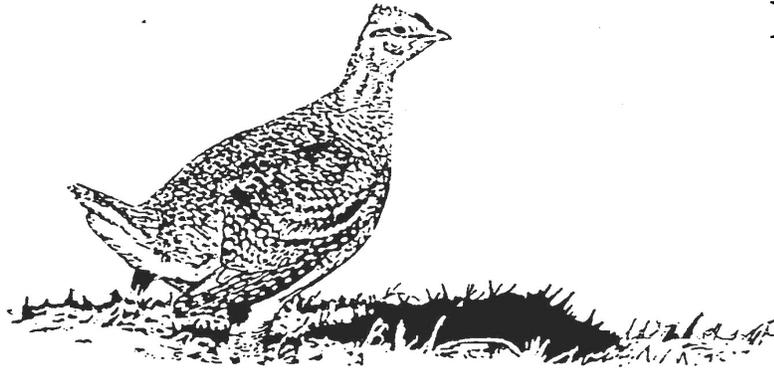


WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 95

Summer 2021

ANNUAL MEETING AUGUST 21 CREX MEADOWS

We'll have a summer gathering of the flock this year, at the Crex Meadows Interpretive Center. This will be a one-day meeting, Saturday, August 21, beginning with coffee and greeting friends at 9:00 AM, and culminating with a visit to the new sharptail sculpture in the prairie walk area near the buildings. We'll have updates on WSGS activities, talks on genetics of the Minnesota to Moquah transplanted sharptails and radio tracking sharpies at Bayfield County Forest sites. We'll also have a session on the developing auto tour along the length of the Northwest Sands.

Maps and information on recent activities will be provided if you wish to take an evening or next day tour of Crex Meadows.

Cost is \$20 to cover the morning and afternoon snacks and noon meal. You'll find a sign-up sheet further in this newsletter.

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SHARPTAIL SCULPTURE DEDICATION

A huge Thank You! to all of you who remembered Jim Evrard with your donations. Dave Groenjes, metal artist, created this distinctive dancing ground tableau and it is displayed in a prominent site visible from the Crex Meadows Interpretive Center. We will gather at the end of the meeting with members of Jim's family, to say a few words about Jim, our longtime faithful and dedicated WSGS member.



THE WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY

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. Questions about the WSGS should be directed to the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, 102 East Crex Avenue, Grantsburg, WI 54840 or emailed to information@wisharptails.org.

WSGS OFFICERS

President: Dave Evenson
Vice President/Treasurer: Ken Jonas
Secretary: Paul Kooiker

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mike Cole John Probst
Mike Amman Bruce Moss
Trevor Hubbs Ashley Steinke

Newsletter Compositor: Lauren Finch

WSGS BOARD ELECTION

Nominations for Board members were sought in our last newsletter. WSGS Board members serve three year terms. The three members who served out their last three year terms are standing for re-election.

Ashly Steinke operated Sedge Wood Farms that produces grass-fed beef. Ashly earned his BS degree from UW-Stevens Point, and his MS degree from South Dakota SU. His experience includes being NCS County Conservationist for Taylor County (home of Pershing Wildlife Area) and a biologist for Wisconsin Waterfowl Association. Ashly has hunted sharptails in four states and Canada. He is our WSGS source of information on Minnesota's elk reintroduction, just across the border.

Paul Kooiker retired from DNR in 2008 after having been a wildlife biologist at Neillsville and then wildlife supervisor at Grantsburg, supervising Crex Meadows and nearby counties. Paul is a charter WSGS member and has been a WSGS board member since 2009.

John Probst is a retired research biologist, formerly employed by the US Forest Service at North Central Forest Research Center in Rhinelander. John has extensive experience with early successional barrens species, particularly the Kirtland's Warbler.

SPECIAL HABITAT RAFFLE JIM EVRARD DECOYS

Shirley Evrard has graciously donated some of Jim's decoys to WSGS. Up for raffle are a pair of Ringneck decoys. These were carved by Mike Johnson, a friend to Jim and many of us in WSGS. Ringnecks were one of Jim's favorite ducks, common on Crex Meadows, and he hunted over these decoys for about 30 years. Raffle tickets are \$5.00, with all of the proceeds going to a sharptail habitat project.



