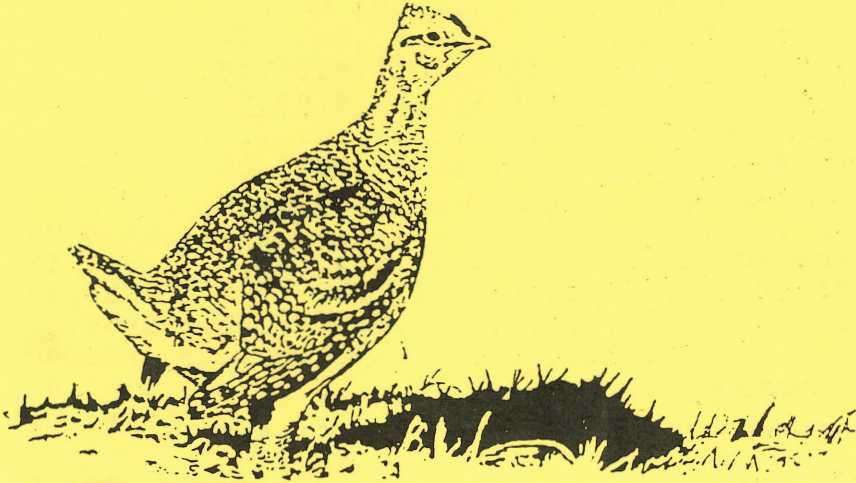


# WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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Volume 24

Winter, 1999

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## WSGS ANNUAL MEETING

We're back to Central Wisconsin again for our annual meeting. The Sandhill Outdoor Skills Center will be the host facility, on April 17-18th. The business meeting will start at 1:00 p.m. Saturday, April 17th, followed by social/evening meal. The best reason to go to this meeting is a meal by Chef John Kubisiak! Then in the evening we will make arrangements for morning surveys. Sunday morning after surveys and summary you're on your own. We'll have more details in the next issue of the newsletter.

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Three positions on the Board of Directors are open this spring. The incumbents are Don Bronk, Jim Evrard, and Ed Frank. Any member may nominate another member for the board or you also may volunteer if interested. Send nominations and biographies to Ed Frank, 1205 Ellen Ave., Madison, WI 53716 by March 20th. The ballot will be in the next newsletter.



**Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society Financial Statement**  
1/1/98 through 12/31/98

Checkbook Balance as of 12/31/97.....\$3,176.05  
 Certificate of Deposits as of 12/31/97.....\$1,573.00  
Petty cash balance as of 12/31/97.....\$10.15  
 Total cash assets as of 12/31/97.....\$4,759.20

**INCOME:**

Memberships - 106 regular @ \$10.....\$1,060.00  
                   19 supporting @ \$25.....\$475.00  
                   2 contributing @ \$50.....\$100.00  
                   1 sustaining @ \$100.....\$100.00  
                   Total Memberships.....\$1,735.00  
 Sales - 8 Stickers @ \$1.50.....\$12.00  
           7 Caps @ \$14.....\$98.00  
           Total Sales.....\$110.00  
 Interest on Checking Account.....\$41.11  
 Interest on Certificates of Deposit.....\$94.49  
 Art Raffle.....\$952.00  
 Annual meeting.....\$86.00  
 Central Wisconsin Workshop.....\$151.00  
Donations.....\$68.00  
  
 Total Income.....\$3,237.60

**EXPENDITURES:**

Projects - Support of UWSP Sharptail Research...\$1,200  
           Crex Wildlife Education Center.....\$500  
           (third and final of 3 annual gifts)  
           WSO Breeding Bird Atlas.....\$100  
           (fourth of 5 annual gifts)  
           Wisconsin Stewardship Network.....\$25  
           Total Projects.....\$1,825.00  
 Newsletter - Printing.....\$557.00  
               Postage and P.O. box rental...\$371.63  
               Office supplies.....\$7.16  
               Total Membership Service.....\$935.79  
 Two Gromme prints for future raffles.....\$303.23  
 Sharptail Hunter Questionnaire.....\$196.34  
 36 Caps.....\$147.60  
 Room rental.....\$50.00  
 Award.....\$31.90  
Non-profit report to Wis. Secretary of State.....\$10.00  
  
