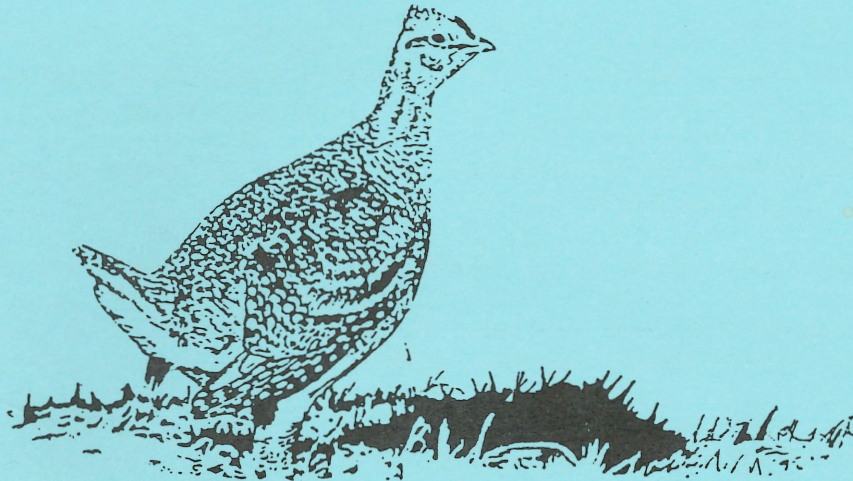


WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 31

WINTER, 2001

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Please look at your mailing label to determine whether or not you are a paid up member. We have been fairly lax in the past about mailing newsletters to past due members, since we needed a certain number to meet the bulk mail requirements. With the growth of the organization that's no longer a concern. We will still cut you a little slack if you happen to forget for a few months, but prefer that you monitor your membership and pay on time. Thanks in advance for those of you who donate at greater than the basic level!

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Two positions on the Board of Directors are open this spring. Any member may nominate another member for the board, or you may also volunteer if you are interested. Send nominations and biographies to Jim Evrard, 630 N. Pine, Grantsburg, Wisconsin 54840 by March 10th. The ballot will be in the next newsletter.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY

Saturday and Sunday, April 28 and 29, 2001
Ashland, Wisconsin

The WSGS invites you and your spouse, partner, son, daughter, or friend to our annual meeting.

Our meeting will begin at 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 28 in the spectacular Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center located just west of the junction of Highways 2 and 13 on the western edge of Ashland. Following our business meeting we will enjoy presentations on the recently completed Northwest Sands ecosystem management plan, savanna management and sharp-tailed grouse in the Moquah Barrens, and the possible sharptail reintroduction in the Ashland red clay area. We will leave the visitor center at 5 p.m. for a short auto tour of the red clay reintroduction area en route to the Northern Wisconsin Rod and Gun Clubhouse where we will enjoy a catered trout boil dinner and social.

Very early on Sunday morning, April 29, we will census sharp-tailed grouse in the Moquah Barrens. 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 meet at the Gus Smith's home, located near the Moquah Barrens, for a census debriefing/brunch beginning at 9:00 am. The meeting ends following brunch.

Registration Deadline is April 21, 2000. The registration fee of \$15 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 many motels in the Ashland area. Please make your own reservations.

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

(cut on dotted line and return with fees)

REGISTRATION - 2001 WSGS ANNUAL MEETING

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

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

Make check/money order (\$15) payable to: Wisconsin Sharp-tailed
Grouse Society

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

EARLY WISCONSIN SHARPTAIL RESEARCH

Second in a series compiled by Jim Hale

Franklin J. W. Schmidt was in charge of the Wisconsin Prairie Chicken Investigation for five years in the early 1930s, and became Aldo Leopold's first graduate student at the University of Wisconsin. Leopold wrote that "Franklin Schmidt knew more about the prairie grouse than any living man.... I have seen few field naturalists of comparable skill and acumen." Schmidt's career came to an abrupt end on August 7, 1935, when he died in a midnight house fire at Stanley, Wisconsin that also destroyed his accumulated notes, photographs and manuscripts. He was 34 years of age. His only major publication, "Winter Food of the Sharp-tailed Grouse and Pinnated Grouse in Wisconsin," appeared in the Wilson Bulletin (an ornithological journal) in 1936. Over a 5-year period, Schmidt intensively studied winter foods used by both sharp-tailed grouse and prairie chickens. Here are some of his conclusions about sharptails:

