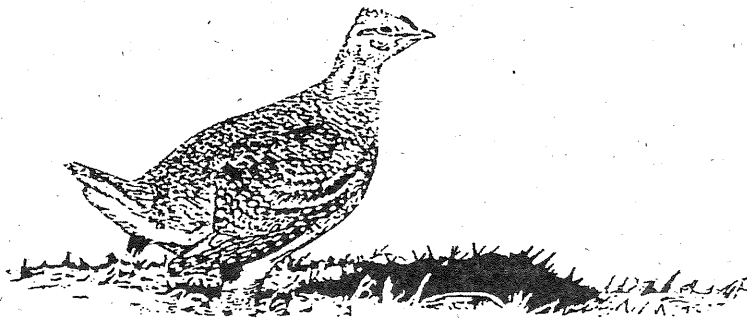


# WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 49

Winter 2007

## CONTENTS

Annual Meeting  
Page 1

President's Corner  
Page 2

Art Raffle  
Page 3

October Board Meeting  
Page 4

Namekagon Barrens  
Page 5

Sharptail Exhibit  
Page 6

Afield with Ziggy  
Page 7

Membership Renewal  
Page 8



## PLAN FOR YOUR 2007 ANNUAL MEETING

**Mark this important event on your 2007 calendar now! The WSGS annual meeting will take place on Saturday and Sunday, April 21 and 22, in Park Falls.** This will be the first time we will meet in that city, the self-proclaimed "Ruffed Grouse Capitol of the World" and will be an opportunity for members and their guests to see heavy-soil sharptail management areas like the federal Riley Lake and the state Kimberly-Clark wildlife areas.

There will be a short business meeting on Saturday afternoon followed by drawings for door prizes and the annual art raffle. The meeting will be followed by a social hour and a dinner at a local supper club.

Early the following morning, Sunday, we will spread out in the area to census sharptails, as we have done in past years. Another possibility is a bus tour of sharptail habitat in the Park Falls area. Following the sharptail census or bus tour, we will gather for a group breakfast before ending the meeting and heading home.

The business meeting will begin at 1 p.m. Saturday, April 21 in the banquet room of AJs Bar and Dining (715-762-3481) at 334 Division Street in downtown Park Falls. The social will take place in their barroom and we will return to the banquet room for our dinner. We will order off the menu with their Saturday specials being Prime Rib.

Dave Evenson has reserved a block of ten rooms (\$51.30 for one person, \$60.30 for two persons in double bed rooms) at the Super 8 Motel on the southern end of Park Falls on Highway 13. You must make your own room reservation (715-762-3383) before the block of rooms is canceled on April 16. Ask for the WSGS block of rooms.

More details of the annual meeting will follow in the next newsletter.

## CALL FOR BOARD NOMINATIONS

The three-year terms of board members, Dave Evenson and Tom Ziegeweid, expire in 2007. Anyone interested in running for these positions or nominating someone for the positions, please send your name or the name of the person nominated and short resumes to Jim Evrard at WSGS, PO Box 367, Grantsburg, WI 54840 before March 15<sup>th</sup>.



## From Your President

By Dave Evenson

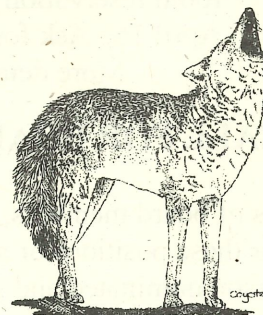
As most of you know, I am a retired DNR wildlife biologist. The state paycheck paid half my mortgage and helped educate my daughter, and today I look forward to the first of the month when the retirement check hits our bank account. So probably I'm not the most un-biased observer out there. But in the last six months or so WSGS has had several opportunities to work with Wisconsin DNR, and I'm pleased with the trend.

The DNR Wildlifers update species plans for each of the important game species about every decade, although some species plans don't get updated quite that quickly. WSGS has pushed for an update on the Sharp-tailed Grouse Plan, but for several years the Upland Game Specialist position was vacant. I think WSGS helped our case by sponsoring the 2005 Manager's Workshop at Crex Meadows, a well-attended and valuable meeting. At that workshop Bill VanderZouwen, Wildlife Bureau Section Chief promised to put updating the plan high on the priority list when a new upland game specialist was hired.