 Total Expenditures.....\$3,499.86

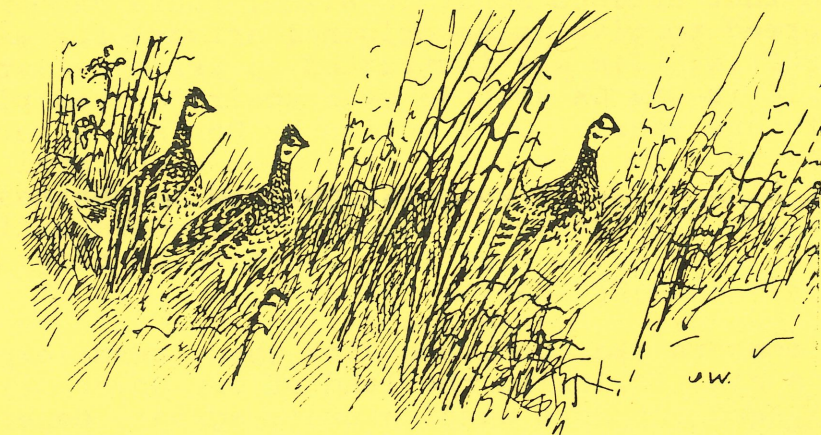
Checkbook Balance as of 12/31/98.....\$2,678.83  
 Certificates of Deposit as of 12/31/98.....\$1,691.04  
Petty Cash Balance as of 12/31/98.....\$12.85  
 Total Cash Assets as of 12/31/98.....\$4,382.72

Submitted by James O. Evrard, Sec./Treas., 1/11/99.  
 WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY

**CENTRAL WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED  
GROUSE HABITAT WORKSHOP**

On December 2, 1998, WSGS sponsored a workshop to look at potential for more sharptail habitat in Central Wisconsin. About 80 land managers and interested WSGS members met at Sandhill Outdoor Skills Center to discuss the future of sharptails in this area. The morning was devoted to biology and habitat needs of the species. In the afternoon various land managers including foresters, federal and state wildlife biologists, biologist for cranberry growers, and others described the land they manage, and opportunities or difficulties in providing sharptail habitat. This was a good first step for WSGS, and this issue will continue to be on the agenda, at this annual meeting and beyond.

Benefits of the meeting including seeing how many big ownerships of land there are, and the close juxtaposition between them. Getting land managers to look beyond their ownership boundaries was also helpful. As well, Tim Eisele, outdoor writer, was in attendance and wrote up the meeting for an article for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. We thank Tim for helping us raise the consciousness of those many readers, and we are seeing our membership grow from that article.



**SOLON SPRINGS SURVEY**

For the last two years the annual meeting has been at Solon Springs and WSGS has done a majority of the dancing ground surveys in Units 2 and 9. This year, with the annual meeting at Sandhill, there is still a need to survey these units. All of you who enjoy seeing sharptails and lots of them, are invited to help with this survey effort. WSGS will sponsor a survey on the morning of April 25th. Surveyors should gather at the St. Croix Inn (715-378-4444) on Saturday evening April 24th, to make arrangements for the morning survey.

If you would like to help survey here (or elsewhere) on your own schedule, that also can be arranged. Call the local wildlife manager and offer your services.

Dancing ground surveys are the keystone to knowing how many birds Wisconsin has. Fall permit levels are heavily based on spring numbers. Please help cover the ground. It's good fun, and it's necessary for management of the birds.



MINUTES OF WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY BOARD MEETING  
Wednesday, August 18, 1998, DNR Fish Hatchery, Spooner

All 7 Board Members (Ed Frank, Bob Dreis, Don Bronk, Dan Dessecker, Tom Ziegeweid, Tom Jancoski, and Jim Evrard) were present plus Dave Evenson, Newsletter Editor.

