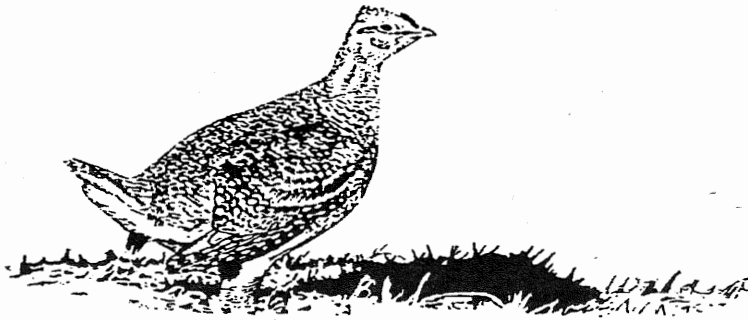


WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 42

Summer 2004

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WSGS PLAYS ROLE IN LARGE CREX GRANT

By Jim Evrard

The WSGS played a role in the recent approval of a federal grant of \$92,300 for pine/oak barrens acquisition and management Glacial Lake Grantsburg Wildlife Management Complex (GLGWMC).

Pete Engman, Manager of the GLGWMC and WSGS member, wrote the grant proposal to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. Funds contributed to the GLGWMC in the past by the WSGS, along with contributions by the Friends of Crex, and the Northwest Concentrated Employment Program, Inc., were used as matching funds for the federal grant.

The grant money will be used for the recent acquisition of 173 acres of land added to the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area, restoration of 300 acres of pine/oak barrens and jack pine/oak stands, and enhancement of 4,500 acres of pine/oak barrens. Included will be construction of two miles of new firebreak to allow prescribed burning of 2,600 additional acres of upland and 1,500 acres of sedge marsh.

This additional habitat work will help the sharp-tailed grouse population of Crex Meadows and surrounding habitat. In this era of severely-reduced DNR operations budgets, Engman should be congratulated for his efforts to secure more funding for important habitat work.



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Dave Evenson



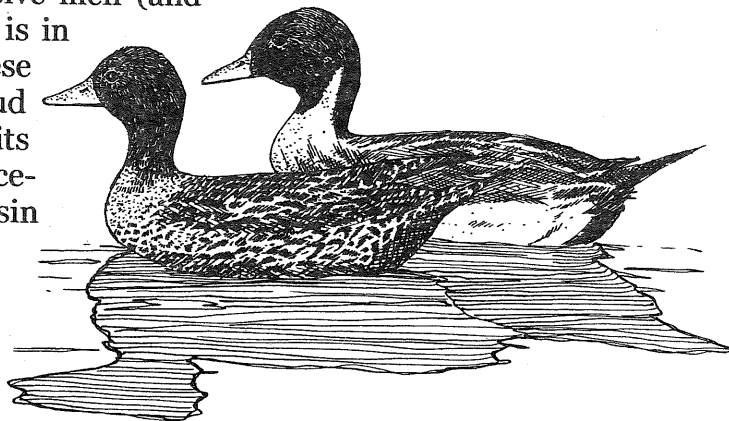
Almost 30 years ago, there was a young wildlife manager on the eastern side of Wisconsin who got a look at statewide wildlife budgets, and wondered, "Why are we spending this kind of money on a couple of dozen sharptails?" A naïve young manager, and a bit jealous of wildlife money being sent to the Crex budget, that wouldn't be coming his way. That young manager, of course, was me.

Then in 1983, I got the best job in the state, moved to Cumberland as area manager, and had within my area two of the sharptail gems, Namekagon Barrens and Crex Meadows. I'm not sure if I got smarter, or just got closer to the situation. But I began educating myself on barrens issues. And in 1990, with the goodwill of half a dozen wildlife managers, a roll of stamps and a ream of copy paper, I sent out the first newsletter that begot this organization.

