

WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Volume 25

Spring, 1999

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. For the Solon area please call Greg Kessler, 715-372-4866.

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.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY
Saturday and Sunday, April 17 and 18, 1999
Outdoor Skills Center, Sandhill Wildlife Area, Babcock, WI

The Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society invites you and your partner, children or a friend to their annual meeting (see agenda below). Please note that the dinner speaker will be Dr. Stan Temple of U.W. Madison. We are asking for volunteers to try to locate Sharp-tailed grouse west and northeast of Sandhill on Sunday morning, April 18. The more volunteers we have the more area we can cover. Locating remaining birds is an important part of any recovery plan we might develop. Following the census effort we will return to The Outdoor Skills Center for census debriefing. We will provide coffee and sweet rolls from 8:30 AM to 10:00 AM on Sunday. The registration fee of \$10.00 includes refreshments and dinner on Saturday, Sunday sweet rolls and registration materials. Payment must be made by the registration deadline of Tuesday, April 13, 1999. You must make your own reservations for motels or camping. There are a number of motels in the WI Rapids area including the Quality Inn (715-423-5506). Call Sandhill Wildlife Area (715-884-2437) to ask about camping.

AGENDA

Sat. April 17 1:00 pm Business Meeting-including Annual Reports, '99 Initiatives, some door prizes, Report on Dec. 2, 1998 Central Sands
STG Workshop With Possible Follow-up Actions-Pd Frank, WSGS Pres.

2:45 Break

3:00 The WI Savanna Partnership-Scott Nielsen,The Sand County Foundation

3:30 Report on Northwest Pine Barrens Workshop-Jim Evrard, WDNR

4:00 Resources of The Northwest Sand Country-Examples of Mapped Data Possible for Central Wisconsin-Gerald Bartelt, WDNR

4:30 Assignment of Sunday 5:00AM Survey Routes-Wayne Hall WDNR

5:00 Social and Evening Meal (Turkey and Roast Beef) John Kubisiak

6:30 Wildlife Communities in STG Habitat-Size, Isolation and Context
Dr. Stanley Temple-U.W. Madison

REGISTRATION-W.S.G.S. 9th ANNUAL MEETING

Number Attending _____

NAMES _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ZIP _____

DAYTIME PHONE (____) _____

I plan to run a STG Census Route Sunday! YES _____ NO _____

Make Check(\$10.00 each) payable to: Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society
Mail form and check to: Pd Frank, 1205 Ellen Ave., Madison, WI 53716
by Tuesday April 13, 1999. Phone (608) 222 3386

SHARPTAIL HUNTING SURVEY

Again, this fall WSGS sponsored a survey of permit holders for sharptails. Much of the survey preparation and data analysis was done by a Grantsburg Middle School class. They even got us on the web!

You can read the survey, as well as all the hunter comments at <http://www.cesall.k12.wi.us/Grantsburg/dnr/index.htm>. Thanks very much to Steve Hoffman, Crex Technician, and Steve Johnson, Middle School teacher.

This year we sent 1500 surveys to permit holders, while last year we sent 316. The harvest was up a little on the survey, from 83 to 90, (total DNR registered harvest was 178 this year versus 137 last year) but the number per hunter dropped off quite a bit from last year.

1997 sharptail survey

	Unit 2	Unit 8	Unit 9	Unit 10	Unit 24	Didn't hunt	Totals
Questionnaires returned	26	13	7	18	2	19	85
# of trips for ST	46	23	16	30	3		118
# of ST harvested	48	13	3	19	0		83
# of ST seen per hunter	56	50	31	20	8.5		
Level of Satisfaction							
Excellent	18	10	2	11	1		42
Good	6	3	3	2			14
Fair	2		1	4	1		8
Poor							
Terrible			1	1			2

1998 Survey

	Unit 2	Unit 8	Unit 9	Unit 10	Unit 24	Didn't hunt	Total
# questionnaires returned	51	28	15	40	1	86	221
# of trips made	129	59	47	72	2	0	309
# of ST harvested	44	14	7	24	1	0	90
# of ST seen	1390	480	237	748	7	0	2862
ST harvested per trip	0.34	0.237	0.15	0.333	0.5		0.29
ST seen per trip	10.8	8.136	5.04	10.39	3.5		9.26

