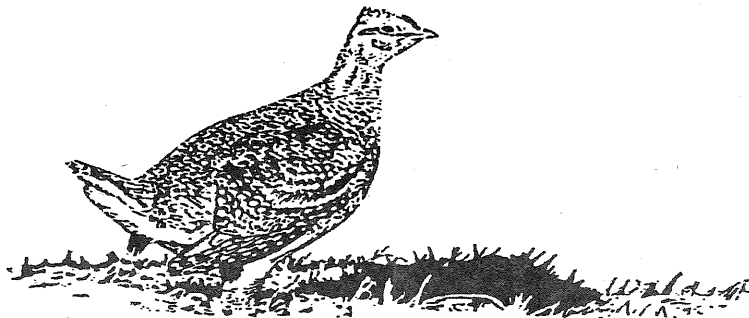


# WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 43

Winter 2005

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## SHARPTAIL WORKSHOP PLANNED

By: Jim Evrard

The WSGS will sponsor a two-day sharp-tailed grouse workshop on Tuesday and Wednesday, March 29 and 30, 2005 in the Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center, Grantsburg. The workshop will begin at 1 p.m. on the 29<sup>th</sup> and will end at noon of the 30<sup>th</sup>.

The workshop should help prepare sharptail advocates for rewriting the DNR's Sharp-tailed Grouse Management Plan and focus public attention on the plight of the bird in Wisconsin.

The Tuesday afternoon session will focus on the future of sharptails in Wisconsin. Habitat fragmentation, genetic isolation, and hunting impacts on the scattered sharptail flocks are planned for discussion.

Wednesday morning's sessions will highlight the history and ecology of the sharp-tailed grouse in Wisconsin. A panel of sharptail managers will discuss the status of sharptails in their respective sharptail management areas. Following the presentations, a social and catered dinner will be held at the Crex Center.

A \$20 registration fee will be charged to cover the cost of refreshments and meals and possible speaker travel expenses. In addition to nearby motel accommodations, free rustic bunkhouses and cabins will be available at the Crex Meadows Headquarters complex.

For more information and to register for the workshop, contact the WSGS at Box 357, Grantsburg, WI 54840 or call (715)463-2739.



# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Dave Evenson



This summer I got a couple of rejoinders from board members. One said, "Dave, this club is getting stale." And shortly after another board member reminded me that the summer was moving on and we hadn't done much of anything since the spring meeting at Spread Eagle. It's a good thing we have energetic members to hold my feet to the fire, and perhaps hold all our feet to the fire. The question is raised- where are we as an organization?

We're just 15 years old now. In human terms that's just a teen-ager, but I would submit that in organization terms 15 years is into maturity. Of course this means that all our charter members, who still make up a good portion of our roll call, are themselves 15 years older. Many are still in their careers, and

some have moved further along in their retirement. There are also a good number who, like me, have moved from their mid-careers into retirement. I hope that all of us have become a bit more introspective, and perhaps a bit wealthier. If we read our newsletters at all, we all should be smarter about sharptail biology and politics. From what I see, the spark continues to burn in us to get afield, and to do right by sharptails.

The Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society is recognized and respected by the DNR and the Natural Resources Board. Give credit where it's due- much of that recognition comes due to Ed Frank who has often spoken in front of the NRB on sharptail issues. We've been able to give a few small grants to wildlife biologists for sharptail work. On the advocacy and education issue, we've hosted a few workshops and seminars.

We have finally been able to move into the habitat world, cost sharing with Friends of Crex and DNR a land purchase on Crex Meadows. This is a major step for us. It's an action I hope we can repeat. We have always been a low key fund raising organization, not asking much of our membership in terms of money. Land acquisition takes real money, and perhaps it's the next step for this organization as it moves into maturity.

