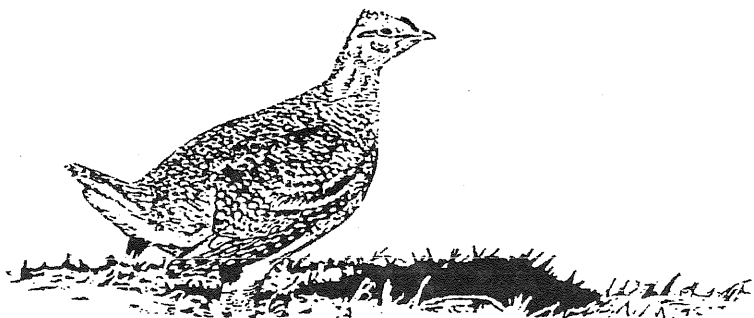


WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 44

Spring 2005

PLAN TO ATTEND THE SHARPTAIL WORKSHOP

The sharptail workshop will take place on Tuesday and Wednesday, March 29 and 30 in the Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center in Grantsburg. The Crex Center is the permanent home of our organization.

The purpose of the workshop is to update our knowledge about the sharptail in our state in preparation for the rewrite of the DNR's Sharp-tailed Grouse Management Plan. The workshop will also focus public attention on the plight of the sharptail in Wisconsin.

The workshop will begin at 1 p.m. on Tuesday. The afternoon session will feature the history and ecology of the sharptail in Wisconsin including habitat fragmentation and effects on genetics and hunting impacts. Planned

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speakers include Stan Temple, professor from the UW-Madison, and Bruce Swanson from the Central Michigan University. Possible speakers include Larry Gregg, retired DNR researcher and Tim Connolly, who did his graduate research on sharptails in northwest Wisconsin. Following the presentations, a social and catered dinner will be held in the Crex Center.

The workshop will resume the following morning with presentations by panels of sharptail managers that will focus on the status and future of the sharptail and its habitat in their respective management areas. The panels will be divided based upon geographical location and habitat type (sands, heavy soils, etc.).

The \$20 registration fee will cover food and drink at the morning and afternoon breaks, the social, the catered dinner, and registration materials. The WSGS has received a \$500 grant from the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative to help defray workshop costs. In addition to nearby motel accommodations, free rustic housing is available at the adjacent Crex Meadows Headquarters complex.

To register for the workshop, contact the WSGS during the day at Box 367, Grantsburg, WI 54840 or call (715)463-2739 or in the evenings, call Jim Evrard at (715)463-2446 or email "evrardsc@grantsburgtelcom.net".

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Dave Evenson



In Mid-February I attended a retirement party for my good friend and wild-life manager compadre Bruce Moss. Many of the attendees were wildlife managers, and many of the conversations were about deer management. I remember well the deer meetings and quota discussions of late winter. Those meetings are always well attended, and always full of passion (and heat!). Reading any issue of *Wisconsin Outdoor News* at this time of year, you'll find a heavy majority of the Letters to the Editor address the management of this abundant game animal

I contrast that critter's following with our critter's stature. Certainly we'll never see thousands of people writing letters, attending meetings and holding strong opinions regarding sharptails. In reading this, you are one of the several hundred passionate followers of the sharp-tailed grouse in Wisconsin. I'm not sure that I'd even want sharptails to have the recognition of whitetails, although it is an interesting picture to visualize. But I do see some positive recognition of sharptails by some thoughtful people in high places.

Legislation and funding at the federal level is leading Wisconsin to develop a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan (CWCP). Despite its title, it really addresses the middle cohort of animals, the ones whose management "falls through the cracks". Game animals have hunting fees and Endangered and Threatened species have other funding sources. The criteria for CWCP animals includes Endangered and Threatened species, but as well includes species at risk because of threats to their life history needs or habitats. And guess what, in Wisconsin sharp-tailed grouse are on that list. The funding pot is small thus far, but a huge nationwide coalition is in place to continue to ask for funding for these neglected species.