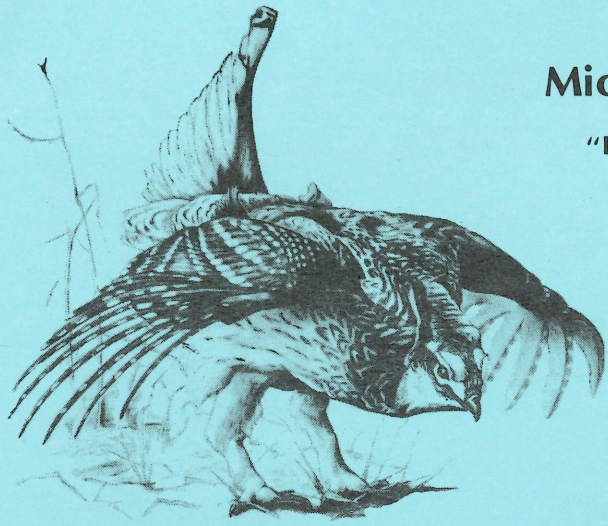
"Browse is available throughout the winter and is the most important class of winter food. Wisconsin sharptails browse on buds, catkins, and twigs of white birch, aspen, balsam, poplar, willow, bog birch, and leather-leaf. All of these may be regarded as staple winter foods."

"In November and December, when the ground is bare, sharptails gather in packs of from 20 to several hundred to feed on harvested fields of oats, buckwheat, soy beans, and corn. Buckwheat seems to be preferred, yet the biggest pack I have ever seen was one of more than 400 birds on an oat field at Hawkins in Rusk County.... All sharptails, in winter, revert to a diet of browse."

"Sharptails use food patches in fall until the first snow of winter, and again in the spring, but not during the winter budding season. Additional winter grain appears not only to be unnecessary, but may be ignored by the birds.... There is no reason to doubt the ability of the sharptail to keep in good condition for several months on a browse diet."

"The availability of grain in fall increases the carrying capacity of sharptail range during the pre-budding season.... Food patches are especially needed in wild regions where there are no farms, and hence few weeds and no grain.... In farmed regions farmers should be encouraged to raise more buckwheat."

"Budding grouse of all species prefer trees that are at the edge of a thicket, standing alone, or in small groups. A dense stand of white birch or aspen is of little use as a bud supply except for a few trees around the edge. ...It is apparent that a stocky, bushy tree has more buds and is easier to climb around on than a slim tree in a dense thicket. Budding trees which meet these specifications can be provided either by planting isolated trees, or by thinning thickets which are too dense, either by cutting or pasturing. ...Farmers generally should encourage small patches of aspen and white birch in treeless areas. Why not leave a patch of fast growing aspen to grow stove wood and to feed grouse at the same time.?"



Michigan Sharptailed Grouse Association

“Dedicated to the Restoration of Grasslands Ecosystems”

NEWSLETTER – FALL OF 2000

Now for the news:

1. MEMBERSHIP: Once again it’s time to renew your membership - - for 2001. To review the various types:

Family-----	\$ 25.00
Contributing-----	\$ 50.00
(Includes Certificate)	
Sponsor-----	\$200.00
(Includes Framed Sharptail Print)	
Life-----	\$500.00
(One-time payment. Includes Framed Sharptail Print and Plaque)	

All memberships include a subscription to MUCC’s Michigan Out-of-Doors Magazine. If you do not want the magazine, please indicate whether or not you want it when your dues go into our Treasury or let us know if you want to have the magazine to go to someone else. If the latter, please be sure to include the name and address. Send your checks to me, payable to Michigan Sharp-tailed Grouse Association.