Dr. Scott Hull was hired into that position early last summer, and in late summer we held the formative meeting for the plan update. (It probably didn't hurt that Dave Clausen, WSGS Board Member as well as Natural Resources Board Member met Scott on his first week in the state and reminded him of the priority!) We've since met as a committee of the whole another time, and are beginning to meet in subcommittees. Scott has shown tremendous openness to having WSGS representation on the committee, allowing us as many representatives as want to attend and speak. In fact I sometimes worry that he may be too open, and we get more voice than we deserve, but so far he assures me that he'll keep listening to anyone with genuine interest in the bird. We have at least one member of the WSGS Board on each of three subcommittees. Thanks, Scott.

WSGS Board member Ed Frank also attends meetings of the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative Committee. In November at one of those meetings he learned of a million dollar grant program available to non-profit organizations. I wrote up the proposal for Open Barrens Restoration in the Northwest Sands by the November 17th deadline, to the tune of \$45,000. Out of 500 applications, 80 were asked to submit full proposals, and we were among them. So I spent a few days right before Christmas meeting and phoning with DNR and USFS managers, and writing up the proposal, before I took off to visit relatives. I need to single out Wildlife Biologist Yoyi (pronounced Georgie) Steele for her excellent suggestions on wording -- much of what I submitted was directly or near directly in her words. Thanks, Yoyi.

As of this writing we do not know if we will receive the grant. Probably 10 or 20 grants will be awarded, so it's a very real possibility we will not, but keep your fingers crossed. Reaching the semi-finals is gratifying, and shows a national recognition that the Northwest Sands ecotype is special.



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: Dave Biegel  
Ed Frank  
Blair Klein  
Dave Clausen  
Newsletter Editor: Jim Evrard

## 2007 ART RAFFLE

Once again the WSGS will conduct a raffle for three framed, ready-to-hang-on-your-wall, colored prints depicting sharp-tailed grouse. Art featuring sharptails is rare either as prints or originals.

New this year will be an artwork by Wisconsin's Ruth King depicting sharptails displaying on a dancing ground or lek in the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area. Ruth graciously donated the original painting to the WSGS and we have authorized the printing of only 100 signed and numbered prints.

We will also offer a print of a sold-out edition by the late Owen Gromme, considered the Dean of Wisconsin wildlife artists. The print's value increased 45% from 2003 when we obtained three copies in the secondary market to 2006 when we bought two additional copies of the print. The beautiful colored print is titled, *Sharptails on the Rise*, and features two sharptails in an aspen parkland.

The final framed print is a colorful artwork by Minnesota artist Louie Raymer titled, *Spring Dance at Crex*. Several sharptails are shown dancing on a thinly-vegetated lek in the brush prairie of Crex Meadows. This print was donated to the WSGS by the Friends of Crex.

The raffle ticket is printed below. Those wishing to enter the raffle should detach the colored "Drop this ticket in a proper place" portion(s) of the ticket, place your name and address on the reverse side and send them with your donation to the WSGS, PO Box 367, Grantsburg, WI 54840. Keep the WSGS Annual Art Raffle Ticket and the attached colored "Keep the coupon" portion(s) for your records.

### WSGS 2007 ART RAFFLE TICKET

This raffle is being offered by the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, PO Box 367, Grantsburg, WI 54840. Wisconsin Raffle License R0016707A-61290.

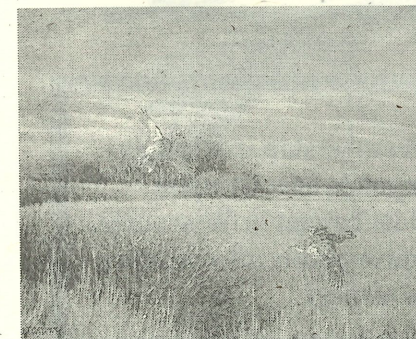
This raffle drawing will be conducted at our annual meeting at 3 p.m., April 21, 2007 at 334 Division Street, Park Falls, Wisconsin. Ticket holders need not be present to win. No prize has a value exceeding \$500.

Suggested donation is \$10 per ticket or \$20 for three tickets.

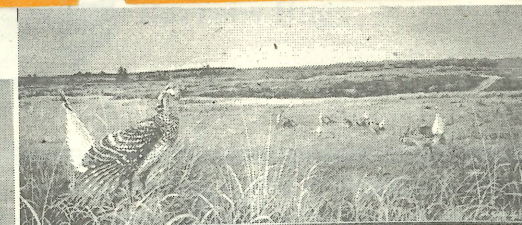
No purchase necessary to be eligible for participation.