In the same vein, two of the first small grants from the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative recognized sharp-tailed grouse. Michele Windsor, wildlife biologist at Black River Falls received a grant to do an intensive survey of the sharptails scattered throughout Jackson County (you can volunteer to help!). And Jim Evrard wrote up a request on behalf of WSGS to help hold the Management Workshop on March 29-30, which was also funded. Little victories among thoughtful policy makers and biologists are welcome indeed.

WSGS OFFICERS

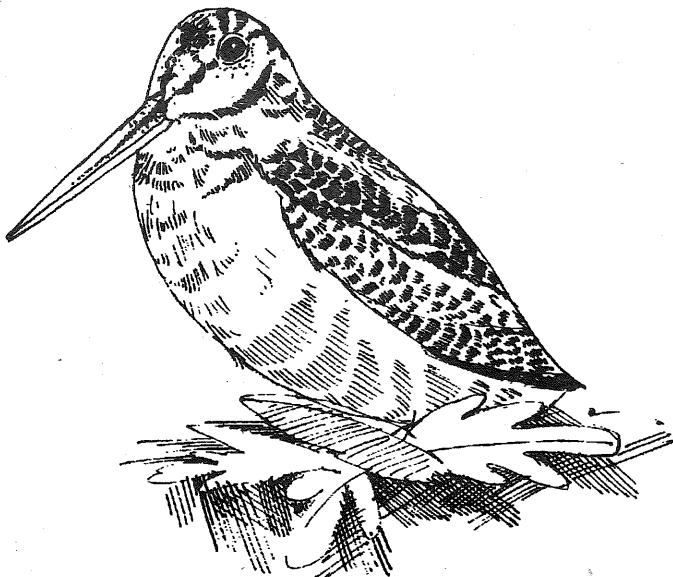
President: Dave Evenson

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Treasurer: Jim Evrard

Board Members: Bob Dreis
Ed Frank
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Jim Wilson

Newsletter Editor: Jim Evrard



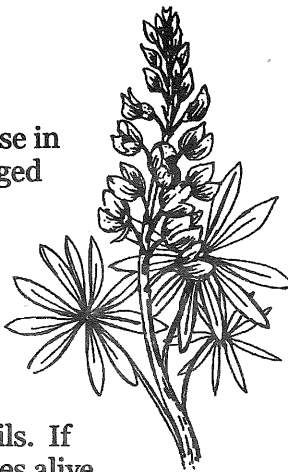
VOLUNTEERS AGAIN NEEDED
FOR SHARPTAIL SURVEY

The WSGS, in cooperation with the DNR, will again count displaying sharp-tailed grouse in Wisconsin this spring. Volunteers are needed to help DNR biologists in censusing managed properties and to count birds in areas not covered by the DNR.

The census period is from early April to mid-May. The biologists provide maps of census areas and the forms and instructions for the survey. The WSGS recruits volunteers and helps in the survey where possible. The DNR is the permanent repository for the survey information collected that is used to determine the distribution and numbers of displaying sharptails. This information is needed each year to set the number of hunting permits available every fall.

For the last several years, about a dozen or so WSGS volunteers have censused sharptails. If you enjoy roaming Wisconsin's wild open lands in the spring when the land again becomes alive after a long dead winter, please become a volunteer sharptail "counter". You'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you personally had a hand in the management of this unique bird.

For those who have volunteered in the past, contact your DNR biologist directly. For new volunteers, contact Jim Evrard at 630 N. Pine St., Grantsburg, WI 54840 (715)463-2446 "evrardsc@grantsburgtelcom.net"



COME TO THE ANNUAL MEETING

By Jim Evrard

This is an invitation for WSGS members and friends to attend our annual meeting this year in Solon Springs on Saturday and Sunday, April 23 and 24 (in the last newsletter the dates were incorrectly listed as April 24 and 25).