2. 2000 SPRING CENSUS: This year’s census was conducted by Forest Service Personnel and eleven volunteers, with the compilation of results being done by Tom Weise, Supervisor of District 4 - - DNR. The total numbers were down a little from last year, but on the LEKs counted both years the totals were 264 this year and 256 in 1999, while dancing males were 111 in 2000 vs. 114 in 1999. The total number of birds on all LEKs (71) were 498 for 2000 vs. 602 in 1999 on 78 LEKs.

As far as anecdotal evidence of bird numbers is concerned, based on reports from people running dogs, it appears that the populations are still high compared to 4 – 5 years ago. One encouraging note is that there are still birds on Drummond Island. I put up a hen with a brood of at least 4 and an additional 2 adults in the Big Burn. The president of the Drummond Island Sportsmen’s Club reported seeing a “bunch” on the Maxton Plains early in the year.

3. NATIVE GRASS PROJECT: This past Spring, with the help and guidance of Jodi Kaiser (formerly with MUCC) we successfully applied to the U.P. Sustainable Forest and Wildlife Endowment Fund for a \$1,000 grant, to be used in a cooperative project with the U.S. Forest Service. Jan Schultz, Forest Plant Ecologist – USFS, has engaged the help of people to gather warm season grass seed native to the U.P., which will be propagated at the USFS nursery in Marquette for outplanting in permanent openings in the Hiawatha National Forest. The grant is to be used to cover pay and expenses for the see gatherers.
4. CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR LARGE OPEN-LANDS AND ASSOCIATED FLORA AND FAUNA IN THE EASTERN UPPER PENINSULA OF MICHIGAN: This major project was completed this past summer. As you know, our organization was an official member of the Committee to develop this project set up by the DN R several years ago. We are quite pleased with the “Strategy” which is a document designed to offer guidelines and reasons for managing five types of large open-lands in the eastern

U.P. The final draft was sent to the DNR for review and, we hope, publication as a Department Bulletin in the near future!

It is now up to us all to work with the public agencies and private landowners to make sure the guidelines in this strategy are implemented in effective long-term management of all these lands, so that ALL species of plants and animals needing this type of habitat will have it, in perpetuity.

5. HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS: Three sizable prescribed burns totaling about 700 acres were conducted this past Spring on the High Rollways, near Manistique, by the DNR, and a new LEK was discovered on one of the burn sites about a week after the fire. I have been told that the firebreaks have been seeded to Canada Wild Rye to help slow down the encroachment of aspen into these valuable grasslands. Also a burn was tried on the Danaher Plains, but was not successful due to lack of fuel. Incidentally, a new LEK was found on the Plains this year which makes two with sizeable numbers of dancers!

In the Hiawatha, a burn near RACO was started in the Spring, but had to be prematurely extinguished because the personnel were called to a wildfire, and weather conditions did not permit a restart later. However, there were two brush cutting projects conducted in early Fall, one with a Forest Service brush hog* and another with the help of the Soo Area Sportsmen’s Club and Lake Superior State University’s Fish and Wildlife Club volunteers. These were done to maintain existing warm season grass plots, which have Contained both LEKs and broods over the past few years.

This is the second year in a row that these nice folks have helped this cooperative effort with the Forest Service under Steve Sjogren’s Direction. We thank them, and would like to see other groups get involved in similar projects.

6. THE “DOG RUNNING PARTY”: On August 24th and 25th this past Summer, approximately 15 DNR personnel from over the State (and I) participated in a well-organized effort to search for Sharptails (with our bird dogs) in the Kingston Plains, the Bullock Ranch, and the Danaher Plains, in the Seney area. This project was organized and conducted by Terry Minzey, the DNR biologist at the Cusino (Shingleton) station. Preliminary results showed approximately 50 flushes each on the Bullock and Danaher, and about 15 on the Kingston.

In addition to having a great time we also were able to have several good discussions about the importance of these up-land openings (which are remnants of much larger openings from many years ago) to Sharptails and many other species of plants and animals, including Humans!

