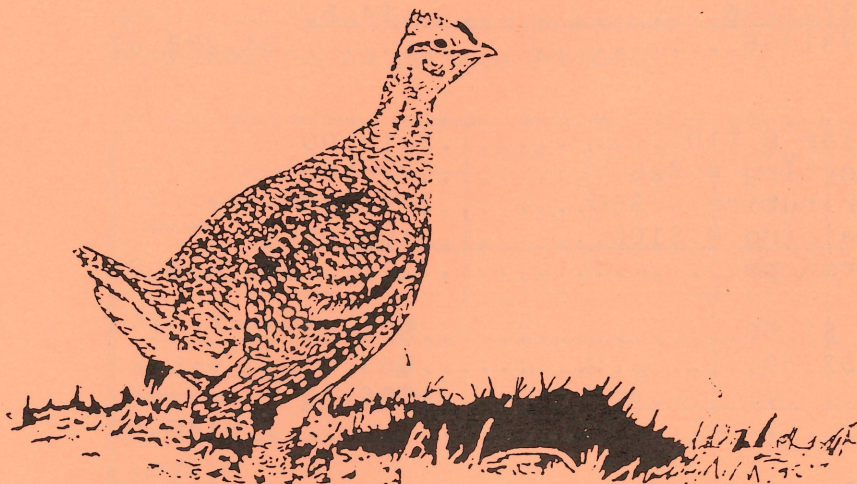


WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Volume 21

Winter, 1998

WSGS BOARD MEETING

The WSGS Board of Directors will meet from 1-4 p.m. on Friday, February 27th at the Fireside Room, Settlement, at the Wausau Inn and Conference Center. This complex is on the southeast corner of the interchange of I-39/US 51 and Highway NN. Board members will be discussing the spring meeting, as well as plans for a Central Wisconsin STG meeting later this summer. All members are invited to attend.

CALL-FOR NOMINATIONS

Two positions on the Board of Directors are open this spring. The incumbents are Tom Davis and Shane Wahlstrom. Any member may nominate another member for the board or you also may volunteer if interested. Send nominations and biographies to Ed Frank, 1205 Ellen Ave., Madison, WI 53716 by March 20th. The ballot will be in the next newsletter

Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society Financial Statement
1/1/97 through 12/31/97

Checkbook Balance as of 12/31/96.....\$2,763.96
Certificate of Deposits as of 12/31/96.....\$1,505.32
Petty cash balance as of 12/31/96.....\$4.53
Total assets as of 12/31/96.....\$4,273.81

INCOME:

Memberships - 81 regular @ \$10.....\$810.00
 15 supporting @ \$25.....\$375.00
 3 contributing @ \$50.....\$150.00
 1 sustaining @ \$100.....\$100.00
Total Memberships.....\$1,435.00

Sales - 14 Stickers @ \$1.50.....\$21.00
 18 Patches @ \$3.50.....\$63.00
 4 Caps @ \$14.....\$56.00
Total Sales.....\$140.00

Interest on Checking Account.....\$33.55
Art Raffle.....\$775.00
Donations.....\$2.00

Total Income.....\$2,385.55

EXPENDITURES:

Projects - Crex Wildlife Education Center..\$500.00
 (second of 3 annual gifts)
 WSO Breeding Bird Atlas.....\$100.00
 (third of 5 annual gifts)
 Wisconsin Stewardship Network....\$25.00
Total Projects.....\$625.00

Newsletter - Printing.....\$704.00
 Postage.....\$162.55
 Office supplies.....\$2.30
Total Membership Service.....\$868.85

300 Patches.....\$540.00
Annual meeting.....\$41.49
Non-profit report to Wis. Secretary of State.....\$10.00

Total Expenditures.....\$2,085.34

Checkbook Balance as of 12/31/97.....\$3,176.05
Certificates of Deposit as of 12/31/97.....\$1,573.00
Petty Cash Balance as of 12/31/97.....\$10.15
Total Assets as of 12/31/97.....\$4,759.20

Submitted by James O. Evrard, Sec./Treas., 1/05/98.

SHARP-TAILED GROUSE HUNTER SURVEY 1997

In December WSGS sent out a survey to the 316 hunters who had received a sharptail permit in 1997. At the end of January, 85 had been returned. In addition to the information listed below we also received information from several hunters on populations outside the open five units.

