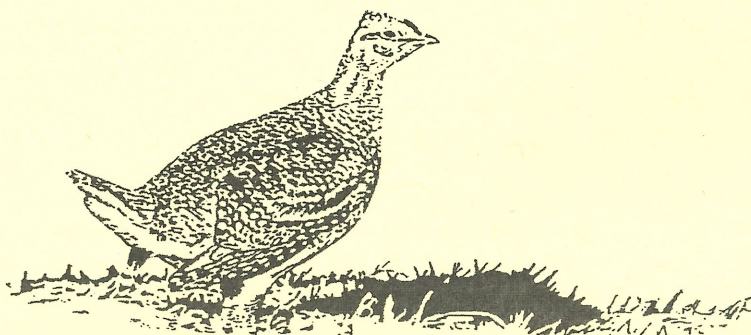


# WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 52

Winter 2008

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## CREX LAND ACQUISITION CELEBRATION

In mid-September, the WSGS hosted a reception celebrating the addition of 320 acres to the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area. The DNR bought the tract from the Plum Creek Timber Company for \$600,000, using \$450,000 of federal funds for protection of the endangered Karner Blue Butterfly and \$150,000 from the Wisconsin Knowles-Nelson Stewardship fund.

The WSGS was active since 2002 in lobbying various agencies and groups to buy the property since until recently it was occupied by sharp-tailed grouse. Tree growth finally forced the birds from the property a few years ago.

Wisconsin's Consolidated Paper Company owned the property for years. Since it was entered in the DNR's managed forest law, it was open to public use and thought to be safe from development. However, a Finnish corporation, Store Enso, bought Consolidated Paper in early 2002 and announced they planned to sell all of their new land holdings. They stated they would not sell the land piecemeal but only to one entity. Plum Creek Timber Company bought the foreign company's land holdings in late 2002 and began to sell some of the properties.

The DNR, represented by WSGS member Paul Kooiker, led the effort to buy the 320 acres to add to Crex Meadows. Through the persistent efforts of another WSGS member, former DNR Natural Resource Board (NRB) member, Herb Behnke, the Crex acquisition boundary was expanded in 2005 to include the timber company tract. WSGS Board members Jim Evrard, Blair Klein, Dave Evenson, and Dave Clausen were active in lobbying the DNR to buy the property.

Finally the DNR acquired the 320 acres this year. The tract was the largest remaining privately owned parcel in the Crex Meadows project. The WSGS celebrated this accomplishment by hosting an informational meeting

on the newly acquired property, followed by a presentation and a reception in the Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center.

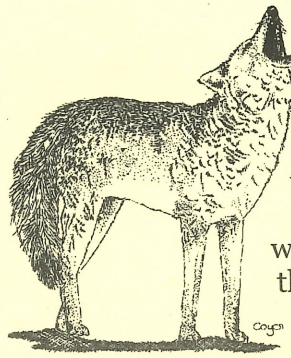
Approximately 20 people drove north of Grantsburg to view the newly acquired land and hear presentations by WSGS Secretary-Treasurer Jim Evrard, Paul Kooiker, NRB Member Dave Clausen, and State Senator Bob Jauch. At the Crex Center, DNR Project Manager and WSGS member Pete Engman gave a presentation focusing on the future management of the 320-acre tract and how it will relate to the overall management of Crex Meadows. State Representative Ann Hrachuck updated the group on the legislative effort to renew the Stewardship Fund. Following the presentations, those gathered were treated to hors d'oeuvres and cocktails. A special thanks to WSGS Board Member Blair Klein for hosting the reception.

The 320 acres, in addition to another 170 adjoining acres recently acquired to the north will add nearly a square mile of potential sharptail range to Crex Meadows. Hopefully in the near future we will again be able to witness sharptails dancing there in the spring and thrill to the flush of sharptails in the fall.



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Dave Evenson



The Northwest Sands of Wisconsin stretch from Northern Polk County, where one can look south and see the plumes from the Twin Cities smokestacks, to nearly the tip of the Bayfield Peninsula of Lake Superior. About 2/3rds of the way north is a huge chunk of jack pine, red pine and recent clearcuts. This land is primarily owned and managed by industrial forests or county forests, and those clearcuts support the largest population of sharptails in the state.

