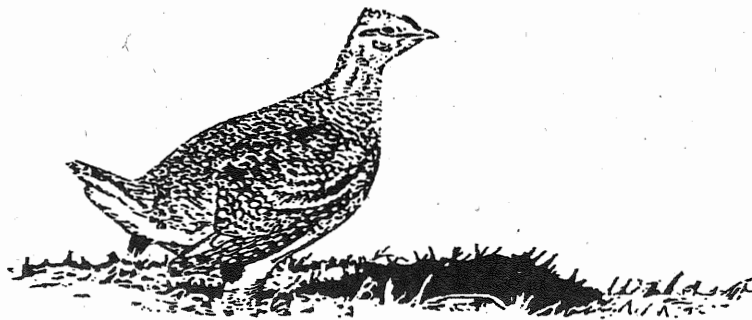


# WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 39

Summer 2003

## 2003 PRAIRIE GROUSE TECHNICAL COUNCIL MEETING

By: Jim Evrard

Planning for the Prairie Grouse Technical Council meeting in Siren, September 30 - October 2, continues. The three-day meeting will focus on sharp-tailed grouse in Wisconsin's Northwest Pine Barrens. The meeting will take place at The Lodge at Crooked Lake resort hotel in Siren and will feature a tour of the Northwest Pine Barrens. The all-day bus trip will visit the Moquah Barrens, the Douglas County Wildlife Area, the Namekagon Barrens, and Crex Meadows in Burnett County.

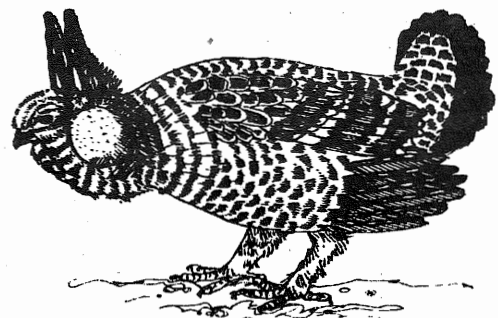
The WSGS will cosponsor the event. An early (before August 1) registration fee of \$100 covers the costs of registration materials and gift, a reception, three lunches, a voyageur dinner, a banquet dinner, a tailgate dinner, refreshments, and the day-long bus tour. There will never be a better opportunity to learn about the Northwest Barrens and its sharptails.

Recently, the North American Grouse Partnership decided to their first annual meeting in Siren following the Prairie Grouse Technical Council meeting. The North American Grouse Partnership is a new organization dedicated to the conservation of all grouse species in North America. Some of the sessions of both groups will overlap but the Grouse Partnership will meet after the Technical Council. The major objective of the grouse group is to begin the development of the North American Grouse Management Plan.

More information is available at the following web site:

["http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/conferences/pgtc/index/htm"](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/conferences/pgtc/index/htm)

To register, contact Jim Evrard, 2003 PGTC Treasurer, 630 N. Pine St., Grantsburg, WI 54840. Jim can be reached by phone (715-463-2446) or email ["evrardsc@grantsburgtelcom.net"](mailto:evrardsc@grantsburgtelcom.net).





## President's Corner:

By Jim Evrard

The WSGS Board decision to contribute \$5,000 toward the acquisition of 170 acres of sharptail habitat for inclusion into the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area represents a new direction for our organization.

It is the largest donation that we have made for any project, with the previous high being \$2,000. The \$5,000 represents over half of the net worth of the WSGS, but as Bob Dreis and other board members stated, one of the stated goals of the WSGS is to protect sharptail habitat.

Buying sharptail habitat is one way to protect it, although some radical politicians in the Wisconsin Legislature want the DNR to sell \$40 million of its land! The contribution also represents our first effort in buying habitat for sharptails. Until this time, we have spent our money for habitat management, educational projects, and lobbying efforts.

In my 30+ years with the DNR, nothing gave me more satisfaction than buying land for the people of Wisconsin. There was a period in the mid-1970s when as the Crex Manager, I had the opportunity to spend as much money as possible for land acquisition and I bought nearly two square miles of land for the Glacial Lake Grantsburg Wildlife Management Complex (Crex Meadows, Fish Lake, Amsterdam Sloughs, and Danbury wildlife areas).

The days of unlimited acquisition funds are memories and acquisition money is now scarce (the same politicians who want to sell DNR land also are attempting to scuttle the Stewardship Program, the major source of DNR acquisition money today). Without our contribution and a contribution from the Friends of Crex, it is doubtful that the DNR would be able to buy the 170 acres. The DNR's Paul Kooiker (also a WSGS member) should be commended for the many hours he spent in this important acquisition project.