Ed opened the meeting at 1:15 pm. by reporting that the minutes of the last board meeting (however abbreviated) were published in the last issue of the newsletter. Jim gave the Treasurers report (\$1,643.67 in 2 CDs, \$3,221.82 in the checking account, \$23.76 petty cash, \$58.50 in checks for a total of \$4,947.50).

Since the Sandhill facility was reserved for April 24th, there was a discussion about the site of the 1999 annual meeting. Park Falls was discussed as an alternate site. Another discussion took place about have a sharptail census day in addition to an annual meeting. We decided to hold our annual meeting at Sandhill on April 17-18 as a first choice. Neal Niemuth will be contacted regarding a census day/assistance.

Jim reported that artists Jonathon Wilde, Louie Raymer, and Ruth King have agreed to give us an original artwork for use in our annual art raffle. Jim was instructed to write/call the artists to ask them if it was OK to hold over their donated piece for raffles in future years. On a motion by Don and a second by Bob D., it was decided to also buy 1 or 2 Gromme sharptail prints if available at \$150-200. It was also decided to contact other artists with the same request including Dave Constantine (Ziggy), Arthur Anderson and Terry Doughty. The need to offer quality door prizes was also discussed.

All 3 board members (Ed, Don, and Jim) whose terms expire in 1999 want to run again (following the lead of our Governor). Ed stressed the need for more candidates (I agree), especially non-DNR types. Names tossed about included Steve Kupcho and Al O'Leary. It was decided that a special call for nominations be included in the next newsletter.

Some discussion centered on the need to broaden the base of support for sharptails in Wisconsin. It was decided to broaden the readership of our newsletter by sending it to DNR administrators, the Wisconsin Senate and Assembly Chairs of the Natural Resources Committees, and the editors of outdoor publications including those of conservation organizations. Don asked for photos of sharptail hunting scenes that he could use in stories he planned to write for hunting magazines. Tom Z. thought that the new patron applicants for sharptail hunting permits might also be a source of new members.

The need for a state-wide spring sharp-tail survey was discussed. Jim was instructed to follow up on the International Crane Foundation sandhill survey to see if we could piggy-back a question on their form. We can also extract some information

from the WSO's Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas project. Gus Smith, a new biology professor from Northland College, will also be contacted to see if Northland students would help in this effort. He should be added to our mailing list. Ed thought the DNR should shoulder some responsibility for a state-wide survey. We could also continue to ask for sharptail sightings in our newsletter.

Of the 25,000 patron license holders who expressed interest in the sharptail hunting permit, approximately 2,500 submitted a permit application, but half of those requested a permit for a unit where none were available! Ed thought we should send a membership recruitment mailing to the 2,500 persons while others thought the 1,250 correct applicants should be contacted. Preference points will be awarded to unsuccessful applicants even to those who submitted incorrect applications. We decided to submit a letter to the DNR Board asking them to use the procedure used in 1997 -- granting a free permit application to patron license holders, but making them pick it up at a DNR station rather than having it sent via the mail. This would eliminate insincere applicants and save the DNR mailing costs.

We agree to provide up to \$200 to sponsor a part of an upcoming NW Pine Barrens meeting to be held at the Northern Great Lakes Interpretive Center just west of Ashland on March 10 and 11, 1999.

Bob was chosen as the WSGS representative in the Brule River State Forest master plan to champion for barren management on the south boundary of the forest. Don Bublitz will be asked to assist him. Ed will continue as the WSGS representative in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest planning process. Dan is also involved in this effort.

Ed has finalized plans for the Central Wisconsin Workshop to be held in December at Sandhill. The speakers include Stan Temple (communities), Mark Boyce (metapopulations), Jan Harms (economics), Neal Niemuth (remote sensing), Mike Zeitmeister (grouse trends), and possibility of Eric Epstein (historical vegetation). There will also be a panel discussion by land managers. The workshop will start at 9 am. and end at 3 pm. Lunch will hopefully be provided by John Kubisiak and offered as part of the registration fee. These fees will be waived for the speakers.

The meeting ended at 4:45 pm. Jim Evrard



## SHARPTAILS IN THE FIFTIES

By Jim Hale

I must be getting old faster than I think. The other day a fellow asked me what sharptail hunting used to be like. Oh, well; since my first Wisconsin sharptail hunt was in 1951, perhaps it was a fair question.