This past May 20th I was invited to ribbon cutting ceremony for the Great Wisconsin Birding and Nature Trail, Northwoods Region, held of course, at Crex Meadows. I stood in the parking lot with 400 other birders, and listened as local and statewide dignitaries explained the economic values of nature observation to our state, as well as the values to our souls. I opened the brochure to look at the sites. Yup, there they were, that string of barrens gems in the Northwest Sands, Crex Meadows, Governor Knowles State Forest, which includes the Kohler-Peet Barrens, Namekagon Barrens, the Bird Sanctuary, Moquah Barrens. In the heavy soil of central northern Wisconsin, Kimberly-Clark and Pershing Wildlife Areas. Over in the eastern sands- Spread Eagle- check, it's there.

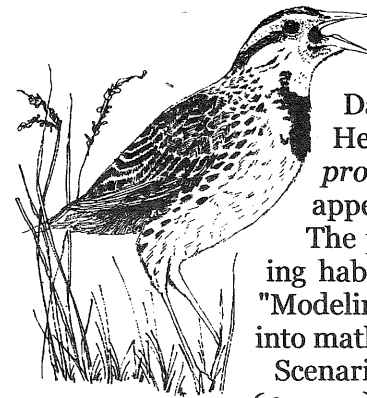
I thought of those stubborn bull-headed game managers of the 1940's and 50's who looked at the disappearing barrens and said to themselves "This much we will save". I can just about guarantee that some of those managers weren't saving those gems for dickie birds and nature observation. Words like holistic ecosystem management and biodiversity hadn't even been invented. They saved them for sharptail areas. They saved them in spite of indifferent support from Madison, and in the face of opposition from many who thought those barrens were worthless places that should be put to better use.

Today we have these gems of biodiversity, where one can hear a sharptail, true, but also hope to see an upland sandpiper or Brewer's blackbird or a clay-colored sparrow. I feel lucky and proud that these stubborn, persuasive men (and women, for certainly Fran Hamerstrom is in their ranks) worked so hard for these sharptail areas. And I feel lucky and proud to be part of the organization that has as its core tenet the preservation and enhancement of these barrens, the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society.



RECENT SHARPTAIL RESEARCH

BY Jim Evrard



DNR biologist and WSGS member Fred Strand recently sent me a research report written by H. Resit Akcakaya, Volker Radeloff and David Mladenoff from the University of Wisconsin - Madison and Hong He. The report, *Integrating Landscape and Metapopulation Modeling Approaches: Viability of the Sharp-tailed Grouse in a Dynamic Landscape*, appeared in April 2004 issue of the journal, *Conservation Biology*.

The publication reports results of highly technical research involving modeling habitat and sharptail populations in Wisconsin's Northwest Pine Barrens. "Modeling" is actually educated guesses obtained by plugging known information into mathematical formulas.

Scenarios involving variables of minimum age of jack pine for harvest (40 and 60 years), clear-cut size (10 and 640 acres), and percent of area in red pine management (0 and 50%) were used to estimate the average sharp-tailed grouse carrying capacity of the 1.1 million-acre Northwest Pine Barrens.

The highest sharptail population estimate for the Northwest Pine Barrens was 16,400 birds under optimum habitat conditions. Under the various active management scenarios, the best average sharptail population estimate, 14,544 birds, was obtained using large clear-cuts (640 acres) of jack pine at an early rotation age (40 years) without any area devoted to red pine management.

The lowest average population estimate was 5,743 sharptails using small clear-cuts (10 acres) of older (60 years) jack pine stands with no red pine plantations. The same management scenario with half the area devoted to red pine plantation strangely had a slightly higher (5,794) sharptail average population estimate.

Sharptail population changes between years due to changes in survival, production, etc. clouded attempts to estimate the future viability of Northwest Pine Barrens sharptails based upon the various habitat management scenarios.

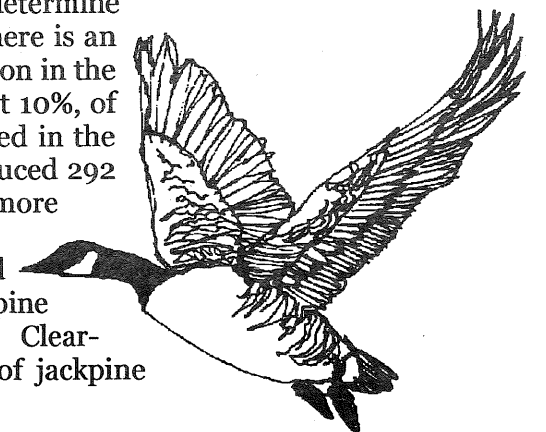
The average fall sharptail density for good habitat in the Northwest Pine Barrens (not all of the area is sharptail habitat) was estimated by Akcakaya et al. (Akcakaya, Radeloff, Mladenoff, and He) to be 35 birds per square mile, based on information from the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area.

