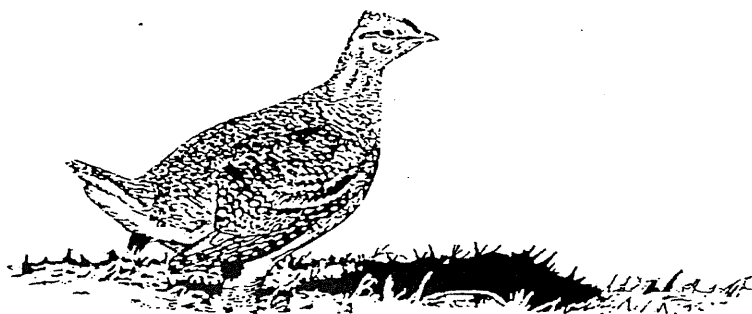


WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 67

Spring 2013

2013 JOINT ANNUAL MEETING WITH MSGS

The 2013 annual meeting of the WSGS will be held jointly with the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (MSGs) on Friday and Saturday, April 26 and 27 at the Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center, Grantsburg.

Meeting registration will begin on Friday at 8:30 AM. Technical sharptail presentations by agency and academic personnel will begin at 9:00 AM. Following a catered lunch, a field trip will highlight habitat management and conditions in Crex Meadows and adjacent areas. There will be a social and a catered banquet Friday night along offerings of a raffle for framed sharptail art prints and a silent auction, both fund raising events for the WSGS and the MSGS.

Optional early morning Saturday field trips will be offered. Breakfast is on your own, but coffee and rolls will be provided at 8:30 AM. The formal meeting will resume at 9:00 AM, featuring less technical presentations. After a catered lunch, separate business meetings of both groups will be held following the drawing for the art prints and determining the silent auction high bidders.

A block of rooms has been reserved for the evening of April 26 at the Wood River Motel in Grantsburg at a rate of \$56 for one or two people. Please make your own reservations (#715-463-2541).

For the more adventurous, there are rustic heated bunkhouses and small cabins as well as heated restrooms and showers available without charge at the Crex Meadows Headquarters complex. For first-come-first-serve reservations, call #715-463-2739. Additional motels are available in Siren, 15 miles east of Grantsburg.

To pre-register, complete the enclosed form and return with fees to: WSGS, 102 E. Crex Ave., Grantsburg, WI 54840.

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FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

By Dave Evenson

You may have gotten the hint that I’ve gone cuckoo over Gordon MacQuarrie from my last column. Some of my friends know it even more so. This column will be a compilation of a bunch of unrelated sharptail tidbits I’ve picked up looking at musty old magazines and on line sites as I’ve searched for Old Duck Hunter Association Inc. items.

Field and Stream, January 1940: “Late in the 1880’s and into the 90’s at least 146 sharptails (and probably many more) were released in Massachusetts. They did not thrive. A few from Alberta were released in Connecticut in 1924 and were said to hang around for a while, but eventually they vanished completely.”

Milwaukee Journal,. Florence Wis., September 13, 1915-Special: “Emerson Hough of Chicago, the author, has been visiting here. He spent several days hunting prairie chickens with friends.” (Emerson Hough was a writer of western novels. This note appeared in the society pages back when there were such things.)

Milwaukee Journal Right off the Reel. October 4, 1936: “Dr. Wm. Hornaday, noted conservationist listed extinct and threatened bird species. Among the threatened list he included sharp-tailed grouse, butterball duck, upland plover, golden plover, woodcock, Attwater prairie chicken, greater yellowlegs, Everglades kite, California vulture, trumpeter swan and about a dozen others.” To me this is interesting-I’ve always thought of “threatened “ as being coined as a descriptor of biologic status perhaps in the 1970’s, but obviously Hornaday and MacQuarrie were using it eighty years ago.

Milwaukee Journal, October 9, 1938: “Upland game seasons open for partridge (ruffed grouse), sharptails and prairie chickens for the first time in four years. Partridge open in 27 counties and prairie grouse in 37 counties.”