From '51 to 1954 I hunted with a couple of friends in an area around Ladysmith which included eastern Rusk, southern Sawyer, western Price and northern Taylor Counties. This was a small-farm, forest-edge section where crops were mostly hay and small grains, plus extensive cattle pasturing in woodlots, especially aspen stands. This combination of small fields with grazed aspen and young hardwoods made good sharptail range.

We found plenty of sharptails, but they were hard to get at. We figured out how to hunt successfully by trial and error. Our first lesson learned was not to use a dog. Even a close-working pointer or retriever would flush grouse out of gun range, compared to our flushes without a dog.

The second lesson was to scout around for roosting areas and then go after them as early as possible the next morning. Alfalfa hayfields seemed to be favorite roost sites, and sharptails seemed less eager to flush at daybreak than they did later in the day. We also found that while a shot wasn't always possible at the flush of the main flock, there usually was a straggler or two that hung back. Being alert for the close flush of a single often yielded a kill.

While it was possible to jump a few sharptails by walking the wooded cattle pastures, it took more effort than our hayfield technique. However, there were enough ruffed grouse around to make it worthwhile.

A couple of other techniques sometimes paid off. We noted that during the day a sharptail flock on the ground and invisible from the road usually had a sentinel bird or two perched high in a lone tree or on a utility pole, abandoned shed or silo. It was then sometimes possible to jump the flock by walking the area watched over by the sentinel birds.

Roads also were helpful in another way. Watching roadsides for dead grouse under utility wires offered an indication that we weren't too far from a roost site, and that a check around on foot might pay off. For some reason, sharptails did not recognize overhead wires and were occasionally killed flying in or out of a roost.

Finally, the earlier in September we could hunt, the better our chances of success would be. By mid-October the sharptails were forming into their winter packs. While this provided more birds in one place, they also became much wilder and flushes in gun range ranged from scarce to none. At any time of the season, a morning's hunt averaging one or more birds per hunter was considered a success.

I doubt that sharptail hunting ever got better in that area than it was during that 4-year period of the fifties. The demise of small farms, reduction of pasturing cattle in the woods, and increased forest growth by natural succession resulted in a substantial decline in sharptail habitat and numbers. I'm sorry to see them gone, but I'm also glad I could hunt them in the good years.

## FIFTH ANNUAL ART RAFFLE

This year's special offering is an original acrylic by Louis Raymer. This original of a pair of black ducks was submitted for the Minnesota State Waterfowl Stamp. While it was not selected, it is a striking work of art.

The first print is Sharptails on the Rise by Owen Grommee. This print was published nearly twenty years ago, but we picked this copy up in the secondary market. Those of you who know art recognize Grommee as the most legendary of Wisconsin wildlife artists.

