

WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 96 Winter 2022

ANNUAL MEETING AT THE BIRD SANCTUARY SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 2022

This year's gathering of the flock will take place at the historic Clubhouse, built in 1935, at the Bird Sanctuary, better known today as Douglas County Wildlife Area. We will follow the model of last year's very successful meeting, convening at 10 AM and meeting into the afternoon, with a late afternoon tour. Your generous dues and donations have been used on several roller chopping projects and we'll visit those sites as well as others.

So mark your calendar- June 18. Details are still being worked out but will be in the next newsletter, as well as on our website wisharptails.org and on Facebook and Instagram. See you there!

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FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Shortly after our meeting at Crex last summer I got a call from Ed Frank, WSGS Past President and Board Member Emeritus, and he must have known I needed inspiration for my president's column, since he basically laid this out for me.

We'll start with the good- we both agreed that the Namekagon Barrens holding good numbers of birds and developing a new dancing ground into the expanded ownership is the number one success. Continuous good management, the new expansion coming into habitat are main reasons, we both think, and while Ed may not agree, I think it's certainly possible that having huge clearcuts just north of the property can't hurt, and being in the center of the "String of Pearls" where birds can immigrate from any direction can't hurt either.

The good, and to me the wow, is the way Bayfield County Forest has reconfigured the Barnes Barrens and quickly brought the Bass Lake Barrens more than halfway to being completely opened up. Those foresters know how to set up sales and move timber in a hurry. Most refreshing is the willingness of Bayfield County administration to embrace these projects, knowing in the long term there will be a little less timber sale money coming into the coffers. Kudos to Bayfield County!

Kudos also to Bayfield County for putting together the research project that we heard about at our August WSGS meeting. WSGS paid for collar number 1 with your help. The cell tower or satellite collars provide a ton of information without the need for personnel to be involved in tracking birds. Now if we can find enough birds to put on the air!

The bad- not so many years ago, the state moved "doomed" birds from the budworm clearcuts which were aging out due to succession into Pershing Wildlife Area. A good effort, but it would certainly appear to have failed.

Continued on page 3...

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 or emailed to information@wisharptails.org.

WSGS OFFICERS

President: Dave Evenson
Vice President/Treasurer: Ken Jonas
Secretary: Paul Kooiker

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mike Cole John Probst
Mike Amman Bruce Moss
Trevor Hubbs Ashley Steinke

Newsletter Compositor: Lauren Finch

Where are the hens? Our female presenter at the August meeting made a bit of a joke, but a true point, that males are not important, and the next male presenter readily agreed with her. We all know this to be true in a lekking species, hens make nests and raise young. Ed is very concerned about this, while I'm just afraid there aren't enough birds at all in some of our areas. I'll address this further in another article.

So, if we have the good, the bad, you all know the next word- ugly, but I'm going to use the word sad instead of ugly.

I'm sad that in our thirty year existence we started out with a meeting at Holcombe (Pershing), and had other early meetings at Black River Falls, Wisconsin Rapids, Florence, Phillips, Park Falls. I remember when Kimberly Clark Wildlife Area had a spring count of about 90. I remember when we could find a few birds out of Wisconsin Rapids. Now we find ourselves almost always scheduling annual meetings within the Northwest Sands, where there are some birds to be seen.

And I'm sad, and a bit shocked that our neighboring East Central Minnesota population has dropped quickly to a point where the state needed to close the hunting season.

So, not to end with ugly, we double down on the Northwest Sands, where habitat is being created every day through timber sales and through deliberate actions by wildlife managers, many actions funded in part by your donations. Thank you.

CONSERVATION CONGRESS DOG TRAINING QUESTIONS

Can it be a good thing for a newly hatched ruffed grouse or sharptail or song bird, still flightless, to be in proximity of a free running hunting dog? How about any ground nesting hen? How about even a newborn fawn? Or, how would you like to have a dog come running through your spring turkey set-up?

Thus far, Wisconsin has rules against training dogs off leash during the nesting and brood rearing seasons. Wisconsin is not alone, all the northern tier of states from Maine to Minnesota have some dog training restrictions during this time of year.

