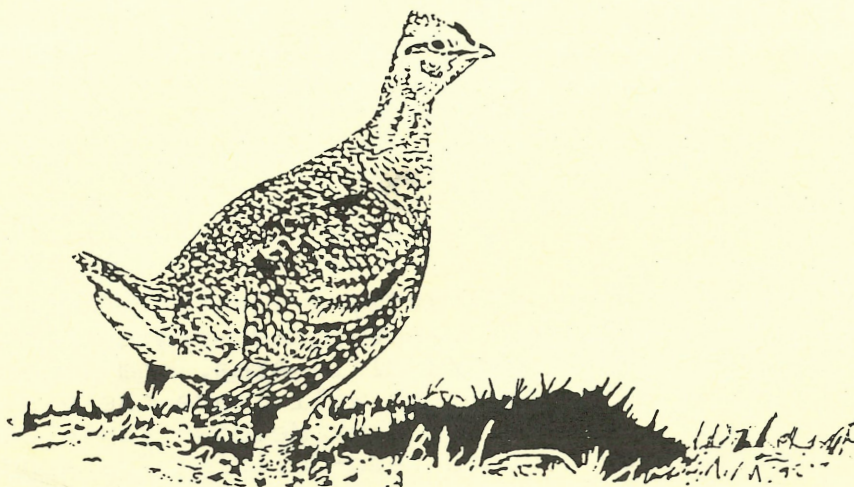


WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 35

SPRING, 2002

ANNUAL MEETING

Mark your calendar for April 27th-28th at the brand new Crex Meadows Interpretive Center! Even more important, open up the newsletter and send in your registration! WSGS may well be the first official group to use this facility. See you there!

PRAIRIE GROUSE TECHNICAL COUNCIL

As you read in the last newsletter, this group, composed of prairie grouse biologists and researchers from other states and provinces will be coming to Siren, Wisconsin in the fall of 2003. A group of Wisconsin biologists and interested citizens are now forming committees to make this a beneficial symposium. This will be discussed at the annual meeting, and the group will be looking for volunteers to help.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY

Saturday and Sunday, April 27 and 28, 2002
Grantsburg, Wisconsin

The WSGS invites you and your spouse, partner, sons, daughters, and friends to our annual meeting.

Our meeting will begin at 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 27 in the newly completed Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center located on the northern edge of the Village of Grantsburg. Come and see the building our donations helped to construct.

Following our business meeting we will enjoy presentations on the status of sharptails in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan, the history of sharptails in Crex Meadows Wildlife Area, and other pertinent subjects. After the program, we will leave the visitor center at 5 p.m. for a short walk to the Crex Meadows Youth Camp Dining Hall where we will enjoy a guaranteed-delicious catered northwoods dinner and social.

Very early on Sunday morning, April 28, we will census sharp-tailed grouse in Crex Meadows and possibly other areas. Census teams will be assigned to specific areas to count male sharptails on their dancing grounds in the early morning hours. Following the census, we will again meet at the Crex Youth Camp Dining Hall for a census debriefing and catered brunch beginning at 9:00 am. The meeting ends following brunch.

Registration Deadline is April 19, 2002. The registration fee of \$20 per person includes refreshments, dinner on Saturday evening, brunch on Sunday morning, and registration materials. Payment must be made prior to the registration deadline.

Lodging is available at the Wood River Inn in Grantsburg (715-463-2541). Please make your own reservations.

For more information, contact Jim Evrard (715)463-2446

(cut on dotted line and return with fees)

REGISTRATION - 2002 WSGS ANNUAL MEETING

Name: _____
Address: _____ City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____ Daytime Phone: (____) ____ - ____

I plan to survey sharptails Sunday morning _____
(yes) (no)

Make check/money order (\$20/person) payable to: Wisconsin
Sharp-tailed Grouse Society

Send form and payment to: Jim Evrard, WSGS
630 N. Pine St.
Grantsburg, WI 54840

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR STATEWIDE SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SURVEY