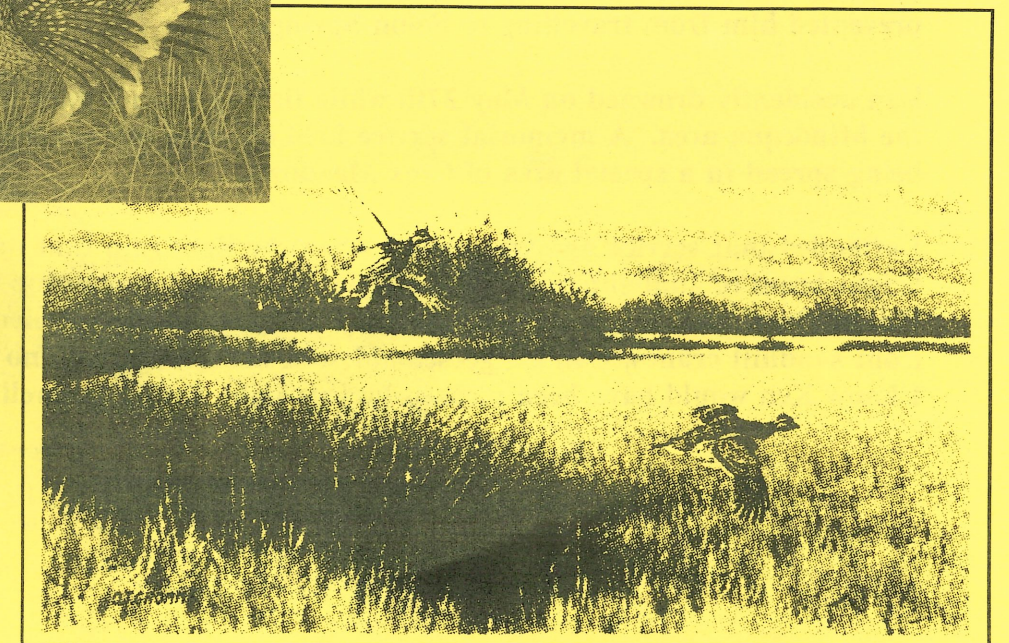
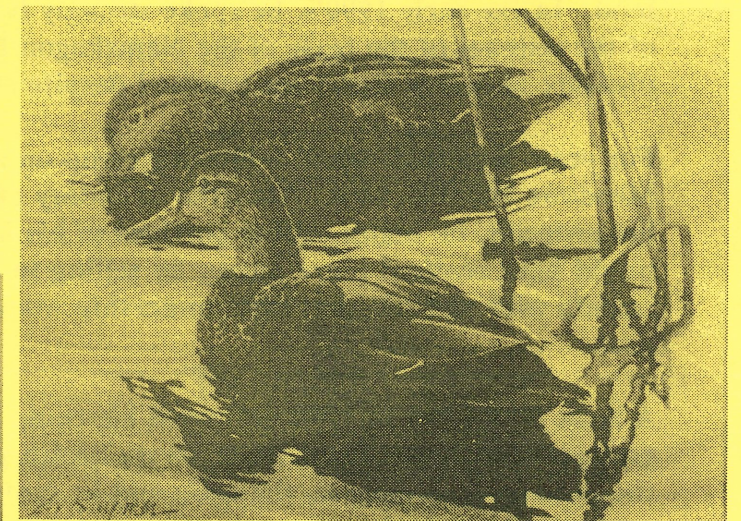
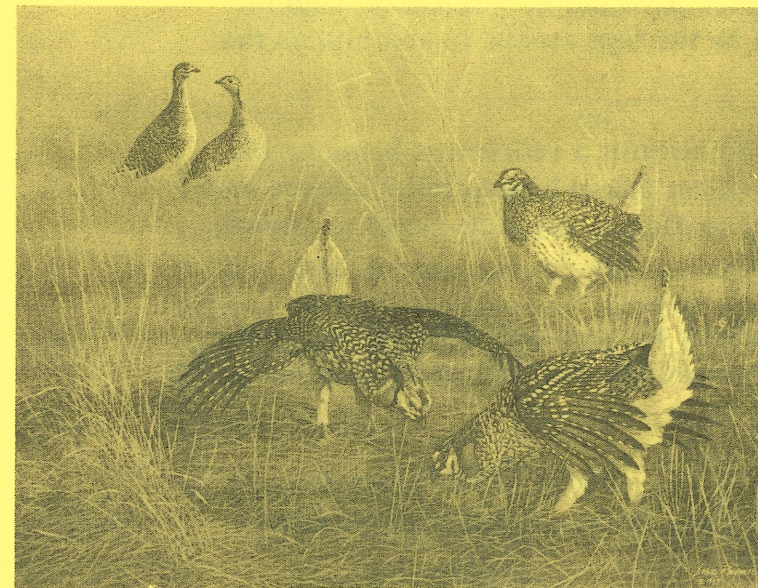
Again this year we are able to offer Spring Dance at Crex by Louis Raymer. Thanks to Friends of Crex for donating this print. (If you're not a member of Friends of Crex, consider joining them.) There are very few sharptail prints out there and this is one of the best.

