

# WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 99 Winter 2022-2023

## WIS. SHARP-TAILED GROUSE & UWSP BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS AND ANGLERS BEER AND GEAR BASH

*By: Trevor Bellrichard, WSGS Digital media Spec.*



The Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society had two highly successful events in February that not only increased membership, but also raised significant funds for future conservation efforts.

The first event held on February 9th was the Gear and Beer Bash, hosted by the UW Stevens Point Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. This event offered attendees the chance to win outdoor gear, gift cards, and other prizes, all while enjoying a new craft beer (Sharptail Ale) brewed by District 1 Brewery, who will be sharing a portion of proceeds with WSGS. The event was promoted on social media and attracted an excellent crowd of

young conservationists.

Thanks to the efforts of UWSP BHA and the support of the community, the Gear and Beer Bash was a great success, raising significant funds with minimal effort for WSGS. In addition, the event gave Mike Amman WSGS VP and Trevor Bellrichard WSGS Media Specialist, the opportunity to speak directly to attendees about Sharp-tailed grouse and the landscape that they call home. We debuted our new hat designs to rave reviews and displayed our new WSGS banner for its inaugural run. Thanks to the success of this event, the Wisconsin

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Sharp-tailed Grouse Society is well-positioned to continue its important work in protecting and conserving the sharp-tailed grouse and its unique habitat in the state.

If you are interested in picking up one of new hats or other WSGS merchandise, visit: <https://www.wisharptails.org/shop> ■

## **WSGS AT 2023 NATIONAL PHEASANT'S FOREVER FEST**

*By Mike Cole, WSGS Treasurer*

For those who have not heard, our participation at Pheasant Fest was a great success! It started out rough for Trevor Bellrichard (WSGS Digital Media Spec.) as he was in a bad car accident on his way to PF from Madison (he is very sore, but it could have been worse). He had the WSGS credit card reader and most of the merchandise inventory in his car. On very short notice, Ashley Steinke, (WSGS Board Member) was able to drive to Madison, pick up the inventory and then drive up to Pheasant Fest in Minneapolis. Bruce Moss and Ken Jonas had the booth setup on Thursday. Ashley and Ken worked the booth on Friday and with Trevor talking them through the credit card reader start-up; they were able to get on-line and began making sales that very afternoon.

Saturday was a busy day setting an attendance record for the event. Mike Amman, Mike Cole and President Emeritus Dave Evenson worked the booth (Trevor was at home recuperating, but still working WSGS Facebook and Instagram, plus helping us when the card reader got stuck). Engagement with the crowd was high, people knew we were going to be there due to Trevor's social media wizardry, plus the publicity that PF gave to visit "The Grouse Trail". People loved the new merchandise, with some saying it was the best hat at the entire show. Several guests showed up wearing WSGS shirts they had bought on-line last summer. The show attendees wanted to talk Wisconsin sharptails. Having Dave and Mike A. in the booth was a real plus for those who wanted to talk with boots-on-the-ground WSGS staff. The week-old video of birds dancing in the snow at Crex was a big hit. I played that on my phone for guests dozens of times over the weekend. Attached are some pictures of the booth before the show opened, during the show, with Dave and Mike both busy talking to visitors, people waiting to get in, and the grouse viewing blind that we had setup next to our booth on loan from Spooner DNR Wildlife Staff. Jodie Provost of North American Grouse Partnerships provided video footage of all varieties of North American grouse and kids/families could sit in the blind like they were watching the real thing.