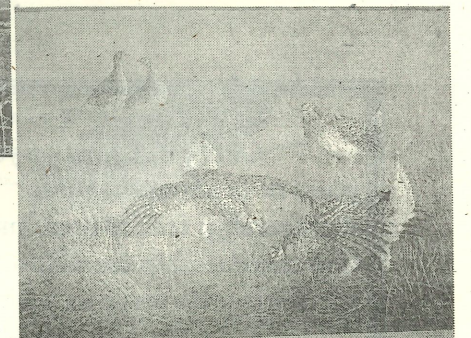
Gromme print



Raymer print



King print





## OCTOBER BOARD MEETING

The WSGS Board of Directors met on 9 October 2006 at the DNR Service Center in Park Falls. Board members present were Dave Biegel, Dave Clausen, Dave Evenson, Jim Evrard, Ed Frank, and Blair Klein. Tom "Ziggy" Ziegeweid was absent. Retired DNR Researcher Larry Gregg also attended the meeting.

President Dave Evenson called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. with Jim Evrard giving the Treasurer's Report. The checkbook balance as of 6 October 2006 was \$7,191.84 and the CD balance as of 30 September 2006 was \$2,239.98 for a total of \$9,434.82. The CD interest rate was 3.03% and Jim will ask Ziggy to seek a higher rate when the CD next matures.

Dave Evenson and Dave Biegel reported that the sharptail workshop presented at the Douglas County Wildlife Area in September went well but attendance was low, only 7 persons plus the two Daves and DNR Wildlife Biologist Fred Strand.

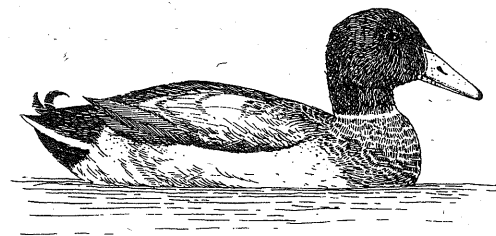
The proposed sharptail genetics study was discussed with no progress being made. Ed Frank said he was awaiting input from Scott Hull and Dave Sample of the DNR. The WSGS has allotted \$4,000 for the study.

Plans for the 2007 annual meeting were made. It was decided to hold the meeting in Park Falls on April 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. April 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> were the second choices. Larry Gregg will assist Dave Evenson in finding a meeting place and lodging. The DNR's Scott Hull and the sharp-tailed grouse management plan were suggested as the meeting program. The Northwoods supper club in nearby Fifield was suggested as the possible site for our banquet and evening entertainment.

Dave Evenson led the discussion regarding the use of Ruth King's donated sharptail painting. It was decided, with Ruth's permission, to create limited edition prints of the painting, not to exceed 100 prints. The first printing will be for forty prints with more printed later if demand exists. A suggested retail price of \$65 would provide a reasonable profit for the WSGS. The prints will be sold directly and also used in the annual art raffle.

Ed Frank dominated the next lengthy discussion regarding the revision of the current DNR sharptail management plan. The center of discussion was the definition of habitat type names with the position being that "open barrens" and "brush prairie barrens" were most beneficial to sharptails. The current trend towards emphasizing "savanna" in barrens management is detrimental to sharptails due to the large number of trees remaining after that form of barrens management is completed.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m. followed by lunch, and a few hours of unsuccessfully pursuing ruffed grouse in the nearby Hay Creek-Hoffman Lake Wildlife Area.



### 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.

## THE AMAZING NAMEKAGON BARRENS

By Jim Evrard

In our last newsletter (No. 48), I wrote about the amazing number of sharptails encountered during a 2005 field trial in the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area (NBWA) in far northeast Burnett County. I speculated that the high 2005 field trial sightings would result in a higher 2006 spring count of dancing males.

The field trial, again held in mid-September of 2006, again produced a large number of sharptail observations. Frank LaNasa, Field Trial Chairman for the Northwest Field Association sent DNR's Gary Dunsmore at Spooner a letter.

LaNasa wrote "the bird [sharptail] was up this year due to successful nesting. More of our bird contacts [flushes] were coveys of birds. In the past few years the relationship of covey finds [flushes] to single finds was lower. This year covey sizes were from 8 birds to 12 birds typically. We saw an average of 4 to 6 flushes an hour with more than half of those being coveys which is higher than in recent years." In mid-September when the field trials are held, coveys of sharptails normally are family groups, broods of young birds accompanied by the adult hen or female.