Milwaukee Journal, Right off the Reel. October 20, 1940: MacQuarrie quotes the 1939 WCD Game Report. Bag reports- Bucks- 25,000, 1.3 million rabbits, including 100,000 snowshoes and 36,000 jackrabbits, squirrels-1.1 million, pheasants-1.3 million.

Winnebago County led all in duck bag at 163,000, Buffalo County on the river had 63,000 ducks and Burnett County was the best in the north with 41,000. On the other hand, when someone shot a goose or two they got their name in the paper. Partridge (ruffed grouse)-144,000, up from 80,000 in 1938, with Bayfield County at 10,000. Prairie Grouse 75,000 versus 44,000 in 1938. Best prairie grouse counties were Wood- 7,000, Marathon-5, 000. Bayfield-5,000, Douglas-4,000 and Oneida-3,000. All figures rounded to nearest 1000.

Enough of the musty stuff. Please be part of the newest thing- the first ever joint meeting of Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society and the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, April 26-27, Crex Meadows Interpretive Center. See you there!

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.

WSGS OFFICERS

President: Dave Evenson
Vice President: Tom Ziegeweid
Secretary/Treasurer: Jim Evrard

Board Members: Mike Cole Bruce Moss
Ed Frank John Probst
Paul Kooiker John Zatopa

Newsletter Editor: Jim Evrard

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

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

WSGS BOARD ELECTION

The terms of Board Members Dave Evenson, Bruce Moss and Tom Ziegeweid expire this year and all three members have agreed to again stand for election. No other nominations were received.

Retired DNR wildlife biologist Dave Evenson is our current President and was responsible for the creation of the WSGS. Dave is very generous, donating the framing for our annual wildlife print raffle and other gifts. Dave, who lives in Cumberland, is an avid waterfowler and a collector of the works of Gordon MacQuarrie.

Bruce Moss is also a retired DNR wildlife biologist, living in the Trego area. Bruce was instrumental in the creation of the Friends of the Namekagon Barrens, is a past President and is the group’s present Treasurer. Bruce is an avid hunter and enjoys hunting sharptails both in Wisconsin and North Dakota.

WSGS Past President and current Vice President, Tom “Ziggy” Ziegeweid lives in Eau Claire and recently retired, selling his business. Ziggy has been active in citizen conservation groups and is an intense gatherer of Wisconsin’s bounty of fish and game. There is little edible wildlife that doesn’t appear on his table.



BALLOT – WSGS BOARD (vote for three)

Dave Evenson _____

Bruce Moss _____

Tom Ziegeweid _____

Write in _____



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

DONATE TO NAMEKAGON BARRENS LAND EXPANSION

by Dave Evenson

Things are happening so fast on the land acquisition front that it's hard to keep up. As we wrote in the last newsletter the land trade between Burnett County Forest and DNR has brought the Namekagon Barrens and a Crex Meadows expansion into state ownership, and that's a huge deal. Now there is an opportunity to expand the Namekagon Barrens by 25 per cent, and that's where we need you.

At stake is 1478 acres of Lyme-St. Croix Forest adjacent to the east border of the Namekagon Barrens. Against the price tag of \$1,060,000 The Conservation Fund has secured a half million and there is a strong likelihood of Wisconsin Stewardship Fund matching that. The gap becomes \$60,000. Many smaller organizations and individuals need to step up to close that gap.

Nancy Cristel, Namekagon Barrens Manager has petitioned WSGS for \$5-10,000, and frankly, we don't have it in the treasury right now. In 2012 and so far in 2013 we distributed most of our treasury (\$10,000) to projects at Riley Lake, Namekagon Barrens, and Crex Meadows Wildlife Areas. The WSGS Board feels we could possibly put \$3000 toward this request at this time, but it will leave us with only a slight cushion for keeping the organization going.