Sunday was a little slower, but Mike A. had to be there early for a taping of Ron Boehne's "Birddog" podcast with special guest Ryan from the "Meat Eater" show. Mike did an awesome job as always and Ron B. swears he will visit WI this spring to sit in a viewing blind. Mike plugged both Crex and Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Areas. Both Ron and Ryan told listeners if folks want there to be a future for ST grouse in Wisconsin, they better join

WSGS! Hopefully that will drive some additional members to join over the next few weeks. The podcast was just released today, so go to the WSGS Facebook page for a link to listen. As the show wound down, people running other booths took the time to visit us and buy WSGS swag. Dr. Ben Jones (Ruffed Grouse Society President), Land Tawney from BHA, Bob St. Pierre, Tom Carpenter and Marissa Jensen all from PF plus AJ from Project Upland, all shook hands, thanked us (we returned the thanks) and talked of potential future partnership habitat projects with WSGS. Ken showed up with his truck at 4:00 and we had everything packed up and out by 5p.m. Long days, but definitely worth it.

We signed up over 30 new members during the weekend, including 2 new Life members and several Sustaining. We sold more than half of our inventory. Between PF and the BHA event in Stevens Point earlier in the week, WSGS took in over \$8200 (including orders that have come in on-line after the show). This more than covers the cost of all merchandise inventory, travel, booth rental and booth display items, with over \$2200 pure profit (future sales of the remaining merchandise will add to that total). We'll have a full breakdown of the totals soon, but at this point it can be stated it was a success and WSGS has more money right now to put into habitat, which was a theme that booth customers definitely supported over the weekend! ■



## 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](mailto:information@wisharptails.org).

### **WSGS OFFICERS:**

President: Ken Jonas  
 Vice President: Mike Amman  
 Secretary: Paul Kooiker  
 Treasurer: Mike Cole

### **BOARD MEMBERS:**

John Probst  
 Bruce Moss  
 Trevor Hubbs  
 Ashley Steinke

Newsletter Compositor: Lauren Thomas  
 Digital Media/Public Outreach: Trevor Bellrichard

## **LINKING HABITAT BETWEEN CREX MEADOWS AND KOHLER PEET MANAGEMENT AREA**

*By: Kyle Anderson, Glacial Lake Grantsburg Property Supervisor*

One long-term property management goal was to connect early successional barrens habitat (4-6 ft brush mixed with warm season grasses and forbs) between Crex Meadows Wildlife Area and Kohler Peet habitat area north of Crex. This habitat is beneficial for a variety of wildlife species, including sharp-tailed grouse that need vast open areas with few tall visual obstructions. The largest hurdle in accomplishing this goal was that the land between these two areas was owned by Burnett County Forestry Department or private citizens.

Years ago, previous Crex managers worked on a land trade between the WDNR and Burnett County. The DNR would acquire a parcel of land between Reeds Lake Road and County Road F, and in return Burnett County Forestry Dept would acquire other DNR lands within the county that would better fit their needs, some of which was located on the east side of Amsterdam Sloughs Wildlife Area. After years of negotiations, the trade took finally took place in January of 2013. During that same time, Friends of Crex land committee members worked with willing landowners to purchase privately owned parcels that would help connect the two wildlife areas.

Thanks to dedicated volunteers and generous donations, Friends of Crex purchased 119 acres north of Monson Flowage that was later sold to the DNR in 2019. After the lands were purchased, DNR foresters set up timber sales with intentions of managing the area through silvicultural practices and/or prescribed fire. Along the eastern side of the parcel (north of Reeds Lake), clearing practices took place and a 100-foot-wide fire break was created around the perimeter of the 580-acre parcel that will be managed with prescribed fire, with plans to burn the area beginning in 2024.

Since the removal of the forest canopy, native warm season grasses and forbs have emerged where seed laid dormant for decades. Ruffed grouse, deer, and turkey frequent the area making it a popular location for hunters and wildlife viewers. In the summer of 2022, sharptailed grouse were spotted in the newly created burn unit shortly after the unit was cleared giving hope that grouse will continue to move north to the Kohler Peet habitat area. ■

### **FIND US ONLINE!**

**Facebook:** *Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society*

**Instagram:** *[wisharptails](https://www.instagram.com/wisharptails)*

**Website:** *<http://www.wisharptails.org/>*

**Email:** *[information@wisharptails.org](mailto:information@wisharptails.org)*



## PRESIDENT'S SOAPBOX

By: Ken Jonas, WSGS President



Henry Fey, John Watson, Earl McCourt, Ted Olson, Francis Daly, Sr. (1939)

City Point Hunting Club

Heart of the Hunter. A history of the City Point Hunting Club. It's remarkable how the area was once noted for hunting of ducks, prairie chickens, and sharp tailed grouse; but to see a deer was rare.