Last Updated on 2/5/99
By gms

Sharp-tailed Grouse Workshop

December 2, 1998

Sandhill Skills Center - Babcock Wisconsin

Speaker Notes

Sharp-tailed Grouse Population Trends in Central Wisconsin - Mike Zeckmeister

Much of the land in central WI was ditched and drained for agriculture in the early 1900's. Originally, this very flat region was dotted with many wetlands. The lake bed of glacial lake Wisconsin covered much of the landscape 10,000 years ago. Fire was a common occurrence in the early part of this century. After fires were controlled, the resulting forest succession was beneficial to sharp-tailed grouse. The government then began a large land purchase project in the area (the result is the very large tracts of county, state, and national ownership.)

Current sharp-tailed grouse habitat in Central WI are the remaining sedge meadows, bogs, shrub-carr and some aspen-oak habitats. Current potential range in central WI includes Wood County Wildlife Area, Jackson County forest, industrial cranberry bogs, and Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. Burns of 200-300 acres are necessary for sharp-tailed grouse management. Larger timber sales on public land are necessary to open up the landscape and provide the shifting mosaic of habitat that will sustain sharp-tailed grouse here. Cranberry growers are aware of sharp-tailed grouse on the bogs but are not conducting intensive management for sharp-tailed grouse.

Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Requirements - Larry Gregg

The current and original distribution maps for sharp-tailed grouse show a wide distribution over many habitat types throughout North America.

What do sharp-tailed grouse need? 1) Courtship area - dancing grounds. Very short grass opening where spring mating ritual can take place. They will stamp down grass to create the wide horizons needed. 2) Nesting cover tall enough to hide the birds on the nest. 10-20 cm tall and dense seems to fit their needs. Nesting cover must be uncultivated land. Land burned the previous year is generally excellent nesting habitat - dense and tall enough. 3) Brood habitat which is similar to nesting habitat. However, broods like diversity among heavy brush and nesting habitat and dense tall grass. They will use old ag fields for brood habitat and current ag fields can be beneficial as well. 4) Fall and winter habitat seems plentiful and not a primary concern. Trees for cover, large marshes, conifers, black spruce and tamarack all serve as suitable cover in winter. Basically, they need some form of protective cover not buried by snow.

This habitat can be created and maintained in a variety of manners: large clearcuts, burning, hand treatments, windstorms, wildfires, etc. However, it is not created accidentally any more. We need a plan and must take action to secure the habitat.

Meta-populations of sharp-tailed grouse - Mark Boyce UW Stevens Point

A meta-population is a collection of sub-populations. A meta-population model to predict the percentage of these sub-population sites that will be occupied based on local extinction was

developed. The model considers the risk of losing all sub-populations when the population size and number of sites occupied varies. As the population carrying capacity at site increases the number of sites necessary to secure the metapopulation goes down, but more sites is still better. In the classic example usually given for sharp-tailed grouse, a minimum habitat size of 10,000 acres has been recommended as necessary to support a viable population of sharp-tailed grouse. The minimum viable population is assumed to be 280 sharp-tailed grouse (carrying capacity). But the model shows that if you have two sites, with a carrying capacity of 140 sharp-tailed grouse each, the possibility of the metapopulation going extinct is lower than just having one site. Further, as the number of sites goes up and the carrying capacity of each site decreases and the area of habitat needed at each site declines, the probability of persistence of the metapopulation increases. (The model assumes that there is the genetic immigration of one bird each generation to each site.)

Certainly, having several population sites in close proximity, both large and small is best for population persistence. What this model indicates is that sharp-tailed grouse, because of their ability to immigrate and pioneer to different sites, can be managed with a number of smaller sites to serve as population sources when certain sites may suffer extinction. There may be the best options for sharp-tailed grouse populations on numerous smaller sites in central WI rather than on one large site where risk to extinction is great (i.e. all the eggs in one basket.)

Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Restoration and Management on Crex Meadows - Paul Kooiker WDNR

Crex Meadows is strictly sand country with very light soils. Brush prairie is the predominant habitat type on Crex and is made up of clumps of oak and prairie with oak brush interspersed. Management is intensive to maintain the oak and pine components of Crex. A lot of expense is incurred in continual burning rotations to preserve the habitat. Other management techniques include timber sales, slash burning and hand treatments to control woody invasion.

Opportunity Costs, Diversity and sharp-tailed grouse - Jan Harms UW Stevens Point

The end value of 125 forest management regimes in the pine barrens of northwest WI were evaluated. The value of timber per acre is highest for red pine in nearly all situations where red pine will grow. The difference in total return between the highest available return and that of another management scheme is called the "opportunity cost." Different diversity management regimes as well as that for jack pine would be beneficial to sharp-tailed grouse but have a high opportunity cost compared to plantation red pine on a 50 year rotation. (The actual rotation varies with soil type and moisture content.)

Alternatively, clear cuts could be made large enough and rotated systematically to benefit sharp-tailed grouse. However, there would be opportunity costs involved with this management as well (albeit much lower than that of jack pine.)

The conclusions are that, from a commodity perspective red pine is the most viable alternative - where it will grow, and it will cost money (opportunity costs) for diversity management. We need to seek solutions within the context of commodity production to reduce the opportunity costs and maintain profit.

Evaluating sharp-tailed grouse Habitat Using Remote Sensing Analysis and GIS - Neal Neimuth UW Stevens Point

The intent of this analysis was to determine what habitat sharp-tailed grouse are using on a landscape scale. Satellite remote sensing analysis was used to determine vegetative succession stages. There was a definite correlation of location of lek establishment and number of sharp-tailed grouse at a lek. Lek location and attendance was correlated significantly with grassland and shrubs, but distance between leks was not a significant correlate. Sharp-tailed grouse did not require large, wide open vistas when choosing a lek site. Leks located near recent disturbance also had significantly higher attendance than those located in areas without recent disturbance.

Neal concluded that non-wooded uplands were lacking in central WI and recommended that larger clearcuts of greater than 500 acres are needed to manage sharp-tailed grouse. Further, these clearcuts should be aggregated around a reserve not implemented randomly on the landscape. He concluded by saying that there are good opportunities for sharp-tailed grouse management in central WI and they are compatible with many other types of land use, but that sharp-tailed grouse here are in dire need of open (treeless) uplands.

Historical Barrens and Savannas in Central Wisconsin - What's there now?- Mike Mossman

The soils in central WI are very sterile. Wetlands were, and are, mainly peat and consist of open sedge bogs and conifer swamps. The uplands were typified by oak/pine barrens which burned frequently.

Currently, the forest is much more dense and made up of white pine, jack pine, hill's oak and aspen/birch. In the areas where original vegetation remnants exist, many grassland critters are still present. Large clear cuts must be considered as a management tool along with management of the large wetland complexes for openness. This area is quite productive for many of the species that require open habitats, but we need to take an active management approach. Cranberry growers present an opportunity for cooperative management.

Open Discussion of the Opportunities, Obstacles and Current Situations on Properties in Central Wisconsin.

Rich King - Necedah National Wildlife Refuge and Wildlife Management Area

In 1933, open habitats predominated on the landscape and historical prairie grouse information is abundant. Currently, there are 3,000 acres open around Sprague Pool, and 2,500 acres around Pool 1 and Pool 2, but these areas are very wet openings not entirely suitable to sharp-tailed grouse.

Plans for savanna restoration include 1,200 acres restored and managed as permanent savanna. And, in 15 years they plan to have an additional 3,500 acres of new upland habitat, at least ½ of which will be suitable for sharp-tailed grouse nesting.

Mike Zeckmeister - Ft. McCoy and Sandhill Wildlife Area

Obstacles include a lack of sharp-tailed grouse information and survey data of current populations, burning difficulties due to safety concerns and public relations, and current low priority of master planning for these areas. But, there is opportunity here if the effort is made.

Pete Engman - Black River State Forest

Current efforts include a 1,200 acre burn unit, a savanna project on the north end, and Dike 17. There is potential for 1,300 acres near an abandoned mine. However, the need for additional firebreaks and impacts to Karner blue butterflies from burning are concerns. The timber type on the forest is changing from jack pine to white pine.

