

USACE Natural Resource Management

Non-migratory Birds



Ruffed Grouse

FAST FACTS

REASONS FOR CURRENT STATUS: This wide-ranging bird experienced population declines during the nineteenth century as a result of logging and agricultural development which destroyed and degraded forest habitats. Practices such as fire control, opposition to clear-cut logging, and conifer management have allowed for the conversion, maturation, and degradation of early-successional forests which the Ruffed Grouse inhabited. (Birds of the World, Cornell)

Though this species is not federally listed, NatureServe lists the Ruffed Grouse as Critically Imperiled in the state of Alabama, Imperiled in Georgia, and Vulnerable in several states.

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION: The Ruffed Grouse is a sought after gamebird, and thus is closely managed. Ruffed Grouse harvest is generally controlled via area closures, bag limits, and season lengths. (Birds of the World, Cornell)

The Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) is a large hunter-conservationist group dedicated to the enhancement of Ruffed Grouse populations. RGS works in cooperation with state and federal agencies to participate in the conservation and management of Ruffed Grouse and other early successional forest wildlife species. RGS uses funds to purchase public and private lands to be managed for Ruffed Grouse and provides technical assistance to landowners who wish to manage private lands for the bird. (Ruffed Grouse Society)

HABITAT NEEDS: Ruffed Grouse occur in North America's coniferous, deciduous, and mixed forests which contain scattered clearings.

- The species is most abundant in early-successional forests dominated by poplars and aspens.
- Management that encourages the reproduction of aspen and other early-successional plants benefits the Ruffed Grouse.
- Occupies both wet and dry situations (Birds of the World, Cornell)
- In the Northwest, these birds can be found in riparian habitat. (All About Birds, Cornell)

Size: This is a medium sized grouse, about the size of an American Crow when full grown. Total length is between 15 and 20 inches. (All About Birds, Cornell)

Color: This species has dark spots and bars on a red-brown or gray background. The tail is finely barred and has one wide, black band across the top. (All About Birds, Cornell)

Photo Credit:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Natural Resource Management (NRM)

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USACE ROLE: USACE established a national partnership with the Ruffed Grouse Society in an effort to support conservation efforts for Ruffed Grouse, American Woodcock and other songbirds and wildlife that have similar habitat requirements on USACE managed lands. As many USACE NRM projects fall within the range of the species, employing active habitat management strategies as suggested by numerous State Wildlife Action Plans, can help slow the decline of area populations.

WHAT IS USACE DOING:

In June of 1997, USACE's Raystown Lake Project and the Ruffed Grouse Society signed an MOU. The MOU established two unique habitat improvement projects dedicated to the memory of Jim Bashline, a well-known outdoor writer and conservationist.

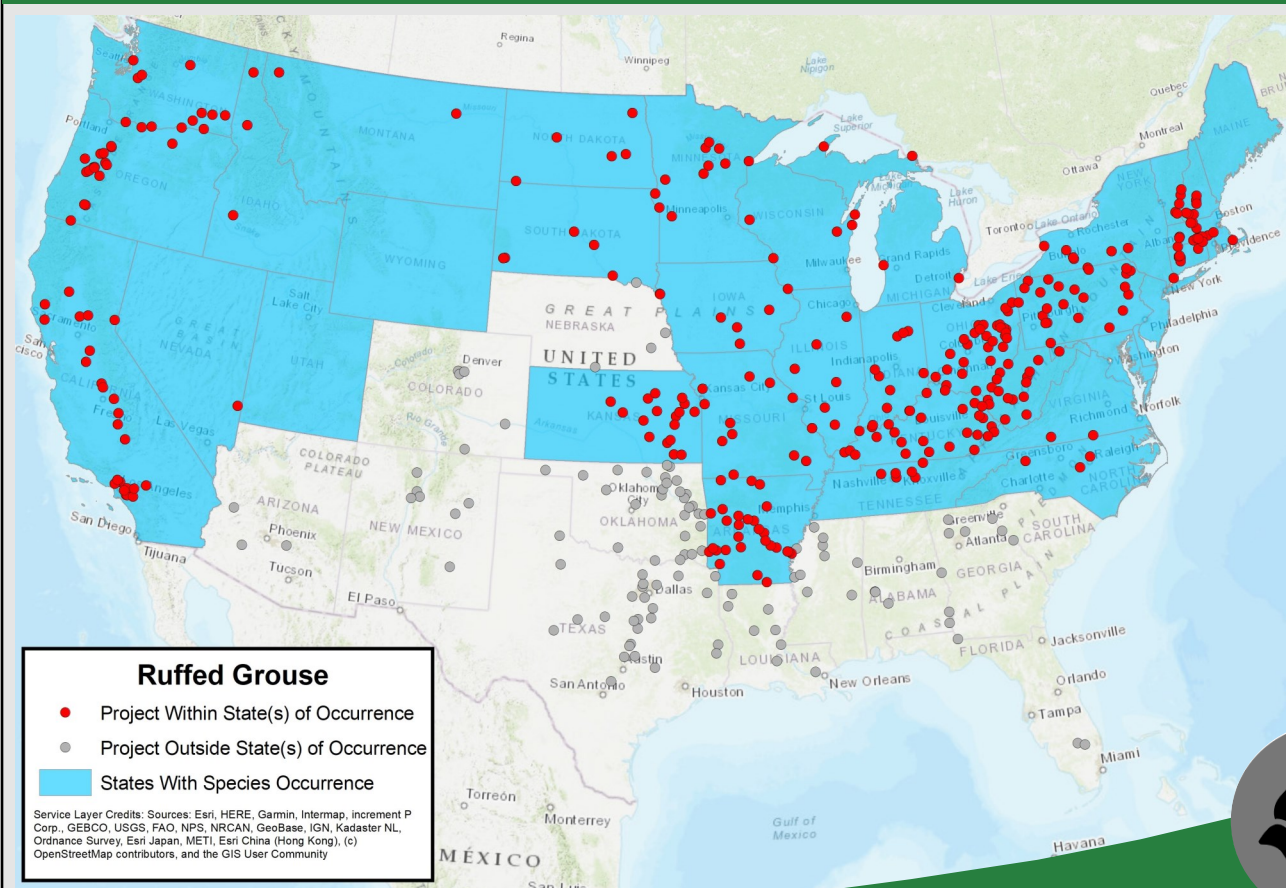
The Jim Bashline Wildlife Habitat Management Area is managed for early successional habitat through timber harvesting. Management activities are being coordinated by the Ruffed Grouse Society, USACE, and the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Included in these activities are small-block timber harvests to provide the dense, young forest habitats required by Ruffed Grouse, American Woodcock, Golden-winged Warblers, and numerous other species. Additional activities include the establishment of conifer seedlings and fruiting shrub plantings to augment local food sources and provide cover.

The second project area is approximately 200 acres and encompasses the existing Old Logger's Trail. This trail has been improved to offer a wildlife habitat management theme with interpretive stations designed to educate the user of the benefits of habitat manipulation, including timber harvest, plantings, and wetland habitat.

Known as the Jim Bashline Wildlife Habitat Demonstration Area, school groups, campers, and hikers utilize this unique outdoor "classroom." The Ruffed Grouse Society has committed to providing long-term financial and technical assistance to ensure the success of the Bashline Memorial Project.



Photo Above: Aerial imagery of the Jim Bashline Wildlife Habitat Management Area of the Raystown Lake Project. The image depicts a mosaic of early successional habitat creation through an active forest management program.



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