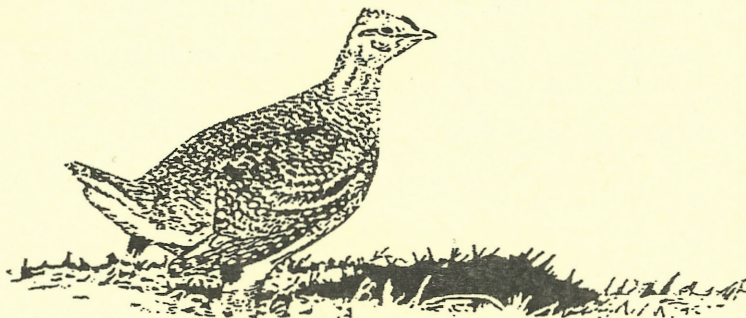


WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 51

Summer 2007

PRAIRIE GROUSE TECHNICAL COUNCIL MEETING

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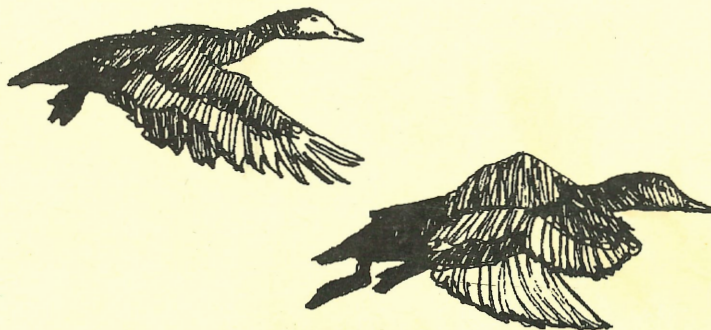
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The 27th Prairie Grouse Technical Council (PGTC) meeting will be held in Chamberlain, South Dakota from October 8 through 10 this fall. The group will meet to "identify, discuss, and implement management issues of prairie grouse [sage grouse, sharp-tailed grouse and prairie chicken] and provide an atmosphere where managers and biologists can gather and exchange information."

As you might remember, the group meets in odd years at various locations throughout prairie grouse range in North America. The PGTC met in Valentine, Nebraska in 2005 and in Siren, Wisconsin in 2003. The WSGS was one of the major hosts and organizers of the event in Siren.

South Dakota provides both prairie chicken and sharp-tailed grouse hunting, especially in the extensive Fort Pierre National Grasslands northeast of Chamberlain. The pheasant hunting season will probably not be open at the time of the meeting, but prairie grouse and waterfowl hunting will be.

More information on travel, lodging, and the PGTC conference is available at "www.wfs.sdstate.edu".



FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

By Dave Evenson

Today's column is brought to you by the letter M, as in money, membership and meetings.

On three consecutive Saturdays in April I found myself at conservation oriented events. The first was the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society's Spring Fling, with an emphasis on private land management, and a panel discussion on acquisition of management rights on dancing grounds via easements. The second was our own WSGS Board meeting and Annual Meeting in Park Falls. And the third was the initial banquet of our local chapter of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

Money, membership and meeting attendance were topics of discussion at both our Park Falls spring Board Meeting and our summer meeting held at Dave and Nancy Biegel's summer home on St. Croix Flowage. Board members are rightly concerned about meeting attendance, membership involvement, and having enough money to do meaningful projects. Annual meeting attendance is usually a few dozen, with perhaps a slight downward trend. (Secretary Jim Evrard has the attendance records and contends we have about the same each year). We pick up some new members each year. But we also have members who let their dues lapse out of lack of interest or perhaps just forgetfulness. We have enough money from your dues, donations and art raffle and art sales to stay nicely in the black. We can do a lot of small to medium size projects, but big projects (land acquisition) are outside our realm.

We have had discussions about hosting a big event, in whatever form that is, but have not settled on location, type of event or other details. Pulling off an event requires a lot of work, and anyone doing it would want to be relatively assured of success. And here's where I reflect on that RMEF weekend. To get a few hundred people to throw twenty dollar bills at anything that looked like a gun took a committee of 36 working and meeting weekly for a few months. That's a lot of commitment.