In 2020, some dog training advocates wrote several questions for the Conservation Congress questionnaire. They were successful in crafting very innocuous sounding questions that made it seem there was no good reason to continue this restriction on training, and thus busy people who didn't give it a lot of thought voted with them. (The writing of these questions was just as slanted, the opposite way, as this first paragraph!)

Most of your WSGS Board members own and love hunting dogs, and they train them well. The board is definitely in favor of having well trained dogs. But our members have seen their own dogs, running even in August when training is legal, catch young birds. They've seen trainers with multiple dogs, again in the legal season, working on sharptails. Sharpies are a great bird to work dogs on- you can see what's going on and make corrections.

Continued on page 4...

The Department has an every other year procedure for dealing with this type of questions, so dog training question(s) will not be on this year's questionnaire, but may appear in the 2023 version. We encourage you to attend, virtually or in person, these hearings. Usually they are the second Monday in April, April 11 this year; last year the online version ran over three days. Please give this issue some thought, talk with your friends, pay attention to when the hearings are, and vote.

WSGS & SOCIAL MEDIA

by Trevor Beltrichard

A brief history: In June of 2019, two members of our board decided to spread our message to a wider audience and create a Facebook group for WSGS. Since then, we have gained a strong and loyal following. Through consistent posts, we have disseminated our core message to residents all around our state. The majority of our followers are in the NW Sands region, along with a sizable following in Dane Co.

Seeing the success of Facebook, our board members decided it was prudent to pursue an Instagram account as well. Instagram is an image based application and a great way to get the story of barrens preservation out. WSGS's Instagram account grew rapidly, gaining an almost immediate following. We attempt to post on both Instagram and Facebook weekly, keeping our followers updated and informed.

Our social media footprint continues to expand and grow. Currently, we have 646 followers on Instagram and 603 page likes on Facebook. Engagement with our content is consistent with 120 – 200 people *liking* our message, per post. A trend is developing and it probably doesn't come as a surprise to our rational thinking members; our posts get the most and highest quality engagement when they are new and engaging information about sharp-tails in NW Wisconsin. Many of our posts feature the history, ecology, and management of barrens. Maybe it's a no brainer, but new, local information on sharpies always gets more attention.

The next benchmark is 1000 followers on each platform. Upon reaching this, new and exciting opportunities become available to our pages. The hope is to be there by the leking season, though that is an ambitious goal.

If you haven't already, check out our pages at - [WSGS Facebook Page](#) - [WSGS Instagram Page](#)

SHARPTAIL DANCING GROUND BLINDS: NAMEKAGON BARRENS

Sharp-tailed grouse viewing is available each April and May. The Friends group and the WDNR makes blinds available for up-close viewing of the startling and entertaining mating dance of the sharp-tailed grouse. Get up early and watch from just a few feet away as males show off, competing for the chance to mate. The Friends of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area (FNBWA) requests a minimum donation of \$10 per blind reservation. All money goes to Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area (NBWA) management and includes a free FNBWA membership.

WSGS TREASURERS REPORT JULY 8, 2021 – DECEMBER 31, 2021

EXPENDITURES

USPS Postage & Stamps	\$ 184.25
Newsletter Printing – Anderson Graphics	\$ 185.00
Annual Meeting Expense Re-imburement – Cole	\$ 203.70
WDNR Douglas Co. WA Habitat Improvement Project	\$ 1500.00

TOTAL **\$ 2072.95**

DEPOSITS

Membership Dues (39 new or renewing mbrs., 22 via PP)	\$ 3471.74
Merchandise (\$373.81 order forms; \$263.81 Spreadshirt)	\$ 743.12
General Donations	\$ 1030.00
Jim Evrard Memorial Donations	\$ 179.60
Annual Meeting Fees	\$ 240.00
Raffle Donations	\$ 355.00

TOTAL **\$ 6019.46**

Net GAIN/LOSS **+ \$ 3946.51**

Checking Account Balance July 07, 2021	\$ 9950.24
Checking Account Balance December 1, 2021	\$13896.75
Jim Evrard Memorial Account	\$ 116.46
General Account Fund	\$ 13780.29
Combined Accounts Balance	\$ 13896.75
Current Paid Memberships =	151
Recent Member Expirations 2021 =	~ 52

SPRING FLING and DOUBLE GUN SHOOT ***Pine City, Minnesota, April 30***

The Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society along with the Pheasants Forever - East Central Spurs Chapter invite you to the 2022 April 30 SPRING FLING and DOUBLE GUN SHOOT at Wings North 19379 Homestead Rd, Pine City, MN.