I hope that reason returns to some members of the Legislature in Madison (either through citizen pressure or defeat in upcoming elections) and we again see political support for the DNR, natural resource conservation, and outdoor recreation. I've lived long enough to see our economy go up and down several times and the political pendulum swing back and forth. I only hope that the economy and pendulum head in the right direction soon!

## PROGRESS ON THE HABITAT FRONT

By Jim Evrard

As a representative of the WSGS, I was recently invited to attend the dedication of the 400<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin State Natural Area, Mott's Ravine in the Brule River State Forest. You might wonder what Mott's Ravine has to do with sharp-tailed grouse.

Mott's Ravine is 600 acres of pine barrens that will permanently be managed by fire in habitat attractive to sharptails. It represents a first on a state forest --- a sizable chunk of land capable of growing red pine, but will instead be maintained in an early vegetation successional stage for the benefit of plants and animals found in that habitat.

The WSGS was actively involved in the development of the master plan for the state forest and lobbied for more barrens habitat than the 600 acres that was finally designated. However, we were competing with many other interests including the timber lobby and the old growth preservationist lobby. The new natural area represents our foot in the door, with more barrens habitat to probably come in the future.

Ed Frank has been representing the WSGS in the effort to develop a master plan for the combined Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. Ed and the WSGS Board are pleased with the U.S. Forest Service's preferred alternative in the plan which increases pine barrens habitat associated with the Moquah Barrens WA in Bayfield County and maintains and even slightly increases the open habitat associated with the Riley Lake sharptail management area east of Fiefeld. The latter project had been questioned by the old growth-preservationist group, but the Forest Service plans to retain that project.

In another project, the WSGS is cooperating with the DNR and the Friends of Crex in acquiring 170 acres of land to add to the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area. The area is presently inhabited by sharptails and consists of old agricultural fields and young red pine plantings and the north half of an important natural wetland. The State owns the south half of the wetland. The WSGS agreed to contribute \$5,000 and the Friends of Crex, \$17,000, to provide the difference between the State's appraisal and the landowner's appraisal to buy this key parcel before it fell into the hands of developers. The WSGS will participate in a dedication ceremony when the lengthy acquisition process is finally completed.



## ANNUAL MEETING

By Jim Evrard



This summary is taken from the minutes of the board meeting and the annual meeting submitted by new Secretary/Treasurer Tim Connolly.

The meetings held at Paradise Shores Resort on Lake Holcombe on April 26 were a success with 45 people attending and 25 people registered. The weather cooperated and about 20 people arose very early on April 27 to participate in a sharptail survey in western Taylor and southern Rusk counties.

The spring board meeting began at 11:00 a.m. with all board members present. As the then-acting secretary/treasurer, I presented a brief treasurer's report giving the WSGS's net worth at approximately \$9,500.

A number of land issues were discussed including input into the management plans of the Brule River and Northern Highland/American Legion state forests, the Governor Thompson State Park, and the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.

In another matter, the WSGS Board voted to provide \$5,000 towards the purchase of an important 170-acre tract of land in the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area. The Friends of Crex agreed to donate \$17,000 towards the purchase. The donations would be added to the amount offered by the State of Wisconsin. The land contains half of an important wetland (the State now owns the other half) and is mostly open abandoned farmland, inhabited by sharptails.

Through the great efforts of Ed Frank, the DNR has dropped the free sharptail permit application from the package received by patron license holders. This should eliminate persons who receive the hunting permit and do not hunt, robbing dedicated sharptail hunters hunting opportunities.

Other discussion revolved around efforts to start a sharptail management program in Central Wisconsin, reintroduce sharptails into the Ashland Red Clay area, and eliminate the sharptail hunting closed areas in the Moquah Barrens and Douglas County wildlife areas since they are no longer needed.

New business discussed included a threat to the Douglas County Wildlife Area. The DNR lease with Douglas County is up for renewal, but local commercial interests want 320 acres of the wildlife area for an all-terrain-vehicle fun(?) park and an industrial park. The WSGS opposes the conversion of the rare pine barrens habitat into land uses where the habitat would be degraded.

The DNR's sharptail management plan will be reviewed and updated in the near future and board members were asked to review and comment upon the plan.

