   - Less abundant statewide
   - Low at monitored sites along road system

3. White-tailed Ptarmigan:
   - Least abundant
   - Low harvest pressure
Proposal 88

1. Effect of Proposal:
   - Reinstate the winter hunting season for ptarmigan
   - Reduce the bag limit

2. Wintertime harvest – additive mortality

3. Average Unit 13 ptarmigan harvest – 1-3 birds/day

4. Unrealistic to manage the species separately