There will be an early field trip, morning sessions and afternoon shoot. REGISTER by March 31 - Mail a check payable to MSGS, to Jillian Fejszes at 1202 Greenhill Drive, Thief River Falls, MN 56701. For further information go to MSGS website or contact Kyle Arola for any questions regarding the event at 218-689- 5178 or kyle.arola32@gmail.com.

SCULPTURE AT CREX MEADOWS HONORS JIM EVRARD

Friends and family recognized lifelong conservation leader Jim Evrard, advocate for Crex Meadows and dedicated worker for sharp-tailed grouse and the sand barrens, with a David Groenjes metal sculpture of three sharptails on a dancing ground. This sculpture, which is placed in the prairie immediately in front of the Crex Meadows Interpretive Center, was dedicated at the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society meeting on August 21, 2021.

The placement is appropriate. While such an undertaking as the Crex Interpretive Center, and the more recent Mess Hall is always due to collaboration of many people, Jim and his wife, Shirley, were right up there as promoters, cajolers and workers in getting these projects to reality. Jim spent countless hours setting up fundraisers, including three Governor's Hunts, where donors made substantial contributions for the privilege of hunting with Tommy Thompson. He sat on the planning committees, offering suggestions, accepting compromises and doing all that long and stressful work in the background of any such projects.

Jim was a founding member of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, and served as long time secretary, treasurer, newsletter editor and corporate conscience. As a researcher he wrote several publications on the history and value of the Northwest Sands of Wisconsin. One of these research projects focused on the wetlands of Namekagon Barrens- Jim knew and loved those barrens as well as Crex.

Before Jim's death on February 10, 2020, he and Shirley often made hunting trips to the Dakotas. On one such trip they stopped at the ND Fish and Game building and noted the large displaying male sharptail statue on the front lawn. "That's what we should have at Crex," said Jim. Shirley remembered that thought, and directed any gifts that friends sent to WSGS or to Friends of Crex. Shirley, along with Ken Jonas and Bruce Moss of WSGS researched this idea and ultimately commissioned metal artist Dave Groenjes to complete the project. This sculpture now can be part of the experience of the thousands of people who come to visit Crex.



WHERE ARE THE FEMALES?

By Dave Evenson

No, that's not the plaint of a young miner new into camp nor the latest country hit song. It's a question I've heard a few times this last year, regarding sharptails. We all know that counting sharpies on a dancing ground we are likely to see most every cock in the area, and find ourselves lucky if a hen or two wanders in. This causes challenges for researchers trying to tag females. But are females really missing from the populations? In a lekking breeding system hens really drive the population dynamics; males don't matter.

Somebody must have drop netted or cannon netted prairie grouse in the winter and taken sex ratios, was my first thought. I have a black and white picture of drop netting in my head, probably from the Hamerstrom era, but Professor Google doesn't know about it. Winter sex ratios would probably be the best indicator of survival, but fall would be the next best indicator- all of the nest and young brood losses would have occurred by then. My trusty *Wisconsin Grouse Problems*, 1948, by Wally Grange shows 29 males, 24 females and four indeterminable from a sample of 57 sharptails in the 1941 harvest. Two online literature reviews from fall harvested birds indicate approximately equal sex ratio.

Draft Washington State Status Report for the Sharp-tailed Grouse by Michelle J. Tirhi and David W. Hays

Sex and Age Ratios Sex and age ratios are typically determined from information supplied by hunters or from **wing samples** taken from harvested birds. Age ratios are influenced by the season data are collected (Table 1). **Overall, sharp-tailed grouse sex ratios are approximately 1:1.**

Table 1. Sex and age ratios (percent) of sharp-tailed grouse.