Total sharptail habitat in Crex Meadows is about 21 square miles which supported an average of 73 displaying male sharptails annually year for the years 1980-1999. The Crex Meadows information was reported in a paper, *The History of Sharp-tailed Grouse in the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area*, written by Jim Hoefler, Paul Kooiker and myself that was published in 2000 in the *Passenger Pigeon*, the journal of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.

Based upon previous studies, Akcakaya et al. assumed that displaying males in the spring made up about 10% of the fall population. This meant that there was an average fall population of 755 sharptails (all ages, male and female) in Crex Meadows during 1980-1999. However, this population model does not agree with that currently used by the DNR.

The simple DNR model used to estimate sharptail numbers to determine hunting permit numbers is more conservative. It assumes that there is an equal sex ratio in sharptails in the spring and the average production in the fall is four young per female or displaying males make up 17%, not 10%, of the fall population. Therefore, if 73 displaying males were counted in the spring, it was assumed there were also 73 adult females that produced 292 young resulting in a fall population of 438 sharptails, slightly more than half of the population estimate of Akcakaya et al..

The main message of the modeling paper is that sharp-tailed grouse in Wisconsin's Northwest Pine Barrens prosper in jackpine habitat that is clear-cut in large blocks at an early rotation age. Clear-cutting in small blocks at longer rotation ages and conversion of jackpine stands to red pine reduces sharptail carrying capacity.



PROGRESS ON THE HABITAT FRONT:

CREX MEADOWS LAND ACQUISITION

Paul Kooiker, DNR Area Wildlife Biologist, sent the following letter to the WSGS: "After a long and difficult negotiation, the 173 acre Buggert Lake property is now part of the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area. WSGS [WSGS], through its very generous donation, played a key role in making this happen.

This property has tremendous ecological and wildlife values. The state -- and every citizen of Wisconsin -- now owns the entire shoreline of Buggert Lake. Buggert Lake is a unique shallow water glacial lake that is home to breeding osprey, trumpeter swans, and waterfowl, and is also an excellent duck hunting lake. The upland portion of the property was burned over in a 1980 wildfire, and is an excellent example of barrens habitat -- considered to be a globally imperiled ecosystem. It provides high quality habitat for several rare and endangered species of grassland birds, butterflies, and amphibians and reptiles, not to mention deer, bear, and other game species.

Perhaps of more importance to WSGS members is the fact that this property has for a long time sustained a breeding population of sharp-tailed grouse. Sharptails routinely move between the Buggert Lake property and the adjacent Crex Meadows barrens. For that reason alone wildlife biologists at Crex have long considered this an extremely important piece of land to add to Crex. This urgency to acquire this parcel increased in recent years as the open barrens habitat began to grow up and succeed into trees, and as a result sharp-tail use of the property has decreased in recent years. Another threat was housing development around the lake if the property was not protected through public ownership.

Management plans include the use of mowing and prescribed burning to bring the land back into peak production for sharptails and other barrens-dependent wildlife species. A large abandoned field will be planted to prairie grasses to provide nesting habitat for sharptails, waterfowl, and other grassland birds.

WSGS members can feel good about knowing that this piece of land will continue to provide quality habitat for sharp-tailed grouse, forever. My sincere thanks to all of you for your generous donation."

Paul also recently sent a message that an executive Vice President of the Plum Creek Timber Company overruled their real estate staff and decided not to sell the 320 acres they own on the northwest side of Crex Meadows to the State of Wisconsin. They may offer it for sale in a year or so and stated that the DNR would be given the right of first refusal to buy the land. Hopefully this key parcel will not fall into the hands of developers.