On Saturday, the dull-to-some-people business meeting in the lower level of the St. Croix Inn lasts only two to three hours and the balance of the afternoon and evening is devoted to door and art raffle prize drawings, socializing, eating a scrumptious catered dinner at the historic field trial building at the nearby Douglas County Wildlife Area, and finally, for gregarious night owls, more socializing back at the St. Croix Inn Pub. The meeting resumes early the next morning with a sharptail census in the wilds of northwest Wisconsin for those adventurous members, ending in a debriefing brunch in the lower room of the St. Croix Inn.

For only a measley \$20 registration fee, each person will receive afternoon break refreshments, a chance to win a door prize, abundant munchies and liquid refreshments at the evening social, a delicious grilled steak dinner in a unique log building complete with a crackling fire in the stone fireplace, and a great brunch served overlooking the beautiful St. Croix Lake. The meeting is also an opportunity to meet fellow members and sharptail enthusiasts and the varied, but interesting (I think!) characters that make up your board of directors.

A block of rooms have been reserved at the St. Croix Inn, but you must make your own reservation (715-378-2287). To make meeting reservations, fill out the form below and send to me.

(detach and send with registration fee)

REGISTRATION 2005 WSGS ANNUAL MEETING

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Make check/money order (\$20/person) payable to the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society and send along with registration form to:
Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society
Box 267
Grantsburg, WI 54840

2005 ART RAFFLE

The annual art raffle is again being conducted as it remains the biggest fund raiser for our organization. The raffle will again include three framed limited edition prints of sharp-tailed grouse.

The first raffle prize is a sold-out edition print by the late Owen Gromme, considered the dean of Wisconsin wildlife artists. The beautiful colored print is titled, Sharptails on the Rise, and features two sharptails flying in an aspen parkland reminiscent of the Pershing Wildlife Area in Taylor County. The value of Gromme prints has skyrocketed. When Wild Wings was contacted this past fall to inquire if the Gromme sharptail print was available, they said the price of the prints had increased 300% in the last four years!

The second prize is a colorful print by Minnesota artist Louie Raymer titled Spring Dance at Crex. Several male sharptails are shown dancing in a thinly-vegetated lek in the brush prairie of Crex Meadows. This print was donated to the WSGS by the Friends of Crex and is the basis for their logo.

The final prize is a black and white print of the dancing male sharptail drawn by Karen Smith, the long-time manager of the Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota. The WSGS acquired copies of this print from the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society.

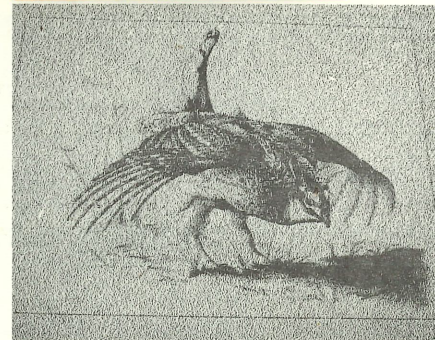
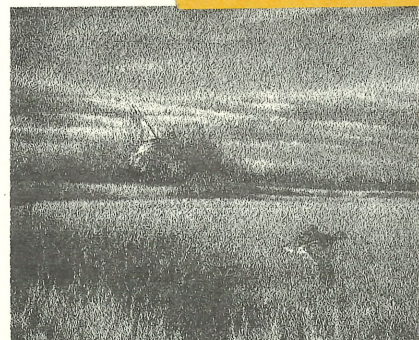
The raffle ticket is printed below. Those wishing to enter the raffle should detach the colored "Drop this ticket in a proper place" portion(s) of the tickets, place your name and address on the reverse side, and send them with your donation to : WSGS, Box 367, Grantsburg, WI 54840. Keep the WSGS Annual Art Raffle Ticket and the attached colored "Keep this Coupon" portion(s) for your records.

WSGS ANNUAL ART RAFFLE TICKET

This raffle is being offered by the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, Box 367, Grantsburg, WI 54840. Wisconsin raffle license R0016707A-02373

The raffle drawing will be conducted at our annual meeting at 4 p.m., April 23, 2005 in the St. Croix Inn, Solon Springs, Wisconsin. Ticket holders need not be present to win. No prize has a value exceeding \$500.