One of the participants, Al Stewart - - DNR Game Bird Specialist, was there with his Setter, and he expressed his interest in learning all he could about these openings, their inhabitants and their relative importance to long range management (I hope I paraphrased his comments correctly). Near the end of the sessions he and I talked at some length, and I asked him to consider coming to a meeting with members of our Board in the near future, and he indicated he would do so. As I write this letter I am waiting to hear from Adam Bump, MUCC wildlife biologist who is trying to coordinate such a meeting.

7. NATURAL HERITAGE GRANT: By the time you receive this newsletter we will have applied to the 2001 Natural Heritage Grants program, sponsored by the Nongame Wildlife Fund, for a grant to develop a first class brochure, with our logo. This brochure will be designed to promote the preservation and restoration of large open-lands in Michigan for the benefit of all species of animals and plants which need this type of habitat. Last year the Sharp-tailed Grouse was put on the Special Concern list in Michigan which qualifies our request to be considered. We hope it will be approved since we have been, from our beginning, a strong advocate group to raise the awareness of the need for open-lands in Michigan, and we feel the proposed brochure will help to do much to elevate that effort!

This concludes the Fall 2000 Newsletter. The next letter will be forthcoming when there is worthwhile news to report. If you need to talk to me, my phone number is (517) 781-0809.

John L. Ries
President

*The brush hog work was done at an approximate cost of \$25.00 an acre according to Steve Sjogren, U.S.F.S. Biologist.