Jim Keir - Quincy Bluff - Adams County

The project goal is 10,500 acres. Currently, DNR owns 2,000 and TNC owns about 3,000. Land cover mapping and master planning needs to be done. Also, there are 40,000 acres of Georgia Pacific land in Adams County that were recently clear cut and replanted to red pine.

Juneau County Forest has some opportunity in approximately 7,500 acres along the Wood County line (6 mi X 2 mi.)

Wood County Forest land may provide some opportunity but money and politics are obstacles. There is potential for large clear cuts just north of the Juneau County line.

Al O'Leary - Northland Cranberry

Northland owns 10,00 acres in the Kingston twp. and there are sharp-tailed grouse there, but there are no open uplands. The big obstacle is economics: what are the economic benefits to Northland of managing for sharp-tailed grouse? Management of land to promote sharp-tailed grouse does not benefit deer or ruffed grouse so it will be a hard sell.

Final Questions:

Where do we go from here?

Should there be a recovery plan for sharp-tailed grouse in central Wisconsin?

Is the Sand County Foundation the place to look for leadership?

Should Wisconsin STGS be the leader in any initiative?

A THANK YOU FROM RESEARCHERS

Hi Dave,

Thank you to the WSGS for its support of research on nesting success of sharp-tailed grouse in the pine barrens. Money donated by the WSGS was used to help purchase a radio telemetry receiver and pay \$5 rewards for banded birds recovered during hunting season.

Tim Connolly, a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point who is conducting the field work, captured and banded 140 sharptails in 1998, including 29 hens. The hens and 22 males were fitted with radio transmitters so Tim could follow their movements. Tim presented preliminary results at the pine barrens conference in Ashland in march, and will continue research in 1999.

Thanks again,

Neal Niemuth



JAMES B. HALE, 5401 RAYMOND ROAD, MADISON, WI 53711

November 6, 1998

TO: All WSGS Members

Please accept my thanks and deep appreciation for the award you have given me in recognition of my interests in the welfare of sharptails in Wisconsin. This came as a complete surprise to me and I am very grateful for this honor. I'm sorry to have missed the annual meeting at Solon Springs and will try to do better next year. Thank you again.

Jim Hale

Sincerely,

SHARPTAIL SURVEY HISTORY

Some survey effort was also expended within portions of Douglas, Bayfield, Rusk, Sawyer, Oneida and Price Counties where sharptail habitat still persists on recent clearcuts or brushy farmland. The additional sharptails flushed in these sites brought the total number of birds on unmanaged lands to 657, including 398 in unit 2, 5 in unit 8, 176 in unit 9, 13 in unit 19, 18 in unit 20, 15 in unit 30 and 32 in unit 31. Sharptail habitat exists within several additional units which were not surveyed due to staff and time limitations.

Table 1. Sharptail Population Trends on Managed Lands

Property	Number of Dancing Males								
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Crex Meadows W.A.	103	126	47	53	59	83	110	117	132
Douglas County W.A.	3	5	4	2	8	12	9	9	18
Kimberly-Clark W.A.	40	56	32	20	20	28	20	15	25
Moquah Barrens W.M.A.	3	6	9	6	7	21	14	17	34
Namekagon Barrens W.A.	33	37	25	16	25	44	48	55	74
Pershing W.A.	23	37	34	24	16	26	30	43	34
Riley Lake W.M.A.	20	25	8	5	7	18	17	19	19
Wood County W.A.	-	54	13	11	16	19	18	10	17
Dike Seventeen W.A.	-	<u>16</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>18</u>
Totals		362	182	146	167	259	273	288	371

THE MINNESOTA SHARPTAILER

PUBLICATION OF THE MINNESOTA SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY



P.O. BOX 3338

DULUTH, MINNESOTA 55803

WINTER 1999



1999 SPRING FLING

There will be a more detailed brochure and advance registration form for the 1999 MSGS Spring Fling mailed in late March, but here are preliminaries. It will be held on Friday evening and Saturday, April 16-17, at the Long Lake Conservation Center south of Palisade, in the heart of Aitkin County's sharptail range. A formal invitation to speak at the Spring Fling has been sent to new DNR Commissioner Allen Garber, and we're waiting for confirmation that he'll attend. There will be an informal business meeting Friday evening, sharptail observation blinds and counts on Saturday morning, and presentations, fun and good food all day Saturday. There will be presentations on the new DNR brushlands funding and how it will be spent, current DNR brushlands management priorities, a progress report on the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources project, oldtimer's stories, previous MSGS habitat projects, DNR Wildlife Manager's projects, door prizes, and more.

