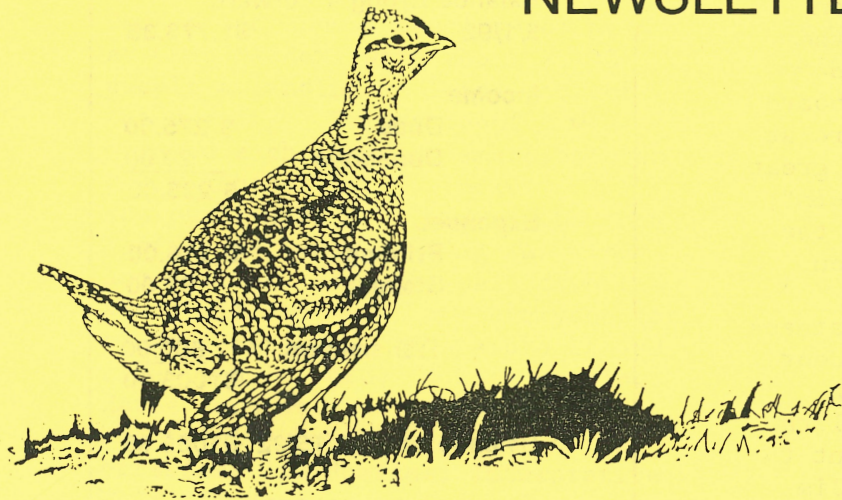


# WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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Volume 5

Fall, 1992

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## HUNTER REPORT CARD REQUIRED

This fall sharptail hunters will be required to obtain a permit/report card before hunting. The DNR knows that there are not a lot of sharptail hunters, and not many birds are taken. This report card will give a much better estimate of those two numbers, as well as distribution of hunting effort around the state. The report card includes information blanks for days hunted, location, and number of birds harvested.

Permit/report cards are free and are available at any DNR District Office (Milwaukee, Madison, Green Bay, Eau Claire, Rhinelander, Spooner), all DNR Area Offices north of Eau Claire or Wisconsin Rapids and most local ranger stations or offices in the Northwest District. Please pick up a card before hunting season and help spread the word to your hunting buddies who may not be members of WSGS. (Better yet get them to become members!)





President's Message

This cool fall-like weather we have had lately is surely getting to me. It does it every year, and I hope it does until I leave this life on earth. Fall is right around the corner, time for hunting, bird migration, and our fall WSGS board meeting. Those of you who were at last year's will remember the great camaraderie we had at "the cabin", the wild goose spaghetti, and the sharptail hunt in the afternoon.

This year we will have our business meeting/combo hunt or any outdoor activity you want to pursue on Saturday and Sunday, October 17th and 18th. Some of you may want to come Friday night the 16th. Jim Evrard has again volunteered the use of the Montgomery Social Club facilities (a deer camp north of Crex). Saturday is the sharptail opener as you are probably aware of, also you may find the waterfowl hunting or bird watching to your liking. On Sunday Crex Meadows is hosting their annual open house. There will be videos, slide shows, and guided bus tours that would be of interest to you.

If you are interested please RSVP via phone call to me at 715-834-2627, evening is best, but we have an answering machine. I will send you a map so you can find us there. You may want to bring a snack or lunch for yourself, and a small dish (pre-made) to pass for Saturday night's dinner before business meeting.

Hope to see you there,  
Tom "Ziggy" Ziegeweid



Treasurer's Report

Balance Brought Forward	
3/1/92	\$1,773.35
Income	
Dues	\$ 275.00
Donations	20.00
	\$ 295.00
Expenses	
Printing	\$ 116.00
Stamps	87.00
Transmitters	800.00
	\$1003.00
Balance as of 8/15/92	\$1065.35

WSGS ANNUAL MEETING, APRIL 24-25, 1992

Our second annual meeting was held at Crex Meadows with about 25-30 people attending at least part of the meeting. Friday evening we enjoyed each other's camaraderie and got organized for the morning sharptail search. Good snacks once again! Saturday morning was windy and cool and probably held down the sharptail activity, but everyone got to at least see some sharptails and a few people observed some dancing. Maybe some year we'll hit a beautiful calm spring day! After breakfast Jim Hoefler, Interpretive Wildlife Manager at Crex, led a tour to see the spring wildlife. Highlight of the tour was a peregrine falcon seen at close range.

Most of the business meeting revolved around proposed by-laws. Several motions were made and forwarded to the by-laws committee.

Moquah Barrens Research - Peter David explained the status of the transfer of birds to Moquah Barrens. Seventy two sharptails have been transplanted to Moquah in 1990 and 1991. The DNR prairie grouse committee is interested in further evaluating the transplant technique and will be transplanting some more birds this summer. We voted to donate \$800 for radio transmitters assuming we have at least a \$500 cushion in the treasury in August when this would be paid.