Folks, we're talking about the Namekagon Barrens here! If there ever was a time to put our money where our mouth is, this is it. A thousand bucks from a few who can do it, or a hundred or a twenty from most of us can make this happen. You are going to be sending in your dues, or your raffle money or your annual meeting sign-up anyway- write a tax-deductible check to WSGS with notation that it's for the NB acquisition. Thank you!

SHOULD WISCONSIN SHARPTAILS BE HUNTED?

by Jim Evrard

I recently read an article about the plight of the sage grouse in the West that was written by Hannah J. Ryan and published in the **Bugle**, the magazine of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. The article, *Destinies Intertwined*, appeared in the September-October 2012 issue of the **Bugle**.

One of the subjects discussed was whether sage grouse should still be hunted given their precarious status. The discussion was analogous to what has been discussed in Wisconsin about sharptails in recent years. The discussion is quoted below with sharp-tailed grouse substituted for sage grouse in the paragraphs. Tom Christensen of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department wrote the following:

"Eliminating hunting would eliminate the [sharp-tailed grouse's] greatest ally: the hunter-conservationist. Hunting creates a constituency of advocates who are interested in seeing that the needs of the [sharp-tailed grouse] are met."

Christensen further states: "We are not impinging on the overall population by hunting. Habitat loss is the issue." This is also the case in Wisconsin. The very limited hunting seasons and bag limits for Wisconsin sharptails aren't the problem – it is the loss of habitat.

The **Bugle** article also states that many other creatures, including elk, also depend upon the habitat of the sage grouse much like many species depend upon sharptail and their management for their barrens habitat.

WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY FINANCIAL STATEMENT

01/01/12 through 12/31/12

Checkbook Balance as of 01/01/12.	\$12,992
Certificate of Deposit as of 10/16/11.	\$2,568
Total cash assets as of 01/01/12.	\$15,560
INCOME:	
Memberships	\$2,330
Sales	\$258
Translocation Celebration	\$38
Raffle/auction	\$641
Donations	\$35
Interest on Certificate of Deposit.	\$22
Total Income	\$3,324
EXPENDITURES:	
Projects - Crex Barrens Restoration . .	\$2,000
Namekagon Barrens Blinds . .	\$2,000
Crex Land Acquisition Fund . .	\$2,000
Total Projects	\$6,000
Dues ---- N. Am. Grouse Partnership	\$35
Friends of Crex Meadows	\$55
Friends of the Bird Sanctuary . .	\$50
Friends of the Nam. Barrens . .	\$30
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation . .	\$60
Total Alliance dues	\$230
Membership Services - Newsletters (4). .	\$1,444
Website maintenance	\$81
Office supplies	\$61
Recognition Plaques	\$105
Total Membership Services . . .	\$1,691
Non-profit report to Wis. Sec. State. . . .	\$10
Raffle License	\$25
IRS Tax-exempt application	\$400
Total Expenditures	\$8,356
Checkbook Balance as of 12/31/12	\$7,937
Certificate of Deposit as of 10/16/12	\$2,591
Total Cash Assets as of 12/31/12	\$10,528

Submitted by James O. Evrard, Sec./Treas., 12/31/12

EARLY WISCONSIN SHARPTAIL RESEARCH

by Jim Hale

Editors Note: The late Jim Hale was one of first trained sharptail researchers in Wisconsin. Hale published a series of articles dealing with early sharp-tailed grouse in past issues of the WSGS newsletter. The following article is the final segment of the last article submitted before his death a few years ago.

“DOUGLAS COUNTY WILDLIFE AREA”

“Control burning should be used about once every five to ten years on this area. Burning not only decreases advancing woody vegetation, it stimulates flower, fruit and seed production. Repeated burning at too frequent intervals does not seem to stimulate maximum production in some species. Blueberries, for example, seem to produce maximum yields with several years rest after burning. Future burning should be concentrated on areas not fired in the last ten years.”