Right now your board is working on a two-day workshop for sharptail managers, to be held in March. Education and advocacy go hand in hand, and this effort is aimed at both. We will gather at the Crex Meadows Interpretive Center and hear and discuss presentations on sharptail status in Wisconsin, habitat management, genetics, threats and opportunities for sharptails. I just hope this is what we need to be doing to keep from being accused of going stale, at least for the short term

## WSGS OFFICERS

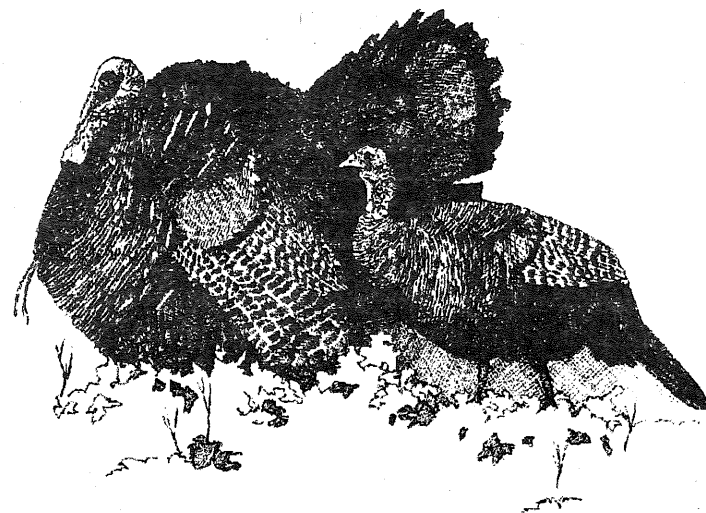
President: Dave Evenson

Vice President: Tom Ziegeweid

Treasurer: Jim Evrard

Board Members: Bob Dreis  
Ed Frank  
Blair Klein  
Jim Wilson

Newsletter Editor: Jim Evrard



# RECENT SHARPTAIL RESEARCH

BY Jim Evrard

U.S Fish and Wildlife scientist and WSGS member Neal Niemuth recently sent me a research report written by Neal and Mark Boyce from the University of Alberta, Canada. The report, *Influence of landscape composition on sharp-tailed grouse lek location and attendance in Wisconsin pine barrens*, appeared in a 2004 issue of the journal, *Ecoscience*.

The publication reports results of highly technical research involving examining the habitat surrounding 36 sharptail leks or dancing grounds and 213 randomly selected points in Wisconsin's Northwest Pine Barrens in 1995-97. Eleven of the dancing grounds were located in sharptail management areas (Namekagon Barrens and Douglas County wildlife areas, Bayfield County fuel break), 23 dancing grounds were in recent jack pine clearcuts, and 2 in recent wild fires. The 213 random points lay between the Namekagon Barrens and Douglas County wildlife areas. Using satellite photos, the vegetation in concentric circles surrounding the dancing grounds and random points was examined and quantified.

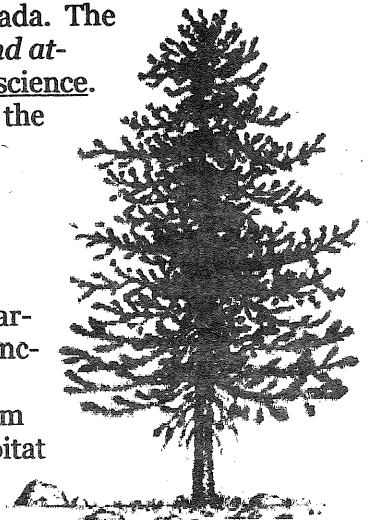
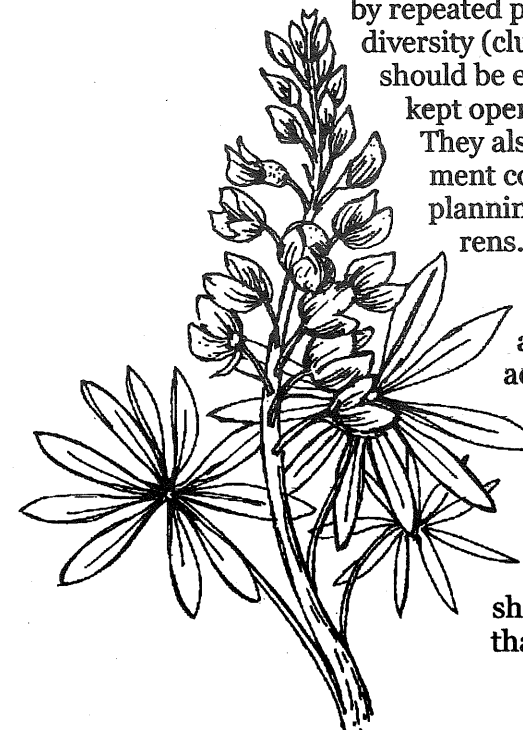
Distances between dancing grounds were less than distances between the random points, meaning dancing grounds tend to be clustered. As would be expected, habitat surrounding dancing grounds was more grassy and shrubby than at random points and dancing grounds were further from forest edges than random points.