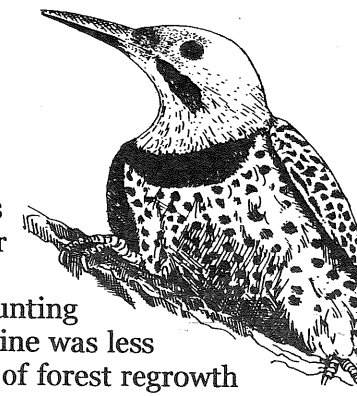


SPRING SHARPTAIL SURVEY RESULTS

By Jim Evrard

Thanks to all the WSGS volunteers who again helped the DNR in their annual spring sharp-tailed grouse counts. The following numbers were furnished by Andrea Mezera, Assistant Upland Wildlife Ecologist for the DNR's Bureau of Wildlife Management in Madison,

Sharptail numbers dropped from last year and the number of hunting permits issued for 2004 reflect those lower numbers. The sharptail decline was less on managed areas (-15%) than on unmanaged areas (-28%), a reflection of forest regrowth in Units 2 and 9 followed the big clearcuts that resulted from the massive jack pine budworm outbreak of the 1990s. Hopefully we've reached the bottom of the grouse cycle and sharptail populations will begin increasing in 2005.



Deer Management Unit	Number of Males		Hunting Permits	
	2004	2003	2004	2003
2	188	263	640	720
3	14	29		
4	21	20		
8	37	52	70	100
9	55	73	190	220
10	53	61	100	200
20	-	4		
24	16	3		
30	16	17		
55	3	2		
Totals	403	524	1000	1240

Wildlife Areas (numbers are included above unit totals)
Number of Displaying Males 2003 & 2004

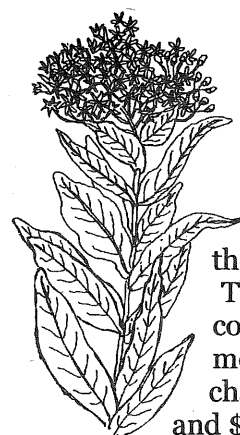
	2004	2003
Moquah Barrens	14	29
Douglas County	21	20
Namekagon Barrens	37	52
Crex Meadows	53	61
Riley Lake	16	17
Kimberly-Clark	-	4
Pershing	16	3
Dike 17	3	2
Totals	160	188



If you're interested in hunting sharptails during the Oct. 16 to Nov. 7 season, you need to obtain a hunting permit application (\$3) from DNR license vendors and have the application in the mail before August 10. Last year about 500 hunters applied for 1,240 sharptail tags. If the same number of hunters apply this year, they might receive two tags each.

ANNUAL MEETING

By Jim Evrard



The 2004 annual meeting took place in the Village of Florence on April 24 and 25. The WSGS Board met in the morning of the 24th at the lakeside cabin of member John Clemetson near Florence. Only Tom "Ziggy" Ziegeweid was absent.

The annual meeting began at 1 p.m. in the Natural Resource Center with 16 persons attending the meeting. In the absence of Tim Connolly, who resigned in late 2003 to take a job in Montana, President Jim Evrard gave the Treasurer's report.

The assets of the WSGS totaled \$6,4574.24 (\$4,469.66 in the checking account and \$2,104.58 in the CD) as of April 20, 2004. During the previous month, \$5,000 was donated to the DNR as a contribution towards the purchase of 173 acres of land for inclusion in the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area and \$600 was contributed to build two sharptail viewing blinds for use in the Moquah Barrens Wildlife Area.

In other business, Evrard wrote a letter of support from the WSGS for Crex Manager Pete Engman who has applied for a large grant from the federal government for barrens acquisition and management in the Glacial Lake Grantsburg Wildlife Management Complex.

An analysis of the status of our 221 members found that 21 are complimentary members, 135 are current paid members and 65 are delinquent members. The delinquent members will be sent a special insert in the next newsletter urging them to pay their dues.

The proposals to eliminate the sharptail hunting closed areas in the Moquah Barrens and Douglas County wildlife areas received overwhelming support in the voting on the recent DNR Spring Hearings. This might provide additional hunting opportunities in the future.

The Board decided to withhold paying annual membership dues (\$250) to the Wisconsin Outdoor Alliance pending obtaining more information about the group's activities. The Board did decide to transport the WSGS display to Madison for display at the 19th North American Prairie Conference scheduled for August 8-12. The Board decided not to participate in Ducks Unlimited Great Outdoor Festival, the Quad 30 Campaign, and Adventure Quest 2004.

