

# WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 100 Spring 2023

## A NOTEWORTHY NEWSLETTER

*By: Ken Jonas*

Not long ago I received the following email from Dave Evenson, Founding Father of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society:

*“Kudos on a great issue of the WSGS newsletter. We have a lot going on and that's why it's good. I noticed it's volume 99; next up is 100! A hundred newsletters isn't as well defined as say 100 years (Serving America for 100 Years!), but it's something.*

*I remember composing Issue No. 1 on a typewriter, literally cutting and pasting line drawings and taking it off to the printer. A long time ago. Now we expect color photos and ship them off by email.*

*Thanks, Dave”*

I also found this nugget from the History of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, 1990 – 1999:

*“Dave Evenson sent the first newsletter to 220 interested persons regarding forming the WSGS. Guidance and help to form the WSGS came from the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society. 12 persons volunteered to be the first WSGS board members. The battle*

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*to renew the lease for Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area was the major reason for forming the WSGS.”*

Times certainly have changed but the mission remains the same - doing what we can to keep sharp-tailed grouse a viable member of our wildlife community, and supporting actions that maintain or increase critical habitat to make it happen.

Thanks go out to all our members for your continued support. Here’s to the next 100 newsletters! ■

## **PRESIDENT’S SOAPBOX**

*By: Ken Jonas*

The vernal equinox also known as astronomical Spring, began in the northern hemisphere on March 20, 2023. Here in the Northwest Sands of Wisconsin you would never have guessed it based on the snow depth and ambient temperature. On that date I measured a depth of 20 inches of snow and a low of 8 degrees F overnight. But the hours of daylight were getting longer with each passing rotation of the sun, promising the annual cycle of renewal was beginning.

This past winter set new records across northern Wisconsin for annual snowfall totals. There were numerous conversations about how this would affect survival of wildlife population including sharptailed grouse living in the barrens. But sharptails have been surviving winter for thousands of years in this landscape, thriving as the glaciers retreated and native grass and brushland developed. To prove how winter hardy they are, observations of male sharptails began showing up on long standing dancing grounds by mid-March. Some of those reports showed male STG doing their mating display atop those 20 inches of snow and there was video footage to confirm it. As spring moved forward, snow receded, the numbers of birds on the leks increased and the intensity of their displaying grew, culminating with hens showing up and mating accomplished. This recurring cycle has been taking place with sharp-tailed grouse for untold millennia. It peaked when their numbers were in the hundreds of thousands and suitable habitat measured millions of acres on the land that came to be called Wisconsin.

The dancing sharp-tails that we count today for an estimate of population numbers, are oblivious to the fact that there are currently less than 100,000 acres of suitable habit here that are occupied by their kind. The remaining displaying males have no idea that on known dancing grounds there are currently less than 200 of them, in the best of years. Not knowing their

numbers are in dire straits, they continue as they always have, thru the seasons year after year in this place called Wisconsin. Still there is hope for the future. Will sharptail habitat be counted in the millions of acres across the state? No, extremely unlikely. Can we, the current population of humans, allow habitat to increase and numbers of STG to follow that trend? Most definitely yes. Based upon preliminary estimates from the folks who are doing the counting, the numbers of male sharptails have increased again this year from where they were last year. New locations have dancing sharptails on improved habitat that were not found there in the recent past. Let's keep working to make that trend continue. ■



*Photo Credit:  
Snapshot Wisconsin, via  
Gary Dunsmoor, Winter  
2022-23 NBWA*

## **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](mailto: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

## **2023 WSGS ANNUAL MEETING IS SET FOR JULY 15** **AT THE NAMEKAGON BARRENS WILDLIFE AREA**

This year's annual membership meeting of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society will be held at the Namekagon Barrens State Wildlife Area as a joint meeting with the Friends of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area (FNBWA) on Saturday July 15. The WSGS annual meeting for this year is planned to be a bit different and less technical than in the past.

The Friends group refer to their annual meeting as "Blueberries on the Barrens". The title came about as those attending have the opportunity to head out in the early morning hours to the wildlife area and surrounding Burnett County Forest Lands for picking blueberries which are generally at their peak abundance. The group then reconvenes at the picnic shelter on the property around 11:00 a.m. where members of the Wis. Sharp-tailed Grouse Society will join in. There will be an hour or so of socializing, checking out the displays, silent auctions and vendors, as well as purchasing raffle tickets and merchandise. A picnic style lunch and beverages will be served around noon, followed by several speakers that will present on topics related to the Namekagon Barrens and the greater Northwest Sands region. Generally, the main event is winding down at 2:00 p.m. or 2:30 p.m.

