



# Maine Guide Tips

## “Know Your Grouse”

Complimentary Information from the Maine Professional Guides Association

### Game Bird Hunters!

Can you distinguish between the legally hunted ruffed grouse (partridge) and the spruce grouse, for which there is no open season?

### Spruce Grouse

#### Behavior

- Generally act very tame; may allow a hunter or a slow moving vehicle to approach to within a few feet.
- Will often “crouch” low to the ground when approached.
- When finally ready to move, Spruce Grouse will often run only a short distance, or fly only to a nearby tree.

#### Physical Characteristics

- Tail feathers have red-brown tips and lack the broad black band of the ruffed grouse.
- Male spruce grouse are slate gray and black above (considerably darker than ruffed grouse), with a characteristic un-feathered red patch of skin above the eye.
- Female spruce grouse are gray and brown above, and white and brown below. Under certain light conditions they may look similar to the red phase of ruffed grouse.

### Ruffed Grouse

#### Behavior

- When approached by someone on foot or in a vehicle, frequently “perk” head up like a chicken.
- Commonly flush and take flight when disturbed.
- May also lower its head, with neck extended, and run for cover.

#### Physical Characteristics (spruce grouse lack all of these features)

- Conspicuous, broad black band on the tail.
- Black ruff feathers on sides of neck.
- Small feathers pointing up from top of head.

### Planning Your Hunt

Licensed Maine Guides specializing in grouse hunting are fully prepared to assure that your hunt is successful, enjoyable and legal.

For additional assistance in planning your hunt, you may want to contact:

**Maine Professional Guides Association**  
[www.maineguides.org](http://www.maineguides.org)

**Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife**  
[www.maine.gov/ifw/](http://www.maine.gov/ifw/)

Spruce and ruffed grouse can and do occur in the same areas of Maine. In certain light conditions, they may look similar. Nearly half a million ruffed grouse are harvested here annually. Although the Fish and Wildlife Department does not have a population estimate for spruce grouse, we do know that they are rare and far less numerous than ruffed grouse.

**Currently there is NO OPEN SEASON on spruce grouse in Maine. As in any hunting situation, it is imperative that the hunter be certain of his/her target before discharging a firearm.**

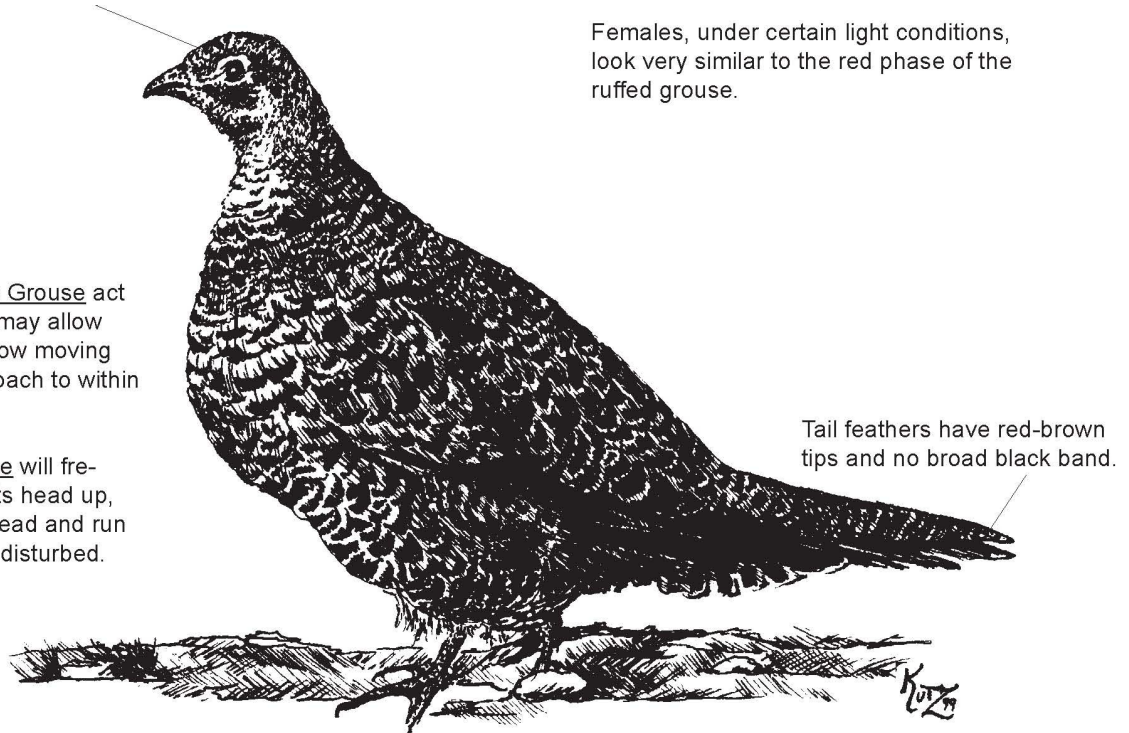
# Spruce Grouse

Males will often have an unfeathered red patch of skin above the eye.

Females, under certain light conditions, look very similar to the red phase of the ruffed grouse.

**NOTE:** Spruce Grouse act very tame and may allow a hunter or a slow moving vehicle to approach to within a few feet.

A Ruffed Grouse will frequently "perk" its head up, then lower its head and run for cover when disturbed.



# Ruffed Grouse

Small feathers pointing up from top of head.

Black feathers on sides of neck.

Conspicuous broad black band on the tail.