I have surveyed sharptail dancing grounds in this area, and those of you who hunt Unit 2 know the area well. I'm a slow learner, and it didn't dawn on me the potential of this area until a field trip WSGS board members and DNR wildlife managers took in summer of 2006. That's when field managers pointed out that 25,000 acres of this industrial forest land in Douglas County was included within the acquisition boundary in the 2002 Brule River State Forest Master Plan. I visited again with Wildlife Manager Fred Strand last month, and he provided me with the maps of the expansion. Wow, what potential! Certainly the price tag will be huge. And the DNR will need to wait until the industrial forest owning companies are willing to sell. In recent years, we have seen quite a few DNR purchases from these companies, so there is hope. The Master Plan calls for all stages of Red Pine-Jack Pine forests, so not all of this area would be managed as openings, but certainly a percentage will be, and managed in a coordinated effort to maintain large contiguous areas in openings. With Stewardship funding secured for another cycle WSGS will push for negotiations to continue for this block.

A second land management plan is being developed right next door, across the county line on the Bayfield County Forest. For decades Bayfield County has maintained 1/4 mile wide firebreaks in the vicinity of the Eau Claire Lakes, in some super flammable forest. These have provided core habitat for a few dancing grounds. In the current Forest 15-Year Plan, wildlifers and foresters are developing a plan that would include a 700-900 acre core area with several thousand acres of big block clear cuts rotating around it. This plan is not finalized but it looks hopeful.

Both of these plans provide fiber for America, revenue for their owners, and large open spaces for the birds. My congratulations to those who have and are working on these plans.

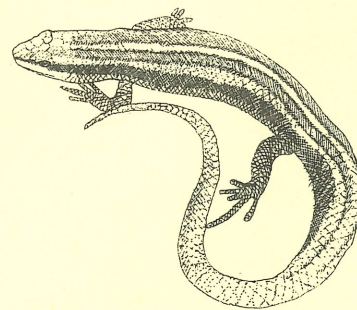
## ALL FOR BOARD NOMINATIONS

The three-year terms of board members, Jim Evrard, Ed Frank, and Blair Klein expire in 2008. Anyone interested in running for these positions or nominating someone for the positions, please send your name or the name of the person nominated along with a short resume to Jim Evrard at WSGS, 102 E. Crex Ave., Grantsburg, WI 54840.

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.

### WSGS OFFICERS

President: Dave Evenson  
Vice President: Tom Ziegeweid  
Secretary/Treasurer: Jim Evrard  
Board Members: Ed Frank  
Blair Klein  
Dave Clausen  
Dave Biegel  
Newsletter Editor: Jim Evrard



## ANNUAL MEETING GETAWAY

By Jim Evrard

Are you looking for a weekend retreat at a luxury resort on the shores of Lake Superior? And are you also interested in meeting with your fellow sharp-tailed grouse enthusiasts and roaming a landscape unlike any other in Wisconsin looking for fabled sharp-tailed grouse?

Then mark Saturday and Sunday, April 26 and 27 on your 2008 calendar. That is the date for the annual WSGS annual meeting that will take place in the picturesque fishing village of Cornucopia just north of the Moquah Barrens in the Bayfield Peninsula of far northern Wisconsin.

Our business meeting will take place on Saturday from 1 to 4 p.m. in the Tam O'Shanter Lodge and Conference Center on Lake Superior, northeast of Cornucopia. Following the meeting, door and art prize drawings, and social hour, we will be served a catered dinner in the Lodge. Early the next morning our group will spread out in the Moquah Barrens Wildlife Area, part of the Chequamegon National Forest, and count sharp-tailed grouse on their dancing grounds. The annual gathering will end with a group breakfast in the Village Inn dining room.

This is an important meeting since we will make a concerted effort to census the sharptails inhabiting the Moquah Barrens. The number of dancing males counted in recent years has been very low and we would like to determine if the numbers recorded represent the true population or inadequate censusing of the birds. An area-wide count by knowledgeable people will help determine the true status of the birds.

Those attending the meeting are responsible for their own lodging that is available at the following places in Cornucopia:

**Tam O'Shanter Lodge** – (715)742-3900 [info@tamoshanterlodge.com](mailto:info@tamoshanterlodge.com)

[www.tamoshanterlodge.com](http://www.tamoshanterlodge.com) Nine rooms, from single rooms to suites with prices ranging from \$55 to \$175 per night.

**Village Inn** – (715)742-3994 [info@villageinncornucopia.com](mailto:info@villageinncornucopia.com)

[www.villageinncornucopia.com](http://www.villageinncornucopia.com) A B&B with four rooms at \$75 per night.

**Fo'c'sle Inn** - (715)742-3337 [info@siskiwitbay.com](mailto:info@siskiwitbay.com) [www.siskiwitbay.com](http://www.siskiwitbay.com) Two rooms, one at \$89 and the other at \$110 per night. This is a picturesque B&B located right on the harbor water.