	Unit 2	Unit 8	Unit 9	Unit 10	Unit 24	Did not Hunt	Totals
No of Questionnaires returned	26	13	7	18	2	19	85
No of trips for S-T	46	23	16	30	3		118
No of S-T harvested	48	13	3	19	0		83
No of S-T seen per hunter (range)	56 (0-150)	50 (10-150)	31 (10-150)	20 0-70	8.5 (1-16)		
LEVEL OF SATISFACTION							
Excellent	18	10	2	11	1		42
Good	6	3	3	2			14
Fair	2		1	4	1		8
Poor							
Terrible			1	1			2

* Hunters who hunted several units were assigned to the unit where they spent the most time.

Those hunters who reported generally gave the 1997 hunt an excellent or good rating, 85% being in those categories. Excellent ratings tended to correlate with those who saw a lot of birds. The two terrible ratings were from hunters who saw no or few birds in multiple trips and didn't shoot any.

With 85 out of 316 responses (27%) the hunters responding accounted for 60% of the registered kill (83 birds on this questionnaire, 137 registered). It is likely that permit holders who did not hunt or were not successful were less likely to return the questionnaire leading to this bias.

Many hunters made comments or suggestions which we will forward to DNR managers. The most common comment was to keep the sharptail permit system off the patron license privileges. There is a concern that patron license holders may sign up for a permit even if they probably won't hunt, and thus deprive some one who wanted to hunt from doing so. For the 1998 season sharptail permits will be on the patron license, so we will be able to see if this does occur and lobby for change as necessary.

One longtime hunter and WSGS member who only heard about the permit by word of mouth was disappointed that our newsletter didn't do a better job of letting members know the system. As newsletter editor, I agree and apologize. While we had general news about the permit system all along we did not give the real specific when and how to apply as we should have. Next year's permit application deadlines is August 10th.

One benefit to WSGS of sending this survey was that we signed up 36 new members! Comments coming back made it obvious that not every one had heard of WSGS before, so this was a good way to spread the word.

FOURTH ANNUAL PRAIRIE GROUSE ART RAFFLE

This year we are offering for raffle a trio of sharptail prints and a bonus of the other prairie grouse - prairie chicken. All prints are double matted and framed.

The first print is Sharptails on the Rise by Owen Gromme. This print was published nearly twenty years ago, but we picked this copy up in the secondary market. Those of you who know art recognize Gromme as the most legendary of Wisconsin wildlife artists.

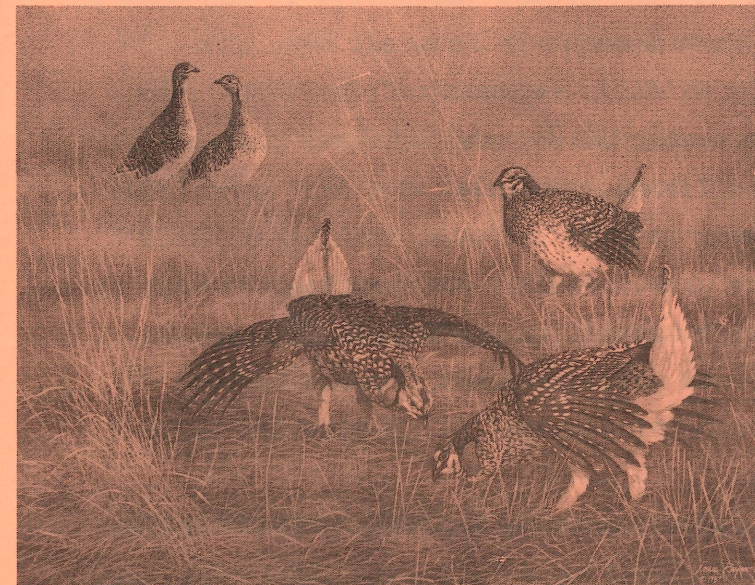
Again this year we are able to offer Spring Dance at Crex by Louis Raymer. Thanks to Friends of Crex for donating this print. (If you're not a member of Friends of Crex, consider joining them.) There are very few sharptail prints out there and this is one of the best.

From Karen Smith and the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, we offer Dancing Male, a sharptail portrait. And as a bonus, we offer from Karen Smith the companion piece, Prairie Chicken Cock. This print was commissioned by the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society.

Ticket Prices - Raffle ticket prices are: 1 ticket for \$5.00; 3 tickets for \$10.00 or 10 tickets for \$25.00. Tickets will be enclosed in your next newsletter. Please legibly write your name and the name of the ticket purchaser, if different, on each of the stubs sold. If you cannot attend the meeting, please send the tickets and payment to Bob Dreis, 632 Smith St., Spooner, WI 54801. Those who attend can bring stubs and money to the spring meeting. You need not be present to win. If you're a good sales person and need more tickets, contact Dave Evenson, Box 1115, Cumberland, WI 54829 or Bob Dreis. Buy a bunch, it's for a good cause!