Tom Ziegeweid was reelected and Dave Evenson, the "Father" of the WSGS, was elected to the Board of Directors. Jim Evrard decided to step down as President and will again assume the duties of Treasurer. Dave Evenson was elected as the new President of the WSGS. WSGS members Stu Boren and Mark Martin presented a very interesting and informative program that centered on the history and present status of the Spread Eagle Barrens Natural Area. Additional information about the status of sharptails in northeast Wisconsin provided by a Michigan DNR video and a spokesman for the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.

Tickets were drawn for the framed sharptail prints in the annual art raffle. Barry Stanek of Gordon won the Gromme print, Tomah's John Spaeth's ticket was drawn for the Raymer print, and Dick Nikolai of Oshkosh was the lucky winner of the Smith print. The meeting ended with door prize drawings and a tour of the barrens exhibit in the Resource Center.

Following the meeting, 20 persons attended the WSGS dinner in the Chamfered Centre, a restored lumber baron's home in Florence. The members enjoyed a tour of the home after dinner.

Eight WSGS members braved the cold and rain the following morning for an auto tour of the Spread Eagle Barrens led by Stu Boren. Much of the restored barrens habitat looked suitable for sharptail with the only question being if the acreage of habitat is adequate to support a sharptail population.

Following the tour, the group returned to Florence to join other WSGS members for a warm and dry breakfast at a local cafe. Following the meal, members returned to their homes throughout Wisconsin and Illinois.



W.S.G.S. Officers 2004



President:

Dave Evenson

The newly elected president of the W.S. G.S., Dave is known as the "Father" or the W.S.G.S. A recently retired DNR Wildlife Biologist, whose most recent position was the Northern Region's Wildlife Expert. Dave makes his home in Cumberland, WI.

Vice-President: *Tom "Ziggy" Ziegeweid*

A charter member of the society, and the groups first president. Ziggy lives in Eau Claire, WI where he owns and operates his own business. An inveterate hunter, Ziggy can be found most fall days prowling his favorite hangouts in Northern Wisconsin.

Treasurer:

Jim Evrard

Jim is the immediate past president, and the long time treasurer of the W.S.G.S. A charter member of the W.S.G.S. , this former DNR Wildlife Biologist and long time sharptail manager resides in Grantsburg, WI.

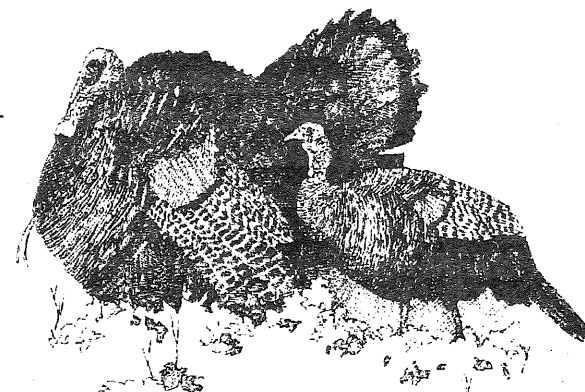
Board Members:

Bob Dreis: A charter member of the W.S.G.S. Bob is a retired DNR Wildlife Biologist who was the former Northwest District Wildlife Supervisor, and a former biologist for the Ruffed Grouse Society. He makes his home in Spooner, WI.

Ed Frank: A former W.S.G.S. President, this retired DNR biologist's last staff position was as the Upland Game Ecologist in Madison. Ed still lives in the Madison area, but much of his time is spent at a cabin near Trego, WI.

Blair Klein: A former attorney and judge in Wyoming, Blair now runs a farm near St. Croix Falls, WI. Dedicated to sharptail conservation, he has hunted sharptails throughout North America.

Jim Wilson: The newest member of the W.S.G.S. board, Jim is a retired veterinarian from Centuria-Milltown, WI. Jim is a long-time enthusiast of sharptail hunting.



CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL

Check your mailing label for the expiration date. If your membership has expired (anything dated 2002 and earlier), please renew. Membership funds are important to carry out our programs benefiting Wisconsin's sharp-tailed grouse so renew your membership today.

**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

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