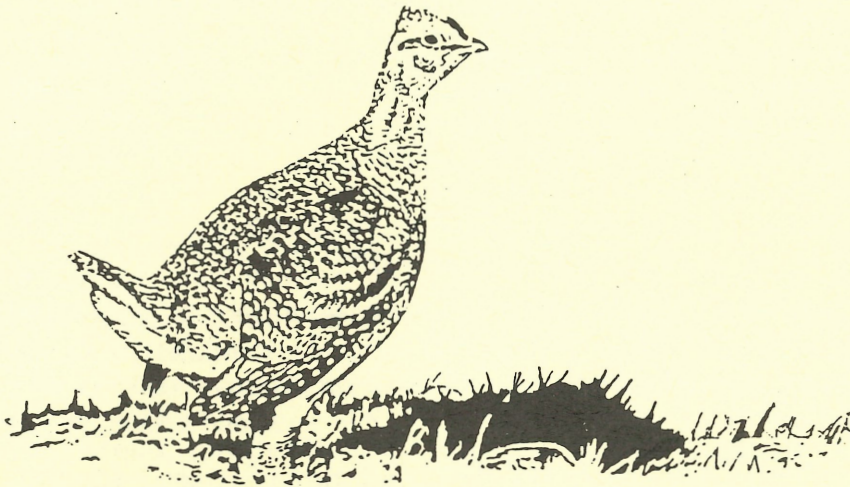


# WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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VOLUME 34

WINTER, 2002

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## SHARPTAIL HARVEST VERY LOW

Wisconsin sharptail hunters harvested 22 birds this past fall. Of these 16 were taken in Unit 10 on and around Crex Meadows, and 3 each were taken in Units 2 and 9.

Units 2 and 9 were the strongholds of the grouse range during the 90's, with thousands of acres of cutover pinelands following the jack pine budworm outbreak. These lands are now growing out of sharptail habitat.

Sharptails often mirror ruffed grouse cycles, and that seems to be the case again, as both appear to be at a low. The early brood rearing season in June was very wet and cold and that could not have been helpful.

Lands specifically managed for barrens values have over the past 50 years been the places sharptails have been able to persevere and in high years to thrive.

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Two positions on the Board of Directors are open this spring. Any member may nominate another member for the board, or you may also volunteer if you are interested. Send nominations and biographies to Jim Evrard, 630 N Pine, Grantsburg Wisconsin 54840 by March 10<sup>th</sup>. The ballot will be in the next newsletter.



## ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY

Saturday and Sunday, April 27 and 28, 2002  
Grantsburg, Wisconsin

The WSGS invites you and your spouse, partner, sons, daughters, and friends to our annual meeting.

Our meeting will begin at 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 27 in the newly completed Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center located on the northern edge of the Village of Grantsburg. Come and see the building our donations helped to construct.

Following our business meeting we will enjoy presentations on the status of sharptails in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan, the history of sharptails in Crex Meadows Wildlife Area, and other pertinent subjects. After the program, we will leave the visitor center at 5 p.m. for a short walk to the Crex Meadows Youth Camp Dining Hall where we will enjoy a guaranteed-delicious catered northwoods dinner and social.

Very early on Sunday morning, April 28, we will census sharp-tailed grouse in Crex Meadows and possibly other areas. Census teams will be assigned to specific areas to count male sharptails on their dancing grounds in the early morning hours. Following the census, we will again meet at the Crex Youth Camp Dining Hall for a census debriefing and catered brunch beginning at 9:00 am. The meeting ends following brunch.

Registration Deadline is April 19, 2002. The registration fee of \$20 per person includes refreshments, dinner on Saturday evening, brunch on Sunday morning, and registration materials. Payment must be made prior to the registration deadline.

Lodging is available at the Wood River Inn in Grantsburg (715-463-2541). Please make your own reservations.