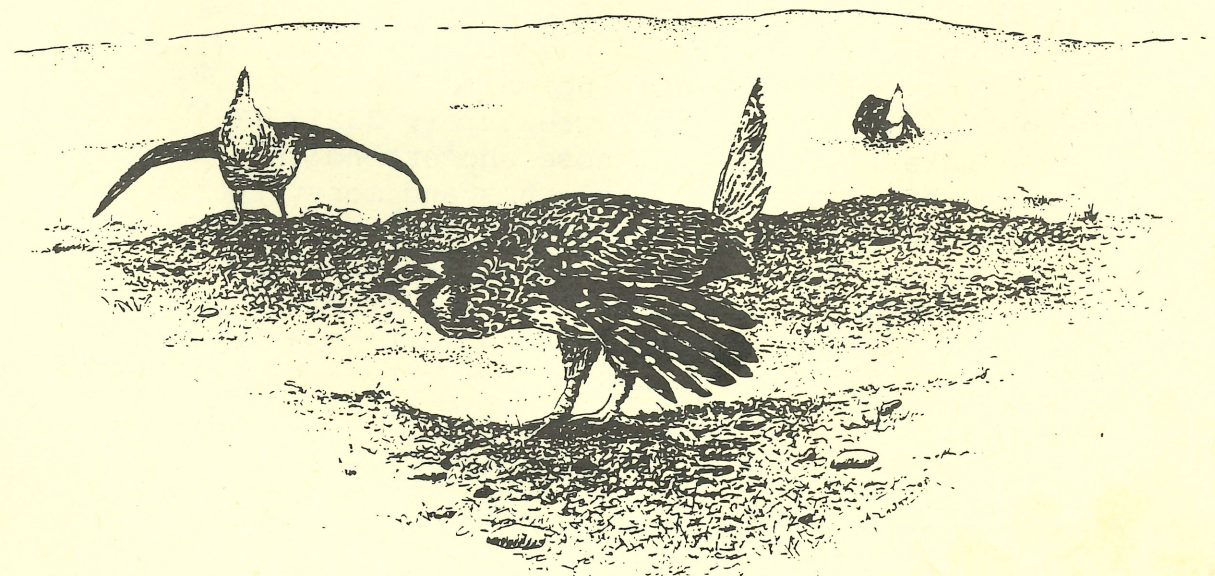
Jim Evrard, President of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (WSGS), is asking for volunteers to participate in a statewide census of displaying sharp-tailed grouse. The survey will be a joint effort between the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the WSGS.

Volunteers recruited by the WSGS will assist WDNR biologists where needed in conducting annual censuses on managed areas. In addition, volunteers will also search areas known to contain sharptails, but where the birds haven't been counted due to the lack of WDNR funds. Survey results will be used to determine the distribution and number of sharp-tailed grouse in the state. The results will also be used to set annual hunting permit numbers.

Male sharp-tailed grouse are counted from mid-April to mid-May by slowly driving roads and trails in their range, stopping every half mile or so, and listening and watching for the displaying birds. Once the birds have been located, an attempt is made to find their dancing grounds or leks. If possible, the number of displaying males are counted either by direct observation or by flush counts. The survey begins before sunrise and continues until mid-morning.

Sharp-tailed grouse live in some of the more wild landscapes remaining in Wisconsin. They share their open habitat with a multitude of interesting and exciting animals. In the pine and oak barrens of central and northwest Wisconsin, tracks of the black bear, timber wolf, and badger are seen in the sandy roads and trails. On rare occasions, a glimpse of these shy creatures in a reward for sharptail counters. Birds sharing the open barrens include the harrier, clay-colored sparrow, and eastern kingbird.

Anyone interested in participating in the sharptail survey contact Jim Evrard, 630 N. Pine St., Grantsburg, WI 54840, (715)463-2446, evrardsc@grantsburgtelcom.net.



ART RAFFLE

This year the grand prize for our annual art raffle is different than in the past. We had an opportunity to acquire a signed set of a limited edition book and print by the Owen Gromme. Gromme died a few years ago and is considered the dean of Wisconsin wildlife artists.

The large print, framed by Wild Wings, is titled "Bobwhites" and features a covey of quail in the snow on and around a split rail fence underneath spreading white pines. The Marshall and Isley Bank of Milwaukee owns the original painting that Gromme completed in 1967.

