

WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 101

Fall 2023

WSGS ANNUAL MEETING 2023

We held our annual meeting in mid-July, partnering with the Friends of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area on this showcase sand barrens property, one of the few remaining strongholds of STG in the state. The Friends group has held an annual “Blueberries in the Barrens” festival for several years as their annual meeting and invite citizens from around the area to come up to the barrens, pick some berries, have a great lunch and learn about this unique ecological type. In the process those local community folks begin to see the value in preserving those open barrens and ultimately become strong supporters for the effort to keep them viable. It seemed like a perfect fit for WSGS to participate and have this be our annual meeting for the year. For our morning business meeting we reviewed the treasurer’s report and approved the past meeting’s minutes. We then went through the newly updated WSGS bylaws, having discussions and making edits in the process. Ultimately we called a vote on the revised bylaws from the membership that were present, that resulted in strong support and approval.

After the WSGS business meeting a social hour was held with silent auctions, raffles and merchandise sales to raise funds for barrens focused activities. This was followed by a number of speakers providing presentations on topics of interest related to the Northwest Sands.

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- Gary Dunsmoor (FNBWA) and Ken Jonas (WSGS) welcomed the crowd to the “Blueberries on the Barrens” program.
- Dave Evenson, filling in for Brian Finstad, gave an update on the Northwest Sands Auto Tour, which follows the 1863 stagecoach road.
- Dave Peters, author of the book Sand and Fire, explained how the book came to be. This informative and interesting book describes both the ecology and the local history of the Namekagon Barrens area.
- Bob Hanson, DNR Northwest Sands Biologist, presented “Managing Barrens for Sharp-tailed Grouse”, and gave the crowd an update on the Sharp-tailed Grouse Management Plan, currently being updated.
- Nancy Christel, DNR Wildlife Biologist and manager of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area, described ongoing management on NBWA, with special emphasis on the recently acquired 1400 acres and conversion from forest to barrens habitat.

Lastly a great picnic lunch was provided by the sponsoring organizations with door prizes, silent auction and raffle drawings ending the day.

PRESIDENT’S SOAPBOX **ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT**

By: Ken Jonas

The annual meeting is in essence similar to a corporate fiscal year, both a beginning and an end. The Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society has had a very active year with positive implications for our remnant population of sharp-tails in the state. In early Feb. we teamed up the UWSP chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers for a fundraising event held at District 1 Brewery in Stevens point. The event enhanced awareness, raised needed funds and resulted in the brewery creating a masterpiece entitled Sharptail Ale. The next major undertaking was participation in the National Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic where we had a booth on Grouse Trail. People from all over the country were in attendance and we talked sharptails, raising awareness with literally thousands of gamebird enthusiasts, as well as selling merchandise and memberships that help fund the mission. We held our annual meeting in mid-July in partnership with the Friends of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area on this showcase sand barrens property, one of the remaining strongholds of STG in the state. The event was well attended by folks from both organizations as well as the surrounding communities. Speakers from

hosting non-profit organizations, the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources, and the author of Sand and Fire talked barrens and sharptails with educational benefits for everyone. Shortly afterward in early August, WSGS along with the North American Grouse Partnership, co-hosted the Prairie Grouse Summit at Crex Meadows WA located at the southern reaches of sharptail range in the state. This focused professional conference shared management details of fragmented prairie chicken and sharptail populations in a tri-state area.

In addition to the outreach effort, WSGS funded projects that had positive benefits for stg populations in the field. We agreed to fund two roller chopping efforts on 245 acres, that will set back succession especially where prescribed burning is unable to do the job. We purchased 2 sharptail grouse viewing blinds for WDNR to be used for surveying male STG spring lek activity on The Crex Meadows WA and assisted with stg surveys on three major properties. WSGS funded two Autonomous Recording Units (ARU) that are programmed to detect the calls of a variety of bird species in the field. The ARUs were used by Bayfield County Forest staff to search for sharptail vocalizations at 5 different sites during the spring mating season, with success at 4 of them.

WSGS representatives served on the committee and assisted with development of a new State of WI Sharptail Grouse Management Plan that will soon be available for public review. We've provided supporting comments on a proposal to increase open barrens habitat on the Brule River State Forest and lastly, committed funding and in-kind services over a four year period on a proposal in review, that would focus on increasing fire as management tool on the three early successional natural sand communities of WI.

All of this work is possible because you, the membership, have committed your hard earned dollars to work for the benefit of sharp-tailed grouse in Wisconsin. Thank you and looking forward to so much more.

FIND US ONLINE!