For more information, contact Jim Evrard (715)463-2446

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(cut on dotted line and return with fees)

### REGISTRATION - 2002 WSGS ANNUAL MEETING

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_

I plan to survey sharptails Sunday morning \_\_\_\_\_  
(yes) (no)

Make check/money order (\$20/person) payable to: Wisconsin  
Sharp-tailed Grouse Society

Send form and payment to: Jim Evrard, WSGS  
630 N. Pine St.  
Grantsburg, WI 54840

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR STATEWIDE SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SURVEY

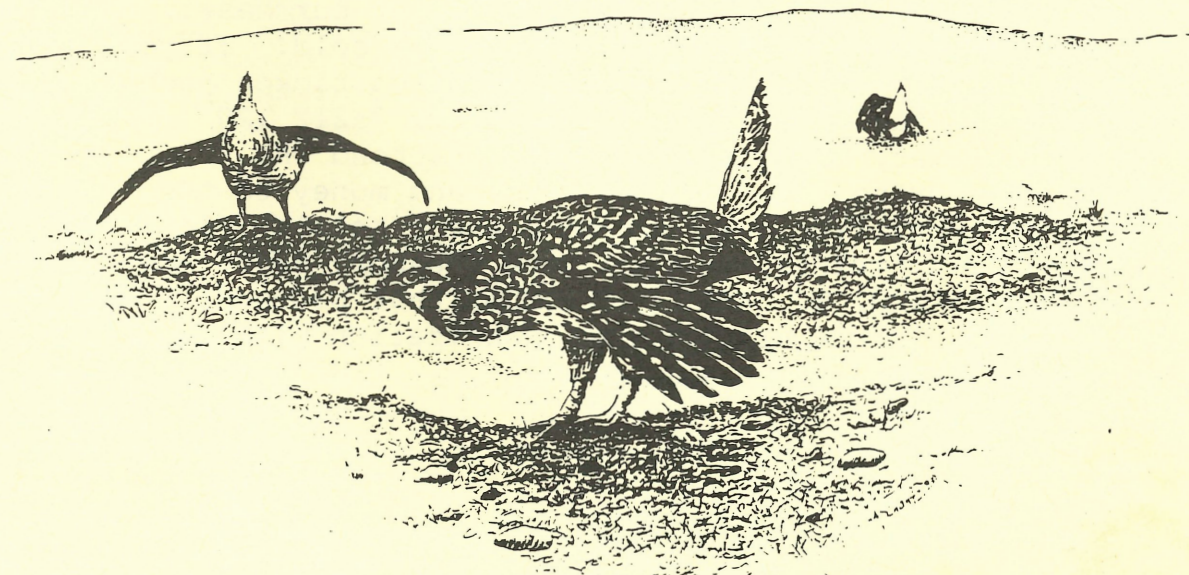
Jim Evrard, President of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (WSGS), is asking for volunteers to participate in a statewide census of displaying sharp-tailed grouse. The survey will be a joint effort between the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the WSGS.

Volunteers recruited by the WSGS will assist WDNR biologists where needed in conducting annual censuses on managed areas. In addition, volunteers will also search areas known to contain sharptails, but where the birds haven't been counted due to the lack of WDNR funds. Survey results will be used to determine the distribution and number of sharp-tailed grouse in the state. The results will also be used to set annual hunting permit numbers.

Male sharp-tailed grouse are counted from mid-April to mid-May by slowly driving roads and trails in their range, stopping every half mile or so, and listening and watching for the displaying birds. Once the birds have been located, an attempt is made to find their dancing grounds or leks. If possible, the number of displaying males are counted either by direct observation or by flush counts. The survey begins before sunrise and continues until mid-morning.

Sharp-tailed grouse live in some of the more wild landscapes remaining in Wisconsin. They share their open habitat with a multitude of interesting and exciting animals. In the pine and oak barrens of central and northwest Wisconsin, tracks of the black bear, timber wolf, and badger are seen in the sandy roads and trails. On rare occasions, a glimpse of these shy creatures in a reward for sharptail counters. Birds sharing the open barrens include the harrier, clay-colored sparrow, and eastern kingbird.

Anyone interested in participating in the sharptail survey contact Jim Evrard, 630 N. Pine St., Grantsburg, WI 54840, (715)463-2446, [evrardsc@grantsburgtelcom.net](mailto:evrardsc@grantsburgtelcom.net).





## ART RAFFLE

This year the grand prize for our annual art raffle is different than in the past. We had an opportunity to acquire a signed set of a limited edition book and print by the Owen Gromme. Gromme died a few years ago and is considered the dean of Wisconsin wildlife artists.

The large print, framed by Wild Wings, is titled "Bobwhites" and features a covey of quail in the snow on and around a split rail fence underneath spreading white pines. The Marshall and Isley Bank of Milwaukee owns the original painting that Gromme completed in 1967.

The coffee-table-sized book is titled "The World of Owen Gromme" and features over 250 color reproductions of Gromme's paintings and accompanying text. The book is bound in leather and is protected by a leather-covered slipcase.

What makes the set unique is that both the book and the print are signed by Gromme and have matching limited edition numbers (918/950).