A relatively surprising finding was that sharptail numbers on recently clearcuts were higher than on areas traditionally managed for sharptails with fire. Niemuth and Boyce concluded that sharptails respond positively to habitat newly created by vegetation disturbances such as clearcutting and wildfire. They thought that the higher numbers of sharptails found in newly created habitat might be due to less predation. In effect, there was a time lag where it took several years for predator numbers to catch up to sharptail numbers.

On managed areas Niemuth and Boyce thought the habitat was too homogeneous, being maintained by repeated prescribed burning. They recommended that more habitat diversity (clumps of trees, different ages of shrubs, etc.) in managed areas should be encouraged, but that habitat surrounding dancing grounds be kept open, grassy and free of trees.

They also thought that sharptails would benefit from the management concept of "rolling or moving barrens", created by careful planning of clearcutting on commercial forestland in the pine barrens. This concept had been introduced by DNR biologist and WSGS member Fred Strand some years ago. Simply, clearcutting would be planned so that when trees in one clearcut area grow to a height where sharptails would be excluded, an adjacent area would be clearcut and sharptails would move into the new habitat. In this way, surrogate barrens habitat (and sharptails) would move across the landscape indefinitely.

One note of caution however. The rolling barrens concept has yet to be fully initiated. And until that is accomplished and proven to sustain sharptail populations, the traditional sharp-tailed grouse management areas will continue to insure that the species will not disappear from Wisconsin.



# Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society Financial Statement

1/1/04 through 12/31/04

Checkbook Balance as of 01/01/04 .....\$7,843.49  
Certificate of Deposits as of 01/01/04 ..... \$2,094.13  
 Total cash assets as of 01/01/04..... \$9,937.62

## INCOME:

Memberships and sales .....\$2,450.29  
 Art Raffle .....\$604.32  
 Annual Meeting ..... \$18.00  
 2003 Pr. Grouse Tech. Counc. Meet .....\$736.74  
 Interest on Checking Account .....\$2.87  
Interest on Certificates of Deposit .....\$43.40  
**Total Income .....\$3,855.62**

## EXPENDITURES:

Projects – Acquisition of Crex Meadows . \$5,000.00  
                   Wildlife Area property  
                   Two sharptail viewing blinds. . \$600.00  
                   Moquah Barrens Wildlife Area  
                   Booth rental at UW-Madison . \$100.00  
 Total Projects. ....\$5,700.00

Alliances – North American Partnership. ...\$35.00  
                   dues  
                   Wisconsin Outdoor Alliance ... \$250.00  
                   Sponsorship  
                   Friends of the Bird Sanctuary ..\$50.00  
                   dues  
                   Wisconsin Wildlife Federation . \$125.00  
                   Dues  
 Total Alliance dues .....\$460.00

Membership Services - Newsletter Printing ..\$913.68  
 Postage ..... \$260.72  
Office supplies ..... \$186.65  
 Total Membership Services .....\$1,361.05

Non-profit report to Wis. Secretary of State.....10.00

**Total Expenditures.....\$7,531.05**

Checkbook Balance as of 12/31/98.....\$4,124.66  
Certificates of Deposit as of 12/31/98..... \$2,137.53  
**Total Cash Assets as of 12/31/98 .....\$6,262.19**

Submitted by James O. Evrard, Sec./Treas., 12/31/04.



# 2004 SHARPTAIL HARVEST RESULTS

By Jim Evrard

Andrea Mezera of the DNR provided the preliminary 2004 sharptail harvest results. As of December 20, 2004, Andrea reported a total of 39 sharptails shot. This compares to 78 birds in 2003, 45 in 2002, and 22 in 2001.

Unit	2001	2002	2003	2004
2	3 (265)*	14 (540)	23 (720)	21 (640)
8	- (0)	5 (80)	19 (100)	8 (70)
9	3 (165)	11 (250)	3 (220)	5 (190)
10	16 (200)	15 (230)	33 (200)	5 (100)
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>39</b>

\*numbers in ( ) are the hunting permits issued.