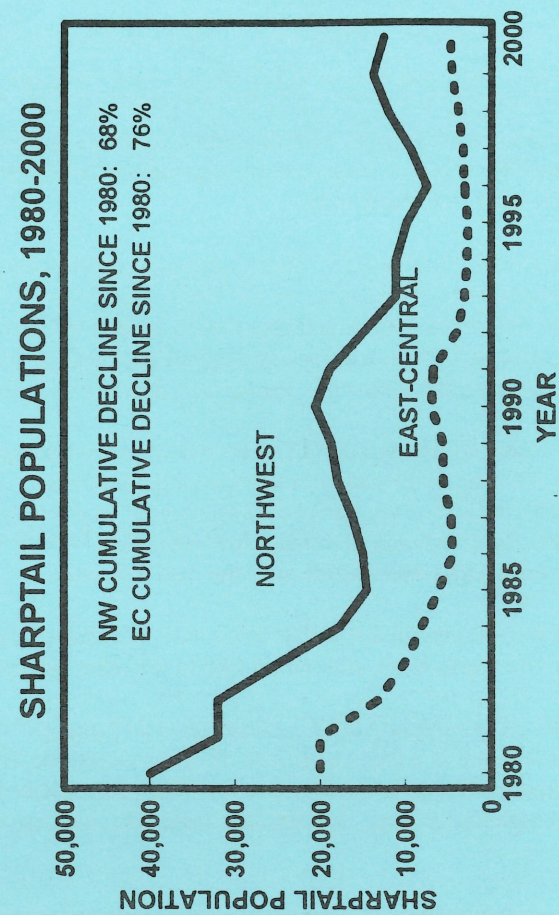
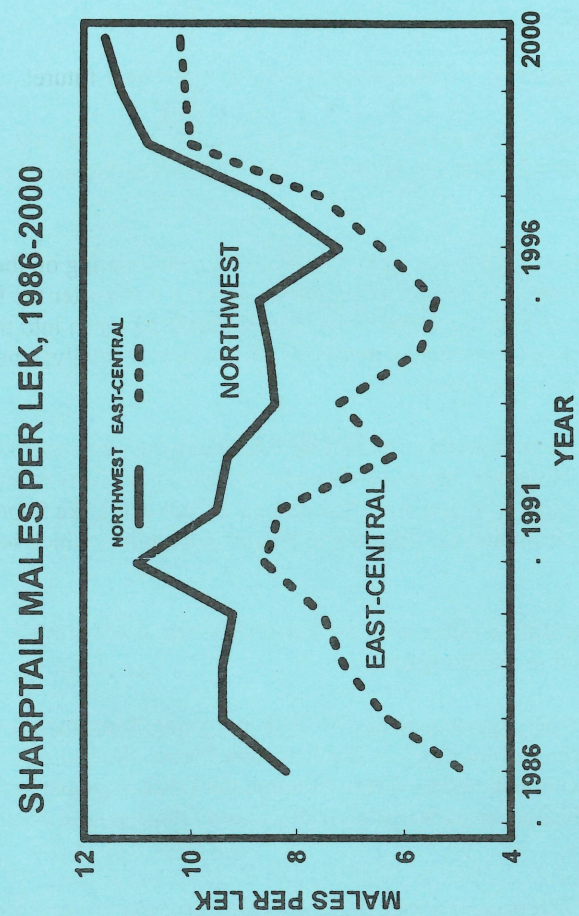
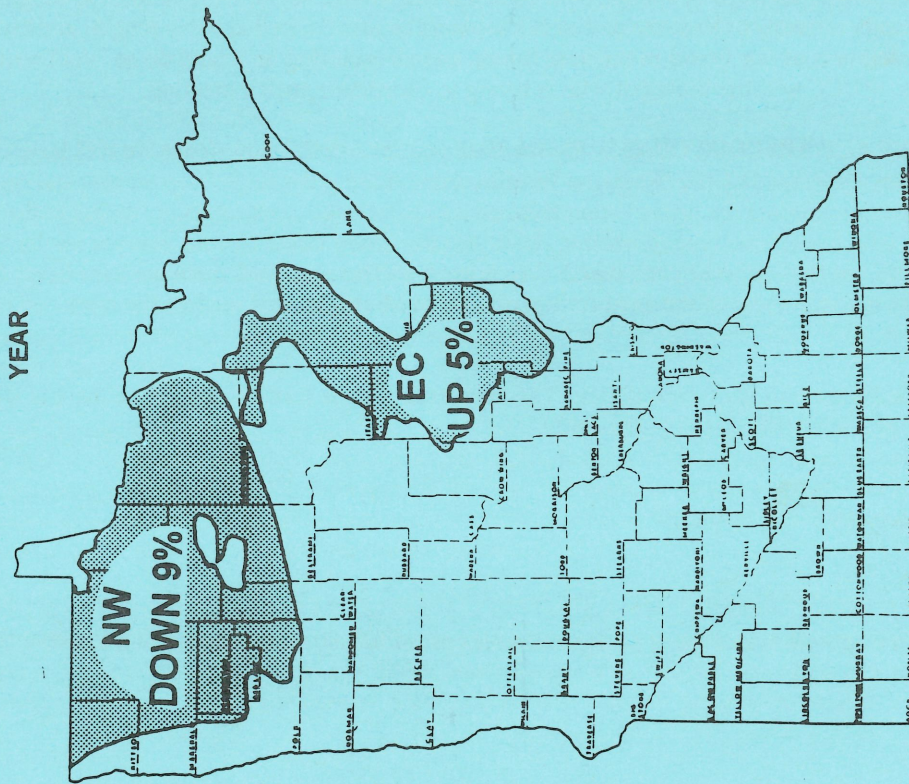
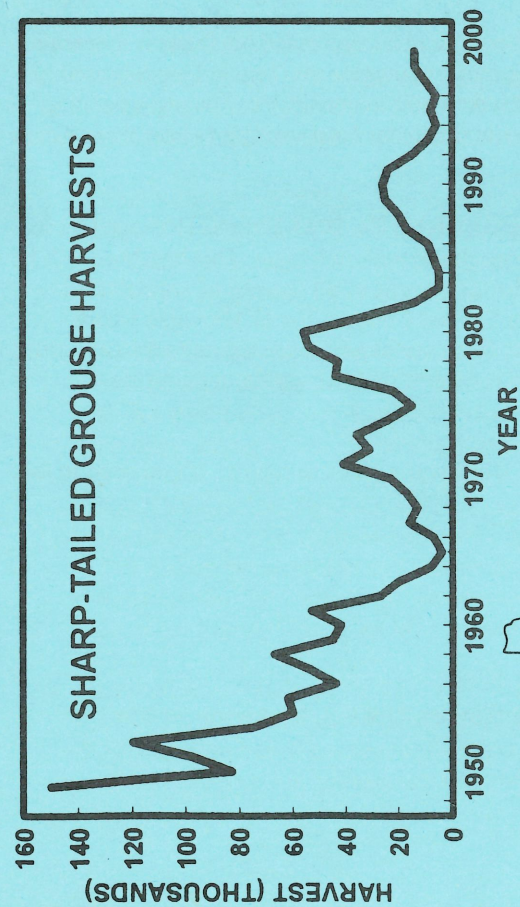


