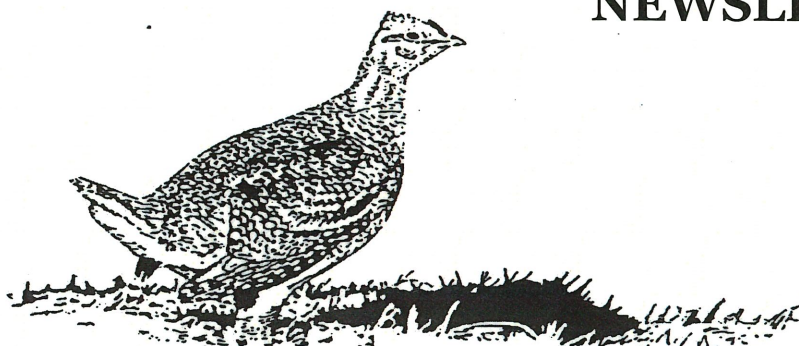


WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 71

Spring? 2014

2014 ANNUAL MEETING

by Jim Evrard

Plan on attending the WSGS's annual meeting in Solon Springs on Saturday and Sunday, April 26 and 27, 2014.

The meeting will be held in the historic field trial building in the Douglas County Wildlife area a few miles southwest of Solon Springs. The restored log building has been the site of many dog field trials of national importance. The building lies north of County Highway M a few miles west of Highway 53. Watch for signs.

The short business meeting will begin at 1 PM., followed by a program featuring the new Northwest Sands Management Plan and a new sharptail research project. At the end of the program, drawings for door prizes and the annual art print raffle, WSGS's biggest annual fund raising event, will take place.

Join us before a crackling fire in the field stone fireplace. Enjoy pleasant conversation and tall tales during the social hour preceding the delicious catered dinner. A wide range of refreshments will be available to aid the conversation.

The WSGS has reserved a block of rooms at a reasonable group rate in the beautiful St. Croix Inn overlooking the scenic St. Croix Lake. Please make your own room reservations by calling 715-378-4444.

Those members interested in a tour of the new 20,000-acre state conservation and access easement of industrial forest land and the Germann Lake fire area south of Brule River State Forest will gather at the St. Croix Inn at 6 AM. Sunday morning for a vehicle caravan tour of the sites.

Following the tour, a group breakfast is scheduled at 9 AM. in an area restaurant. Breakfast costs will be the responsibility of those participating. The meeting will officially end following breakfast.

The fee for the annual meeting is \$15 per person to cover the cost of refreshments and the catered dinner. Please send the fee by April 21 to Jim Evrard at the WSGS address so the caterer can have a head count.

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FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

by Dave Evenson

I remember the day back in the 1980s when it sunk into my brain what people were saying about the St. Croix River being a world-class river. As I came to wrap my mind around that thought, “Where is there a big river, flowing mostly unhindered, without industrial or agricultural pollution or big cities?” Russia? Europe? South America?”

And at that time I realized people were right – the St. Croix is a world treasure.

Today the Northwest Sands of Wisconsin are called by scientists Globally Significant. It is these Northwest (NW) Sands that make the St. Croix River so special. We had some fun at the last DNR Sharp-tailed Grouse Committee meeting trying to come up with an even more impressive title, since most people are uninformed or ho-hum about this world-class landscape. We settled on Galactically Imperiled, or some such nonsense.

At least one group within the DNR is taking the plight of the sharptails and the global significance of the NW Sands seriously. Funding for research projects is tight, and there are always many candidate projects. Scott Hull was able to secure a multiyear survey investigation to look throughout the landscape for sharptail presence.

Michael Hardy, Ph.D. Student, with two helpers will be running 17 survey routes three times over this spring. The routes are set up so that they should be able to triangulate on sharptail dancing or vocalizations. During the prime survey time of the morning they will be moving quickly from route to route, so they will not have time to move in and get more data on numbers of birds dancing or presence of hens or pick up feathers for genetic analysis. If time permits they will return later in the day and make attempts at picking up this information.

Michael and his crew can use our help in this effort. Citizen-scientists (that’s us!) will go out to sites that Michael can provide us and get that follow-up detail. We will be trying to find actual numbers of birds, and after daily breeding activity I over, collecting feathers for DNA analysis.