ART PRINT RAFFLE

The WSGS will again conduct a raffle for three framed, limited edition, ready-to hang-on-your-wall sharp-tailed grouse art prints. Sharptail art is rare, either as prints or originals. This is our main fund raiser- please buy as many tickets as you can!

The Dean of Wisconsin Wildlife Artist, the late Owen Gromme, painted "Prairie Sharp-tailed Grouse" depicting three sharptails in flight in a burnt-over landscape.



This Buzz Balzer winter scene is reproduced on canvas, and framed in white birch, reminiscent of the scene on Crex Meadows where Buzz found these sharptails budding on birch trees.

Our third offering is a gift from the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society. It features a study of a dancing sharp-tail, by Minnesota wildlife artist Karen Smith. This print is specially custom framed in an unique rustic frame.



WSGS Treasurers Report April 23, 2021 – July 07, 2021

Expenditures

USPS	\$ 24.05
Red Fox Creations – Hats & Embroidery	\$ 515.00
Wis. Dept. of Administration – Gaming License	\$ 25.00
David Groenjes, Artist – JEM Sculpture & Delivery	\$5125.00

TOTAL **\$5689.05**

DEPOSITS

Membership Dues	\$1396.32
Merchandise Sales	\$ 47.97
General Donations	\$ 500.00
Jim Evrard Memorial Donations	\$ 210.00

TOTAL **\$2154.29**

GAIN/LOSS **-\$3534.76**

Checking Account Balance April 22, 2021	\$13485.00
Checking Account Balance July 07, 2021	\$ 9950.24
Jim Evrard Memorial Account	-\$ 63.14
General Account Fund	\$10013.38
Combined Accounts Balance	\$ 9950.24

Current Paid Memberships = **141**



The Namekagon Barrens

WSGS BOD Meeting 4/22/21

Present: Dave Evenson, Ken Jonas, Mike Cole, John Probst, Mike Amman, Bruce Moss, Trevor Hubbs, Ashley Steinke, Ed Frank (emeritus)

- Special guests: Brian Vander Maazen, Bob Hanson
- We met at Ashley's family property on Bonner Lake, near Webster, WI. Beautiful!
- Meeting began at 10 AM, concluded at 2:30.
- Treasurer's report by Ken (Jan-April). We will soon have enough donations to cover our portion of the Evrard memorial.
- Transition to electronic newsletter is slow, apparently our group prefers paper newsletters. Moss moved to accept report as-is, Ashley seconded. Passed unanimously.

Report from Visitors

- Brian Vander Maazen introduced himself, he is currently working on a series of podcasts about Wisconsin native birds. He was there to observe our proceedings and potentially follow up with a few of us to interview. (*Note: he has since uploaded a podcast, a link is on WSGS Facebook site.*)
- Bob Hanson – Bass Lake barrens (new project) seeing birds move there from Moquah (stepping stone), 1300 acres, timber harvest in process and remainder of timber being sold now. Mike A. made a drone video of Bass Lake “before” and we can compare to the video he will take at the end of the project. Aggressive burn schedule in NW WI. 10-person crew size limit (COVID) is making it tough to get larger areas done, but lots of cooperation between crews in different area. PR projects in Bayfield (also with turkey stamp money) include roller chopping. The new collars being used to track sharptails weigh 13 grams, send a signal every 5 hours and uploads every 8 hours. WSGS bought a collar and that bird is “on the air”, we'll get a link to the site where we can see history of where the bird went.