Facebook: *Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society*

Instagram: *wisharptails*

Website: *<http://www.wisharptails.org/>*

Email: *information@wisharptails.org*

AUTONOMOUS RECORDING UNITS (ARU)

By: Mike Amman



I attached the summaries of the 5 different sites we deployed the 2 ARUs this spring. Sites 1-4 are in the Barnes Barrens Core. The 5th site was at Bass Lake Barrens. Initial results were very promising, as the audio recording units successfully detected sharpies on all 4 sites that I placed the ARUs. I am not totally surprised by the results, but it confirms what I was hoping for and that is that the areas I was thinking we would likely hear birds, they were confirmed to be present. That means next year I can move the ARU units further away from the core to investigate sharp-tail occupancy and habitat usage in the spring. As part of the summaries, you can see that the units will pick up thousands of other bird calls which certainly adds much greater value. Bass Lake did not record any sharp-tailed grouse, which was what I expected. The point of putting an ARU out there was to gather baseline information from our initial efforts to clear a large area and monitor how grassland birds are responding. The results of our first efforts are promising, and we plan on buying more ARUs and placing a couple out on the Bass Lake Barrens for the entire spring next year. They have been a very reasonable investment to learn more about sharptail use of the landscape as well as other wild bird species' habitat use. More analysis to come but this is what I have so far. I will be sending the raw data off to my contract bird specialist in California this week so he can dig further into the recordings to ferret out the percentages of false positives and to verify the outputs to ensure our summaries are accurate.

THE WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY

The Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (WSGS) is a private, nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of the sharp-tailed grouse and its habitat in Wisconsin. Questions about the WSGS should be directed to the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, 102 East Crex Avenue, Grantsburg, WI 54840 or emailed to information@wisharptails.org.

WSGS OFFICERS

President: Ken Jonas
Vice President: Mike Amman
Secretary: Paul Kooiker
Treasurer: Mike Cole

Newsletter Compositor: Lauren Thomas

BOARD MEMBERS:

John Probst
Bruce Moss
Trevor Hubbs
Ashley Steinke
Trevor Bellrichard

PRAIRIE GROUSE SUMMIT

By: Jodie Provost

An Upper Midwest Prairie Grouse Summit was held on August 1-2 at Crex Meadows Wildlife Area near Grantsburg, WI. The purpose was to gather key leaders to address the issue of fragmented sharp-tailed grouse and greater prairie-chicken populations across our ecoregion. It was co-hosted by Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (WSGS) and North American Grouse Partnership (NAGP). About 40 people from North Dakota to Michigan attended. Above we are pictured behind metal art of displaying sharptail, created in honor of Jim Evrard, long time WSGS leader. Pdfs of all presentations are on the NAGP website under the "Lakes States Collaborators & Resources" tab on the left. Thank you immensely to WSGS, especially Ken Jonas their president, and NAGP. And to all that shared information and came from local grouse and conservation societies, and government agencies. Our work is based in science and our fellowship gives it wings.



WSGS ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES
JULY 15, 2023
NAMEKAGON BARRENS WILDLIFE AREA

WSGS and the Friends of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area (FNBWA) co-hosted the “Blueberries on the Barrens” event at the NBWA cabin. Approximately 70 people were in attendance.

WSGS Annual Meeting

Present: BOD: Ken Jonas, Mike Cole, Mike Amman, Bruce Moss,
Ashly Steinke, Paul Kooiker
Honorary Directors: Dave Evenson, Ed Frank, Dave Clausen
Note: there was a quorum present for both the Board of Directors and the general membership.

Meeting started at 9:31 AM.

- Kooiker briefly summarized the minutes of the June 6, 2023 meeting. Minutes were unanimously approved (BM/MA).
- Treasurer’s report by M. Cole (June 7 – July 15, 2023): Starting balance was \$19,267 and ending balance was \$20,241. Total income for the period was \$1,567, of which \$700 was registration for the upcoming Prairie Grouse Summit. Treasurer’s Report was unanimously approved (BM/MA).
NOTE: Mike sent out a follow-up report (7/25/23). Total income to WSGS from the July 15 annual meeting was \$1,233 which included membership renewals and proceeds from merchandise sales, art raffle, and silent auction. He also noted that we finally received \$3,479 as our share from the BHA event in Stevens Point.
- Board of Directors election: the terms of Mike Cole, Mike Amman, and Ken Jonas have expired so there were three BOD vacancies. Those three in addition to Andy Voight were on the ballot. Results were as follows:
 - Ken Jonas – 19 votes
 - Mike Amman – 18 votes
 - Mike Cole – 16 votes
 - Andy Voight – 5 votesThanks to all those who volunteered to run for the BOD!
Nominations and selection of officers for the BOD will be conducted in the near future, likely via e-mail.
- Approval of draft bylaws: Ken presented the final draft of the updated bylaws that resulted from the Board’s discussion at the June 6, 2023 meeting. Two additions were proposed and added to the draft bylaws: 1) In **Article 1** under **Purpose** change the sentence to read “--- the native sharp-tailed grouse ---” and 2) in **Article 4** add “The Digital Media Manager (DMM) shall annually share all pertinent passwords and electronic account information

with the elected WSGS secretary immediately after the annual election of officers and as new passwords or accounts are created.”