The second raffle prize is a framed and signed limited edition of sharp-tailed grouse by Louis Raymer titled "Spring Dance at Crex". This colorful print features several sharptails in their spring mating displays and has been offered in past art raffles.

The third prize is a framed black and white print of a dancing male sharptail by Karen Smith, the manager of the Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota.

**Ticket Prices** - Raffle ticket prices are: 1 for \$5, 3 tickets for \$10, and/or 10 tickets for \$20. Please print your name and the name of the ticket purchaser, if different, on each side of the tickets sold. If you cannot attend the annual meeting, send the ticket stubs and money to Paul Hayes, WSGS Treasurer, 33212 120<sup>th</sup> St., Twin Lakes, WI 53181. Those who attend the meeting can bring their ticket stubs and money to the annual meeting. You need not be present to win. If you need more tickets, contact Dave Evenson, WSGS, Box 1115, Cumberland, WI 54829. Remember that proceeds from the art raffle provide our organization with much of our annual operating funds.

## EARLY WISCONSIN SHARPTAIL RESEARCH #5 in a series compiled by Jim Hale

Aldo Leopold published his "Report on a Game Survey of the North Central States" in 1931. He stated "The purpose of this survey is to appraise the chance for the practice of game management as a means to game restoration in the north central region. It attempts to describe game conditions as they exist, the opportunities which those conditions offer, the human machinery available for acting on them and the probable consequences of their further neglect."

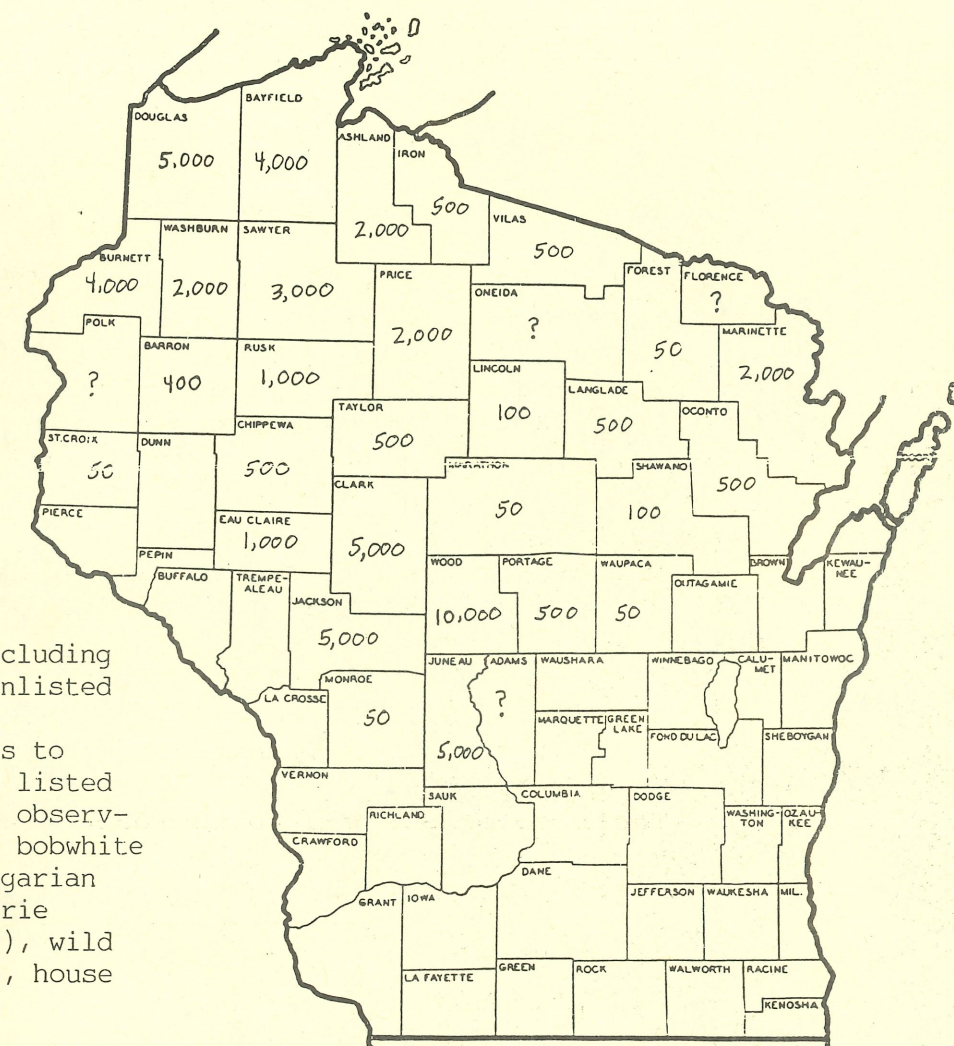
He surveyed 8 states, including Wisconsin. In each state he enlisted local people he believed to be knowledgeable about game species to gather status information. He listed 187 Wisconsin residents as his observers. The species covered were bobwhite quail, rabbits, pheasants, Hungarian partridge, ruffed grouse, prairie chickens (including sharptails), wild turkey, deer, waterfowl, foxes, house cats and crows.