Old Business

- DNR Vacancies – Disappointed in our response from Preston Cole. Some interviews for the higher-level positions are being scheduled (with the idea those hires would then do additional hires to fill out their staffs). Maybe we helped get those interviews started? Frustrating that money RGS gave to WI is being returned unspent due to lack of ability to complete the work (Mike Amman will keep us up to date).
- Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) – we believe this will be passed
- Dog Train question Conservation Congress – no training on State properties April-July “won” at Spring Hearings level. The other question passed. Conservation Congress could still kill it. DNR could also opt not to put it on the questionnaire (i.e. we have two chances remaining to get this killed). WSGS believes we need to form a coalition (with RGS, WSGS, Greenfire, Deer Hunters, DU, Delta, WWA) to inform others why the proposal is a bad idea. Update: we sent a position letter to the WWF, chastising them for supporting it (thanks Trevor for writing, others for editing). WWF wants to hear us out and are scheduling a ZOOM meeting for Tuesday 5/18 at 7 PM for this. The MSGS Fall 2020 newsletter had an article about the effect of lek disturbance on bird production.
- No Lead initiative – need testimonials about using non-toxic (tell the story of how it works for us). Stress that use is voluntary. Need for next newsletter, and then we can add the logo to our newsletter.
- Jim Evrard memorial—sculpture is almost done. We need to work with Kyle Anderson to

prep the site for the sculptures. Discussion about size of mounds, whether vegetation should grow there.

- Terms for Trevor and Mike A – “straw poll” results Mike A. will serve the full 3 year term, Trevor will fill out the remainder of Bob Dumke’s term.
- Threatened Species – nothing new to report
- Facebook/Website. Currently at about 330 likes/followers. We got lots of shares and new followers from other groups when we asked our followers to pass the word about the spring hearing questions. Website needs refresh, no set time-frame for this.
- Next newsletter to publish soon. Anyone that wants to contribute go ahead and write it up and send to Dave. Mark Parman (author from Seely, WI) is a new member and wants to write something about the research project. No-lead testimonials needed as well.

New Business

- Spring survey results so far: Gehrman Road about the same, Namekagan about 50 birds just today, Crex slightly up, but other areas about 50% down. Official survey numbers ready in about a month. Mike A. reported that his county will begin watching leks with cameras.
- Hunting season – meet early June to discuss. New sharptail management plan will need to include criteria to establish a hunt, also more meaningful zones.
- Annual meeting Grantsburg 8/21 – 8/22. Planning tour for Sunday. Ken will get raffle license so we can raise some funds with Evrard prints and Mike Johnson decoys (tickets for prints 1/\$10 or 3/\$20, tickets for decoys \$5 each). Would be good to know if Crex building can be open since many of the speakers would want to do an electronic presentation, which does not work well outside. We have the pavilion at Memory Lake reserved for us that weekend. Mike Cole to arrange caterer.

Other Information

- NW Sands tour of Bass Lake barrens Thursday 6/3 @ 1 PM. Bob Hanson, Mike A.
- Need to order more WSGS hats. Ken will pursue. Ken motioned and Trevor seconded, unanimous approval for Ken to buy when he finds something acceptable.
- We need to put pressure on Polylab to complete the Moquah feather DNA study (that we already paid for). Brian is also putting pressure on them. Ken will get an update from Brian.

Submitted by Mike Cole 5/21/21

WSGS ON LINE

More people every day are looking at their screens for information. Last summer Mike Cole and Ken Jonas got us up on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/WIsharptails.org/>. You can help by liking and commenting on stories as they are posted. And you can contribute your own sharptail related items, or links to other stories.

Kim Wheeler manages our website, <http://www.wisharptails.org/>. We need to get better at feeding information to her as well, and making that site more useful.

WSGS has a new email account: information@wisharptails.org.

So, as everyone in the world says, like us on Facebook!

Trevor Bellrichard, our newest Life Member, is a communicator who will be helping us with Instagram and other ways. Here's the first of his stories for you.

Is your dog dumb? Most hunters would prefer phrasing like, “He’s got a lot of try” or “She’s big hearted”. Tik Tok would have you believe some dogs are smart enough to be able to communicate complex ideas with the assistance of talking buttons. We’ve all watched videos of Border Collies taking single steps left or right based on a command while herding sheep. My dog brought back pine cones instead of a downed birds. She refused food only to later select driveway gravel. Sometimes she barked at garbage cans. Are there logical and behavioral explanations for all of the above? Most certainly. Around our house we said, “She’s got a lot of try”.

If you’re around bird dogs long enough you end up with some stories. Most of us have watched someone’s GSP flush birds three hills over. “Wow, your dog ranges well”. I bet you have a buddy who needed to throw empty shells in the direction of a downed duck to get his lab to head that way. “No worries man, any dog would have a hard time marking that one”. Dogs are often the scape-goats in these situations but it’s the owners that are lacking.