“Hand-cutting of jack pine should be stopped, allowing jack pine that survive the fire to remain. Hand-cutting of aspen, however, along with basal spraying might help to reduce aspen groves that increase after burning. Complete extermination of any tree species should not be carried out, since good sharptail grouse range contains a variety of tree species.”

“I observed that in past burning operations, some juneberry bushes were protected from fire. I suggest that these bushes not be spared in burning, but the fire should be allowed to nip or consume the bushes since this will result in increased fruit production and reproduction.”

“I believe that control burning can be used as the sole management tool on the upland portions of this area. On the off-sites areas of aspen, basal spraying might hasten the clearing.”

“NICOLET NATIONAL FOREST”

“Within the Nicolet National Forest there are several areas presently being managed by WCD for sharptail grouse. Two of these areas have been burned in an attempt to reopen and extend old clearings. The burning only succeeded in eliminating excess “duff” and stimulating some grass and forb growth. The encroaching woody shrubs and trees were not seriously set back by burning. These areas do not lend themselves to burning because the surrounding northern [forest] types are somewhat fire-proof. When they do burn, chances of an uncontrolled fire are great. Since the terrain is broken and rocky, uniform burns and adequate firebreaks are also difficult to attain. Perhaps logging, hand-cutting, or basal spraying followed by fire would improve results.”

[Editors Note: To my knowledge sharptails and their habitat no long exist in the Nicolet National Forest]

“SPREAD EAGLE WILDLIFE AREA”

“The acreage that has been subjected to prescribed burning did not greatly benefit from it. Both the north and south sections of Spread Eagle consist of a series of large openings. It appears that these openings (bracken-grasslands) do not need fire for their maintenance and one fire every ten years or so would only be beneficial in removing unnecessary accumulated duff as well as stimulating flowers, fruit, and seed production, particularly blueberries.”

“However, If some of the adjoining ridgetop forests could be burned when the openings were burned, fire could be allowed to run into this forest edge until stopped, so that any woody invasion might be checked and a good “edge” might be produced.”

“The jack pine stands on the north-facing slopes should be allowed to remain, since these more mesic slopes are best suited for forest growth and would help to provide different cover types.”

[Editor’s Note: The size of the openings in the Spread Eagle Wildlife Area have been increased substantially through the efforts of Stu Boren, DNR Forester in Florence. This area has the potential for reintroduction of sharptails once an effective translocation method is developed]



SHARPTAIL PUBLICITY

by Jim Evrard

I recently wrote an article about Wisconsin sharptail hunting that was published as my column in the January 25, 2013 issue of the Wisconsin Outdoor News. The column, "An unusual water retrieve of a sharp-tailed grouse", was an account of an early November, 2012 sharptail hunt in the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area (NBWA).

I was lucky enough to draw a permit for Unit 8 that included the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area. I hunted the Barrens with fellow WSGS Board Member Mike Cole of Grantsburg, his German Shorthair Hazel and a coworker of Mike's.

It was a cool, gray day, but we saw a good number of sharptails, had shooting at a few, and I bagged an adult cock. When I shot the bird, it fell into a deep wetland and Mike was good enough to retrieve it for me.

The land trade between the DNR and Burnett County described in detail in the last newsletter, was approved by the DNR, the Burnett County Board, the Governor, and the Legislature. The DNR has to approve the withdrawal of the county-owned land from the Managed Forest Law and the final approval needed is from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service since some of the DNR land was purchased with federal Pittman-Robertson funds (the 11% excise tax on arms and ammunition).



SUPPORT THE WSGS – BUY A CAP

We still have a small supply of embroidered tan and blaze orange caps for sale. The front of the cap features a colorful dancing sharp-tailed grouse under the black letters, WSGS. A strip of camouflage cloth covers the lower half of the cap and extends around the outside edge of the cap's bill. The size of the cap can be adjusted using a sturdy Velcro closure.

The cost of the cap is \$15 (shipping free) and can be ordered by using the renewal form on the back page of this newsletter.