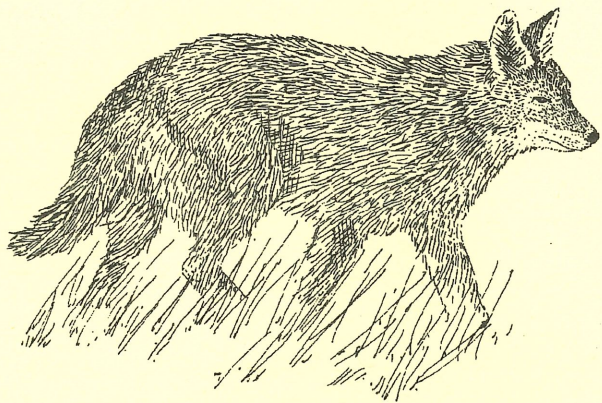
At our summer board meeting Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society President Roche Lally asked the rhetorical question regarding their organization "Why do we need more money?" He could be speaking for WSGS as well. Identifying a cause is primary, and dictates the drive for fund raising.

We need more members and to keep the members we have (Pay your dues, please). We need more involvement, especially to pull off an event. Perhaps we need more vision of what we are to become. I'd welcome comments or questions from each of you to clarify what WSGS is to be in the coming decades.

The Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (WSGS) is a private, nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of the sharp-tailed grouse and its habitat in Wisconsin.

WSGS OFFICERS

President: Dave Evenson
Vice President: Tom Ziegeweid
Secretary/Treasurer: Jim Evrard
Board Members: Dave Biegel
Ed Frank
Blair Klein
Dave Clausen
Newsletter Editor: Jim Evrard



2007 SHARPTAIL CENSUS AND HUNTING PERMIT NUMBERS

By Jim Evrard

It looks like Wisconsin's sharp-tailed grouse have finally turned the corner and are again increasing. In Wisconsin, population numbers of sharptails and ruffed grouse roughly follow a 10-year cycle, a phenomenon yet not fully understood. For the past two years, ruffed grouse drumming counts have increased and in some areas, counts of dancing male sharptails have also increased.

Dancing cock sharptails in the Douglas County, Namekagon Barrens, Pershing, and Riley Lake wildlife areas are at or near record numbers for the nine year period 1999-2007.

For many years Crex Meadows had the largest managed sharptail population. However, beginning in 2000, the numbers of dancing sharptails in Crex decreased to only a third of their former numbers by 2006. Finally this year, the number of birds counted showed an increase and will hopefully bounce back to former levels.

Sharptails in the Moquah Barrens, Kimberly-Clark, and Dike Seventeen wildlife areas remain at dangerously low levels. The cause for these precipitous population declines should be determined and action taken to prevent the disappearance of the birds from these areas. What happened in the Moquah Barrens? How could a population that averaged 29 cocks from 1999 to 2004, suddenly nose-dive to an average of only 6 birds from 2005 to 2007?

A close examination of the number of displaying cocks counted in some of the spring surveys would indicate that the census techniques need refinement. For example, there has to be sharptails that are not counted in the vicinity of the Dike Seventeen area. A population could not survive from 2001 to 2007 with only one to three males in the spring population.

Area	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Crex Meadows	111	110	73	61	61	53	49	38	45
Douglas County	20	16	11	12	20	21	14	15	28
Namekagon Barrens	54	44	15	29	52	37	19	42	51
Moquah Barrens	40	36	19	35	32	14	7	6	6
Kimberly-Clark	40	39	5	9	4	-	0	3	9
Pershing	22	-	19	13	3	16	11	16	28
Riley Lake	27	27	17	12	17	16	12	16	25
Dike Seventeen	3	6	0	2	3	3	2	1	2
Subtotal:	317	278	159	173	192	160	114	137	194
Unit 2	283	155	71	143	263	188	181	152	173
Unit 9	123	127	44	66	73	55	34	44	33
Subtotal:	406	282	115	209	336	243	215	196	206
Total:	723	560	274	382	528	403	329	333	400
Rusk County					25-30				
Unit 4					22				
Unit 8					15				
Grand Total:					462				

The total number of sharptail hunting permits available in 2007 is 695, down from 775 permits available in 2006. By management unit, hunting permits dropped from 540 to 520 in Unit 2; remained at 50 in Unit 8; dropped from 160 permits in 2006 to 100 permits in 2007 in Unit 9; and remained at 25 in Unit 10.