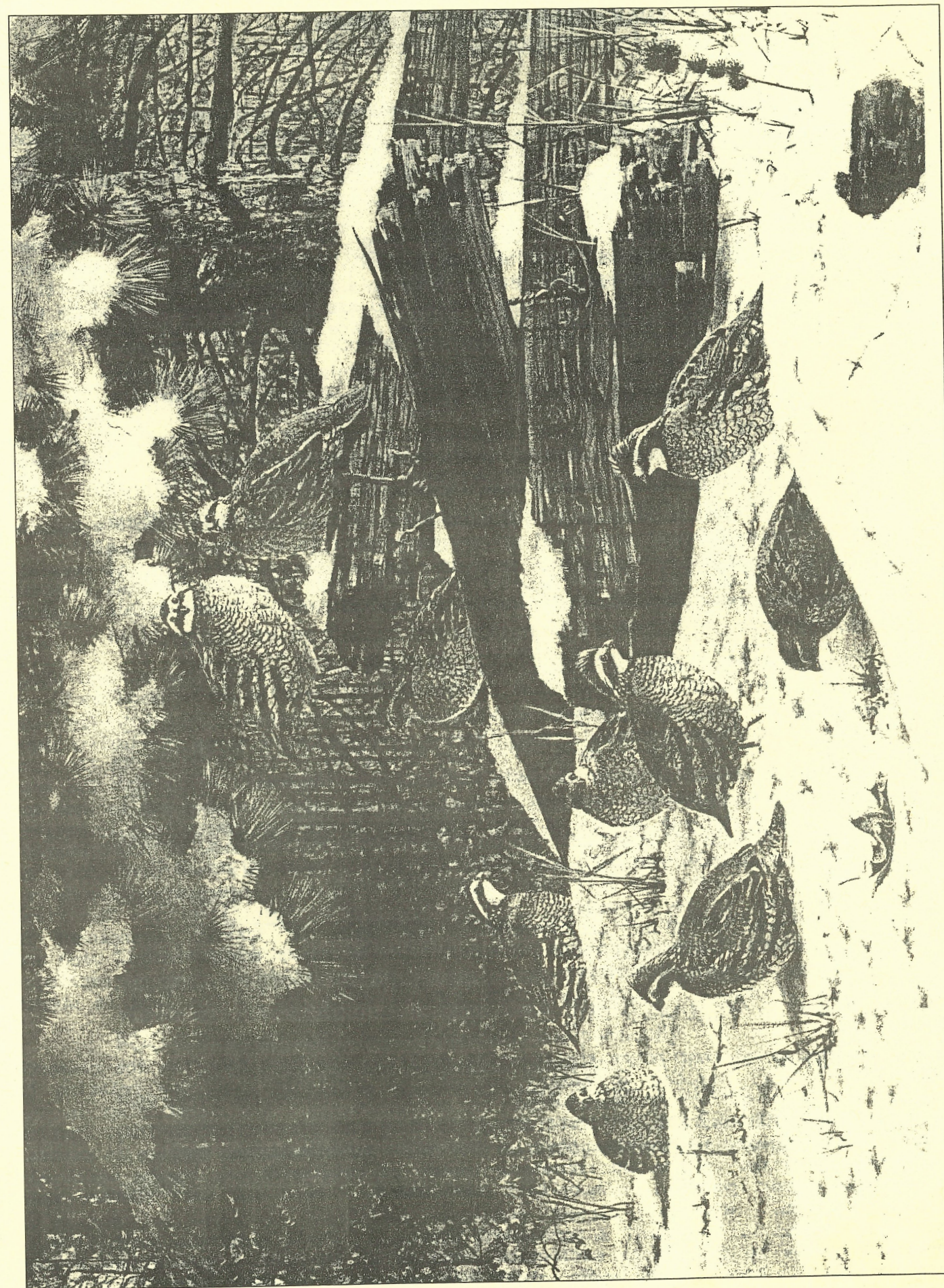
The coffee-table-sized book is titled "The World of Owen Gromme" and features over 250 color reproductions of Gromme's paintings and accompanying text. The book is bound in leather and is protected by a leather-covered slipcase.

What makes the set unique is that both the book and the print are signed by Gromme and have matching limited edition numbers (918/950).

The second raffle prize is a framed and signed limited edition of sharp-tailed grouse by Louis Raymer titled "Spring Dance at Crex". This colorful print features several sharptails in their spring mating displays and has been offered in past art raffles.

The third prize is a framed black and white print of a dancing male sharptail by Karen Smith, the manager of the Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota.

Ticket Prices - Raffle ticket prices are: 1 for \$5, 3 tickets for \$10, and/or 10 tickets for \$20. Please print your name and the name of the ticket purchaser, if different, on each side of the tickets sold. If you cannot attend the annual meeting, send the ticket stubs and money to Paul Hayes, WSGS Treasurer, 33212 120th St., Twin Lakes, WI 53181. Those who attend the meeting can bring their ticket stubs and money to the annual meeting. You need not be present to win. If you need more tickets, contact Dave Evenson, WSGS, Box 1115, Cumberland, WI 54829. Remember that proceeds from the art raffle provide our organization with much of our annual operating funds.