- Ashly raised the question of how we could help the prairie chicken folks start a PC support group similar to WSGS, perhaps by covering them as a temporary “chapter”. It was noted that Article 6 of the original bylaws, entitled “WSGS Chapters”, had been deleted in the revised bylaws. Although there was unanimous agreement to help the PC folks in any way we can, it was a consensus that the priority today was to approve the bylaws as presented. A motion to approve the revised bylaws was made and seconded (BM/A. Voight) and the vote was 15 to 1 in favor of accepting the bylaws as amended.
- Following the success of our presence at the 2023 Pheasant Fest in Minneapolis, Ashly recommended that WSGS attend the next PF to be held in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He would donate a turkey hunt as a fundraiser. The idea was well received and will be added to the agenda for the next BOD meeting.

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded (MA/MC) and the annual meeting was adjourned at 10:33 am.

Program

Gary Dunsmoor (FNBWA) and Ken Jonas (WSGS) welcomed the crowd to the “**Blueberries on the Barrens**” program.

- Dave Evenson, filling in for Brian Finstad, gave an update on the **Northwest Sands Auto Tour**, which follows the 1863 stagecoach road.
- Dave Peters, author of the book **Sand and Fire**, explained how the book came to be. This informative and interesting book describes both the ecology and the local history of the Namekagon Barrens area. *Photo: Dave Peters’ presentation on Sand and Fire.*
- Bob Hanson, DNR Northwest Sands Biologist, presented “**Managing Barrens for Sharp-tailed Grouse**”, and gave the crowd an update on the Sharp-tailed Grouse Management Plan, currently being updated.
- Nancy Christel, DNR Wildlife Biologist and manager of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area, described ongoing management on NBWA, with special emphasis on the recently acquired 1400 acres and conversion from forest to barrens habitat.



*Submitted by Paul Kooiker
August 4, 2023*

WSGS TREASURER'S REPORT
JUNE 7, 2023– JULY 15, 2023

Starting Balance June 7, 2023

19267.73

Expenditures

USPS—Mail (6) hats, membership decals, roll of tape	40.30
Postage for newsletter, membership meeting/ballot mailing	77.40
Spring newsletter printing	258.00
Reimburse T. Bellrichard for Grouse Summit decal printing	92.43
Reimburse Dave Evenson for print framing glass	75.54
State of WI raffle license	25.00
Refund for (1) hat — PayPal	25.00

Total

593.67

Income

Memberships	560.82
Merchandise (not including spreadshirt t-shirts)	53.84
Spreadshirt t-shirts	0.00
Prairie Grouse Summit registrations (\$60/person, minus fees)	700.32
Credit for fraudulent charge	51.33
Donations (Huntmark, Dhein)	201.00
Total	1567.31

Net Gain for Period

973.64

Ending Balance July 15, 2023

20241.37

Jim Evrard Memorial Account

166.46

General Account Fund

20074.91

Pending income:

 \$3333 from Steven's Point Event

 Additional Prairie Grouse Summit registrations

 Annual Membership Meeting proceeds (merch sales, art raffle)

Membership Totals:

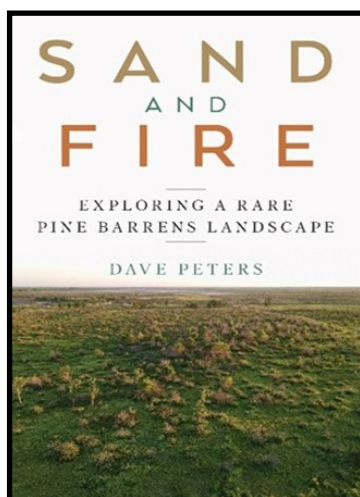
6/6/2023 228

7/15/2023 Approx. 210 (not including renewals from 7/15 membership meeting)

Submitted by Mike Cole 07/15/2023

SAND and FIRE

An excellent newly released publication written by Dave Peters that details the formation of the expansive sand barrens in NW Wisconsin, the human inhabitants of the area through time and the unique assemblage of plant and animals species that are well adapted to that environment.



Sand and Fire: Exploring a Rare Pine Barrens Landscape

By Dave Peters

Published by the Wisconsin Historical Society Press

A few miles from the confluence of the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers in northwest Wisconsin lies a rare preserve of pine barrens that offers one of the most significant opportunities in North America to preserve, restore, and manage a large-scale barrens community. A tiny remnant of the millions of barrens acres that once covered the region, the Namekagon Barrens were formed over thousands of years by unfathomable amounts of glacial sand and repeated fires. This is a land of scrub oak and jack pine, blueberries and sweet fern, the ideal habitat for wolves and sharp-tailed grouse.