For members of WSGS we plan to have a business meeting beginning at 9:30 a.m. with all members welcome to attend. That meeting will consist of the current treasurers report, a review of the previous meeting's minutes and a count of ballots for election of three board member positions whose terms are expiring. We will then review changes and updates to the WSGS bylaws, have a discussion of the various sections and entertain any proposed changes followed by a vote for passage. Currently the existing WSGS bylaws require a majority vote by the membership at the annual meeting to enact any changes to the document. We will have the new draft of proposed WSGS bylaws on our website in early June for online review and copies will be available at the meeting. If there are any new project proposals we will discuss those and the Board will vote. As stated above, we will join the Friends of the Namekagon Barrens group beginning at 11:00 a.m. for the remainder of the joint meeting agenda. After the speakers and festivities wind down, there will be an option for a tour of the Namekagon Barrens with local Wildlife Management staff or via the auto tour that has 9 interpretive stops. ■



***Directions to FNBWA cabin: 33174 Gomulak Firelane, Danbury, WI***

*From WI Hwy 35: Go east on St. Croix Trail 9 miles and follow the signs.*

*From WI Hwy 77: Go north on Namekagon Trail 6 miles, then east on St. Croix Trail 2 miles and follow the signs.*

*From Minong: Go west on Nancy Lake Road 9 ½ miles to County Line Rd go north 1 mile to St. Croix Trail then west 1 mile and follow the signs.*

There is no set fee for attendance but a donation to cover costs is appreciated if staying for lunch. A donation box will be on site. We would like to have an estimate of attendance in advance, so please fill out the sign-up form below and mail to:

***WI Sharp-tailed Grouse Society***

***102 E. Crex Avenue***

***Grantsburg, WI 54840***

OR e-mail Ken Jonas at: [Jonas@wisharptails.org](mailto:Jonas@wisharptails.org)

**2023 Annual Meeting Sign-Up**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Number Attending: \_\_\_\_\_

**FIND US ONLINE!**

**Facebook:** *Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society*


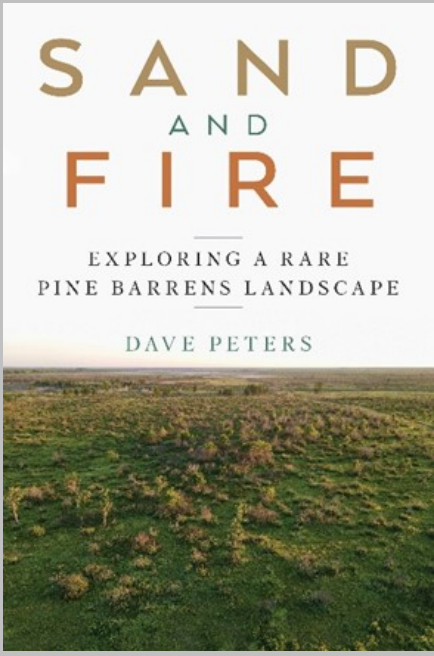
**Instagram:** *wisharptails*

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

**Email:** *[information@wisharptails.org](mailto:information@wisharptails.org)*

## SAND AND FIRE

An excellent newly released publication written by Dave Peters that describes details about how the sand barrens of NW Wisconsin were formed, the human inhabitants of the area through time and the unique assemblage of plant and animal species that the sand barrens support.



**SAND AND FIRE:**  
*Exploring a Rare Pine Barrens Landscape*  
By: Dave Peters  
Published by: The Wisconsin Historical Society Press  
152 pages; 84 color and B&W photos; 8 maps

The book may be purchased at:  
<https://shop.wisconsinhistory.org/sand-and-fire>

ISBN: 978-1-9766-0005  
Paperback: \$22.95

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 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.



## WSGS BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINATIONS

Nominations for the Wis, Sharptail Grouse Society Board of Directors are now being accepted. The term of office for three WSGS board members, Mike Amman, Mike Cole, and Ken Jonas expire this year. Nominations are being sought for a three-year term for each of the three expiring positions. All WSGS members in good standing can be nominated by themselves or by other members for the expiring terms.