Suggested donation is \$10 per ticket or \$20 for three tickets. No purchase or donation is necessary to be eligible for participation.



THE DNR AND SHARP-TAILS NEED YOUR HELP!

By: Jim Evrard

This article represents my views and not necessarily those of the WSGS.

In 35 years fighting for Wisconsin sharp-tails, I never saw the future look so bleak for the DNR and sharp-tailed grouse in our state.

Two years ago the Wisconsin Legislature chose not to approve all Governor Doyle's requested increases in hunting and fishing license fees. The resident deer-hunting license, which provides the bulk of the DNR's money for the law enforcement and fish and wildlife management programs, was not increased. Legislative leaders boasted about saving deer hunters money, likening user fees to taxes.

Some of these politicians who would like nothing better than having the DNR disappear, opening the door for a raid on our natural resources by greedy business interests. There is another group of politicians who like to use the DNR as a whipping boy for selfish political purposes. These politicians spew forth misinformation about the DNR in efforts to weaken the agency to benefit their big campaign contributors.

Two years ago, the operating budget for the Crex Meadows wildlife management complex was cut to only 40% of the previous year and then restored to 60% this year. The only reason that some management activities have continued on Crex is that Pete Engman, the Crex Manager, has been very effective in obtaining grants and other donations. However, this funding is not dependable.

This year, the Governor again approved the proposed DNR license fee increases and sent them to the Legislature for approval. The major increase will be the resident deer hunting license from the present \$20 to \$32.

This license was last increased nine years ago. We all know that our costs and wages have increased in the past nine years.

Without the proposed fee increases, the DNR's segregated fish and game fund will face a \$20 million deficit. With a deficit that huge, there probably will be no DNR money for sharp-tailed grouse management.

Crex Meadows has the largest managed population of sharptails in Wisconsin. All but two of the other special sharptail management areas in the state also are funded by the DNR. The future of the entire DNR sharptail management program depends upon the approval of the license fee increases.

What can WSGS members do to avert this disaster? Call, write, or contact your state representative and senator and tell them to support the Governor's proposed license fee increases.

The main concern of our elected officials is re-election. They listen to their constituents especially if there is a large group of voters asking them to take a particular position on an issue.

Your local newspaper generally prints the names, numbers, and addresses of the politicians who represent you. Making a telephone call or sending an email message is relatively easy and painless. Writing letters, while more time consuming, is also very effective.

Take the time to contact your representative and senator, the future of sharp-tailed grouse in Wisconsin is at stake!



AFIELD WITH ZIGGY

(an unedited treat from your Vice-President)

SHARPTAIL HUNTING IN THE GOPHER STATE OR "DON'T FORGET YOUR HIP BOOTS!"

By Thomas Ziegeweid

For the past thirty years I have made my annual trek to the Thief Lake Wildlife Management Area located in northwestern Minnesota. This area is one of the greatest places on earth in my estimation. Abundant public land is available with primitive campsites, along with a plethora of wildlife both watchable and huntable.

The farmers are generally cooperative to hunters for private access, and the Minnesota DNR staff are the best. Key species available are deer, waterfowl, ruffed grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, and woodcock. If you are fortunate, you may spot a timber wolf, moose, or elk.

The last few years I have done some extensive sharptail hunting north of Thief Lake in the Caribou WMA. The area is dominated by an aspen parkland habitat type not unlike southeastern Manitoba which is just three miles north of where I hunt. The Nature Conservancy recently purchased a sizable number of private parcels of land in and around Caribou and have been doing extensive burning. The landscape has really opened up!

Any further discussion of sharptail hunting in Minnesota should be clarified with this note: Minnesota sharptails like to get their feet wet, whereas Wisconsin birds are generally on sandy dry sites. This fact only reinforces the wide variety of habitats that sharptails inhabit on this continent, provided the landscape is relatively open and the blocks of open land are large. Minnesota has no shortage of large blocks of open land.