Figure 2. Changes in male sharp-tailed numbers counted on comparable leks 1999-2000, sharp-tail population trends, 1980-2000, and males per lek, 1986-2000 in the Northwest and East-Central sharp-tail ranges.

TWO RECENT SHARPTAIL ARTICLES OF INTEREST

By Jim Evrard

Articles about Wisconsin's sharp-tailed grouse occasionally appear in newspapers, magazines, and scientific publications. In the past few years, WSGS Board member Tom Jancoski wrote an excellent article that was published in the *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine. His article dealt with the opportunities for observing dancing sharp-tails in the spring on managed areas throughout the state. I also published an article in the *Wisconsin Outdoor Journal* that featured a sharp-tail hunt of mine on Crex Meadows.

Two sharp-tail articles were published in the recent issue of the *Passenger Pigeon*, the journal of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology. The first article titled, **The History, Status, and Future of Sharp-tailed Grouse in Wisconsin**, was written by WSGS members, Larry Gregg and Neal Niemuth. The lengthy article chronicles the rise and fall of the sharp-tail in our state and gives a series of recommendations to insure that the bird will continue to be a part of Wisconsin's birdlife. The article also gives the WSGS good publicity that hopefully will increase our membership and acceptance in the conservation community.

I was the senior author of the second article, **The History of Sharp-tailed Grouse in the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area**, which appeared in the bird watchers publication. WSGS members Jim Hoefler and Paul Kooiker of the DNR staff at Grantsburg were co-authors. The article describes Crex Meadows and its more than 50-year sharp-tail management history. Presently, the largest managed sharp-tailed grouse population in Wisconsin is found in Crex Meadows.

Free copies of the two *Passenger Pigeon* articles are available from me at 630 N. Pine St., Grantsburg, WI 54840 or (715)463-2446 or evrardsc@grantsburgtelcom.net.



NORTH AMERICAN GROUSE PARTNERSHIP

By Jim Evrard

In 2000, the WSGS Board made the decision to join the newly-formed North American Grouse Partnership (NAGP). The NAGP's stated goal is "To promote the conservation of grouse and the habitats necessary for their survival". I recently received their first newsletter, Grouse Partnership News, a glossy magazine replete with colored photos of prairie grouse and their habitats.

The NAGP officers and board members are from the western states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Colorado, New Mexico, Montana, South Dakota, Oklahoma, and Texas. Several articles explained the origin, goals, and objectives of the organization.

Other newsletter articles reflected the home states and interests of the board members. There were articles about Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, greater and lesser prairie chickens, and Gunnison (a newly designated species) and greater sage grouse. The closest area to Wisconsin featured in an article was western Nebraska.

Although the WSGS joined the NAGP as an organization, the newsletter was sent to me personally at my address. I actually received a second newsletter copy with only my address on the mailing label, not my name.

I don't know if this was a simple administrative mistake or if it was by design. My suspicions are based upon the group's goal of developing state chapters for the NAGP. These chapters might sap or dilute the strength of existing prairie grouse advocacy groups. Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin now have organizations championing the sharptail while prairie chicken groups exist in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The WSGS will evaluate our continued support of the NAGP based upon their evolution as an organization. I sincerely hope that the two groups can exist as strong, supportive, but independent organizations.