Please indicate the color you desire.



PARTNER: FRIENDS OF CREX

by Jim Evrard

If you looked closely at the annual WSGS financial statement in our newsletter, you will see where the WSGS pays dues to a series of conservation organizations. One group is the Friends of Crex (FOC).

The FOC is one of the oldest and largest 'friends' groups in Wisconsin. It was born in 1985 when the group was formally organized by DNR Assistant Crex Manager and Naturalist Jim Hoefler. The purpose of the organization is to support, assist, and promote the wildlife education and management activities of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources at the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area and the other wildlife properties (the Fish Lake, Amsterdam Sloughs, and Danbury wildlife areas) that comprise the Glacial Lake Grantsburg Wildlife Management Complex in Burnett County.

The major FOC accomplishment thus far has been raising nearly \$1 million needed to build the Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center located on the northern edge of the Village of Grantsburg. Fund raising began in 1993 and the building was completed in 2002. The permanent exhibits in the Center were completed in 2007.

Other FOC efforts include raising an additional \$1 million for an endowment fund designed to provide a perpetual source of funding for the wildlife education program at Crex. More recent projects are efforts to raise funds to buy land within the Crex Meadows boundaries in situations where state land acquisition is inadequate and to remodel the Youth Camp kitchen and mess hall.

The WSGS relationship with the FOC began in 2002 when the WSGS and FOC Boards signed a Memorandum of Understanding, pledging mutual cooperation. The document allows the WSGS to maintain its permanent 'home' in the Crex Center. The WSGS receives its mail there and we also receive assistance in developing our newsletter and other printed materials. In exchange, the WSGS provides financial assistance for the administrative help received and for selected FOC projects. We have also provided 'political' assistance for projects like expanding the Crex Meadows acquisition boundaries.

Future newsletters will feature our other 'partners', the North American Grouse Partnership, the Friends of the Namekagon Barrens, and the Friends of the Bird Sanctuary (the Douglas County Wildlife Area).

WSGS WEBSITE

The WSGS website, "wisharptails.org", has now been in existence for about a year. The website describes our goals and objectives, projects, members of our board, membership and contact information, and electronic copies of the last four newsletters.

For those of you looking forward to spring, go to the website and open the link to fnbwa@yahoo.com and check out the video of dancing male sharptails.

Those members wishing to receive their newsletters electronically should check the appropriate line on the back page of the printed newsletter when renewing memberships or contact me at the WSGS address.



AFIELD WITH ZIGGY

by Tom Ziegeweid

Hunting South Dakota Prairie Chickens - 2013: I'm assuming a goodly number of WSGS newsletter readers have hunted sharp-tails in Wisconsin or somewhere in the U.S. Might this be the year to broaden your horizons by going on a trip to Fort Pierre, South Dakota to hunt greater prairie chickens?

When: South Dakota's prairie chicken and sharp-tailed grouse season runs from around September 15 through the first weekend of January. The best action is the first several weeks of the season. The weather is usually balmy, sometimes downright hot, with the most birds available. Our group usually goes out to hunt for three days during the second week of the season around September 20-22.

The later you go, the more you may have the place to yourself. My hunting colleague, Roche Lolly from Duluth, Minnesota, just got back in early January from his second trip there. The birds are jumpier than earlier in the season, having changed patterns for winter survival; but if you want to shoot a "mounter", late is great, and he did just that.

Where: The Fort Pierre National Grasslands is administered by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and is a huge chunk of public land, interspersed by some private land along with native American reservation land. It is located almost smack-dab in the middle of the state. Fort Pierre is a western suburb of Pierre, the capitol of South Dakota. The mighty Missouri River runs through both towns.

Fort Pierre National Grasslands is arguably the best place to hunt chickens in the U.S. There are hunters from all over the U.S. and occasionally foreign countries to boot.

Hunting Tips: Be prepared to do a lot of walking. We figure we knock off around 20 miles in three days of hunting. I wear a good pair of tennis shoes. The ground is hard, flat and dry, making for easy walking.