**1 Ticket - \$5.00**

**3 Tickets - \$10.00**

**10 Tickets - \$25.00**

**(Tickets will be  
mailed in next  
newsletter)**





**KEN WALLIN**  
By Jim Evrard

Sharp-tailed grouse in Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Sharptailed Grouse Society (WSGS) lost a staunch supporter with the death of Ken Wallin on May 27, 1998. Ken was a charter member of the WSCS and active in our organization.

His love for the sharptail was exemplified by the article he wrote for the fall 1994 issue (Vol. 11) of our newsletter. That article dealt with a 1937 sharptail hunt in the Namekagon Barrens in northwest Wisconsin.

Ken believed in giving something back in exchange for the bounty he received from the land. In the early 1990's, he spoke strongly before the Burnett County Board in support of the renewal of the lease of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area. He had the pleasure of seeing that lease renewed despite stiff opposition from forestry interests.

For years Ken had owned a hunting camp on a large block of land north of the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area. After the boundary of the wildlife area was extended to include his property, he began selling portions of his holdings to the state. He knew that he would have realized more money by selling to developers, but he wanted the land to remain wild and felt that state ownership would be the best avenue to accomplish that goal.

A large forest fire in 1980 destroyed his camp and he built a retirement home on his remaining acreage. However, a severe health problem forced him to sell his home and the remaining acreage to the state and he moved to Marshfield to be closer to needed specialized medical care.

Ken continued to attend our annual meetings despite his pain and difficulty walking. Ken and his wife, Jan, were familiar faces at the meetings until this year when his health prevented him from travelling to Solon Springs.

Ken accidentally drowned on May 27th while fishing from a dock at his lake side home in the Minocqua area. A memorial service held on June 6th concluded with his ashes being spread in a special area of Crex Meadows.

I attended that service and was moved when the light rain that was falling ceased and a bright beam of sunlight broke through the clouds over the group assembled at the Wallin Overlook. His grandsons spread Ken's ashes accompanied by a burst of song from sandhill cranes, Canada geese, and songbirds. Although no sharptails were heard, I know Ken would have been pleased by this final, fitting farewell.

**1998 SHARPTAIL HUNT**

The spring of 1998 saw excellent numbers of breeding sharptails in Wisconsin, the best in decades. So we would expect that the fall hunt would have been good as well. It was - hunters took 178 sharpies in comparison to 1997's 137 birds. But it seemed like fewer birds were seen than the monster flocks of 75-100 in 1997.

In 1997 316 persons had a permit in their hand, while this past year almost 1500 held permits. This is mostly due to the ease with which a patron license holder could choose to be in the draw. Those of you who hunted can verify that hunting pressure did not increase five fold, and many of those permits went unused.

<u>Units</u>	<u>Permits</u>	<u>Harvest</u>
2	900	91
8	200	26
9	300	10
10	200	45
20	50	0
24	50	2
30	50	4
31	50	0
	<hr/> 1800	<hr/> 178

The WSGS is again doing a survey of all permit holders. Results are still trickling in (if you're one of the tardy ones please still send in your survey). This year Grantsburg Middle School students, with the assistance of Steve Hoffman, Crex Technician, are helping with the mailing and the data analysis. We'll have the results compiled in the spring newsletter.





WSGS  
Box 1115  
Cumberland, WI 54829

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 83  
CUMBERLAND, WI 54829

04 99

54840

PLEASE CHECK THE DATE ON YOUR MAILING LABEL BELOW TO  
DETERMINE IF YOU ARE PAID UP

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL**  
(1999 Annual Dues \$10.00)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed: \$\_\_\_\_\_ dues

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

Volunteer Activities

\_\_\_\_\_ Board of Directors  
\_\_\_\_\_ Newsletter Writing  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bird census work  
\_\_\_\_\_ Publicity  
\_\_\_\_\_ Education  
\_\_\_\_\_ Fund Raising  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other

Yes! Please send me: \_\_\_\_\_ Deluxe corduroy dress cap (\$14.00 postage incl.)  
\_\_\_\_\_ WSGS Logo Window Sticker (\$1.50 postage incl.)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Total Amount Enclosed

Thank you for your continued support,  
Board of Directors

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO AND RETURN THIS APPLICATION TO:  
Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, P.O. Box 1115, Cumberland, WI 54829