We can’t expect our dogs to read our minds. Of course that GSP is three hills away, running and flushing is fun. He hasn’t been given the opportunity to succeed or know better in a controlled situation. You yelling and shocking him right now isn’t doing anything positive. Sure, that lab needs help knowing where a mallard went down. You didn’t practice blind retrieves over the summer and now expect magazine level performance. Whatever our dogs do in the field is a direct reflection on us as owners. Screaming or abuse only doubles down on that image.

Back to my dog, who had a lot of try. We did our best to put her in situations that were like those she encountered in the field. Still, not every hour could be devoted to her. There was dinner to make, RV’s to renovate, vacations to take. Desensitizing her to garbage cans took a backseat. So we put up with some odd, endearing behaviors. So she likes driveway gravel? Certainly we didn’t blame her for that. She’s just doing his best.

Someone just told me a story about taking their dog down to the local training ground. It was a scene all too familiar. Guys wanting their dogs to complete giant blind retrieves, dogs getting shocked or berated for non-compliance, lots of talk about force fetch and the sometimes brutal methods involved. What a terrible way to treat your supposed “best buddy”. Your dog doesn’t understand English. If you haven’t practiced something, repeatedly, your dog will struggle. There’s no shame in that. I’ve always had a lot more success getting my dogs excited and trying to make whatever we were training as fun as possible. While we all may go off to jobs that are monotonous and soul crushing, why inflict this burden on your dog? He or she is like a 5 year old child. When your dog gets it right, be excited, jump around, use a high pitched voice that would shock your friends. All of us, including dogs, perform better when we are excited about what we are doing.

Make the time you have with your dog fun. It’s probably only going to live a dozen years, sometimes less. They live hard lives: out in the cold, jumping out of trucks, guns going off over their heads. I cried like a baby when we put my gravel eating girl down. I didn’t remember her flushing birds $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away. I didn’t recount her refusing to retrieve ducks that were literally in front of her face. I remembered her proud prance with a bird in her mouth, her bright eyes and panting smile after getting out of the water, the perfect timing she had when putting her head in your lap when you needed it most. When out in the field, roll with the punches and keep a smile on your face. They’re only around so long.

BALLOT WSGS BOARD (vote for three)

Ashly Steinke _____

Paul Kooiker _____

John Probst _____

Write-in _____

Bring to the annual meeting or mail to: WSGS 102E. Crex Ave. Grantsburg WI, 54840

WSGS 2021 ART RAFFLE TICKET

This raffle is being offered by the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society
102 E. Crex Ave, Grantsburg, WI 54840

Wisconsin Raffle License R0016707A-77731

The drawing will be held at 3:00 PM, August 21, 2021 at the annual meeting of the WSGS at Crex Meadows Interpretive Center, Grantsburg, WI. Winners will be notified by mail or telephone. No prize has a value over \$500. Suggested contribution is \$10 for one ticket or \$20 for three tickets. No contribution is necessary to participate. You may photocopy for more tickets.

(Keep this portion for your records)

(Detach here and send with your donation or mark "no donation")

Name _____

Name _____

Name _____

Address _____

Address _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Phone _____

Phone _____

EVRARD DECOYS HABITAT PROJECT RAFFLE TICKET

Tickets are for a raffle of a pair of Ring-necked Duck decoys. Suggested contribution per ticket is \$5.00.

All details shown in the WSGS Art Raffle apply here as well.

Decoy raffle

Decoy raffle

Decoy raffle

Name _____

Name _____

Name _____

Address _____

Address _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Phone _____

Phone _____

2021 ANNUAL MEETING SIGN-UP

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City, State ZIP _____

WSGS BOD Meeting 7/7/21

Present: Dave Evenson, Ken Jonas, Mike Cole, Mike Amman, Bruce Moss, Trevor Hubbs, Ashley Steinke, Ed Frank (emeritus)

- Special guests: Trevor Bellrichard
- This was a video meeting conducted with ZOOM, meeting began at 7:00 PM

Treasurer's report

- We are \$63 short on the sharptail sculpture, but more continues to come in (no worries). FOC still owes their \$500 pledge.
- One lady that already donated significant amounts gave us another \$500 for 'whatever'. Ken awarded her a life membership.
- We are up to 141 members, many new have joined via Paypal. Social media is bringing us new members, this is our highest membership in a long time.
- Mike A. motion to approve treasurer's report as-is, Moss second. Passed unanimously.