Resolution to Close Hunting in Some Areas - Myron Anderson presented the following resolution. Members present did not vote officially on the resolution but realized that it's a big issue and should receive wider distribution as in this publication.

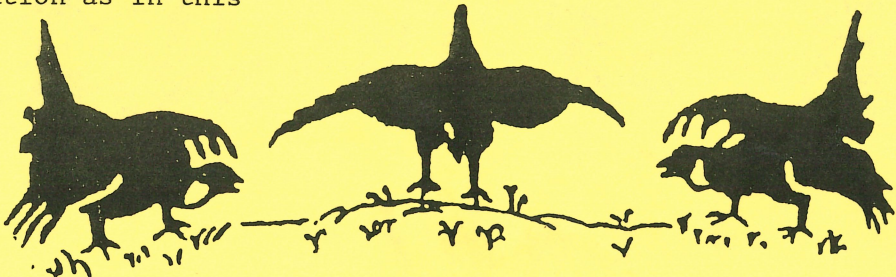
From Wisconsin Sharptailed Association

1. We urgently request that the DNR close the sharptailed hunting season in most of the state.
2. This would be accomplished by using a zone system similar to the deer hunting zones.
3. We urge that any zone that has no sharptails or only a remnant population be closed indefinitely (or until a sound hunnable population is established).
4. We, the Wisconsin Sharptailed Association, would then help restore (and not feel frustrated by annihilation) the birds to their former areas.
5. In some zones a quota system should be used.
6. For the present (at least) the same geographical zones as for deer could probably be used to save time and money.

REASONING BEHIND ABOVE RESOLUTION

We believe that from past experiences with other wild creatures such as wolves, eagles, turkeys, etc. it has been shown that this system of closed seasons is a must to establish our goal of protecting this endangered species.

We the W.S.T.A. would help with bird counting, zoning, etc. if asked by DNR.



Revised  
AS IS  
It is now



## OBSERVATIONS ON THE SHARPTAILED GROUSE IN NORTHERN WISCONSIN

By W. W. Barton, R. Dale Sanders, and W. A. Elkins  
U. S. Forest Service

*Editors Note: This report was presented at the Fourth Midwest Wildlife Conference in 1938. Fifty some years have passed, and management thinking is once again focused on the Moquah Barrens, as pointed out in other articles in this newsletter.*

The Moquah Barrens in the Chequamegon National Forest are one of the better sharp-tailed grouse ranges in Wisconsin. The area of approximately 120,000 acres, in Bayfield County is a high sand plain, the backbone of a peninsula jutting into Lake Superior. It was logged off between 1895 and 1910 and has been burned over repeatedly since that time. Since 1933, however, with more adequate fire protection, there has been only one major fire on the area.

Jack pine, red oak, aspen and cherry form the principal cover distributed in large and small patch pattern. Over half of the area is aspen with a ground cover of blueberry, sweet fern, bracken, rose, sedge, and grass. The blueberry crop is a very important economic asset to the local people and from our observations is important for grouse food as well. Since 1930 the Forest Service has planted about 27,000 acres of this area to jack and red pine.

As these plantations cover almost one-fourth of the total area and plans are being made for extensive plantings in the future it is evident that definite multiple use management plans that consider

grouse production and blueberry production as well as timber production are needed.

In 1930 Leopold estimated the population for Bayfield County as 1,000 to 2,000 pinnated grouse and 4,000 to 5,000 sharptails. Since 1934, trained observers have covered the area periodically but to date there is no authentic report of any pinnated grouse having been seen anywhere on the barrens. It is roughly estimated that the present population is at least 10,000 sharptailed grouse with a considerable number of ruffed grouse present in the heavier cover types.

In the fall of 1936, grouse were counted on an area of four sections by one observer walking all forty and quarter lines in the area... Using this method, Arnold Steelman obtained an average population figure of 33 sharptails per section in 1936.

In 1937 no formal census was taken but the sharptail population was estimated at 80 birds per section. This figure may have been somewhat high for an average of the entire area.

On September 20 and 21, 1938, a census was attempted using bird dogs. The census was run for two hours in the morning and again for two hours in the early evening, using three dogs, 2 setters and a pointer. A compass line was followed, the distance being paced and the width of the strip over which the dogs ranged being estimated at 10 chains. The time of day, type of cover, flushing distance, direction and distance of flight were recorded for each covey and each bird. . .

On a 125 acre area around a food patch, 83 birds or an average of one bird per each 1½ acres were flushed. On another area, more than a mile from the nearest food patch the density of population was one bird per each 3½ acres or about 180 birds per section. This is more than double the 1937 estimates. It seems that the "Barrens" are producing a sharptail population larger than anyone had believed.

A total of 134 sharptails (excluding all re-flushes) and 2 ruffed grouse were counted on the census. The presence of the 2 ruffed grouse indicates overlap of habitat for the 2 species where cover is sufficient for ruffed grouse. As the barrens become more timbered a gradual conversion from sharptailed to ruffed grouse habitat may be expected.

