

Hooters Hooting Heralding Spring In Alaska's Panhandle

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Hooters, or blue grouse, are again heralding the spring season throughout most of the Panhandle, reports the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Cabin fever season is over. sportsmen can now take their guns off the wall and begin hunting again.

Each year the coming of spring encourages the male blue grouse to perch in the top of the tallest tree around and begin hooting, said John Crawford, southeastern regional game supervisor.

The hooting call, similar to several notes blown across the mouth of a coke bottle, is used to warn other males and attract females. Some hunters are able to use a bottle to call

a hooter within shooting range.

Hooter hunting is not easy. The hunter must locate the bird by its call and this can be difficult. Often a hooter will cease to call when a hunter approaches and remain silent until he leaves.

He may not be able to spot it through the dense foliage. Shotguns and .22 rifles are most popularly used for hooter hunting and binoculars are of assistance in locating the birds. Grouse should be drawn immediately after killing or they may become unpalatable.

The season on grouse will remain open until May 15, with a limit of five birds a day. It is doubtful many hunters will bag their limits. Crawford explained that hooter hunting is selective to males and since grouse are polygamous little effect is felt by the total breeding population.