Location	Adult		Juvenile		Source
	M	F	M	F	
Alberta	47	53	50	50	Hilton and Wishart (1981)
Colorado	45	55	47	53	Giesen (1987)
Michigan	60	40	56	44	Ammann (1957)
North Dakota	53	47	na	na	Kletts (1962)
North Dakota	51	49	49	51	Kobriger (1981)
South Dakota	55	45	56	44	Jackson and Henderson (1965)
South Dakota	52	48	54	46	Robel et al. (1972)

M=male, F=female. a Includes all ages of sharp-tailed grouse.

Restoration Plan for Sharp-tailed Grouse Recovery in Western Montana May 2017

Developed for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Authors: Lance McNew et.al.

Significant differences in survival between either adults and yearlings or between sexes have not been found (Boisvert 2002, Collins 2004), but seasonal patterns and causes of mortality may differ between sexes. Increased female mortality can occur during the nesting season, while male mortality increases during the breeding season when birds are attending

leks (Collins 2004).

Everything in this short review would say sexes are more or less equal in number. These were in relatively large populations. So, do we have a shortage of females, or just a shortage of sharptails, period? It will be a tough problem to research. Perhaps there are other studies out there that I didn't find. Bottom line is, we need lots of hens and lots of successful nests and broods.

WSGS BOD MEETING **9/9/21 ZOOM 7-8:30 PM**

Present: Dave Evenson, Ken Jonas, Mike Cole, Mike Amman, Bruce Moss, Trevor Hubbs,

Special guests: Trevor Bellrichard

Treasurer's report by Ken Jonas

- \$1225 conference income:
 - o \$60 hats
 - o \$360 memberships (1 was a life membership)
 - o Donations
 - o \$240 costs for food, etc

\$335 raffle income

Social Media

Instagram ("wisharptails") has 356 followers after only making 12 posts. Trevor is posting daily with pre-approved content (not sustainable at this rate, but good for getting traction early-on).

7 new memberships in last 30 days (likely as a result of Instagram)

How to connect Facebook and Instagram? This can be done by adding Trevor as an administrator to our Facebook page (Cole's note: has since been done)

Promoting our posts – we can target the area (i.e. Midwest) where our material gets pushed. Facebook has 373 followers as of 9/9 (Cole's note: is up to 451 as of 11/9, growth coming from Instagram followers)

Communications

Discussion on search for image of a potential new (alternate) logo. It came from a print Shirley Evrard may have gotten from a rummage sale. Can't find any copyright. We don't necessarily have to confine ourselves to one logo, could have multiple.

General agreement to move forward with our on-line store. Can add link to that store to our website. We need to provide our non-profit info to the website.

Potentially create a new position "Communications Director" or "Digital Specialist" for website and media, add to FB & Instagram. Does not have to be a Board member at this time.

Trevor H. can build the website, Trevor B. can work on/maintain it. Approved unanimously. Newsletter, last one was late. Delays all-around, including printer. Dave will start the next one earlier.

Consider a regularly scheduled ZOOM meeting 6 times per year. Set the dates early in the year so BOD can keep those dates free and we can get more BOD attendance. The world

of sharptails has much going on, and we meet too infrequently to be proactive. By the end of 2021, lets set our scheduled six meetings for 2022. Unanimously approved.

Spring Meeting

Discussion- where to hold spring meeting? Decision next Zoom.

Dave has several art prints donated by Shirley Evrard. Potential to do another art raffle?

Christmas raffle? By law, we can't do it on-line. Potential to raffle off a donated hunt or fishing trip? Further discussions planned for this topic.

Meeting Adjourn

- Motion by Moss, second by Cole. Passed unanimous at 8:29 PM. Submitted by Mike Cole

MINUTES OF WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY **BOARD MEETING**

December 4, 2021

Crex Meadows - Grantsburg

Present: D. Evenson, B. Moss, K. Jonas, M. Cole, M. Amman, P. Kooiker (Quorum)

Treasurer's Report

Ken reported our combined accounts balance is \$13,881.81, a net gain of \$3,391 over the past 6 months.