I applied for Unit 8 sharptail hunting tags as a second choice in 2006 and drew one tag. On October 20, I drove from my home in Grantsburg to the Namekagon Barrens to hunt the birds. I hunted alone without a dog in cloudy, cold weather accompanied by snow flurries, but did see sharptails. I flushed 24 grouse in groups or coveys as large as 9 birds. The sharptails flushed wild and I did manage to get off a few long shots without damaging the grouse population (I don't have the reputation of being the best wing shot!)

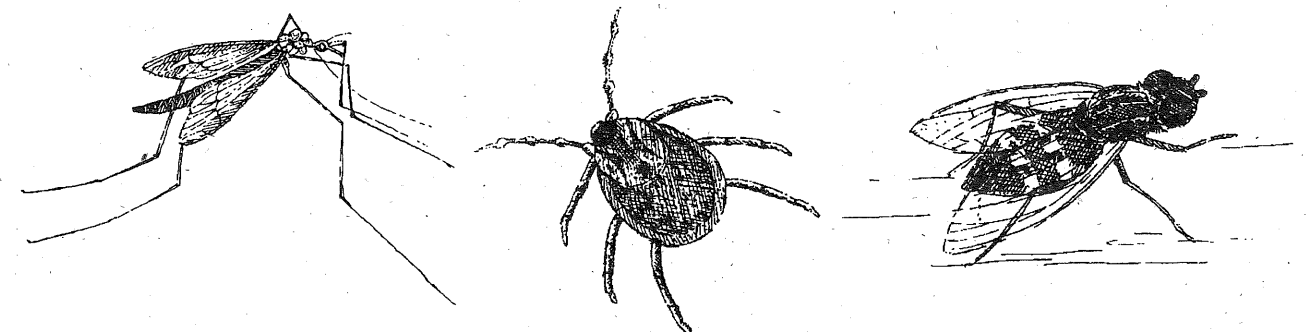
Despite not bagging any sharptails, it was a great hunt. I never saw another hunter and enjoyed roaming the wild barrens on that cold, snowy day and seeing many sharptails.

The official reported sharptail harvest in Unit 8 (the Namekagon Barrens) for 2006 was only 9 birds. Since 50 permits were issued, the reported hunter success was 18%. If that represented the actual hunting harvest, only a very small part of the sharptail population (estimated by the present DNR model at 184 birds) on the Namekagon Barrens was taken by hunters.

All things considered, the number of dancing male sharptails counted this coming spring should increase. This speculation is based on more birds seen in the fall of 2006 and the birds being in the early part of the upswing in the grouse cycle. Time will tell.

Another positive for the Namekagon Barrens and sharptails is the formation of the Friends of the Namekagon Barrens. Nancy Christel, NBWA Manager, is going through the process of forming a formal friends group that will have the objective of supporting the Namekagon Barrens and its management. Those interested in joining the new organization can contact Nancy at the Department of Natural Resources, 810 W. Maple St., Spooner, WI 54801.

### Barrens Bugs



## 2006 SHARPTAIL HARVEST

By Jim Evrard

Andrea Mezera, DNR Assistant Upland Bird Ecologist in Madison, furnished the summary of the reported 2006 sharp-tailed grouse harvest.

As you probably know, the reported harvest represents the minimum sharptail harvest since undoubtedly some of the hunters with permits who bag birds fail to report their harvest despite the reporting 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. Additional mortality attributed to hunting can come from crippling loss that in ducks, for example, averages around 20%.

Total reported sharptail harvest was 28 birds statewide, an increase of 6 birds over the 2005 harvest of 22 grouse. Reported hunting success remained low as in past years.

In Unit 2, the harvest dropped from 16 sharptails in 2005 to 12 in 2006. This drop might be attributed to fewer permits available in 2006 (540) than in 2005 (620) with an accompanying drop in reported hunting success from 3% in 2005 to 2% in 2006.

In Unit 8, the 2006 reported harvest was 9 birds with a hunting success rate of 18%. The season was closed in Unit 8 in 2005.

Reported hunting success in Unit 10 in 2006 was 28% with 7 sharptails bagged and 25 permits issued. Six sharptails were reported shot in 2005 with 50 permits issued, a 12% hunter success rate.

No sharptails were reported killed in Unit 9 in both 2005 and 2006 despite 110 hunting permits issued in 2005 and 160 permits issued in 2006.

The disparity in reported hunting success could be partially explained by the type of habitat the sharptails are found in. Both Unit 8 (Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area) and Unit 10 (Crex Meadows Wildlife Area) are islands of intensively managed sharptail habitat surrounded largely by public and industrial forestland. The sharptails are concentrated in habitat that is readily identified by experienced hunters. By contrast, Units 2 and 9 are largely industrial forests with large, widely distributed clearcuts that are mostly the result of past jack pine budworm outbreaks. In my experience, sharptails in these areas tend to be widely dispersed and use heavy cover during the hunting season.