River City Memoirs #2 by Dave Engel. *From Steven Bornbach.*

The photo shows a group of hunters back in 1939 with a pretty good bunch of sharp-tails harvested

around the former town of City Point in the Northeast portion of Jackson Co. I started deer hunting in this “central sands” area with my dad and grandpa beginning in 1968, just 29 years after this photo was taken and sharp-tails were already pretty much gone from that landscape. The uplands had rapidly converted to maturing oak and aspen without the periodic wildfires that had previously kept it more open as a shrub/grass community, interspersed with large areas of lowland sedge meadows.

A small population of stg were maintained until the late 1990's 15 miles west of City Point, on the Dike 17 Wildlife Area, through DNR wildlife management efforts using prescribed burning and mowing. Roughly 60 years after the abundance of sharp-tailed grouse allowed hunters to bag large daily limits, these birds had totally disappeared from Wisconsin's central sands ecological landscape and many other former locations as well.

The lesson here, is that we need to continue working hard at maintaining habitat conditions that allow sharptails to persist in the northwest sands ecological landscape where they are making their last stand in WI. We must take every opportunity available to increase habitat that will allow sharp-tailed grouse and the unique landscape it inhabits to flourish. I certainly hope that 60 years from now, people aren't looking back at old photos of what used to be but are instead celebrating a rich and vibrant plant and wildlife “barrens” community in the NW Sands that is secure and functioning because we the people, made the right choices that allowed it to happen. The Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society which includes you, is working hard to keep sharptails in Wisconsin a reality. Please continue with your membership, buy WSGS merchandise, spread the word about how sharptails need our help, and provide your input to policy and legislation that paves the way for continued sharp-tailed grouse prosperity. Do it because you care for the birds. ■

## **THE BEST LAID PLANS**

*By Ken Jonas, WSGS President*

We had a plan, and it was a good one. The core idea was hatched by Jodie of North American Grouse Partnership way back in May of 2022. A “Native Grouse Row” at the Pheasant/Quail Forever National Festival to be held at the Minneapolis Convention Center in February 2023. WSGS was invited to participate in this “big time” show along with other grouse focused organizations. The WSGS Board of Directors approved and we secured booth space adjacent to the other partners on what eventually became known as Grouse Trail.

By the Dec. Board meeting, Trevor Bellrichard, WSGS Digital Media Specialist, had things rolling in the right direction with several color combinations of a new, very cool trucker hat and a mix of high quality t-shirts all with the newly designed WSGS logo. In addition, he facilitated design and purchase of a WSGS banner with an outstanding sharp-tailed grouse photo and an emblomed over-hang table cover to attract attention to our booth for information and sales. WSGS purchased a credit card reader, tablet and software programmed to deposit funds directly into our PayPal account. Trevor was the guy who knew how to make it all work.

Through a good stroke of luck WSGS partnered with the UW Stevens Point chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Angler to participate in the BHA Gear and Beer Bash held at District 1 Brewery in Stevens Point on Feb. 9th. While the event gave WSGS a good opportunity to raise awareness and some funding for projects, it was also a good practice run for the big show, Pheasants Forever Fest in Minneapolis, Feb. 17 – 19. We were rolling now!