Please include the candidate's name and contact information in the nomination along with a short write-up of their qualifications and interest to: *Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, 102 East Crex Avenue, Grantsburg WI 54840.*

Nominations will close on June 15th and a ballot that lists all candidates will be sent to the membership shortly thereafter. Votes may be cast by the membership up until the time they are tallied at the Annual Meeting July 15. ■

### 2023 WSGS BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINATION

Name of Candidate \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Nominator (*can be self*) \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information \_\_\_\_\_

Qualifications, Experience, Interest (*attach a short write-up*)

**WSGS TREASURER'S REPORT**  
**FEBRUARY 6, 2023– APRIL 11, 2023**

**Starting Balance February 6, 2023** **14919.30**

**Expenditures**

USPS—Mail (31) hats, (6) prints, membership decals	207.88
Anderson Graphics— print newsletter	355.00
USPS— postage for newsletter mailing & renewal cards	69.60
Canvas by the Stitch— 2 sharptail viewing blinds for Crex	2070.00
U-line— boxes for shipping hats	20.57
Bayfield County— bird trackers	1500.00
Simple Filin'— Fed tax form for non-profits	40.00
Hotels for Pheasant Fest	427.59
Menards— folding tables & chair for Pheasant Fest	249.95
Reimburse K. Jonas for Dept. Financial Inst.— non-profit filing	25.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>4965.59</b>

**Income**

Memberships	3707.72
Merchandise (not including spreadshirt t-shirts)	3634.31
Spreadshirt t-shirts	63.66
Donations (Kmetz)	500.00
Refund partial PF booth payment (from NAGP)	97.50
Refund unused portion of USFW grant	141.06
<b>Total</b>	<b>8144.25</b>

Net Gain for Period	3178.66
Ending Balance February 6, 2023	<b>18097.96</b>
Jim Evrard Memorial Account	166.46
General Account Fund	17931.50

Pending expenses: reimburse K. Jonas for WSGS printing	182.52
Pending income: Steven's Point event	3333.00

Membership Totals:  
2/6/2023           187  
4/11/2023         240

*Submitted by Mike Cole   04/11/2023*



## WSGS BOD MEETING 4/11/23

*Present: Ken Jonas, Mike Cole, Mike Amman, Bruce Moss, Trevor Bellrichard, Ashley Steinke, John Probst, Dave Evenson*

*This was a ZOOM meeting, it began at 6:07 PM*

- Minutes from previous meeting: Move to approve (Moss, Steinke), unanimous pass.
- Treasurer's report by Mike C. (2/6 – 4/11/23). Balance is \$18,098, net gain of \$3179 since last report. This represents a very successful membership drive and merchandise sales via Pheasant fest, BHA event in Stevens Point, also on-line sales being driven by several podcasts and magazine articles about WSGS. Steinke moved to accept report as-is, Moss seconded. Unanimous pass.
- Recent projects:
  - Purchased two viewing blinds for Crex Meadows for use this spring
  - Purchased two recorder units for Bayfield County
  - Turkey stamp projects (for which WSGS was to be a matching partner) were not funded.
  - Douglas County WMA -- Greg Kessler was unable to initiate roller chopping due to heavy snow (snow too deep to maneuver equipment and effectively knock down woody growth). Disappointing, hope to make it happen next year.
  - Comment made – why spend so much on research (genetics, trail cameras) when we already know habitat is the primary need?
- Subcommittee report on how to best utilize “Counselors” not ready yet. Needs to be something that WSGS can add to our bylaws and can be voted upon by the BOD.
- Annual Meeting, planning to have this be a co-meeting with FNBWA. Potentially Saturday July 15. Planning a BOD meeting, speakers. Ken is working with FNBWA on the day's schedule. Ashley would donate beef for burgers for lunch.
- WI DNR STG Management Plan update – Bob Hanson has finished phase 1 and it is with the DNR leadership team. DNR is asking for details on criteria that would allow a hunting season. Bob says it is not yet known when public review and comment period will begin. DNR leadership expressing concerns with costs. RAWA and Beautify America have both been re-introduced in the Legislature with a focus on barrens. There is hope!
- Podcasts – Brian Vander Maazen's show featuring Ken, Bob Hanson, Kyle Anderson

(Crex) and Mike C. nearly ready. Also Ron Boehne (“The Hunting Dog Podcast”) and Nick Larson (“The Birdshot Podcast”) are meeting with Mike Amman soon, potentially another podcast in the works.