He attempted to census sharptails and prairie chickens in Wisconsin by compiling local estimates or counts made by game wardens and volunteers. In 1930, Wisconsin sharptail numbers were estimated by 2 to 5 "official state game observers" in each county.

A total of 55,350 sharptails in 29 counties were recorded, as shown on the map herein. Leopold was assisted in this effort by Franklin J.W. Schmidt. 1930 was deemed a "medium" year for numbers of both sharptails and prairie chickens. Leopold commented on the census that they "seem to me a little optimistic. I doubt whether there are that many."

He summarized his findings in part: "Chickens (including sharptails) are the most mobile of gallinaceous game. Hence a single refuge covert and feeding station will serve a very large area. Refuges, in short, are nearly as effective for chickens as they are for waterfowl.

"By reason of the same mobility, management is best undertaken by neighborhood pools rather than by individual farmers. For the same reason, a large degree of supervision and control of management practice is, and always will be, desirable."







Gromme framed, numbered and signed print with "matching" book.

## CENTRAL WISCONSIN INITIATIVE

By Jim Evrard

Twenty-three persons attended an important meeting for sharp-tailed grouse in Black River Falls on December 18. The meeting's focus was the management of the Dike 17 area of the Black River State Forest for sharptails. The meeting was part of WSGS's continuing Central Wisconsin Initiative headed up by Board Member, Ed Frank.

Dike 17 consists of about 3,700 acres that have been managed primarily for waterfowl and secondarily for sharptails. About 3,000 acres are open with much of that acreage being wetlands. The primary management tool is fire with small amounts of mowing and cropping.

The goal of the property is to produce a fall population of 75 sharptails. In recent years, the sharptail population has declined to only a handful of birds. Concern for the species led present DNR Dike 17 Manager, Michelle Kastler, to ask for management advice.

Former Dike 17 managers, Gene Kohlmeyer, Paul Kooiker, Ken Jonas, and Pete Engman gave summaries of their work on the project and suggestions to increase sharptail numbers.

Their consensus was to increase the size of Dike 17 especially open upland areas. Cropping is not essential for the birds, but prescribed burning is essential with perhaps a longer rotation than is used now.

Opportunities for expansion of the project are possible with the upcoming rewriting of the management plan for the Black River State Forest. The recent approval of reintroducing elk into the Forest provides an opportunity for increasing sharptail habitat since elk and sharptail management can be compatible.

The meeting closed with a discussion of other opportunities for sharp-tailed grouse and their habitat in Central Wisconsin. These areas included the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, the Wood County Wildlife Area, the Brockway Barrens, the Wazee park, and a military bombing range on county lands.



## PRAIRIE GROUSE TECHNICAL COUNCIL MEETING

By Jim Evrard

The biennial meeting of the Prairie Grouse Technical Council (PGTC) took place in the first week of November 2001 in western Oklahoma. I attended the meeting with Paul Kooiker, DNR supervisor from Grantsburg and former Crex Meadows manager, and Jim Keir, DNR wildlife biologist from Wisconsin Rapids who has the responsibility of managing Wisconsin's prairie chickens.

About 125 persons attended the PGTC meeting in Woodward, Oklahoma, a city of 13,000 people. A large motel served as the headquarters for those meeting attendees from other areas. The opening reception was held in the local historical museum, which was impressive for the size of the city. Technical paper sessions were held in a restored theater, now Woodward's cultural center. We were treated to an evening barbecue dinner in the city's community center located in their municipal building. All all-day bus field trip concluded the meeting.