Thursday Feb. 16th was the set-up date at the Minneapolis Convention Cntr. for the National PF fest. Bruce Moss and I drove over that morning from the Spooner area bringing tables, chairs, a grouse viewing blind and display board. Trevor was coming up from Madison at the tail-end of a snowfall event, hauling all the T-shirts, hats, display banners and the precious credit card reading system that would facilitate electronic sales at the event. And that is when the best laid plans started to go astray. In Trevor’s words:

*“I was still leaving Madison, on the Beltline headed East. A red SUV lost control in the far right hand lane, I was in the far left. The red SUV bounced off the guardrail and came back into traffic, colliding with two cars in the process. My last thought was, I'm going to drive right past this, I got lucky. In that moment, that same SUV was in front of me, I hit them, head on at 50 mph. Transported to the hospital via ambulance, diagnosed with a fractured sternum and severe bruising around the ribs and shoulder. Once stable, still from the incoming trauma room, I asked my wife to call Mike Amman and let him know that I wasn't going to make it. (to the PF fest) I don't know what happened from there, but Mike must have contacted Ashly who left for Madison early the next morning, Friday. My father-in-law met him at a park and ride with all sharptail related*

*items pulled from the wreckage of my Rav4. Ashly then hit the road for the Twin Cities, saving the day and the weekend.”*

All of us who knew what had happened were very concerned for Trevor’s condition. Upon hearing he was going to be okay our next thought was how can we get the stuff he had from Madison to Minneapolis, to make our participation at the PF show worthwhile. A new plan was hatched. As stated above, Ashley Steinke a member of your WSGS Board of Directors drove down to Madison very early the next morning from rural Chippewa Falls, a distance of at least 190 miles. He met Trevor’s father in-law, loaded up the merchandise, credit card reader, banners and boxes then turned around, driving to downtown Minneapolis which is a distance of about 270 miles. I met him at the loading dock where we carried the goods inside and then Ashley left. Not for home, but to the nearby parking ramp and then back inside the Convention Cntr. to help set things up at the booth and work the show until 7pm. After the event shut down for the night he drove back to Chippewa Falls which is another 100 miles away. He told me as the evening fest was winding down that he might be in a little “hot water” with his wife for being gone all day. That may have been the case, but to those of us who know what he voluntarily did that day, which is far and above the call of duty, at his own cost, we will be forever in his debt. Thank You Ashley! ■





## CAMP CANDLES FOR CONSERVATION

Brendon Paden of Camp Candles for Conservation has recently designated the Wisconsin Sharp-tails Grouse Society as his Conservation Organization of the Month for this coming April.

Brendon tells us that throughout the month of April “10% of my sales would be donated to WSGS, plus I have a "direct donations" option on my website as well. 100% of that money gets donated to the organization of the month. In April I plan on auctioning off a high end cutting board with the WSGS Logo engraved on a coin and inserted into the cutting board. 100% of the winning bid will be donated to WSGS.”

His website [www.campcandlesforconservation.com](http://www.campcandlesforconservation.com) states “We are a small family business based in Pennsylvania with a focus on protecting wildlife across our great country. Most of our products are home made in our kitchen, basement or small work shop behind our house.” Please take a look at the wide variety of unique products Brendon has on his website and consider making a bid on that one of a kind custom cutting board being auctioned on the site during April. ■



### WSGS T-SHIRTS

Get your new shirts and support WSGS at the same time!  
Go to <https://wsgs.myspreadshop.com/> and proudly wear our new logo.





**WSGS TREASURER REPORT**  
**DECEMBER 5, 2022– FEBRUARY 6, 2023**

**Starting Balance December 5, 2022** **15065.40**

**Expenditures**

USPS—Postage to mail (5) hat orders	29.70
Shel/Don Print— Banner, Display, Table cloths	536.98
Dues to WWF and Friends of Bird Sanctuary	175.00
Insurance for Pheasant Fest	164.17
Amazon— name tags for BOD @ Pheasant Fest	27.41
Wisconsin Screen Process— WSGS Decals	460.18
Duluth Screen Print (75) T-shirts for Pheasant Fest	952.75
Reimburse Dave Evenson for print framing glass	110.00