I hunted sharptails at Caribou WMA four days and bagged four birds. One of the days I shot two birds and came close to a three bird limit.

Yes, you better bring your hip boots! Last October I needed chest waders to ford some of the extensive ditches in the area, that are literally sharptail magnets. The ditch berms and roadsides are great feeding areas, as they were disturbed recently and have an abundance of wild rose hips and poison ivy berries.

Despite bad hatches the last few years due to torrential rains during the nesting season, the birds have fared well and this area should have abundant birds in the future. Northwestern Minnesota is one of the bright spots in current sharptail management in the Midwest.

Soooo drive on up to Kittson County, stop at DNR office in Karlstad and they will provide you with maps and info.

P.S. - "What do Sharptails Feed On?"

Every grouse I bag gets a thorough crop examination upon cleaning. What I have found is sharptails eat pretty much the same items as ruffed grouse.

Sharpies love rose hips (Vitamin C, etc.), poison ivy berries, and various legume leaves like clover and alfalfa, also sweet clover.

Ruffies prefer buds (popple, gray dogwood), wintergreen berries, and the above mentioned legume leaves.

I have found acorns in both. Ruffies will eat corn "chewings" left by squirrels. Sharpies will also do barley and sunflower seeds if available.

One of the birds I bagged in Minnesota last fall was a juvenile male who had gorged himself on bugs. This made sense as young growing birds are mostly insectivorous and change over to a vegetable diet in fall. This bird was chucked full of grasshopper and catydid (Orthoptera) and dragonfly larvae (Odonata) that were pre-emergent juveniles. He had to be picking them out of water in the ditch.

Ziggy

SHARPTAIL HABITAT THREATENED

By Jim Evrard

All Wisconsin counties are now in the process of updating and rewriting the ten-year management plans for their county forests. In an earlier newsletter, I reported that I had represented the WSGS at a meeting that was part of the process of rewriting the Burnett County Forest Plan.

I've been informed that a part of that draft plan is out for review, but has changed very little from the previous management plan. This is disturbing but I'll withhold judgment until I can see the entire draft plan.

A more disturbing problem is an apparent effort by the new Bayfield County Forest Administrator to change the Bayfield County Forest Plan to eliminate the system of quarter-mile wide fuel breaks and big block management scheme in the Bayfield County Forest north of Barnes.

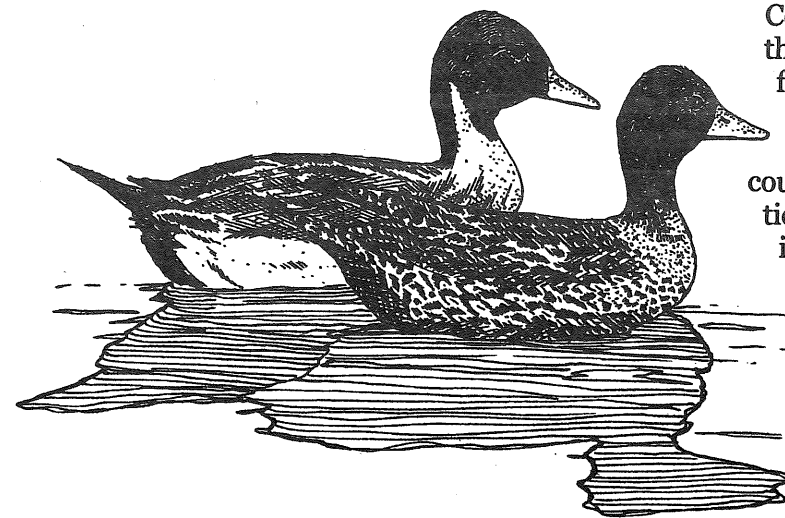
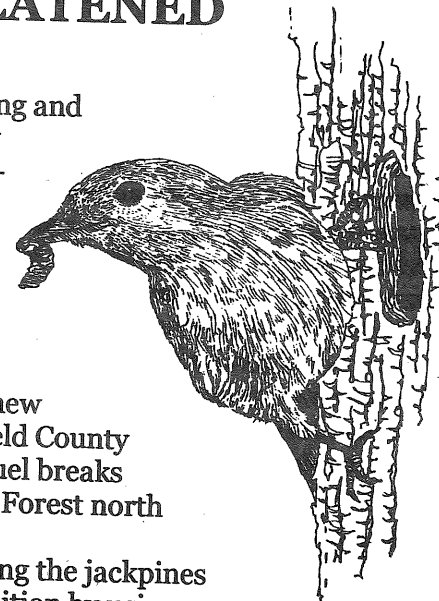
These fuel breaks were developed over time by clearcutting the jackpines and maintaining the breaks in an open grassy-brushy condition by using prescribed burning. The objective of the fuel breaks is to prevent crown wild fires by forcing the fire from the treetops to the ground where it could be slowed and stopped. Much time and money has been spent by foresters and wildlife managers in the past to develop these fuel breaks.