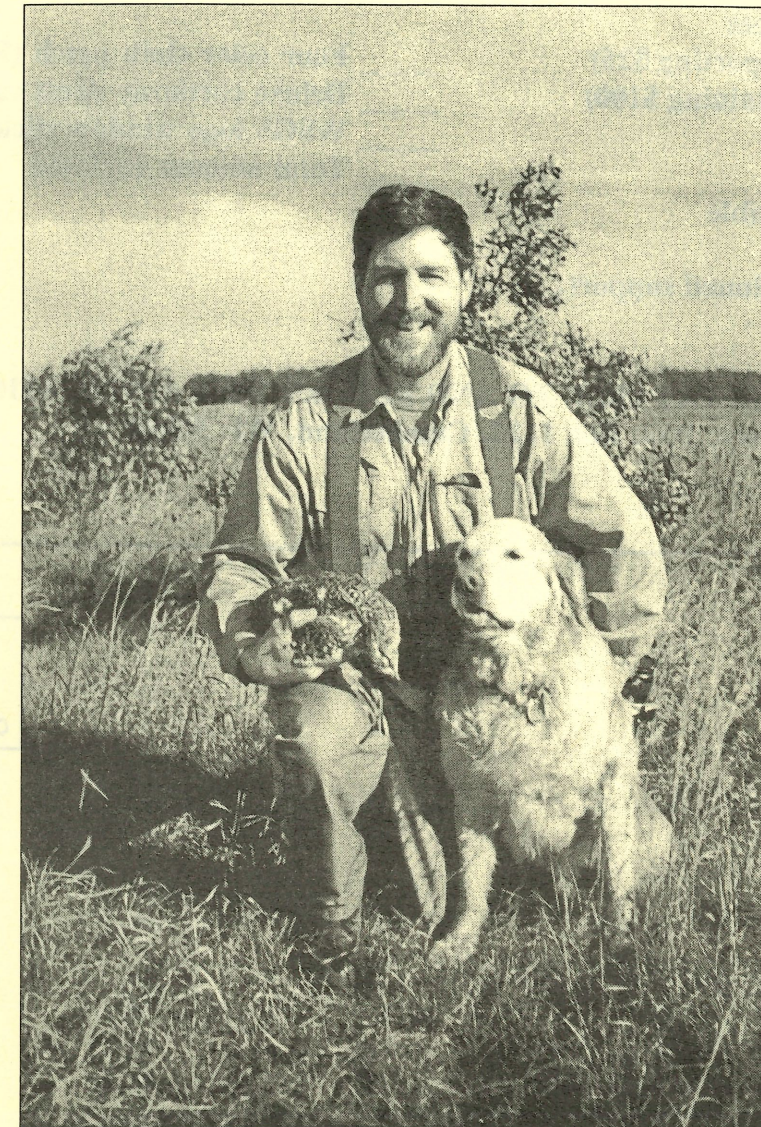
As with most meetings dealing with a wide geographical subject, only a small percentage of the 30 papers presented at the technical sessions had anything to do with the prairie grouse found in our state. Five of the papers dealt with Wisconsin, primarily prairie chicken, and only four applied to Wisconsin's sharp-tailed grouse.

A common theme in the technical papers was concern that fragmentation of prairie grouse habitat was causing loss of genetic diversity in the increasingly-isolated grouse populations. Another common theme was the continued loss of prairie grouse habitat as human populations and development keep increasing.

At the business meeting that followed the presentation of technical papers, it was decided that the next PGTC meeting in 2003 will be held in Wisconsin. Jim Keir made the offer, stating that the two past PGTC meetings in Wisconsin featured prairie chicken in the central part of the state. He proposed holding the future meeting in northwest Wisconsin with the probably meeting site being Siren. By vote, the PGTC accepted Keir's offer.

The emphasis of the 2003 meeting will be sharp-tailed grouse in the Northwest Pine Barrens, from Burnett to Bayfield counties. Hopefully, the meeting will focus public and resource agency attention on the

plight of sharp-tailed grouse in our state. The WSGS will be one of the major sponsors of the meeting. Details will be discussed at our upcoming annual meeting.



Jim Shurts, WSGS Legal Counsel  
and former Vice President  
on a great day at Crex this past fall



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

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL**

**(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 Address:

\_\_\_\_\_ Newsletter Writing

\_\_\_\_\_ Bird census work

\_\_\_\_\_ Publicity

\_\_\_\_\_ Education

\_\_\_\_\_ Fund Raising

\_\_\_\_\_ Four color cloth patch (\$3.50 postage inc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Deluxe corduroy dress cap (\$14.00 postage inc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ WSGS logo window sticker (\$1.50 postage inc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ 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**

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WSGS  
Box 1115  
Cumberland, WI 54829

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