Annual Meeting

- Modifying the agenda and will continue to do so as things evolve. Now planning a BOD meeting on Friday and the Saturday general meeting will start 9 or 10 AM. Two hours of speakers before and after lunch, 3:00 sharptail sculpture, self-guided tour for those who want to do it on Saturday evening. Nothing planned for Sunday. This can get everyone on their way at a reasonable hour on Saturday and might be more attractive to those who don't want to do 8 hours plus late driving.
- Need to get Kyle Anderson's OK to use Crex visitor center for BOD meeting and membership meeting.
- Food: Coffee, juice and rolls on Saturday morning. Lunch will be provided for all attendees on Saturday. No caterers available, so probably Subway platters, chips and desert and beverages. Light snack and soft drinks in afternoon, maybe beer at the end. Cole in charge of arranging the food. If the Evrard family wants to join us, they are welcome and we will cover the cost unless they insist otherwise.
- Raffles and door prizes:
- Regular raffle for framed art (1/\$10, 3/\$20)
- Evrard/Johnson decoy raffle \$5 each (for habitat), in-person only (no mail)
- Ashley donated an AIRBB rental to raffle, will provide more info to Dave so it can be included in the raffle mailing.
- Bring stuff for door prizes!

Communications

- Newsletter between now and meeting with raffle tickets, ballots for BOD needs to be mailed early August (starting work now)
- Website updates are slow, we may need to add additional webmasters. Trevor B. and Mike Cole are options.
- Facebook – need more info from Alexis before we can start promoting the tracking collars and potentially solicit some crowd-sourced funding.
- Instagram – potential source to write our posts is Trevor Bellrichard. He works for WI Senate Sargent-at-Arms in Madison. Lots of non-profit background. Interested in working with us to use Instagram to drive more folks to our Facebook, Membership or "Donate"

page. Trevor will prepare some sample posts to see how we like them, work together to edit if needed, then start posting once approved.

Conservation Congress Strategies

- Potential that Conservation Congress will bring BOTH proposals forward for approval. This could put dogs and trainers in the woods legally between May 1 and June 30. We need to know what our next step is and be prepared to react. Can we form a consortium? Reach out to turkeys, waterfowl and deer hunter groups?

Delegate to Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

- Need representation in order to proactively head off proposals like the dog training issue in the future (we miss Jim Evrard's presence as our representative).
- Their next meeting is same date as our Membership meeting.
- Mike Amman might be willing to be our delegate until Mike Cole is ready (retiring soon, looking to do more at that time)

Other issues:

- Mike Amman asked how many Board members are needed, should we add some? Currently at 9 directors, can add if desired. For now, need to start recruiting people to fill upcoming vacancies.

Meeting Adjourn

- Motion by Moss, second by Cole. Passed unanimous at 9:03 PM.

Submitted by Mike Cole 7/23/21



Photo from the USFWS

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

We are going to a primarily electronic newsletter, with hard copy only on request. This makes it impossible to send individual dues reminders, so the dues now will be annual for all, due in January for next calendar year.

Name: _____
Street/PO Box _____
City: _____ State: _____
Zip: _____
Phone: _____

Would you like to volunteer for:
_____ Board of Directors
_____ Newsletter articles
_____ Other

Email: _____ Electronic Newsletter

Enclosed:

\$ _____ Dues ***Please note changes* (Regular - \$30 (receive decal), Family - \$50 (receive decal), Sustaining - \$100 (receive hat), Life - \$300) *(Dues are fully tax-deductible)*

\$ _____ Donations in Memory of Jim Evrard *(will be put towards memorial statue)*

\$ _____ WSGS Logo Decal (\$1.50)

\$ _____ Four-color Cloth Patch (\$3.50)

\$ _____ Tan or blaze orange Cap (\$15 – indicate color choice)

\$ _____ King sharptail limited edition print (\$60) *(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 Avenue, Grantsburg, WI 54840