Ken reported 27 new members (15 via Paypal), which brings our current membership to 112. There are 52 expired memberships – need to contact those folks.

Report approved (PK/MC)

Annual Meeting

The Board agreed on a one-day annual meeting (instead of a two-day overnight meeting) in early June. Location will be the Douglas County Wildlife Area clubhouse. Check potential dates with Greg Kessler and Douglas County Forestry Dept. re rental of the clubhouse. The DCWA Friends Group will be invited. Motion approved (MC/KJ)

Potential topics include:

Current habitat projects

History of DCWA

Presentation by DCWA Friends

Status of the STG Management Plan

Update on FB, IG, merchandise sales etc

Spring breeding STC survey

Discussion on potential new Board candidates

Fund raising

Discussed online merchandise sales: hats sold out.

Discussed possibility of selling our inventory of prints via our website, FB, and IG.

The raffle at the last annual meeting generated \$355.

Habitat Projects

Received one project proposal to date from Greg Kessler (\$1500 for work on DCWA).

Decided to solicit projects from other entities including USFS, county forests, NRI etc. Mike Amman gave the board an update on the Bayfield County barrens projects. They include land clearing by DNR, timber sales set up within the Barnes Barrens core area, and 133 acres of roller chopping scheduled for the Bass Lake Barrens.

WSGS Board Issues

Need to produce two newsletters prior to each annual meeting. Next issue will include a call for new board candidates.

The earlier board decision to create a mandatory membership expiration date in January has not worked out very well. Members receiving a hard copy of the newsletter will see their membership status on the address label, but this is not possible with the electronic newsletter. Ken will contact the latter members to update their membership status, especially those who are currently non-paying members.

Board decided to stay with the current membership fees.

Set dates for future Zoom meetings, 7PM first Mondays of even numbered month

Submitted by Paul Kooiker

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS TO THE WSGS BOARD

We will have the ballot for board elections in the next newsletter, preceding our annual meeting. The board has begun meeting every other month on a regular basis for a Zoom meeting, and also meets once or twice a year, usually at a sharptail projects site, with possibilities for a fishing or hunting time if you so desire.

If you know of a good candidate, please make a nomination, and if you think you would be interested, nominate yourself! Thank you.

WSGS ON LINE

More people every day are looking at their screens for information. Last summer Mike Cole and Ken Jonas got us up on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/WIsharptails.org/>. You can help by liking and commenting on stories as they are posted. And you can contribute your own sharptail related items, or links to other stories.

Kim Wheeler manages our website, <http://www.wisharptails.org/>. We need to get better at feeding information to her as well, and making that site more useful.

WSGS has a new email account: information@wisharptails.org.

So, as everyone in the world says, like us on Facebook!

NEW LOGO, NEW SHIRTS

Get your new shirts and support WSGS at the same time!
Go to <https://wsgs.myspreadshop.com/> and proudly wear our new logo.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

We are going to a primarily electronic newsletter, with hard copy only on request.

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

Would you like to volunteer for:
_____ Board of Directors
_____ Newsletter articles
_____ Other

Email: _____ Electronic Newsletter Hard Copy Newsletter

Enclosed:

\$ _____ Dues (Regular - \$30 (receive decal), Family - \$50 (receive decal), Sustaining - \$100 (receive hat),
Life - \$300 (receive decal, patch & hat) *(Dues are fully tax-deductible)*)

\$ _____ WSGS Logo Decal (\$1.50)

\$ _____ Four-color Cloth Patch (\$3.50)

\$ _____ Orange, olive or brown cap (\$20 – indicate color choice)

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

(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 Avenue, Grantsburg, WI 54840

Or visit our website for membership and merchandise orders at <https://wisharptails.org>

Questions? Please e-mail WSGS Treasurer, Ken Jonas: kenjon@centurytel.net