Why would wildlife managers be involved? The present fuel breaks are large enough to support sharptails. Sharptail dancing grounds are presently found in the fuel breaks and the fuel breaks also provide sharptail hunting. Many other wildlife and plant species common to the very rare pine barrens habitat also call the fuel breaks home.

Big block management (combining small clearcut pine areas into larger clearcuts) also benefits open-loving wildlife and plants by creating temporary habitat around permanent core habitat such as the fuel breaks.

The motivation to eliminate the fuel breaks is apparently money. More income could be realized if the open fuel breaks were planted to pine plantations. It is another example of forestry interests placing more emphasis on wood production than on the other multiple management values such as wildlife and recreation.

Contact the county forest officials in the counties where sharptails are found and tell them to practice true multiple management in the county forests. Although the county forests are owned by the counties, the whole county forest system is heavily subsidized by the State of Wisconsin and management of these forests is the rightful concern of all Wisconsin citizens.



SURVEYORS NEEDED FOR JACKSON COUNTY SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SURVEY



This year Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources wildlife staff is attempting to survey most of eastern Jackson County's current and historical range for sharp-tailed grouse.

Now is no better time to get a comprehensive survey done for STG in Jackson County. The county forest, and soon to follow, the Black River State Forest will be completing their 10-year management plans. A complete census of population numbers and locations can help guide future management of the forests to benefit STG as well as other grassland and barren species.

The Department is seeking volunteers to help canvass Jackson County this spring in search of STG. If you would be interested in helping out, please contact Michele Windsor at (715) 284-1403.

BOARD ELECTION

The terms of WSGS board members, Jim Evrard, Ed Frank, and Blair Klein, expire this year and nominations were sought for the three-year terms for the three positions. Jim, Ed, and Blair are seeking reelection and no other nominations were received.

Jim Evrard is a retired DNR biologist living in Grantsburg and is a charter member of the WSGS. He first became a board member in 1991 and served as Secretary-Treasurer 1995-1999, President 2000-2003, and again Secretary-Treasurer 2004-present. He is also presently serving as newsletter editor.

Ed Frank is also a retired DNR biologist who lives in Madison and has a cabin in Washburn County. Ed was first elected to the board in 1996 and served as President from 1997 to 1999. He represents the WSGS in state government proceedings and in conservation organizations and is interested in maintaining sharptails in central Wisconsin.

Blair Klein was raised in Minnesota but moved to Wyoming as a lawyer in 1971. He moved to Wisconsin in 2000 to manage a large family farm near St. Croix Falls. Blair was first elected to the board in 2002. He has hunted sharptails throughout the western U.S. and Canada and has been involved in several conservation organizations including being a national DU trustee.

BALLOT - WSGS BOARD (vote for three)

Jim Evrard _____

Ed Frank _____

Blair Klein _____

Write in _____

(mail to WSGS, Box 367, Grantsburg, WI 54840)

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

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, PO Box 367, Grantsburg, WI 54840

WSGS
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Grantsburg, WI 54840

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