On The Rise
by Owen Gromme



Spring Dance at Crex
by Louis Raymer



Sharptail Cock
by Karen Smith



Prairie Chicken Cock
by Karen Smith

20 ACRES OF BUCKWHEAT

by Jim Hale

This piece could well be titled "Sharptails On A Shoestring." In the spring and summer of 1948, the first year that the Wisconsin Conservation Department (WCD) began sharp-tailed grouse research at the Douglas County Grouse Management Area, 2 experimental management projects were undertaken. The first was a controlled spring burn of 120 acres. Since intentional burning was just getting started as a management tool in the state, we wanted to know how fire actually affected plant growth on the sandy Douglas County barrens.

The burning was done by WCD Forest Protection crews. Actually, it was used as a training exercise so crews and equipment were brought in from all over the northwest part of the state. I was the only wildlife representative present, so I couldn't do much but watch. Judging by the number of men and machines present, it looked like the whole county was going up in flames. However, the fire went well. It was a hot one, and by the end of the summer most of the scattered aspens were dead and the bluestem and other grasses were growing well. As sharptail habitat it looked good. There were no people or wildlife casualties and similar controlled fires shortly became widely used on state-owned wildlife areas. Costs to our project for the fire, based on the Forest Protection manual of charges was \$82.87, or 69¢ per acre burned.

Our second objective that first year was to test the hypothesis that feeding sharptails in winter would result in better survival to spring than among sharptails wintering entirely on natural foods. To do this we had one biologist (me), one part-time assistant (salaried), and as many volunteers as we could recruit. The boss said we could have \$350 for the project, excluding salaries and travel.

First we staked out the boundaries of a 20-acre field west of the field-trial buildings. This area then had to be tilled, seeded and fenced against deer. Our best cooperators, Al Etienne and his son Harold, farmed land several miles west on the Moose Road. They volunteered to do the soil preparation and planting with their own machinery, and also donated a pile of pine fence posts. A couple of other neighbors also donated posts.

We borrowed 2 post-hole diggers and a fence-wire stretcher from the Gordon Ranger Station. We couldn't afford fence wire, but the local telephone company at Solon Springs was replacing their lines east of town and gave us all the used wire we needed for fencing. They even delivered the wire to the planting site at no cost.

We wanted to test a deer-proofing technique consisting of a single-wire fence about 30 inches above the ground. On this wire at 3-foot intervals were suspended 2" squares of galvanized sheet metal attached to 6" dangling copper wires. The

entire fence was to be electrified so that a deer sniffing a dangler with a wet nose or otherwise touching the wire would get a good jolt.

The Ladysmith city dump was the source of the dangler components. We salvaged enough copper wire from the armatures of several disabled electric motors and enough sheet metal scraps from a local heating company's waste to meet our needs. We were also able to borrow an electric fence controller from the WCD deer research staff at Ladysmith.

The main expense was buckwheat seed. Our only other equipment costs were for fence staples and a battery for the controller. Our hardest task was digging post holes by hand. Even at 16-foot spacing between posts, it was a lot of digging. We were glad we were in sand and not harder soil. Once the posts were in, we strung wire and hung danglers, and then watched and waited.

The buckwheat sprouted on schedule. The deer fence wasn't perfect. A few deer went over or under the fence to enjoy the buckwheat, but others came to the fence and wouldn't cross it. Deer damage was minimal. When the buckwheat was ripe, Al Etienne mowed half the field. We stacked most of it inside the fence. A few bundles were stored for winter feeding elsewhere on the area. The unmowed buckwheat was left standing with the hope that enough seed would survive the winter to provide a volunteer crop in 1949.

In the fall and early winter of 1948-49 the buckwheat was heavily used. Up to 200 sharptails were counted in the field at one time. After there was a good snow cover, little sharptail use was seen until next spring.

For the next few winters, a system of feeding stations was maintained on the area. However, feeding as a management tool was abandoned when it became apparent that over-winter sharptail survival was about the same on fed and non-fed areas, and that habitat restoration was better long-term management than artificial feeding.

Our bottom line was that the total operating cost of the 1948 buckwheat project was \$327.50, just under budget. The boss never said we did a good job, but he never complained, either.



WSGS
Box 1115
Cumberland, WI 54829

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 83
CUMBERLAND, WI 54829

03 98

54840

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

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL
(1998 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

Volunteer Activities

_____ Board of Directors

_____ Newsletter Writing

_____ Bird census work

_____ Publicity

_____ Education

_____ Fund Raising

_____ Other

Yes! Please send me:

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

_____ WSGS Logo Window Sticker (\$1.50 postage incl.)

_____ Total Amount Enclosed

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