Gromme framed, numbered and signed print with "matching" book.

From September of 1940 through 1942, the Wisconsin Conservation Department conducted a grouse research project that was financed with both state and federal wildlife funds. Its objective was to develop an information bank about all Wisconsin grouse species that could be used for management of grouse habitats. Wallace Grange was the project leader. The project was intended to run for 5 years, but was disrupted by World War II.

A final report was completed in 1943 just prior to Grange's entry in the Navy Seabees. After his return from military service in 1947, Grange extensively revised and updated his 1943 report, which was published in 1948 as a 318-page hard-cover book titled "Wisconsin Grouse Problems." At that time Grange had his own extensive game farm near Babcock in Wood County, which he later sold to the State and is now well-known as the Sandhill Wildlife Area.

Grange and his assistants studied all Wisconsin grouse - sharptails, prairie chickens, ruffed grouse and spruce grouse. They recorded information on population cycles, diseases, food habits, predation, migration, sounds and performances, and habitat requirements. They undertook experimental management, prescribed burning, and developed management recommendations. Here are some of Grange's more interesting quotes:

"The prairie chicken in Wisconsin is a doomed species. It will pass from the hunting picture within a few decades at most, and may become extinct in the state after 1967.... The sharp-tail in Wisconsin is similarly doomed as a hunted species but is apt to persist longer as a rare species. It may conceivably survive another 5 decades, but again in the absence of adequate management techniques or of widespread fire, it inevitably will go on the rare and none-hunted bird list...."

"Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Specifications: Size- Minimum land area needed, about 2,000 acres. Larger blocking is desirable. It is believed that lesser acreage would not support sharptails through both the high and the low of a cycle.... Location- Any land area in central or northern Wisconsin. Soil Type- A combination of soils, including light sandy uplands and peat or muck lowlands. Heavier upland soils can be used, but the rate of plant succession is so rapid as to involve additional expense. Drainage- The area should include some well-drained land and some of the bog type. It need not include any source of free water, such as lake or stream. Contour- No sharply limited specification. Preferably flat to moderately rolling. Land History- Formerly forested or now forested. It may or may not have been burned in the past. Objective- Upon this land to produce the combination of plant growth which will permit sharptail occupancy, increase and abundance. All other objectives to be secondary. Plant Arrangement Specifications- The first specification is one of plant arrangement. The final or desired arrangement is prevaillingly open. In gross appearance it presents long views across sedge, weed and herbacious covering dotted with innumerable clumps and groves of shrubs, bushes, saplings, and some larger trees.... Sharptails seldom survive where 75% of the land is wooded (closed in); reach abundance where only 25% to 50% is so covered"

"...Wisconsin and most other states still dwell in the Dark Ages, as the research man sees the matter, insofar as making use of the available knowledge relating to successful wildlife and forest management is concerned.... The first step in the enlightenment of public opinion is fact-finding, of which the present grouse investigation and those which preceded it are examples.... The major prairie grouse problem in central and northern Wisconsin is the environmental impact of reforestation, beside which all other factors appear puny.... Sharp-tail management... need not wait further upon exhaustive research. Wisconsin already possesses sufficient technical information on habitat requirements... to permit a management start.... Shall Wisconsin permit the... sharp-tailed grouse to decline to extinction sometime in the next 2 generations by our default, or shall we here and now begin actual land management in their behalf?"

WSGS PLANS MOVE

By Jim Evrard

The Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (WSGS) plans to move its permanent address from Cumberland to Grantsburg. Since the inception of the WSGS in 1990, the permanent address for our group has been the personal post office box of Dave Evenson, the founder of the WSGS and present newsletter editor.

Communications between WSGS officers scattered around the state and Dave in Cumberland has been difficult at times, especially without the help of paid staff. The all-volunteer Board can't always respond to member's needs and inquiries in a prompt manner. Dave single-handedly puts together the newsletters, addresses them, and puts them in the mail, an incredible job by any measure. And our group and group needs continue to grow.

Recognizing these limitations, the Board decided to approach the Friends of Crex (FOC) with a proposition seeking administrative support for the WSGS in exchange for financial support of the FOC. The FOC has a paid director who will soon move into the brand new Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center in Grantsburg. The Center will be state-of-the-art including desktop computer publishing abilities. The building will also be manned five to seven days a week throughout the year.