Michael will be one of our speakers at our annual meeting on April 26 at the Douglas County Wildlife Area. He and his crew will be well along in their efforts by that time. If you are interested in being part of the citizen scientist effort you can contact Michael at mahardy@wisc.edu . The WSGS has paid mileage in the past and is also willing to pay mileage for your survey efforts. Let Treasurer Jim Evrard know if you would like reimbursement.

This is an intriguing effort, and it will be interesting to see what we can find out about sharptails especially in the Germann Road Fire and clearcuts from the 2011 windstorm. See you April 26!

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.

WSGS OFFICERS

President: Dave Evenson
Vice President: Tom Ziegeweid
Secretary/Treasurer: Jim Evrard

Board Members: Mike Cole Bruce Moss
 Ed Frank John Probst
 Paul Kooiker John Zatopa

Newsletter Editor: Jim Evrard

WSGS Board Election

by Jim Evrard

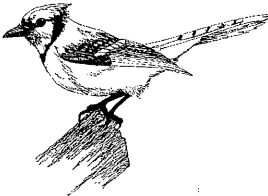
The terms of WSGS Board Members Mike Cole, Jim Evrard and Ed Frank expire this year and nominations were sought in the last newsletter for three-year terms for the three positions. Mike, Jim and Ed are seeking reelection and Ashly Steinke is seeking election to the Board.

Mike Cole has been a member since 2009 and was appointed to the Board in 2012. He has represented the WSGS before the Natural Resources Board. Mike lives in Grantsburg with his three German Shorthairs (and his wife!) and is an Engineering Manager for Parker Hannifin Corp. He is the Chair of the Crex Meadows Chapter of DU, is a sharptail hunter, but has never bagged a Wisconsin bird despite enjoying several fantastic hunts in the Northwest.

Jim Evrard is a retired DNR biologist from Grantsburg and a charter member of the WSGS. He first became a board member in 1991 and served as Secretary/Treasurer 1995-1999, President 2000-2003 and again Secretary/Treasurer 2004-present. Jim is also the WSGS newsletter editor, is active in Ducks Unlimited and the Friends of Crex and since retirement, has written a conservation column in the Wisconsin Outdoor News for the past 13 years.

Ed Frank is a retired DNR biologist from Madison who formerly had the responsibility for sharp-tailed grouse statewide as a member of the Madison DNR wildlife staff. He has a cabin near the Namekagon Barrens. Ed is a long-time member and was first elected to the WSGS Board in 1996, served as President 1997-1999, and continued on the board from 2000-present. He has represented the WSGS in testimony in state and federal government proceedings.

Ashly Steinke is the NRC County Conservationist in Taylor County. Following college, Ashly was involved in a project involving translocating prairie chickens from Minnesota to the Buena Vista Grasslands in Wisconsin. Steinke joined the WSGS in January and offered his name as a Board candidate. Ashly has been fortunate to have hunted sharptails in South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Saskatchewan and Alaska.



(cut and mail or bring to annual meeting)

Ballot – WSGS Board (vote for three)

Mike Cole _____

Jim Evrard _____

Ed Frank _____

Ashly Steinke _____

Write in _____

Mail to: WSGS
102 E Crex Ave
Grantsburg, WI 54840



AFIELD WITH ZIGGY

by Tom Ziegeweid

As I write this column, it is Monday, November 25. It was warm today which was a respite from the unusually very cold deer season opener. I suspect the kill is going to be substantially down. There was a fraction of the hunters I normally see out where I hunt and only saw a few deer in trucks. But tomorrow is another day, so I plan on going solo and maybe I will get some meat!

Upland game birds are down. We went on our annual trip to Fort Pierre, South Dakota in September. We probably flushed around 100 birds in three days and bagged 11 birds (7 prairie chickens and 2 sharptails) for 7 hunters. A U.S. Forest Service biologist told us they had two torrential hail and rain storms during the nesting season. Also the birds are in a down cycle.

Other than a modest number of pheasants I saw in South Dakota, as of this writing I have not seen a pheasant in Wisconsin or Minnesota this fall. Last winter I saw a pile of pheasants during the winter months while going ice fishing.

I have seen 26 ruffed grouse this fall and bagged 5 birds. As a whole they are down, but ridiculously spotty. I have been seeing birds in places and habitats where I normally have never seen them.