**Total** **2456.19**

**Income**

Memberships	569.59
Merchandise (not including spreadshirt t-shirts)	136.23
Spreadshirt t-shirts	10.51
Donations (Evrard, Dhein, Drake, Berg, M. Smith)	1600.00

**Total** **2316.33**

Net Gain for Period	-139.86
Ending Balance February 6, 2023	<b>14925.54</b>
Jim Evrard Memorial Account	166.46
General Account Fund	14759.08

Pending expenses:  
Buying tables for Pheasant Fest booth  
Hotel Rooms for Pheasant Fest

Membership Totals:  
12/05/22           125  
02/06/23           187

*Submitted by Mike Cole   02/06/23*

## RECENTLY APPROVED WSGS PROJECT FUNDING REQUESTS

### Crex Meadows Viewing blinds:

With the uptick in sharp-tail grouse numbers on Crex and more consistent lekking sites, we would like to purchase 2 sharp-tail grouse viewing blinds similar to what Namekagon Barrens has. We requested a cost estimate for blinds but have not heard back from the manufacturer yet. I'm estimating each custom-built canvas blind will cost in the neighborhood of **\$900 each**. We are requesting Wis. Sharp-tail Grouse Society funding to **cover the cost of purchasing** the viewing blinds.

### Bayfield Co. Forestry, Remote Recording Units:

Bayfield County would like to apply for funding to purchase 2 Autonomous Recording Units (ARU) as a tool to assist in our sharp-tailed grouse monitoring efforts. These ARUs could and would be utilized to survey for other bird species as well during the spring in the barrens and throughout the year for other bird species as well such as potentially the Connecticut Warbler. **The request for funding is \$1,500 dollars from WSGS**, which would cover two units and some or all of the costs from NRRI to analyze the recordings. ARU's are becoming more sophisticated in what they can detect and verify. There is an area in the NW portion of the Barnes Barrens where we are struggling to reliably find birds but feel they are there and possibly dancing but with limited human capacity to survey that area consistently we have failed to figure out where and how often birds are there in the spring. These units would also be deployed adjacent to the core barrens to see if birds are utilizing the adjacent recent harvests.

### Nat. Wild Turkey Federation/WDNR Turkey Stamp NW Sands Barrens Enhancement:

This proposed 2 year project work will take place across three wildlife areas that have similar habitat management goals. Management work will directly and indirectly enhance early successional barrens habitat that is ideal for a plethora of wildlife. Project work will be a mix of installing new firebreaks, enhancing existing but degraded firebreaks, and roller-chopping of woody stems to knock back encroachment. A total of 7.85 miles of 100 foot wide, firebreaks will either be installed or enhanced. The roller-chopping of 200 acres of woody stems will have immediate impacts and will also reduce fuel concerns for future controlled burns, providing both near term and long-term benefits. Habitat work will not only benefit a large number of wildlife but will also have a positive impact on the native vegetation in this ecosystem. Total estimated project costs are \$100,500 broken down in the figure above. NWTF would be looking for **\$5,000 in partner matching funds from WSGS towards the project**. (Dependent on Receiving DNR Turkey Stamp Grant)

### Bayfield Co. Forest/Turkey Stamp Project Partnering for Roller Chopping Project:

Eddie Shea, DNR wildlife biologist, informed us that the Bayfield Cty. Pittman-Robertson fund request to roller chop 120 acres on the Barnes Barrens core was denied. PR funding was down a bit this past year and the DNR is restructuring how those funds get allocated. Plan B now is to apply for turkey stamp dollars for the work instead. That grant is due by the end of today and having partner dollars included makes for a better chance of an application being approved. The funding request total is for \$20k. Bayfield county will hopefully be chipping in a few thousand dollars in Nickel an Acre Fund dollars. Bayfield County and DNR Biologist Shea are asking **WSGS for \$3k in committed partner funds** to go towards this application. (Dependent on Receiving DNR Turkey Stamp Grant)