The annual meeting began at 1 p.m. and was successful in many ways, one of which was financial. A profit of \$128 was realized from registration fees and another \$675 from the annual art raffle. The old business discussed at the board meeting was presented to the members at the annual meeting. Several items of new business were discussed. Ed Frank discussed his participation as a WSGS representative in the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative (WBCI). Both Ed and Tim Connolly are active in several WBCI committees.

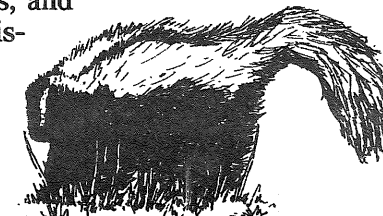
Board member Blair Klein discussed the annual meeting of the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association in Cable this fall and the WSGS participation in the tour of the Bayfield Peninsula, including the Moquah Barrens WA.

I testified at a meeting of the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee in River Falls regarding the need to approve the proposed DNR's license fee increases in the Governor's budget. My and other sportsmen's testimony was largely ignored as the Republican-controlled committee voted along strict party lines (12-4) to deny the full license fee increases. The Republican-controlled legislature also voted to deny the proposed license fee increases in the budget submitted by Governor Doyle.

Michele Windsor, DNR wildlife biologist in charge of the Dike 17 project on the Black River State Forest, requested funding for a research project to help determine the limiting factors for sharptails in the project. Her discussion led to a decision to increase the scope of the project to include all of Central Wisconsin. When and if the DNR approves Michele's project, she will submit it to us for funding.

Following the business portion of the annual meeting, DNR wildlife biologists Windsor, Pete Engman, manager of Crex Meadows, Nancy Christel, manager of the Namekagon Barrens, and Mark Schmidt, manager of Pershing, made short presentations summarizing the history and status of sharptails in their respective projects.

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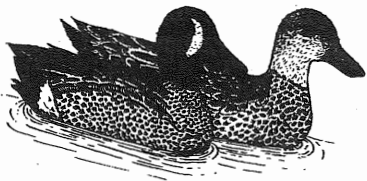


ANNUAL MEETING (continued from page 3)

Engman also gave a report of the barrens restoration work he has accomplished with the \$3,000 donation that the WSGS has made in the past few years. He also made a presentation of the draft Crex Meadows video. Schmidt also made assignments to those who planned to census western Taylor and Rusk counties the following morning for displaying sharp-tails.

Finally, in a close race among three candidates, Bob Dreis was re-elected and Jim Wilson was elected to the WSGS Board. The meeting ended at approximately 4 p.m. after completing the drawings for door prizes and for the art raffle.

The people that looked for sharp-tails early Sunday morning were rewarded by seeing about 20 sharp-tails. In addition, much other wildlife were encountered including deer, turkeys, sandhill cranes, and gobs of waterfowl.



SPRING SHARPTAIL SURVEY RESULTS

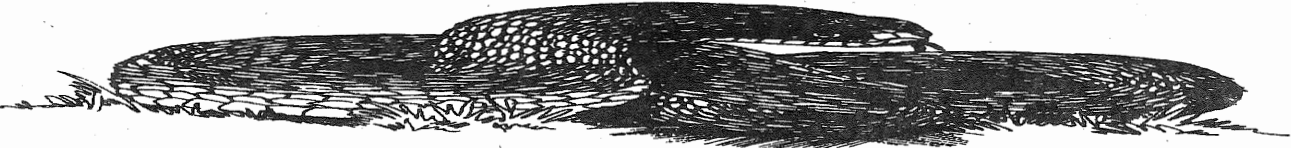
By Jim Evrard

Once again volunteers from the WSGS cooperated with the DNR in the annual spring surveys to determine sharp-tail numbers in Wisconsin. While numbers are not directly comparable from year to year due to differences in survey efforts, it seems that state-wide sharp-tail numbers increased somewhat.

Deer Management Unit	Number of Males		Hunting Permits	
	2003	2002	2003	2002
2	263	143	790	540
3	32	35		
4	20	12		
8	52	27	150	60
9	73	66	220	250
10	61	61	180	200
20	3	9		
24	19	13		
8		no survey		
30	22	56		
31	3	1		
56	no survey	32		

Wildlife Areas (these numbers are included in above unit totals)

	Number of Males	
	2003	2002
Moquah Barrens	32	35
Douglas County	20	12
Namekagon Barrens	52	29
Crex Meadows	61	61
Riley Lake	17	12
Kimberly-Clark	4	9
Pershing	3	13
Dike 17	3	2



SPRING SHARPTAIL SURVEY RESULTS

(continued from page 4)



Sharp-tails continue to hold on in Central Wisconsin. Dike 17, a special management area within the Black River State Forest is an example of a population one step from extirpation. Other central Wisconsin sharp-tails were not censused this year, possibly due to lack of DNR funding.

