

**FEDERAL AID ANNUAL
RESEARCH PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NO. W-33-11

PROJECT NO.: 35.0

PERIOD: July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2016

PROJECT LOCATION: Statewide

PROJECT TITLE: Status, Public Use, and Management of Small Game Populations in Alaska

REPORT DESCRIPTION: This performance report describes small game program survey and inventory, research, management, and education activities for Fiscal Year 2013. Activities are listed by objective.

I. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED TOWARDS PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

All project objectives were addressed and work completed during this reporting period.

OBJECTIVE 1: Receive recommendations and assist ADF&G management staff in addressing local or regional small game issues.

JOB/ACTIVITY: A good relationship has been built between the small game program and area management biologists statewide. The program has developed research questions, management proposals, and educational materials based on these relationships to assist and ease existing staff workload. Program staff attended 2 Board of Game (BOG) meetings in winter 2013 to assist management staff with various ptarmigan proposals.

OBJECTIVE 2: Design and implement springtime survey techniques that will provide more timely and useful abundance trend data for managers in select locations on and off the road system.

JOB/ACTIVITY: A total of 3 ruffed, and 1 sharp-tailed grouse, 15 willow, 10 rock, and 2 white-tailed ptarmigan abundance surveys were completed during the spring or summer of 2013. Attempts were made to establish additional non-road accessible willow and rock ptarmigan survey locations during spring 2013; however due to a very late spring these surveys could not be established.

OBJECTIVE 3: Implement of harvest composition monitoring through wing and tail collections of grouse and ptarmigan and hunter effort statewide.

JOB/ACTIVITY: A total of 950 wings were collected during regulatory year 2012. All 7 species of Alaskan grouse and ptarmigan were represented in the collection from 17 of the 26 game management units (GMU).

OBJECTIVE 4: Create and maintain an effective network of volunteers throughout the state to accomplish program goals that include fall harvest samples and hunter effort questionnaire.

JOB/ACTIVITY: Since the inception of the program passionate volunteers have been utilized to assist with education programs (Becoming and Outdoors Women-BOW), completing ruffed grouse drumming surveys, and provide objective and sound field and hunter effort reports. In January, the program published the results of the first statewide small game hunter survey. This survey questioned 9,500 Alaska resident and non-resident license holders about their household small game hunting activity to better understand hunters use, harvest, and effort of Alaska's small game resources.

OBJECTIVE 5: Promote the development of a research plan with universities in Alaska, federal agencies, and others when funding and needs are available.

JOB/ACTIVITY 1: Beginning in spring 2013, a rock ptarmigan study as initiated by the small game program to better understand their movement and distribution relative to road access in GMU 13B. This study was initiated from a BOG Proposal that needed further research. The small game program has also established a strong relationship with professors at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks on other research efforts (Objective 6).

OBJECTIVE 6: Begin a 3-year research project examining willow ptarmigan distribution and seasonal movement patterns. This will require the capture of live willow ptarmigan for which an Animal Care and Use Committee plan will be approved prior to commencing field work.

JOB/ACTIVITY: In winter 2012, the small game program secured funding through the Alaska Energy Authority to support research on the distribution and movements of willow ptarmigan near the proposed Watana hydroelectric facility. In January 2013, a graduate student took the lead on this study and in spring 2013, willow ptarmigan were captured and radio collared. This project will continue for 2 additional field seasons. Although this project has not directly supported this study, some equipment and resources have been periodically used.

OBJECTIVE 7: Develop educational programs, seminars, and interactive material with ADF&G staff and non-governmental organizations on small game hunting and life history for the public on small game.

JOB/ACTIVITY: This project has supported numerous efforts to provide educational material to the public including the creation of a new grouse and ptarmigan poster, funding the reprinting of the grouse and ptarmigan handbook, creating hunter kiosks at the Anchorage, Palmer, Fairbanks, and Juneau offices.

This project has also provided numerous public presentations on Alaska small game and hunting techniques to sportsmans shows, school groups, Wildlife Wednesday series, and to various venues with the public. It also supported the BOW program with staff, funds, and materials. In September 2013, the first annual Beyond BOW Small Game Hunting event was created by the project.

OBJECTIVE 8: Complete an annual small game report that documents current status of studied populations, management issues, research studies, and future goals.

JOB/ACTIVITY: This report was completed in August 2013 and reviews and documents all of the results from the statewide wing collections, springtime abundance surveys, recent BOG action, and other management concerns.

II. SIGNIFICANT DEVIATIONS AND/OR ADDITIONAL FEDERAL AID-FUNDED WORK NOT DESCRIBED ABOVE THAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED ON THIS PROJECT DURING THIS SEGMENT PERIOD

None.

III. PUBLICATIONS

Merizon, R. A. and S. J. Carson. 2013. Statewide small game hunter survey, 2012. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Wildlife Management report ADF&G/DWC/WMR-2013-2, Anchorage, Alaska.

Merizon, R. A. 2013. Status of grouse, ptarmigan, and hare in Alaska, 2013. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Wildlife Management Report, ADF&G/DWC/WMR-2013-3. Palmer, Alaska.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

None.

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DATE: 3 October 2013