Since cover type maps are available for the whole area, future censuses can be planned quite efficiently and the amount of similar sharptail habitat computed from them. A man with one or two well trained dogs will be able to cover many times the area that could be censused without a dog.





## MOQUAH BARRENS SHARP-TAILED GROUSE RESTORATION

By Peter David

In the first year of the transplant (1990) 27 birds were moved from Crex to Moquah. The project seemed to be going well, but it was very difficult to evaluate its success. In order to better evaluate the project, 10 radio transmitters were obtained for the all 1991 transplant. We moved 35 birds from Crex, and 9 birds from a second site, the Kimberly-Clark Wildlife Area near Park Falls as well. Ten of the trapped birds were equipped with radio transmitters.

Typically the first few weeks after transplanting are the most difficult for trapped birds. We were very pleased to find that mortality related to trapping, transportation and release was minimal. We also determined that dispersal from Moquah after release was not a problem, as some had feared. None of the birds radioed left Moquah after release. We also found that survival through the fall was quite good.

However, over-winter mortality was severe: nine of the ten radioed birds dies by late winter, and the 10th is "MIA". Raptors were responsible for most kills. It is difficult to determine if the radios contributed to the level of mortality observed; one must assume that the radios prove some hindrance, but most birds survived several months at least, so the hindrance does not appear severe. In addition, sharp declines in sharp-tail populations occurred across Wisconsin and Minnesota this year, so high mortality was not limited to Moquah.

Despite the results of our radio sample, spring surveys have offered a little encouragement. The 1992 count indicated at least 9 males were in the area, compared to approximately 3 in the spring of 1990. Although this increase is small, it is encouraging because most populations in the state have declined from 1990. These declines are part of the natural population cycles of ST's, but it was encouraging that we could buck these trends while at these very low levels.

The project will continue this fall with the help of the WSGS grant for radio transmitters. The decline observed across the state is likely to keep us from realizing our goal of 100 transplanted birds; since there are no donor sites in Wisconsin which are able to donate 30-35 birds to the project.

Perhaps ten to fifteen birds will be moved in the final year. Most of these will be radioed, so that we can at least learn as much as possible from the approaches employed in this effort.

After that, Moquah's ST's will have to make it on their own, at least until populations again cycle to the high part of their cycle. Each year that this population hangs on, however, the better their future looks. Additional areas are being opened up each year, and each year the quality of the habitat looks a bit better. Hopefully, Moquah will once again prove to be a stronghold for Wisconsin's ST's.

## LETTERS FROM MEMBERS

Dear Dave,

The sharptail meeting was an item that would have been a good time. For some reason whenever you plan to go somewhere your schedule runs amuck.

In the latter part of March I went to one of our properties in Jackson County (Bear Bluff Township) to set up a blind. That morning we flushed somewhere between 35 and 40 birds. It was one hell of an impressive flock. Since then there have been 14 dancing on our property in the southwest corner of the township and 9 - 10 dancing on another cranberry property about two miles northeast.

There are other properties in that area that do have sharptails dancing but it is remote and real difficult to get to them. Very similar to the remote portions of WCWA. I will send the data sheets to Mike (Zeckmeister).

This summer, now that I have a "wildlife technician" working for me we will conduct a few burns to maintain our habitat. This area ties in well with the population across the street on WCWA so between the private and public lands this is an area where you can grab birds to plant in other areas, they are almost huntable. When you talk about management in some areas consider using summer burning if you want to control shrub invasion. The July and August burns we did on SHMV did one hell of a good job. As long as your humidity is between 25 and 70% and the wind is below 15 mph it will work. The low humidity will increase spot fire problems. Jim Keir will tell you about the fire in

July of 1985. The combination of summer (first attack on shrubs), spring (keep the shrubs hurting and boost some grass species) and late summer/fall (turns on some food producing forbs) is a good overall plan.

During summer burns we had 15' aspen with spot crown fires. If there is ground layer coverage of fine fuel, the summer heat will let the fire consume green vegetation as well. Sure, it is a little on the smokey side of life but it really terminates the shrub's growth season. If you really want to terminate them after the summer burn, when some of the shrubs re-sprout, use a weed wiper and give them a hit of 1.5% Roundup.

Attached is a check for my membership. I will try to hunt you down sometime this summer. Please say hi to the old gang. Hope the weather turns out well on Saturday.

Ned Norton  
Northland Cranberry Incorporated





MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL  
(1992 Annual Dues \$10.00)

Volunteer Activities

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

Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ dues;  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ additional donation

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

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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MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We now have 150 members and have  
been running at a 90+% renewal rate,  
as well as picking up new members as  
the word gets out. You can help out  
by telling friends of our  
organization.

Also, please send in your 1993 dues  
between now and the end of 1992.  
Dues and donations so far have been  
our only source of friends and we  
thank you for your generosity and  
prompt payment.

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Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society  
P. O. Box 1115  
Cumberland, WI 54829