**Cornucopia Tourist Homes** – (715)742-3994 [www.cornucopiacabins.com](http://www.cornucopiacabins.com) Two two-bedroom cabins and one three-bedroom cabin. \$95/night for two people and an additional \$20/person/night

**Swenson's Cottages** – (715)742-3282 Four cottages of various sizes with rates ranging from \$42 to \$74/night.

Reservations for the annual meeting will be required in order to have a head count for the catered dinner. There will be two choices for dinner – whitefish or garlic steak. Dinner costs will be \$12-\$14. Dinner and breakfast costs will be the responsibility of those attending the meeting. The \$5 registration fee will cover the costs of meeting and social hour refreshments. *Make your reservations now!*

(Return form and registration fees to address below)

## REGISTRATION 2008 WSGS ANNUAL MEETING

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Make check/money order (\$5 per person) to Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society and send to:

WSGS, 102 E. Crex Ave., Grantsburg, WI 54840



## PROGRESS ON THE HABITAT FRONT

By Jim Evrard

In addition to the habitat progress described in other articles in this newsletter, the WSGS was instrumental in potentially increasing the size of the Pershing Wildlife Area (PWA). The PWA is only one of three heavy-soil sharp-tailed grouse management areas left in Wisconsin, the others being the Kimberly-Clark and the Riley Lakes wildlife areas.

The PWA is located in western Taylor County in two units totaling about 8,000 acres, located north and south of County Highway M. Except for the far eastern end of the wildlife area, the two units are separated by about a mile or two strip of private land, largely small former dairy farms. The private land is mostly grassland reverting to brush and trees.

This area was mentioned for acquisition in the DNR's Land Legacy Report, a plan for acquiring recreational land in the foreseeable future. However before any land can be bought, the acquisition boundary has to be enlarged.

Largely through the efforts of WSGS Board member and Natural Resources Board (NRB) member Dave Clausen, an acquisition boundary extension feasibility study was approved at the December NRB meeting. The DNR made staff assignments for the feasibility study within days of the approval.

As the 1971-73 PWA manager, I'm excited at the possibility of joining the two wildlife area units into one project, large enough to support a long-term viable population of sharp-tailed grouse. Many other wildlife species will benefit by the future DNR early succession habitat management that favors grassland, brushland, and aspen forests.

## WSGS LOSES LONG-TIME SUPPORTER

By Jim Evrard

Jim Hale, long-time WSGS member and supporter, died of prostate cancer at the age of 85 on November 4, 2007. Jim, a graduate student of the University of Wisconsin's Aldo Leopold, worked for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for 35 years. Professionally he was a wildlife researcher who finished his career as Director of the Bureau of Endangered and Nongame Species.

He and his wife, Mary Jean (Pat) of 61 years lived in Madison and spent much time at their cottage in Door County. In the early part of his career, Jim studied sharp-tailed grouse in northern Wisconsin and published several scholarly papers on the species. More recently, he authored a series of articles in the WSGS Newsletter that summarized his sharptail research.

Jim was a soft-spoken gentleman who always had time to mentor newcomers under his supervision. I first met Jim while a DNR wildlife manager and becoming a charter member of the Wisconsin Chapter of the Wildlife Society, the professional society in which Jim held state and national offices. I also felt Jim's influence during the latter part of my DNR career when I worked as a wildlife researcher.

Jim was active in the WSGS, attending our annual meetings and providing newsletter material. He was Wisconsin's sharp-tailed grouse historian and will be sorely missed by his friends and former coworkers.

## 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 fight for the sharp-tailed grouse and its habitat in Wisconsin. Our membership fee is low compared to most conservation groups and supports all-volunteer members who serve as your board of directors and do the work of the society.

## A VICTORY FOR WISCONSIN OUTDOORS

By Jim Evrard

Wisconsin's outdoors and outdoor persons won a victory in late October when the state's budget was finally approved by the Legislature and the Governor. Contained within the budget was the renewal of the Stewardship Program at a bonding authority of \$83 million per year for 10 years (2010-2019). That may sound like a lot of money but the 10-year total of \$830 million is less than two days of current federal spending for the Iraq War!

The current Stewardship Program is funded at a rate of \$60 million per year and ends in 2009. Governor Doyle proposed Stewardship renewal at a rate of \$105 million annually while the Republican Assembly approved only \$25 million per year. A compromise was reached at the \$83 million annual amount. Included in the compromise were new rights for hunters in land acquired with Stewardship funds and some oversight of Stewardship spending by the Legislature.