Unit 2 is mostly industrial forest and showed a 14% increase in males counted this year but the number of hunting permits were reduced. Spring male sharptails in Unit 8 (Namekagon Barrens) increased 21% and 18% in Unit 10 (Crex Meadows), but the number of hunting permits remained the same. Males counted in Unit 9 dropped 25% and the number of permits were reduced by 38%.

Using the DNR's sharptail model, enough male sharptails were counted (25+) in the Douglas County, Pershing, and Riley Lake wildlife areas to trigger the issuing of hunting permits. Since there has been no evidence that hunting sharptails under today's very conservative hunting seasons does not negatively impact sharptail populations, there is reason to believe that a few permits could be issued for those public lands.

Although most of the Douglas County Wildlife Area is closed to hunting, that part of the management area lying south of CTH M is in Unit 8 and can be hunted with a Unit 8 sharptail hunting permit.

Hopefully we can look forward to several years of increasing sharptail populations until they again begin their decline in the next cycle. The information on sharptail numbers and hunting permits was provided by the DNR, in particular, Sharon Gericke Fandel, Assistant Upland Wildlife Ecologist, Madison. Thanks Sharon for your cooperation.

INTERESTING READING

By Jim Evrard

I recently read two articles in the Fall 2007 issue of the *Passenger Pigeon*, the journal of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology. The first was the **Status and Management of the Greater Prairie Chicken in Wisconsin – 2006** by John Toepfer, a WSGS member. The second was the **History of Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*) at Seney National Wildlife Refuge and Surrounding Areas, Schoolcraft County, Michigan** by Elizabeth B. Losey, Bridget R. Deemer, and R. Gregory Corace, III.

Toepfer wrote an extensive and detailed account of the history of prairie chicken conservation in Wisconsin, starting with the Hamerstoms and ending at the present time. His main theme is that there has been too little done for the prairie chicken in our state with the DNR primarily to blame. There was a fair amount of controversy in the development of the recently-completed ten-year DNR prairie chicken management plan. John and others argued for much more land acquisition than the DNR thought was feasible given political and economic reality.

The second article is much like the Toepfer article excepts it deals with sharptails in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. It is a familiar story of logging, fires, and the arrival and population explosion of sharp-tailed grouse in that area. The paper also documents management efforts by public agencies to maintain sharptail numbers. However, it too, is another story of too little and possibly, too late. While sharptails can still be found in the Seney Refuge, their numbers have declined and more aggressive habitat management in the form of logging and burning is needed to prevent the disappearance of the birds.

I found the articles interesting reading and valuable in documenting the history of the prairie grouse species in both areas. Those who do not have access to the *Passenger Pigeon* could contact me for copies of the articles.

WHAT IS YOUR WSGS BOARD DOING?

Board Meeting Minutes, April 21, 2007, Park Falls DNR Service Center

President Dave Evenson called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. Board members present were Dave Biegel, Jim Evrard, Ed Frank, Blair Klein, and Tom Ziegeweid. Dave Clausen would not arrive until mid-afternoon.

Ed suggested that we add Scott Hull, Scott Lutz, and Stan Temple to the list of WSGS Councilors. No action was taken.

Board items discussed included:

Progress on the update of the DNR's sharp-tailed grouse management plan.

Sharptail genetics study - (DNR's Scott Hull and Dave Sample are working with Brad Swanson from the Central Michigan University on the problem, Ed will talk to John Toepfer about availability of the Hamerstrom-collected sharptail wings from the 1950s). Jim stated that a Ph.D. candidate from UW-Madison, Ashley Steinke, is currently working on prairie chickens and might be interested in sharptail genetics working with Peter Dunn, geneticist from UW-Milwaukee.

Problem of declining sharptail numbers in the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area.

Progress in safeguarding the Bayfield County fuel breaks.

Acquisition progress at Crex Meadows.

Rewriting of the Black River State Forest management plan.

John Probst has offered to run for the board in 2008.

WSGS change of address – 102 E. Crex Ave., Grantsburg 54840.

The Board decided to sell the new King-Maslowski sharptail print for \$60 retail. The first 10 numbered prints have been reserved for future art raffles. It was decided not to sell the print for less than \$60 at this time – the price can be reduced in the future if sales lag.