The WSGS Board asked the FOC Board if we (the WSGS) could use their address as our permanent address, assuring that our mail will be opened on a near-daily basis. WSGA inquiries by telephone or computer could also be responded to promptly. The FOC would help us in the production and distribution of our newsletter. There would be space in the new building to store our files, display board, and other materials. We would have a permanent facility for our meetings. In exchange, the WSGS will reimburse the FOC for the costs of their director's labor, and any materials used in WSGS business.

The proposed "marriage" is logical since Crex Meadows is the home to the largest managed population of sharp-tailed grouse in Wisconsin. Sharptails are part of the official logo of the FOC. The affiliation of the WSGS will support the FOC in many ways. However, the WSGS and the FOC will remain independent financially and politically.

The Memorandum of Agreement between the WSGS and the FOC was signed on January 13, 2002. The actual change of address and permanent home will occur later this year when the Crex Education Center is opened and operational. This will be discussed further at our annual meeting.

WHY SHARPTAILS DISAPPEARED FROM POWELL MARSH

By Jim Evrard

A man from the Mercer area recently called me after seeing my request for volunteers to census sharptails that appeared in the Badger Birder, the newsletter of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology. He didn't offer to volunteer his services, but stated that I should learn why sharptails disappeared in southern Iron County.

He asked me if I knew Powell Marsh. I said I did, but he never waited for more explanation and immediately launched into an anti-DNR tirade. He claimed that on four or five occasions, he saw sharptails killed in the prescribed burns that the DNR used to manage Powell Marsh. He said as pine trees would flame up in the process of burning (i.e. crown), flocks of sharptails would fly into the burning pine and would all be incinerated.

When I heard that, I knew he was either drunk or kooky. As a DNR wildlife manager, I saw sharptails in the Powell Marsh in the early 1970s,. The only reason sharptails were there (and still might be there) was the DNR's prescribed burning program which stopped or even pushed back plant succession in the large wetlands. Without burning or some other disturbance, the sedge marshes would eventually grow into black spruce-tamarack swamps, eliminating the open sharptail habitat.

During my career as a wildlife manager and researcher, I was present at hundreds of prescribed burns in sharptail habitat, and never saw or even heard of a sharptail being burned. I also read all the known research and management studies and results on sharptails and burning and never heard of sharptails flying into burning trees and being burned up.

This is a prime example of what I call bar room or coffee shop biology. Someone dreams up a wild tale, tells it to others, and the tall tale is repeated often enough until it is accepted as the

truth. Anti-DNR embellishment only helps the lies being accepted as facts.

Other tales of seeing the DNR trucking timber wolves south and deer north or some other crazy story are much the same. When attempting to verify the observations, the person usually claims he or she didn't actually see the event, but heard it from someone whose relative or friend saw it or heard of it, etc. Dates and locations of the observations are equally difficult to pin down.

The Mercer man also said the DNR planted all the open, fallow agricultural fields southeast of Mercer to pines, forcing the sharptails out. On this issue, he was accurate. Forestry has been and still is responsible for the destruction of sharptail habitat, either by planting pines or controlling wild fires.

The Forest Management Bureau of the DNR's Forestry Division basically manages county and state forests along with promoting trees on private land. Their Fire Control Bureau is responsible for preventing wild fires. The combination of pine plantations on public and private land and the control of wild fires have eliminated almost all of the sharptail habitat in northern and central Wisconsin.

The few sharptails we have left are found on special management areas, a few large bogs, and open private land not yet planted to trees. It is ironic that these remaining sharptails are due to the DNR's Wildlife Management Bureau activities.

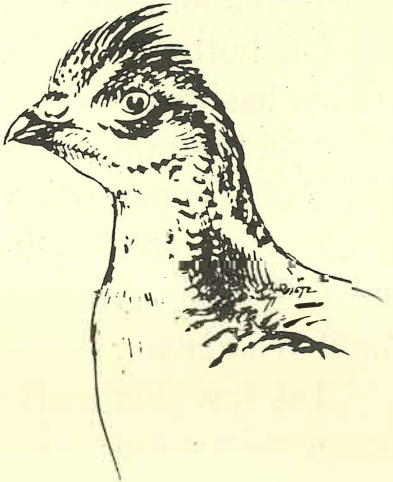
The man from Mercer concluded his call with another anti-DNR tirade, this time about not been given a permit to evidently dam a trout stream to create private ponds. So when the telephone rings, I never know who will be calling or what the message is, but it makes life interesting!