The WSGS actively lobbied for the approval of the new Stewardship Program. Board members Ed Frank and Dave Biegel traveled to the capitol to testify and register in favor of reauthorization of the program at the higher level of spending.

How do sharptail hunters and enthusiasts benefit by the Stewardship Program? A case in point was the recent State acquisition of 320 acres of land from the Plum Creek Timber Company to add to the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area. Money for the \$600,000 acquisition came from federal endangered species funds (75%) and Wisconsin's Stewardship funds (25% or \$150,000). The WSGS's limited resources make it difficult to actively buy land for sharptails, but lobbying for more public funding, like the Stewardship Program, is within our abilities.

The WSGS was also actively involved in the effort to expand the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area acquisition boundary, making the Plum Creek Timber Company purchase possible since the tract was outside the former Crex boundary. Former Natural Resources Board member and WSGS member, Herb Behnke, should be given much of the credit for expanding the Crex boundary.

The WSGS did provide \$5,000 for the purchase of 170 acres within the Crex Meadows boundary a few years ago, but that only represented about two percent of the total purchase price. The Friends of Crex donated another seven percent and the balance (about \$200,000) came from the Stewardship funds. However, our donation was important as it showed that citizen groups are willing to partner monetarily with the DNR to save wildlife habitat.

## PRELIMINARY 2007 SHARPTAIL HARVEST

By Jim Evrard

Sharon Fantel, DNR Assistant Upland Bird Ecologist in Madison provided the preliminary sharptail harvest numbers. The final tally will be published in the next newsletter.

Hunters reported harvesting 40 Wisconsin sharptails this past fall. This compares to the harvest from the four units of 28 in 2006 and 22 in 2005. The harvest appears to follow the trend in the number of displaying males counted in the spring statewide (194 in 2007, 137 in 2006, and 114 in 2005).

The reported harvest represents the minimum harvest since some of the hunters with permits who bag sharptails fail to report their harvest despite being mandatory. Additional harvest comes from hunters who do not have sharptail hunting permits and confuse sharptails with ruffed grouse and from some 'hunters' who are outright poachers.

Unit 2 (primarily Wausau Paper Co. forest) had 520 hunting permits available in 2007 compared to 540 in 2006 and 620 in 2005. The respective reported harvests for those years were 25, 12, and 16. You can see that the harvest increased considerably despite fewer permits being issued. Still, the 2007 reported hunter success was only 5% (25 of the 520 permits 'filled').

Unit 8 (mostly the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area) had 50 permits available in 2007 and 2006. The hunting season was closed in 2005. The reported harvest of 10 sharptails in Unit 8 this past fall represents a permit 'success' of 20%, roughly no change from the 18% (9 sharptails) in 2006.

Unit 10 (Crex Meadows Wildlife Area) had a reported harvest of 5 sharptails (20% of the 25 permits filled), less than the harvest of 7 birds in 2006 (25 permits available) and 6 birds in 2005 (50 permits).

For the past three years, no birds were reported bagged in Unit 9 despite between 33 and 44 displaying males counted in that unit in each of those years. The upswing in sharptail numbers and harvest hopefully will continue for another few years before the grouse cycle again drags population numbers down.



## MINUTES OF WSGS BOARD MEETING

September 16, 2007, Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center

President Dave Evenson called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. Board members present were Jim Evrard and Ed Frank. Blair Klein and Dave Clausen arrived in the mid-afternoon. Dave Biegel and Tom Ziegeweid had excused absences.

Jim gave the **Treasurer's Report** - Checking as of 9/14/07: \$8,705.64; CD as of 6/30/07: \$2,290.62; Total: \$10,996.26 and the **Secretary's Report** - minutes of the April board and annual meetings and June board meeting were printed in the recent newsletter.

**Genetics Study** - Ed contacted John Toepfer at his home in Plover. John said he had about 200 pairs of sharptail wings collected in the 1950s by the Hamerstoms. John told Ed that he would prepare and submit a proposal to the WSGS regarding the analysis of the wings and other genetic material from present-day Wisconsin sharptails.

**Status of DNR's Sharptail Management Plan Revision** - DNR's Scott Hull has set a meeting of the Department's Prairie Grouse Committee for October 2<sup>nd</sup>. This is not the committee charged with rewriting the sharptail plan.

**Moquah Barrens Habitat Management** - Ed sent a lengthy email message to Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest officials expressing his concern about the management direction of the Moquah Barrens (savanna vs. brush prairie), but has not yet received a response.