Blair stated that we should maintain our focus and meager resources on the NW Sands sharptails where habitat and sharptails now exist.

Over \$1,000 was netted in the annual art raffle. Thanks to Dave Evenson for his donated framing services.

The summer board meeting will take place on Thursday and Friday, June 28 and 29, at the Dave Biegel summer home on the St. Croix Flowage, Gordon.

Board Meeting Minutes, June 29, 2007, Biegel Cottage, St. Croix Flowage

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m. Present were Dave Evenson, Tom Ziegeweid, Jim Evrard, Ed Frank, Blair Klein, and Dave Biegel. Dave Clausen was absent. Roche Lally, President of the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society or MSGS, was our guest.

Jim gave the Secretary's Report that was the minutes of the 4/21/07 board meeting in Park Falls and the Treasurer's Report (\$8,573.78 in the checking account and \$2,273.62 in a CD). The present officers (President Dave E., Vice President Tom, and Secretary-Treasurer Jim) were reelected unanimously.

Jim reported on the results of the spring sharptail census. All areas reporting showed as increase in the number of displaying males over the previous year with the exception of Unit 9. No reports were available at the time for the Kimberly-Clark, Riley Lake, and Dike 17 areas. The final report will appear in the next newsletter.

The sharptail genetics project was discussed. Ed will again attempt to contact John Toepfer for the availability of the sharptail wings collected by the Hammerstrom's during the 1950s when they were employed by the then Wisconsin Conservation Department. DNR's Scott Hull has indicated that an effort will be made to collect Wisconsin sharptail wings this fall. We discussed the pos-

possibility of analyzing Minnesota wings in the future to compare to Wisconsin wings.

Dave E. reported that about ten Ruth King sharptail prints have been sold thus far. Roche offered to place a print image on the MSGS web site to help sell the prints. Jim said he would develop a flyer with a colored image of the print to also help speed sales. Ed reported a problem of the print rippling evidently in response to high humidity and Dave E. responded by stating he thought there might be a framing problem and said he would investigate.

Dave E. plans to resubmit the barrens restoration grant request by the August 1 deadline. The initial grant submission never reached the granting group due to an email mistake made by Jim. Dave will add more information to the grant request regarding climate change impacts. New this year is the need to match the grant on a 2-1 basis.

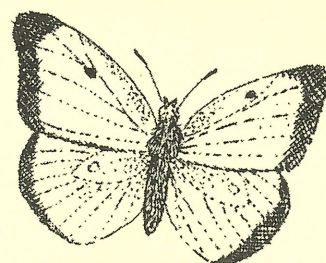
It was decided to hold the 2008 annual meeting in Solon Springs on April 26 with April 19 as an alternative to avoid conflicts with the central Wisconsin prairie chicken celebration. The St. Croix Inn will be the meeting site with a pig roast dinner planned for the field trial building on the Douglas County Wildlife Area. Also discussed was a possible joint meeting with the MSGS in 2009, possibly at Hinckley, MN.

Scott Hull is planning "challenges" issues for the subcommittees working on the DNR sharp-tailed grouse management plan. Scott is the DNR liaison for the WSGS.

Jim announced the 2007 Prairie Grouse Technical Council meeting will be held in Chamberlain, South Dakota, October 8-10. Several board members expressed an interest in attending the meeting. In addition, Blair made a motion, seconded by Tom, and approved by the board to provide a travel stipend not to exceed \$500, for a DNR sharptail manager to attend the meeting, providing there is no DNR funding available for that person. More information about the meeting is available at www.wfs.sdstate.edu.

Jim gave a report on the progress of the acquisition of the Plum Creek Timber Company land adjoining the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area.

The meeting ended at noon for a great lunch provided by the Biegels. Dave and Nancy also hosted a super breakfast before the meeting and a feast featuring Dave Evenson's first gobbler. The Biegels also put up with other board members wandering around their summer home for a day and a night. It should also be reported that Ed caught the biggest fish of the meeting and Tom needs a new tape measure for his boat.



PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Check the date on your mailing label and please renew your membership if it has expired or is about to expire. The WSGS is a small organization and depends heavily upon membership fees to continue the fight for the sharp-tailed grouse and its habitat in Wisconsin. Our membership fee is low compared to most conservation groups and supports all-volunteer members who serve as your board of directors and do the work of the society.