Get a good waterproof map from the USFS office in Pierre. Some land is posted, but the majority of it is open.

Just because you see cows in a section, it doesn't necessarily mean it is private land. Fort Pierre grasslands are leased to ranchers for a fee. The cattle mimic the grazing of the buffalo of long ago.

Chickens and sharptails are found in a 5:1 ratio and will be in close proximity to each other. Both species like to sit on the downwind receding edge of a "high" spot.

Prairie chickens are not as jumpy anytime during the season like the sharptails. They don't "cluck" when they flush. Sometimes I have walked past them only to have them flush behind me. You should be aware that there are also pheasants in the grasslands so don't misidentify a protected hen pheasant for a prairie grouse.

The two features on the landscape where we had the best hunting were stock ponds and sunflower fields. Many of the sunflower fields are in private land surrounded by public grassland sections.

Don't walk in a straight line like of bunch of English redcoats. Put hunters out on the flanks and hunt slowly, especially early in the season.

Logistics: Your small game license will cost \$120 for two five-day hunting periods (no lottery!). You want to "bank" your second five days to the "last five days" of the bird season. If you go to South Dakota a second time, you have the option of moving your 5-day hunt period back, but not forward.

There are many reasonable motels in Pierre; some are hunter-friendly being equipped with cleaning stations and freezers for your birds. There are also many good restaurants in Pierre. If you need more information, call me evenings at 715-834-2627.

2013 WSGS & MSGS JOINT TECHNICAL SESSION & MEMBERSHIP MEETING PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

Friday & Saturday, April 26-27, 2013
Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center,
Grantsburg, Wisconsin

Name _____ Organization _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

REGISTRATION FEE: \$10.00

MEALS: Please circle meals you will eat:

Friday Lunch- \$6.00

Friday Supper - \$12.00

Saturday Lunch - \$6.00

Total amount enclosed \$ _____ (Make checks for registration and meals payable to WSGS.)

I'd rather pay when I arrive: _____

MEMBERSHIP DUES: Please circle dues you will pay: (Dues can also be paid at the meeting.)

WSGS membership – Regular \$10, Supporting \$25, Contributing \$50, Sustaining \$100, Sponsor \$200
(Make check payable to WSGS)

MSGS Membership – Regular \$5, Supporting \$15, Contributing \$50, Sustaining \$100, Sponsor \$200,
Life \$500 (Make check payable to MSGS)

Please enclose checks and mail before April 18 to:

WSGS, Crex Meadows Wildlife Area, 102 E. Crex Ave., Grantsburg, WI, 54840

Additional Information:

I would like to attend a Saturday morning tour or help survey for sharptails - Circle Yes or No

ROOM RESERVATIONS (you make these yourself)

- First come, first serve at Crex (715-463-CREX)
- or in Grantsburg @ Wood River Motel (\$56/night, 715-463-2541, mention the grouse meeting)
- or in Siren @ Best Western Northwoods Lodge (877-349-7800)
- or also in Sire @ The Lodge on Crooked Lake (877-THE LODGE)
- Directions – See <http://www.crexmeadows.org/Directions.htm>
- For agenda details, see MSGS (www.sharptails.org) or WSGS (www.wisharptails.org) web sites
- Questions – Contact Dave Evenson at dave3397@centurytel.net

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

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

Would you like to volunteer for:

_____ Board of Directors
_____ Bird Censusing
_____ Newsletter articles
_____ Annual Meeting

_____ **Electronic Newsletter (by email)**

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)

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

\$ _____ King Sharptail limited edition print (\$60)

(all prices include postage and handling)

\$ _____ Contribution to Namekagon Barrens land acquisition fund

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO AND RETURN THIS APPLICATION TO:

Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, 102 East Crex Avenue, Grantsburg, WI 54840

WSGS
102 East Crex Avenue
Grantsburg, WI 54840