Just as compelling is the land's rich human history, from Paleo-Indian hunters to Ojibwe berry pickers and from failed immigrant farm efforts to the habitat specialists who manage it today. This first-person account of a trek across the barrens sets the land's unusual natural history as the backdrop for a multilayered story about the impact of people on a vulnerable landscape.

Dave Peters is a retired journalist and avid member of the Friends of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area Board of Directors. He walks the barrens as often as he can, finding new wonders every time.

WSGS has been fortunate to work with the author providing signed copies of the publication that may be purchased from our website at: <https://www.wisharptails.org/shop>

NEW EQUIPMENT FUNDING REQUEST COMMITMENT



As this newsletter was in the process of being finalized, a new funding request was submitted asking WSGS to partner in the purchase of a new roller chopper with Bayfield County. As outlined in the preceding Accomplishment Report we have been very active on a variety of fronts throughout this calendar year. In addition to what has been

funded and accomplished, we have a couple outstanding commitments that include partnering on an 85 acres roller chopping habitat improvement project on the Douglas County Wildlife Area (\$4450) and support for a proposed 4-year project to improve and create more use of prescribed fire throughout the three sand ecological areas of Wisconsin (\$2500/year)

The new roller chopper purchase proposal needed to have rapid approval as one of the grants being applied for has a deadline of Oct. 1. As is common for most grant applications, having committed partner funding allows a proposal to get a higher-ranking score that then gives it a better chance of receiving the grant. Board members of WSGS quickly rallied behind the proposed equipment purchase and committed to funding up to \$8000 upon approval of grants and other partner funding sources.

As Bayfield County Forester Mike Amman states “The need for a roller chopper to be used on the Bayfield county forest to maintain high quality barrens is high. We feel there will be an annual need to roller chop indefinitely as it compliments prescribed burning well. Holding brush back under 6 ft is a constant battle and having a locally owned chopper that can be pulled with local equipment allows for the needed flexibility to treat both large and small acreages. As part of this purchase the goal is to share it with the Forest Service to help them improve the habitat on Moquah as well as at the Douglas County Wildlife Area, Mott’s and Namekagon.”

Currently roller chopping work is costing about \$110.00 per acre and the few contractors doing this type of work are often booked well in advance. This purchase has the potential to greatly increase the amount of woody vegetation treated each year in the Northwest Sands, creating improved open areas of habitat for sharp-tails and other sand barrens wildlife.

FIGHTING FOR FIREBIRDS

A recent article in the **Wisconsin Natural Resources Magazine** highlights the Sharptail-ed Grouse in the Northwest Sands, discussing efforts to manage habitat and conduct radio telemetry research that will improve chances for long term survival of this species of greatest conservation need. Follow the link below to connect with this quick read.

Fighting For Firebirds | Barrens Management Benefits Rare Game Bird
from Wisconsin Natural Resources Magazine | Summer 2023

https://issuu.com/wisconsinnaturalresources/docs/final-final_spreads_summer_2023/s/26334760



Sharptails at Crex Meadows, Spring 2023

WSGS T-SHIRTS

Get your new shirts and support WSGS at the same time!
Go to <https://wsgs.myspreadshop.com/> and proudly wear our new logo.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

We are going to a primarily electronic newsletter, with hard copy only on request.

Name: _____
Street/PO Box _____
City: _____ State: _____
Zip: _____
Phone: _____

Would you like to volunteer for:
_____ Board of Directors
_____ Newsletter articles
_____ Other

Email: _____ _____ Electronic Newsletter _____ Hard Copy Newsletter

Enclosed:

\$ _____ Dues (Regular - \$30 (receive decal), Family - \$50 (receive decal), Sustaining - \$100 (receive hat),
Life - \$300 (receive decal, patch & hat) (*Dues are fully tax-deductible*)
\$ _____ WSGS Logo Decal (\$1.50)
\$ _____ Four-color Cloth Patch (\$3.50)
\$ _____ Orange or olive cap (\$25 – indicate color choice)
\$ _____ King sharptail limited edition print (\$30)

(all prices include postage and handling)

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO AND RETURN THIS APPLICATION TO:

Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, 102 East Crex Avenue, Grantsburg, WI 54840

Or visit our website for membership and merchandise orders at <https://wisharptails.org>

Questions? Please e-mail WSGS Treasurer, Ken Jonas: kenjon@centurytel.net

Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society
102 East Crex Avenue
Grantsburg, WI 54840