On the opening weekend of the fall turkey season in Central Wisconsin, namely the Meadow Valley Wildlife Area, my hunting buddy Pat Otteson and I figure we saw 300-400 turkeys in a 48-hour period. It had rained through the night and into the morning and the roads were literally infested with birds.

But true to form, these turkeys disappear later in the season – go figure! There seems to be a pattern and I think it has to do with barometric pressure. I never see a lot of grouse and turkeys out on the same day. It's either or situation. The grouse seem to like low air pressure with mist and calm winds. Turkeys seem to like high air pressure following a rain the day before.

One common thread I saw wherever I hunted was the rapid demise of CRP. Corn and soybean prices are high. People use soybeans in many ways, but a lot of this corn glut is going into making ethanol. But without being subsidized, would we have this corn ethanol boom? I think not. Food for thought.

Tom



WSGS WEBSITE

The WSGS website, "wisharptails.org", describes our goals and objectives, projects, members of our board, membership and contact information, and electronic copies of recent newsletters.

Those members wishing to receive their newsletters electronically should check the appropriate line on the back page of the printed newsletter when renewing memberships or contact me at the WSGS address.

THE LAST SHARPTAIL LEGALLY SHOT IN WISCONSIN?

by Jim Evrard

(Our newsletter "publisher", Kim Wheeler of the Friends of Crex told me there would be a newsletter blank page and asked if I had any material to fill the space. So I'm treating you to a part of my column from the Jan. 25th, 2013 issue of the Wisconsin Outdoor News.)

At Wisconsin's 2012 sharp-tailed grouse hunting season's end, I journeyed from Grantburg to the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area in far northeast Burnett County to hunt sharptails.

I rode with fellow WSGS Board member, Mike Cole, along with Paul Heimbach who also had a Unit 8 sharptail hunting permit and Hazel, Cole's German Shorthair. Since I hunted the Namekagon Barrens in the past and conducted DNR barrens research there in the late 1990s, I was the "guide".

November 9th was a cool, overcast day with little wind and the next-to-last day of the 2012 hunting season. We drove to the Barren's North Unit and parked near a small wetland where I had seen sharptails in the past.

We formed a line with Mike and Hazel in the middle and began hunting along a ridge in open fire-pruned oak brush. I was just below the ridge along the wetland edge.

It wasn't long before a couple of sharptails flushed out-of-range in front of Paul and Mike. Since it was near the end of the three-week hunting season, the birds were wild and wary. Then Hazel went on point and a small flock of sharptails flushed. Mike and Paul each shot, missing the birds. I never saw the grouse.

A few minutes later, seven sharptails flushed from the ridge and flew above me towards the other side of the wetland. One of the birds was in range so I raised my 12-gauge, shot and missed the sharptail.

A bit later, I heard the "chuckling" of a flushing sharptail on the ridge above me. It burst out of the brush, flying towards the opposite shore of the wetland. I swung on the bird, pulled ahead of it, and shot. This time the sharptail folded and arched dead into the wetland with a big splash.

I marked the bird where it fell and began to take off my leather boots to wade into the water to retrieve the bird. Mike took pity on me and sloshed into the marsh and found my grouse (Hazel is not a retriever!).

While attaching my tag to its leg, I noted it was an adult male sharptail. It may have been the last sharptail legally shot in Wisconsin since the 2012 season closed the following day and was closed completely in 2013. It might not reopen again if sharptail numbers do not increase.

I hope sharptail numbers recover enough to justify another modest hunting season. It is a shame that sharptail populations in our state have declined to a point where the DNR is finally beginning to take some real action to maintain and increase sharptail habitat and sharptail numbers.

Hopefully the 20,000-acre DNR conservation easement south of the Brule River State Forest, the DNR-Burnett County land trade, the recent Namekagon Barrens land acquisition, the new Northwest Barrens Management Plan and the new DNR prairie grouse research project, will insure that sharp-tailed grouse will not disappear from Wisconsin.



Jim Evrard holding tagged dead sharptail with wetland in the background

ANNUAL ART PRINT FUNDRAISER

The WSGS is again offering an opportunity to win a signed, framed, limited edition, ready-to-hang-on-the-wall art print in our annual raffle. Our art raffle is the source of funds for our special projects. The art prints depict Wisconsin sharptails in their native habitat.