- WSGS Brochures are printed and ready to use. Nice work by Trevor B. on short notice!
- New WSGS newsletter needs to be out by end of May (notification of BOD candidates and upcoming annual meeting)
- Bayfield County project:
  - Two sharptails on the air at this time. Do not plan to do any trapping this spring (for radio placement) -- collar failure in the past, need to find a new alternative.
  - Keith Crowley reported a group of thirteen STG on Barnes Barrens
  - Two recorder units (provided by WSGS) will be deployed soon. Can recognize calls of over 3000 species, including mammals and amphibians. Will provide a broad spectrum inventory on a variety of species.

### **New Business:**

- WSGS BOD elections – Mike A., Mike C. and Ken J. are up for election. We will solicit for other WSGS members to consider running as well.
- Bird-a-thon – Trevor B. – get sponsors for the numbers of birds species a team can find. Brian Collins (potential speaker at Annual Meeting) will be on WSGS team and is a fantastic birder, he will pump up the numbers. Half the money raised comes to WSGS. A way to introduce people to barrens species (beyond STG). Motion for WSGS to form a team by Trevor B. Second by Mike A. Unanimous pass except Moss abstained.
- Camp Candles for Conservation – WSGS is the “Conservation Organization of the Month” for April. A percentage of their sales during the month will be donated to WSGS. They will be auctioning off a custom cutting board with all funds raised coming to WSGS. This is the second time we have been a recipient, and very much appreciate it.
- Spring STG surveys – birds are displaying now (have been since late February in some areas in NW WI). Namekagon WA is still scouting, still shoveling to get access. They will have people in their blinds this weekend. Douglas County is starting to monitor. Crex will be doing extensive surveys and has one viewing blind open to the public for the first time in many years. Mike A. reports 6 birds spotted, plus the 13 by Keith Crowley.
- Prairie Grouse Summit proposal:
  - A huge proposed list of invitees (Pheasants Forever, USFW, etc.) – seems to be get

ting too big and out of focus. Was initially going to just be MN, WI and MI STG groups.

- We will work with organizers to reduce the number of participants and make it more manageable. Might consider not sponsoring the event if numbers are not reduced.

- Ken will share our sentiments with Jodie Provost of NAGP

- WSGS Bylaw updates (current version are 1990 vintage). Needs update for number of BOD members. Also update for roles in the BOD (and Counselors if we add these). Any changes need to be approved by the membership at the Annual Meeting (July) and published prior to then. All BOD members are asked to provide input to 3/24 email from Ken on this matter.
- Michigan STG Association is down to about 34 members, “fading”. Lost their 501-3c (non-profit) status. Their DNR has no STG Management Plan and is not well organized with managing STG populations. Lack of interest by the public to join the organization membership. How can we help them? Potentially our tri-state meeting (if scaled back) might be a good first step. Are they interested in becoming a “chapter” of WSGS and is that a legal possibility. Ken to check with former Board Jim Shurts for advice.
- Rusk County STG status and proposal – low population, fragmented population, may not be sustainable, some farmers may be interested in habitat work. Emma Hanson (DNR, manages Pershing) can’t do private lands. Would a support letter provide incentives?
- Print sale – Bruce Moss may have an outlet in Spooner that would sell some of our surplus prints. Ken and Bruce to visit them with samples of what we have.
- Mott’s Ravine:
  - Currently proposed amendment to the Master Plan would allow big expansion to the core area.
  - WSGS should weigh in and ask our members to do the same – need to generate positive comments about this proposal.
  - The 21 day review period is already underway.
  - Mike A. will create a form letter and Trevor B. can get it to our members
  - Ken will write a letter on behalf of WSGS
  - BOD members should also comment on their own

*Meeting adjourned at 8:47 PM (Steinke motion, Ken second, unanimous approval)*

*Submitted by Mike Cole 5/14/23*

## 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](mailto:kenjon@centurytel.net)