**Brule River State Forest Addition** - Ed also thought that a management plan should be developed for the recently-approved 20,000-acre addition to the Forest presently owned by Wausau Paper Company. In the eventuality of the addition being acquired by the State of Wisconsin, a management plan more beneficial to sharptails is needed.

**Cellulosic Ethanol Production** - Ed finished his meeting input by providing a copy of a paper that deals extensively with the production of cellulosic ethanol, potentially benefiting sharptail habitat.

**Bayfield County Fuel Breaks** - Jim asked if there was any progress in safeguarding the fuel breaks. Dave said he would have to contact DNR Biologist Todd Nass for that information. Dave also thought that the fuel breaks could serve as the permanent core of sharptail habitat for the potential rolling barrens management of the 20,000-acre Brule River State Forest addition previously discussed.

**2008 Joint Meeting with the MSGS** - Dave discussed a proposal by the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society forwarded by Tom for a joint meeting in early March of 2008 on the eastern border of Minnesota. With only a few details available, the Board members present did not express interest in partnering for the meeting, but thought that WSGS members might attend the MSGS meeting to support that organization.

**2007 Prairie Grouse Technical Meeting** - Dave, Ed, and Jim are not planning to attend the meeting although Blair said he planned to attend. No DNR managers have requested funds to attend the meeting.

**Membership in the Friends of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area** - It was decided to join the group since the WSGS is a member of the Friends of Crex and the Friends of the Bird Sanctuary.

**WSGS Membership Brochures** - Jim reported finding a box containing thousands of the membership recruitment brochures. All hunters that applied for a 2007 sharptail hunting permit will be sent a brochure in a recruiting "drive".

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon.

## AFIELD WITH ZIGGY

(In his own words)

By Thomas Ziegeweid



**My 2007 sharp-tailed grouse hunting season** started out in Minnesota in mid-September with two good friends, Roche Lally and Ward Julien, along with Roche's son Reed and two of his sidekicks. We hunted a remote bog near McGregor that had an extensive soybean field adjacent to it. The hunting was phenomenal as we bagged 15 birds on opening morning. That afternoon we bagged two more birds near Roche's shack near Cromwell.

Most of the birds were juveniles. They apparently had a good hatch. I am really glad we had the three 'kids' along as the older hunters pretty much ran out of gas by noon. The terrain is challenging to say the least. Hummock sedge is that clumpy stuff in bogs that grows a high root matrix that you literally have to step around, step by step. Some of the sphagnum bogs are like walking on an air mattress and sinking up to your knees.

By the end of the opening day, we were ready for a few Grain Belt Premiums and some great mallards cooked on a grill by Ward Julien.

**One good trip deserves an encore:** Roche and I and his two dogs left Duluth on October 19<sup>th</sup> for Baudette. He wanted to explore some of his old haunts that he hunted in his youth. We found mostly overgrown habitat between Baudette and Warroad that had no or few birds. We did find a good spot that had a lot of birds and Roche shot his limit (three) and I missed all my shots.

My luck would change the next day as we hit the Thief Lake area in northwestern Minnesota. I bagged a limit around Thief Lake the following day. My first Minnesota limit.

The underlying theme is all the places in Minnesota where the birds are coming back is the presence of aging CRP land! The first few years a piece of land is in CRP, it is rather sterile, mostly cool season grasses. As succession chugs along, the small aspen and willow come on, along with various forbs to create ideal habitat.

The Minnesota DNR has done some extensive planting of warm season grasses and prairie forbs adjacent to willow and crop fields. This is the perfect mix.

**Unit 2 in Douglas County, Wisconsin:** I hit the barrens area around Highway 27 during our season on October 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. I missed the opener, but did flush 12 birds, plus 2 ruffies. The birds mostly flushed out of range. By the looks of the vehicle, people and dog tracks in the sandy roads, there were a lot of hunters out the previous weekend (the opener). I was pleasantly surprised to see two large flocks of turkeys in that area, one of which was south of Lake Nebagamon.

My buddies Pat Otteson and Joe Rudytis were out in Unit 2 for the opener and filled three of their four sharptail tags. Pat mentioned to me that he saw a lot of hunters out, which is good to keep the sport alive. Unit 2 is our best and largest unit for sharptail numbers in the state.

It was good to see another monster clear-cut east of Highway 27 on this trip. That cut was at least a section in size. This might be my honey hole for the future.



Where's that honey hole?



# 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, 102 East Crex Ave., Grantsburg, WI 54840

WSGS  
102 E. Crex Ave.  
Grantsburg, WI 54840

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