NORTH AMERICAN GROUSE PARTNERSHIP

A number of North American grouse species such as Sage-Grouse, Pinnated Grouse (Greater and Lesser Prairie-Chickens), and (Columbian and Prairie) Sharp-tailed Grouse have experienced serious population declines during the last 50 years. Such declines have resulted in recent petitioning by various factions to the USFWS requesting inclusion of several grouse species on the threatened and endangered species list. Interpretation of some of the recent data has suggested that within as little as 10 years, all prairie grouse could be categorized as endangered. Residing on either private or public lands or both, depending on the species, these magnificent birds function as primary indicator species for the health of their particular habitats, and they are held in especially high esteem by sportspersons, birders, biologists and land managers.

Consequently, during August 1999, a founding group of thirteen concerned professionals initiated a new national and international advocacy group for grouse, the **North American Grouse Partnership (NAGP)**, which is hoped eventually to function similarly to Ducks Unlimited in both the U.S. and Canada. The **North American Grouse Partnership** is incorporated in Idaho as a 501(C)3, not-for-profit organization. In it's mere infancy, this new effort is comprised of state and provincial chapters with working groups to address particular problems that vary with each species. The Prairie Grouse Technical Council, a group of approximately 100 North American grouse biologists, serves as one of the scientific authorities for NAGP. It is hoped that NAGP will function to bring the immediate plight of declining grouse species to public attention as well as to provide future oversight for the health of grouse populations, and to raise funds to help



The mission of the North American Grouse Partnership is to promote the conservation of grouse and the habitat necessary for their survival and reproduction.

stimulate and leverage solutions for the problems resulting in grouse declines. The problems are varied, long-term, and immense, involving millions of acres of private and public land, and in many ways are greater than those faced in the past by waterfowl. The constituency for grouse is smaller than that for waterfowl, but at the same time the constituents who exist are extremely passionate. It is expected that for the first two to five years this organization will function through volunteers, but as funds are raised, a full-time, salaried staff will be employed.

Along with bison, prairie grouse are the magnificent icons of the Great Plains. They were the inspiration for the war dances of so many native Americans. They fed and sustained the early pioneers of the prairies. Today, the mating displays on grouse leks fascinate professional birders and laypersons alike. These birds have provided many memorable days afield for gunhunters, fieldtrailers, and falconers too. Most importantly, they are

indicator species for the health of our American prairie land. Their presence or absence tells us that all is well or all is not well on the plains.

If you are somebody who cares about our native grouse species, why not join the **North American Grouse Partnership**, and become a part of the solution for their future? The membership already includes conservationists, fieldtrailers, birders, wingshooters, falconers, ranchers, energy consultants, agriculturists, biologists, and other North Americans like you. We need your participation, your interest and your support. Please tell your friends about NAGP and ask them to join as well. Together we can do something positive for these magnificent gamebirds!

NORTH AMERICAN GROUSE PARTNERSHIP membership application:

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY, STATE, ZIP _____
HOME PHONE _____
WORK PHONE _____
E-MAIL ADDRESS _____
MOBILE PHONE NO. _____
OCCUPATION _____
MEMBER OTHER ORGANIZATIONS? _____
(conservation, sporting, birding, ranching, _____
gunning, hunting, agricultural, etc.) _____

Membership Category

- | | |
|--|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular | \$35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steward | \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor | \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Affiliated Org. | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Sponsor | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | _____ |

Benefits: Annual Newsletter, window decal, membership in NAGP listserv, discount on NAGP products, membership in both NAGP National and State.

Please duplicate this form for use by your friends or follow instructions below to download this same form from the internet). Please mail completed application form and year 2001 dues/contribution to: **Mr. Cleo Sealing, 1670 N. 1/2 Road, Fruita, CO 81521.** E-mail address: sealings@acsol.net. To download this form from the internet: www.suttoncenter.org click on prairie-chicken picture, click blue link for NAGP membership, print.

PLEASE CHECK THE DATE ON YOUR MAILING LABEL BELOW TO DETERMINE IF YOU ARE PAID UP (FOR EXAMPLE 01 00 MEANS YOU ARE PAID UP UNTIL JAN, 2000)

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

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Cumberland, WI 54829

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