Please watch for the special Spring Fling announcement from MSGS, and plan on staying for Friday night and all of Saturday. You wouldn't want to miss the meals prepared by Long Lake's cooks!

MSGS HELPS DNR PURCHASE LAND

In January, the St. Louis County Board found itself wrestling with the decision to approve the purchase of an additional 160 acres adjacent to the Fermoy Wildlife Management Area, a prime sharptail area near Sax and Zim. The problem was that St. Louis County had adopted a "no net loss" policy, and if the state purchased more land, it would have to sell an equal amount to private buyers. The event got lots of TV and newspaper attention.

MSGS President Roche Lally stepped in, and together with Mike Furtman from the Izaak Walton League, and John Lenczewski of Trout Unlimited, explained that the taxes the state pays to the counties for lands actually exceeds the amount private landowners pay, and that these publicly-owned wildlands don't require any services such as roads or police protection. The turning point came when Lally showed the County Board the dancing sharptails portion of the Pageant of Grouse video. In the end, St. Louis County approved the purchase.

1998 TREASURER'S REPORT

Gregg Nelson

Another year has come and gone; 1998 was a good one for MSGS. I hope that the bird watching, hunting, and other outdoor activities that you participated in brought a great deal of satisfaction. The Society met the financial challenges and needs of another year, with membership growth. Corporate and group contributions continued, many members contributed in excess of their regular dues, and the membership record keeping process was restructured. We need to work on continued growth in membership and revenue to allow MSGS to have a more significant impact on habitat management and education. MSGS helped financially with several brushland habitat and prairie seeding projects across the sharptail range, continued with the LCMR savanna project, and contributed to the building project at Long Lake. We finished 1998 with a balance of \$1,569.01. Thank you for the dedication and support from you, the MSGS members who make it all possible.

DON BRONK

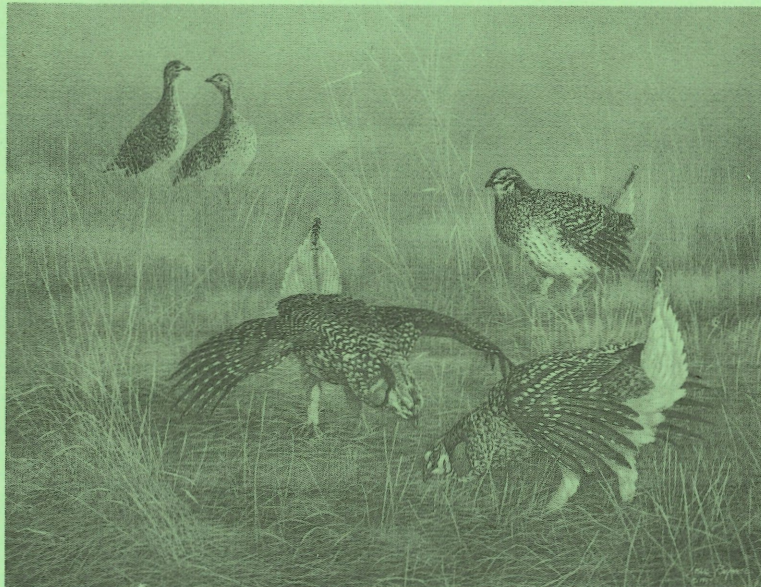
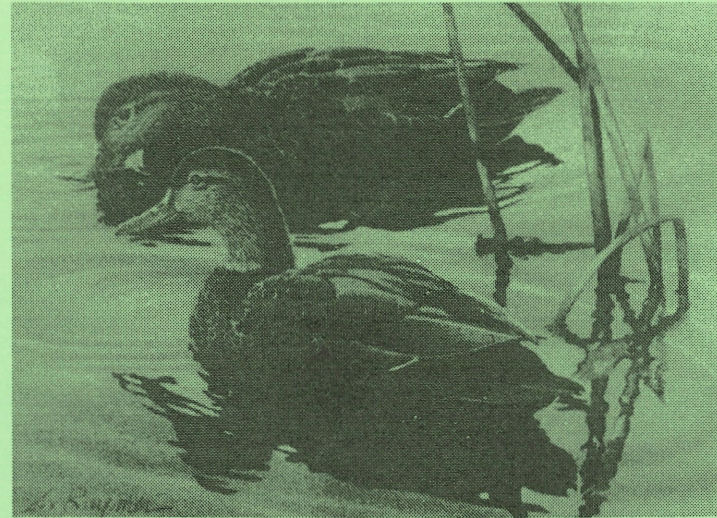
- Education:** University of Wisconsin, graduated 1961, B.S.
- Military:** Wisconsin ARNG, 1960-66; M.O.S. - Medic; Rank SP-5; Honorable Discharge
- Employers:** Institute of Paper Chemistry - Appleton
(First to last) Gibbs Mfg., Janesville (sub-contractor for Apollo moon rocket)
Wausau - Marathon County Park Dept., 25 years Admin. Officer
- Current Status:** Semi-retired; freelance writer and lecturer
- Hobbies:** Hunting (mostly waterfowl), fishing, camping, woodworking, photography, archaeology (Greece, Near East) astronomy, science fiction, classical music, paleontology, play writing and going, ancient religions, travelling, game cooking, natural history, reading.
- Sharptail Interest:** Began when I hunted them at the Ackley Wildlife Area, starting in 1972.