The WSGS has been working on developing a sharp-tail management strategy for that part of the state to link the remnant sharp-tail populations in Dike 17, the Wood County WA, and private lands, mostly cranberry farms. This effort is an uphill struggle.

The other sharp-tail populations of concern are found in the heavy-soil management areas of the Kimberly-Clark and Pershing wildlife areas. Hopefully, sharp-tail numbers there will increase with the coming upswing of the grouse cycle.

As part of our annual meeting, I surveyed the Southern Unit of the Pershing WA for sharp-tails. I was the Pershing manager in the early 1970's and feel that the habitat there now is not much different than when I managed the property. However, the open lands between the two units of Pershing have changed. Most of the farms are no longer active although people continue to make their residences there.

This land use change and the presence of a large shooting preserve next to the north unit of Pershing may have caused the recent decline in sharp-tails. The DNR no longer has the money to grow crops within the refuge in the north unit and sharp-tails are probably drawn to the extensive strips of corn and other grain in the shooting preserve. Since released hen pheasants are legal targets in shooting preserves and most hunters probably couldn't tell the difference between a hen pheasant and a sharp-tail, the sharp-tails in Pershing's northern unit may have been shot out of existence. This should be investigated.

Minnesota's sharp-tail counts increased in 2003 according to the lead article in the Minnesota Sharp-tailer, the newsletter of the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society. The Northwest Minnesota sharp-tail population (711 males counted) increased 21% over last year and the East-central population (616 males tallied) increased 10%.

Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society Financial Statement

January 1, 2002 through December 31, 2002

Checkbook balance - 01/31/01 .....\$6,778.31  
Certificate of Deposits - 01/31/01 .....\$1,979.48

Total cash assets - 01/31/01 .....\$8,757.79

Income:  
Memberships and sales .....\$1,576.00  
Annual meeting and art raffle. ....\$2,039.00  
Refund from UW-Stevens Point .....\$640.19  
Interest from checking account .....\$34.55  
Interest from CDs .....\$63.24

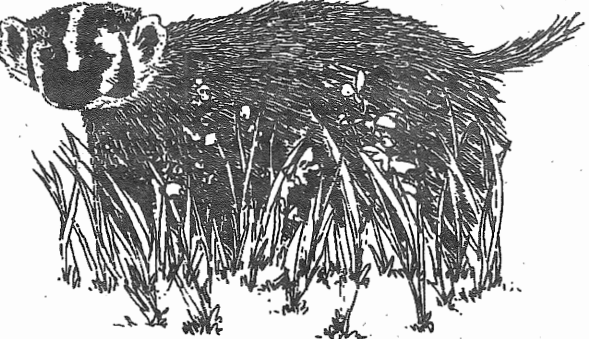
Total Income .....\$4,352.98

Expenditures:  
Newsletter and membership services .....\$1,545.49  
Annual meeting .....\$782.00  
Crex Meadows barrens restoration .....\$2,000.00  
Red Clay reintroduction project. ....\$100.00  
Membership - Wis. Stewardship Network. \$50.00  
Membership - N. Am. Grouse Partnership.. \$35.00  
Raffle license .....\$25.00  
Nonprofit Report to Secretary of State ....\$10.00  
Banking fees .....\$7.50

Total expenditures .....\$4,555.99

Checkbook balance - 12/31/02 .....\$6,513.06  
Certificate of Deposits - 12/31/02 .....\$2,042.72  
Total cash assets - 12/31/02 .....\$8,555.78

Submitted by James O. Evrard, Acting Treasurer



CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL

Check your mailing label for the expiration date. If your membership has expired (anything dated 2002 and earlier), please renew. Membership funds are important to carry out our programs benefiting Wisconsin's sharp-tailed grouse so renew your membership today.

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

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street/PO Box \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to volunteer for:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Board of Directors  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bird Censusing  
\_\_\_\_\_ Newsletter  
\_\_\_\_\_ Annual Meeting  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**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)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Deluxe Green Corduroy Cap with Logo (\$14.00)

(all prices include postage and handling)

Total Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO AND RETURN THIS APPLICATION TO:**

Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, PO Box 367, Grantsburg, WI 54840

WSGS  
Box 367  
Grantsburg, WI 54840

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