Whatever the reasons, it will be interesting to see if Wisconsin's sharp-tailed grouse respond to the upswing in the grouse cycle and increase this coming year. If so, we should be able to hunt this grand bird on a limited basis again.

## SHARPTAIL EXHIBIT TO OPEN

By Jim Evrard

The long-awaited permanent displays in the Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center are being completed and are scheduled to open this spring. As you may recall, the WSGS contributed funds for the construction of the building. WSGS members have also contributed materials and items for the displays. The money for the displays came from the DNR's Bureau of Wildlife Management.

Jim Hoefler, DNR Naturalist at Crex and WSGS member, is responsible for the design and development of the displays. I helped him where I could through the multiyear process.

Part of the display deals with the human and natural history of Crex Meadows, but the major display is a spectacular diorama of Crex Meadows as we know it today. The diorama depicts Crex Meadows and its wildlife inhabitants in a variety of spring habitats from upland brush prairie to sedge marshes to managed wetlands.

The centerpiece of the brush prairie exhibit is a sharptail lek or dancing ground inhabited by mounted sharp-tailed grouse. A demure sharptail hen is shown casually picking at something on the ground while three sharptail cocks surround her in their wings-outstretched dancing poses. Another pair of sharptails cocks can be seen in the background. Taped sounds of the dancing sharptails and other wildlife add to the realism of the display. So the next time you are in the Grantsburg area, stop at the Crex Center and see what some of your funds have accomplished. I'm sure you will be pleased.

## AFIELD WITH ZIGGY

By Thomas Ziegeweid

This column features a great recipe from the Ziegeweid Kitchen. Most of you who know me, know I like to eat, perhaps in excess sometimes. DIET is a four-letter word in our household! At times in the future, I plan on featuring recipes in this column. Feel free to send me any special recipe you have and I will try to get it printed. It can be any game or fish dish.

Tom Ziegeweid,  
2950 E. Wellington Dr.  
Eau Claire, WI54703-0748

### TOO TENDER UPLAND GAME BIRDS

You need:

1. Two grouse, two pheasant, four quail, or just chicken breasts.
2. Cooking bag (oven bag) - medium size or larger for more birds.
3. Two chicken bullion cubes (more if you wish).
4. Dry or fresh dill weed (dill loves fish and chicken).
5. Seasoned salt to taste (Lowreys, Pleasong, etc.).
6. Fresh ground black pepper to taste.
7. One can of chicken soup or celery soup (chicken soup is best!).
8. Wild rice or plain rice.
9. One can of water (use soup can).

You will:

Put birds in bag, put other ingredients in pan and heat up, whisk for homogeneity, put gravy over birds in the bag, cooking rice separately. Cook at 350° for one - one and a half hours till meat falls apart off bones. Take out birds and put gravy in pan and keep it warm. Let birds cool, so you can remove all meat from bones, legs and back included. Throw meat in gravy and rewarm. Serve over rice.

This recipe is a personal concoction. It is not an exact science, so feel free to tweak ingredients to your taste. The meat will melt in your mouth. It's never tough. People who shy away from wild game will love this (don't tell them until they are done eating).

BON APPETIT! ZIGGY



## SHARPTAIL POETRY

You wouldn't normally expect to find poetry in our newsletter, but art and literature about sharp-tailed grouse are rare. In searching for art to use in our annual art raffle, we have found very few works depicting the sharptail. Sharptail prose is a bit more common, but I have encountered only one sharptail poem.

The poem, *SHARP-TAIL DANCE*, was written by Ted Berkland a retired clergyman living in the Grantsburg Area. The poem, one of a collection by Berkland, is found in his book, *WE ARE GUESTS*, published in 1999. The theme of the book centers on the wildlife and environment of Crex Meadows.

### SHARP-TAIL DANCE

By Ted Berkland

They come to their dancing ground each spring  
For their annual fling with other males,  
an aviarian rendezvous  
complete with boasting, fighting, dancing—  
wings outstretched, feet stomping,  
heads down, tails raised high  
like castanets keeping cadence  
with a music heard by none but themselves,  
starting, stopping together in concert—  
all towards the end of attracting a mate.

Copies of the book, published by Pine Cone Publications, Grantsburg, are available in the Bog Shoe gift shop in the Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center.

# 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

WSGS  
Box 367  
Grantsburg, WI 54840

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