WSGS Financial report 1/17/00

Checking Account First Star Bank	\$6,784.97
Savings Account Charter Bank Eau Claire	\$1,979.48
Cash on hand	\$85.00
Balance	\$8,849.45

Summary of annual meeting 2001

INCOME		EXPENSES	
51 registrations @ \$15.00	\$765.00	art and framing	\$280.96
art raffle	\$640.00	dinner	\$528.05
		breakfast	\$75.00
		clubhouse	\$25.00
		meeting room	\$75.00
	\$1,405.00		\$984.01
net income from annual meeting	\$420.99		



OTHER STATE HUNTING PROPOSALS

Minnesota DNR has proposed the first prairie chicken hunt in 60 years. This proposed hunt will take place in 2003 if the legislative approval is given. This hunt will be similar to our sharp-tailed grouse hunt in that there will be a lottery for a limited number of permits, so as to prevent over-harvest.

In the Michigan Sharptailed Grouse Association Newsletter, it states that Michigan DNR gave consideration to a sharptail hunting season as early as this fall. Concerns by people within Michigan DNR, USFS, and the MSGA themselves put the proposal on hold. MSGA is attempting to set up a methodology of surveys and harvest control so that this may be able to proceed in future years.

CANDIDATES FOR ELECTION TO THE WSGS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jim Evrard

I'm a retired DNR wildlife manager and research biologist now pursuing a second career as an outdoor/conservation writer. I'm a WSGS charter member and first became a board member in 1991 as a volunteer and was first elected to the board in 1993, serving as Secretary-Treasurer 1995-1999 and President 2000-present. I've been active in many WSGS activities including restoring the sharptail hunting season and organizing pine barrens/sharptail workshops and annual meetings at Solon Springs and Ashland.

I'm seeking reelection to the Board for another term and hope to continue as your President. We will continue our organization's effective lobbying on behalf of the sharp-tailed grouse and seek partners for future habitat projects. An important future project in which I'm involved is the 2003 Prairie Grouse Technical Council meeting in northwest Wisconsin. I would appreciate your support for another three-year term to the WSGS Board of Directors.

Ed Frank

I worked with Wisconsin upland game birds for the DNR for 33 years before retiring in 1991. I have a cabin in Washburn County and enjoy April through November visits to nearby Barrens that support sharp-tailed grouse. I offer to do what I can do to keep pine-oak barrens and sharp-tailed grouse as part of Wisconsin's wildlife heritage.

I was elected to the WSGS Board of Directors in 1996 and served as President from 1997 to 2000. I have been actively involved in the effort to maintain sharptails in Central Wisconsin. I am placing my name in nomination for re-election to the Board of Directors for another three-year term.

Blair Klein

I was raised in St. Paul, Minnesota and St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin. I moved to Wyoming in 1971 where I practiced law and served as a part-time judge until 1999. I returned to St. Croix Falls in 2000 and made it my permanent residence. I live and work at Big Rock Creek Farm, a 1600-acre parcel that has been in my family since 1920.

My particular interest in Wisconsin sharptails stems from my conviction that habitat enlargement and enhancement can and will lead to increased populations. I do not hunt sharpies in Wisconsin for personal reasons, hunting instead in Saskatchewan, Montana, North Dakota, and other western states. My experience in the 1970s as a National Trustee and Vice President of Ducks Unlimited has given me a perspective on the necessity for habitat improvement and the wide variety of methods for accomplishing major projects. I am very eager to participate fully in the WSGS programs and activities.

BALLOT - WSGS BOARD
(vote for 3 members)

(MAIL IN OR BRING TO ANNUAL MEETING)

_____ Jim Evrard

_____ Blair Klein

_____ Ed Frank

_____ Write-in

**PLEASE CHECK THE DATE ON YOUR MAILING LABEL BELOW
TO DETERMINE IF YOU ARE PAID UP.**

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

(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

Thank you for your continued support,
Board of Directors

**PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO AND RETURN THIS APPLICATION TO: Wisconsin
Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, P.O. Box 1115, Cumberland, WI 54829**

Volunteer Activities

_____ Board of Directors Address:

_____ Newsletter Writing

_____ Bird census work

_____ Publicity

_____ Education

_____ Fund Raising

_____ Four color cloth patch (\$3.50 postage inc.)

_____ Deluxe corduroy dress cap (\$14.00 postage inc.)

_____ WSGS logo window sticker (\$1.50 postage inc.)

_____ Total amount enclosed

WSGS

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Cumberland, WI 54829

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4/1/02