AFIELD WITH ZIGGY

By Thomas C. Ziegeweid

This dish is famous in northeast Wisconsin where Belgian immigrants settled. Bob Baye of Green Bay developed this Booya recipe. It would make a great camp meal, serving about 12 to 16 persons.

Wisconsin Chicken Booyah (Belgian beef, pork, chicken stew)



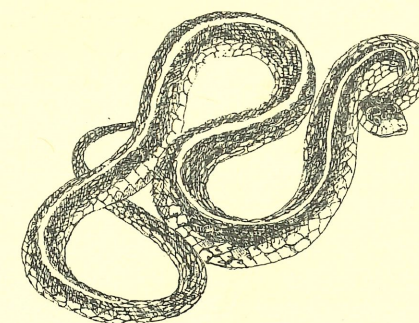
- 1 roasting or stewing chicken (about 4 pounds)
- 1 pound each of beef and pork stew meat with bones
- ½ cup minced parsley
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 tablespoon rosemary
- 1 tablespoon thyme
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon sage
- 4 cups quartered potatoes
- 2 cups chopped onions
- 2 cups chopped celery
- 1 cup cut-up carrots
- 1 cup cut-up green beans
- 1 cup fresh peas
- 1 cup skinned, seeded, and chopped tomatoes
- 2 lemons

Place chicken in deep kettle with beef and pork. Cover with boiling water. Bring slowly to simmer, remove scum from top, and add herbs and seasonings. Cover and simmer very gently about 1 hour.

Remove chicken and, when cooled, remove meat from bones and cut into pieces. Let beef and pork continue to cook until tender, 45 minutes to an hour or more.

Remove beef and pork and let cool enough to remove meat from bones. Add vegetables to broth and simmer for 5 to 10 minutes.

Grate lemon rind and set aside; remove white pith and seeds from lemons, chop pulp, and add to broth. Season to taste. While vegetables are still crisp, return meat to broth to heat through. Serve in large soup bowls and sprinkle with lemon rind.



2007 WSGS ANNUAL MEETING

April 21-22, Park Falls

President Dave Evenson called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m., Saturday, April 21 in AJ's Supper Club. Approximately 22 persons were present. Secretary/Treasurer Jim Evrard stated that meeting minutes and financial reports can be found in issues Nos. 49 and 50 of the WSGS newsletter. Copies of a more detailed 2006 financial report were available at the meeting. Over \$10,000 is available for sharptail work.

Evenson and Tom Ziegeweid were unanimously reelected to the WSGS Board on the basis of three ballots received.

Evenson recounted the WSGS accomplishments of the past year including works on the update of the sharptail management plan and the barrens grant application to the Wildlife Conservation Society. Jim mistakenly sent the application to the wrong email address so the application will be resubmitted this summer. Dave also talked about plans for 2008 including continuing work on the sharptail plan and funding a sharptail genetics study.

Dave then introduced Scott Hull, DNR upland bird ecologist from Madison who reviewed progress on the rewrite of the sharptail management plan. The effort has been divided between three committees.

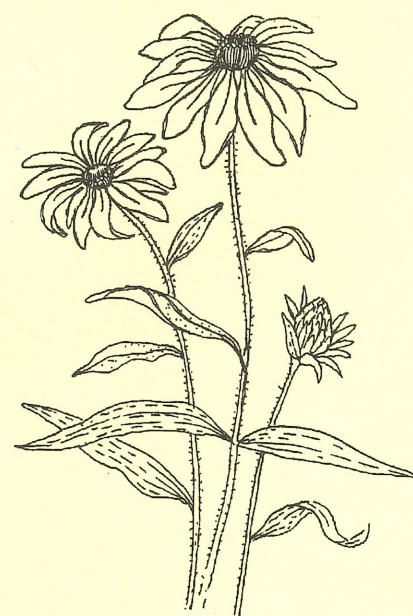
Bill Berg, from the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (MSGs), gave an off-the-cuff summary of the history and activities of their group. Bill is a not-so-retired Minnesota DNR research biologist who had responsibility for Minnesota sharptails when still working and is still actively involved in the MSGs.