ED FRANK

Worked with Wisconsin upland game birds for the DNR 33 years before retiring in 1991. Have a cabin in Washburn County and enjoy April - November visits to nearby Barrens that support Sharp-tailed grouse. I offer to do what I can to keep pine-oak barrens and sharp-tailed grouse as part of Wisconsin's Wildlife Heritage. For the past three years I have been President of the WSGS and I am placing my name in nomination for re-election to its Board of Directors for another three year term.

JIM EVRARD

I'm a charter member of the WSGS and was a volunteer board member from 1991 until elected to a 3 - year term as a board member in 1993. I became Secretary-Treasurer in 1995 and was reelected to the Board in 1996. I've been actively involved in many WSGS activities including the effort to continue hunting sharp-tailed grouse in Wisconsin, the 1993 Pine Barrens Workshop, the 1994 Wisconsin Grouse Symposium, and the successful annual meetings held at Solon Springs in 1995, 1997, and 1998. I'm seeking reelection for another term with the hopes to devote more time to the WSGS due to my scheduled DNR retirement in July, 1999.



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 Gromme. 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 Gromme 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.

Ticket Prices - Raffle ticket prices are: 1 ticket for \$5.00; 3 tickets for \$10.00 or 10 tickets for \$25.00. Please legibly write your name and the name of the ticket purchaser, if different, on each of the stubs sold. If you cannot attend the meeting, please send the tickets and payment to WSGS, Box 1115, Cumberland, WI 54829. Those who attend can bring stubs and money to the spring meeting. You need not be present to win. If you're a good sales person and need more tickets, contact Dave Evenson, 715-822-5421. Buy a bunch, it's for a good cause!

BALLOT - WSGS BOARD (Vote for 3 Members)

_____ Don Bronk

_____ Jim Evrard

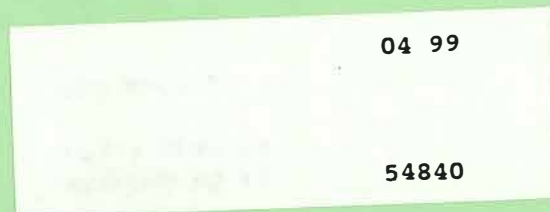
_____ Ed Frank

_____ write-in

MAIL IN OR BRING TO ANNUAL MEETING

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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

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

Volunteer Activities

_____ Board of Directors
_____ Newsletter Writing
_____ Bird census work
_____ 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