New this year, the WSGS is offering **four** rather than three colorful prints by artists Buzz Balzer, Owen Gromme, Ruth King, and Louie Raymer for the same donations as previous years.

- The Balzer print is on canvas rather than paper and shows a winter flock of sharptails in the Crex Meadows refuge (PHOTO 1).
- The Dean of Wisconsin artists, Owen Gromme’s print depicts flushing sharptails in typical Wisconsin aspen habitat (PHOTO 2).
- Ruth King painted a sharptail dancing grounds in the North Unit of the Namekagon Barrens in typical barrens habitat (PHOTO 3).
- Louie Raymer’s print shows displaying male sharptails being watched by sharptail hens in Crex Meadows (PHOTO 4).

The raffle ticket is printed below. Those wishing to enter the raffle should place your name and address on the ticket stub(s), detach the stub(s) and send with your contribution to:

WSGS
102 E. Crex Ave.
Grantburg, WI 54840

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WSGS 2014 ART RAFFLE TICKET
This raffle is being offered by the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society
102 E. Crex Ave., Grantsburg, WI 54840
Wisconsin Raffle License R00116707A-16013

The drawing will be conducted at 4:00 PM., April 26, 2014 at the annual meeting of the WSGS in Solon Springs, Wisconsin. Tickets holders need not be present to win. Winners will be notified by mail or telephone. No prize has a value over \$500.

Suggested contribution is \$10/ticket or \$20/three tickets.
No contribution is necessary to be eligible for participation.

(KEEP THIS PORTION FOR YOUR RECORDS)

.

(DETACH HERE AND SEND WITH CONTRIBUTION OR MARK “NO CONTRIBUTION”)

Name _____	Name _____	Name _____
Address _____	Address _____	Address _____
_____	_____	_____
Phone _____	Phone _____	Phone _____
_____	_____	_____



Photo 1: Balzer

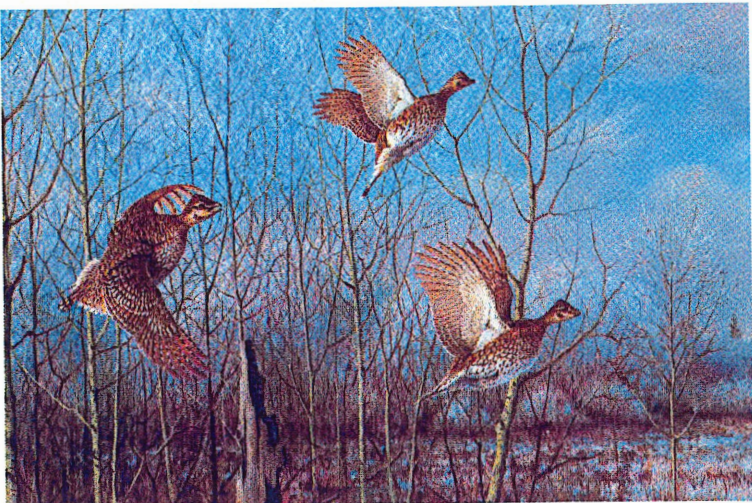


Photo 2: Gromme



Photo 3: King



Photo 4: Raymer

PLEASE RENEW
YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Check the date on your mailing label and please renew your membership if it has expired or is about to expire.

The WSGS is a small organization and depends heavily upon membership fees to continue the struggle for the sharp-tailed grouse and its habitat in Wisconsin. Our membership fees are low compared to most conservation groups and support all-volunteer members who serve as your board of directors and do the work of the society.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

Please check the date on your address label and renew your membership if it has expired or is about to expire.
Dues are the main source of income for our small all-volunteer organization.

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

Would you like to volunteer for:

_____ Board of Directors
_____ Bird Censusing
_____ Newsletter articles
_____ Annual Meeting

_____ **Electronic Newsletter (by email)**

Enclosed:

\$ _____ Dues (Regular - \$10, Supporting - \$25, Contributing - \$50, \$100 Sustaining, \$200 Sponsor)
(Dues are fully tax-deductible)

\$ _____ WSGS Logo Decal (\$1.50)

\$ _____ Four-color Cloth Patch (\$3.50)

\$ _____ Tan or blaze orange Cap (\$15 – indicate color choice)

\$ _____ King Sharptail limited edition print (\$60)

(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

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