Evenson then called on the managers of Wisconsin's three heavy-soil sharptail management areas for a summary of their work.

Susanne Adams from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) gave an interesting presentation of the Riley Lake area in the Chequamegon National Forest. The area consists of about 5,000 acres of which 1,500 acres are actively managed with fire and roller chopping. The balance of the area is a large muskeg bog. The area is being expanded with another 640 acres of mostly aspen forest to be converted to grass-brushland.

Pat Beringer of the DNR at Park Falls talked about the Kimberly-Clark area. Ownership is about 9,000 acres with 5,500 acres being sharptail habitat. The area is managed with fire on a 4-6 year rotation and herbicides in problem areas. The population peaked at 56 males in the early 1990s. Pat thinks the area is connected with agricultural land to the south into Price, Rusk, and Taylor counties. He is optimistic about the future of sharptails in the area. Both he and Susanne expressed hope in biofuel production being used for management of sharptail habitat.

Ken Jonas, DNR wildlife biologist at Hayward, filled in for Pershing Manager Mark Schmidt. Pershing has about 8,000 acres in two units separated by private land including a shooting preserve that might contribute to significant illegal harvest of sharptails. The Pershing management plan will be rewritten shortly to include expanding the acquisition boundary to include the private land between



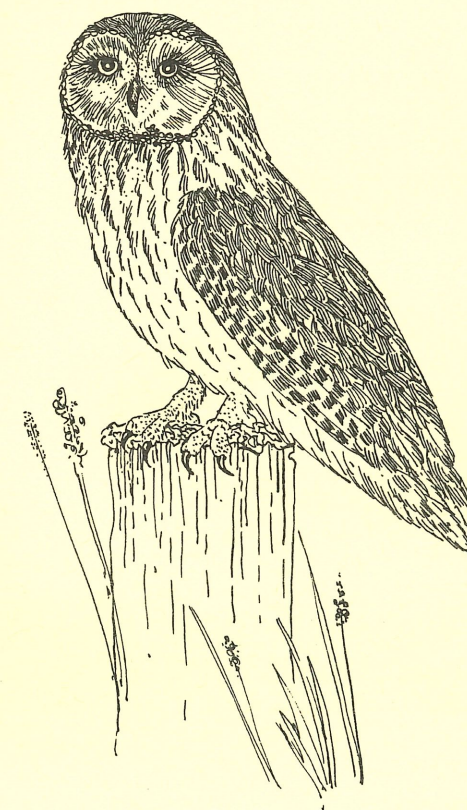
the two units (the shooting preserve is presently available in the real estate market for \$1 million!). About 4,000 acres are managed with fire. This spring they found two leks in the south unit with 15 males (7,8) and a flock of 13-14 birds seen in the north unit. There are sharptails found in the private land surrounding Pershing.

The meeting closed with drawings for door prizes and for the three art prints. Dick Nikolai won the Raymer print; Peter David's name was drawn for the Gromme print; and Fred Strand was the lucky winner of the King-Maslowski print.

A special event was the presentation of a framed King-Maslowski print to Ed Frank by Ken Jonas in recognition of Ed being given the Wisconsin Award by the Wisconsin Chapter of the Wildlife Society. The Wisconsin Award is the highest award given to a wildlife professional by the Wisconsin Chapter. Soctt Hull also presented Ed with the accompanying engraved plaque. Congratulations Ed!

The group then enjoyed a nice social hour and dinner at AJs. Following dinner, DNR biologist Laine Stowell gave an interesting and informative program, update the group on the status of Wisconsin's elk herd.

The following morning, most of the group gathered at 6 a.m. at the Super 8 Motel in Park Falls and embarked on an auto tour of the Riley Lake and Kimberly-Clark wildlife areas and the country in between. Displaying sharptails were seen on two leks in the Riley Lake project. The Riley Lake area seemed to be more intensively managed than the Kimberly-Clark area. Several turkey gobblers and hens were seen along with waterfowl, raptors, and even a deer. A group breakfast was enjoyed in Phillips during the tour. The weather was great and everyone enjoyed a great tour led by Dan Ecklund and Mike Bablick of the USFS and Pat Beringer of the DNR.



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, 102 East Crex Ave, Grantsburg, WI 54840

WSGS
102 East Crex Ave.
Grantsburg, WI 54840

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