# WSGS BOARD OF DIRECTOR MEETING MINUTES DECEMBER 5, 2022

*Present: Ken Jonas, Mike Cole, Mike Amman, Bruce Moss, Trevor Bellrichard, Ashly Steinke, John Probst, Trevor Hubbs, Paul Kooiker, Ed Frank*

*Meeting started at 6:32pm via ZOOM.*

- Approved October 3, 2022 minutes.
- Treasurer's report by M. Cole (October 1 – December 5 2022): ending balance of \$15,065. Lots of merchandise on hand for PF and BHA events. Current membership is 185; will address expired memberships.
- Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Management Plan: WDNR Northwest Sands Biologist Bob Hanson presented an update on the status of the plan. Pending committee and internal reviews of the draft, the plan will hopefully be ready for the 30-day public comment by early spring, with a NRB presentation in April or May. Recommendations will include the creation of eleven "stepping stone" blocks connecting core sharptail properties across the northwest sands. Each of these blocks would be roughly 1280 acres in size and be spaced 3 miles apart. Projected costs for the creation of these new blocks (14,000 acres) is \$1400-1900/acre; future maintenance costs would be \$9/acre. These costs would be significantly mitigated by contributions from partners, grants etc. Research on minimum population size and sensitivity analysis will be a priority for proposed research.
- Merchandise: Trevor B. explained that hats have been ordered for Pheasant Fest. A discussion on T-shirt orders followed. He has taken the J Dowd designs off the website (WSGS netted about \$1000 from his designs). A motion was made and unanimously approved to order up to \$1000 worth of T-shirts for PF and the BHA gathering in St. Point. Need to figure out the distribution of shirt sizes. Will also have various T-shirt samples on hand so people can order their own.
- Pheasant Fest (Feb. 17-19, 2023 Minneapolis Convention Center): Ken discussed some of the details; ie setup, insurance, lodging etc. Will need volunteers to man the booth for 4-to-6 hour shifts; Ken will send out a sign-up sheet to board members.
- Habitat Projects: WSGS received a grant request from Greg Kessler in the amount of \$4,450 for control of woody encroachment on the Douglas County Wildlife Area. The proposal calls for roller chopping and mowing up to 205 acres within a 640 acre burn unit scheduled for burning in spring 2024. Payment would be made directly to the contractor. The Board unanimously approved the request, with the comment that additional acreage on the DCWA with large standing timber needs to be treated as well, and that WSGS would likely contribute additional dollars to this project upon request. A recommendation was made to send a letter to the Douglas County Forestry Department encouraging more aggressive management on the DCWA.
- Sharp-tailed Grouse research: Mike Amman gave a brief update on the status of the NRI research project in Bayfield County. Still a few birds on the air. A meeting is scheduled for tomorrow December 6 with NRI staff to discuss the need for more timely deliverables, which has been lacking to date.

*Meeting adjourned at 9:14pm  
Submitted by Paul Kooiker  
January 13, 2023*

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

We are going to a primarily electronic newsletter, with hard copy only on request.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street/PO Box \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Email: \_\_\_\_\_  Electronic Newsletter  Hard Copy Newsletter

Enclosed:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Dues (Regular - \$30 (receive decal), Family - \$50 (receive decal), Sustaining - \$100 (receive hat),  
Life - \$300 (receive decal, patch & hat) *(Dues are fully tax-deductible)*  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ WSGS Logo Decal (\$1.50)  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Four-color Cloth Patch (\$3.50)  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Orange, olive or brown cap (\$25 – indicate color choice)  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Sharp-tailed Grouse prints (check WSGS website online store for availability) (\$30)

*(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**

Or visit our website for membership and merchandise orders at <https://wisharptails.org>

Questions? Please e-mail WSGS President, Ken Jonas: [kenjon@centurytel.net](mailto:kenjon@centurytel.net)