The 2004 harvest declined in all four units open to hunting, with the greatest decline in Unit 10, which is the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area.

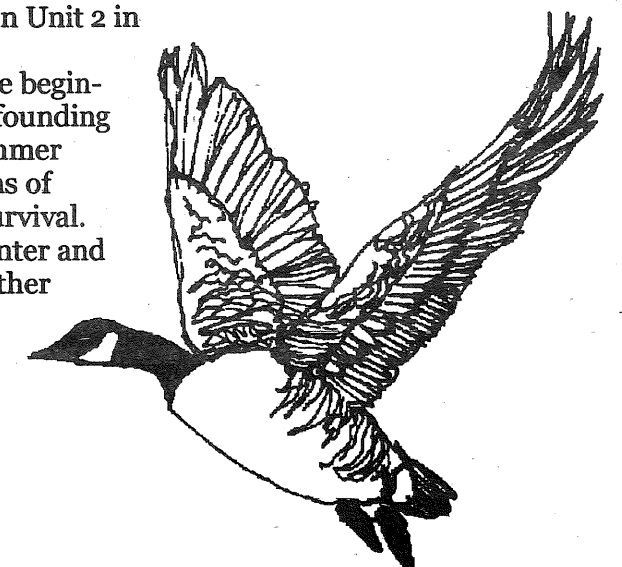
It is difficult to believe that only five sharptails were bagged in Crex Meadows. The estimated fall sharptail population in Crex Meadows was 244 birds, using the DNR population model of the number of displaying males (61) in the spring multiplied by four. The five bagged sharptails would represent only 2% of the estimated population.

Using the DNR model, only 3% of the fall population in Unit 2, 2% in Unit 9, and 5% in Unit 8 (Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area) were harvested. If the model is accurate, none of the populations could be considered even close to being overharvested.

However, I think the harvest is probably under-reported despite the legal requirement to tag and report every bird shot. It's time that DNR determine the unreported sharptail harvest in order to verify the model used to determine actual number of sharptails shot. This has been done in the past with Exterior Zone Canada geese where every goose shot must be reported.

Reported hunter success rates (i.e. the number of sharptails reported killed vs. the number of hunting permits issued) were 3.5% in 2001, 4.0% in 2002, 6.3% in 2003, and 3.9% in 2004. On a unit basis, the 2001-2004 reported hunter success rate varied from a low of 1.1% in Unit 2 in 2001 to a high of 16.5% in Unit 10 in 2003.

Grouse, both ruffed grouse and sharptails, should be beginning to build numbers from their cyclic low. But confounding the issue was the 2004 cold, wet spring and early summer that might have lowered grouse production. Invasions of winged predators from the north also affect grouse survival. There is a reported owl invasion from Canada this winter and goshawks have been seen with some regularity. Whether this prevents the recovery of the sharptail numbers this coming spring (and the resulting number of hunting permits issued in 2005) remains to be seen. We can only hope for the best.





## AFIELD WITH ZIGGY

(Editors Note: This is the first of a series of sharptail hunting articles written by Tom "Ziggy" Ziegewied, WSGS's first president and current vice-president. To those who know Ziggy, his outdoor experiences are always interesting and sometimes, hilarious. Enjoy Ziggy's first unedited contribution to the newsletter)

### ZONE TWO CAN BE TOUGH

By Thomas Ziegewied

This past October I was biting at the bit to get out and hunt sharptails. I drew two tags for Zone 2 as did my long time friend and WSGS member Pat Otteson from Muskego, WI. We were sitting around his shack the night before opener, tucked away in the boonies of Bayfield County discussing our strategy for the next morning. Where should we start? How heavy of cover would they be in?

We departed opening morning despite a cold, windy drizzle for Zone 2, just west of Hiway 27 and north of CTH A that runs west to Solon Springs, WI. This area is predominately owned by paper mill companies and is open to the public. It also boasts the largest population of sharptails in Wisconsin, and is dominated by a sandy soil jack pine plant community.

Pat and I and his dog soon departed for an area with a long ridge that runs north and south that had pretty thick cover. We hadn't gone 100 yards and a sharpie flushed and Pat bagged it with one shot, a nice adult female. We continued to hunt for another three hours but didn't see anymore birds.

Most of the hunters we talked to reported that they had seen few or no birds by noon. The assumption most made was that the birds were "really down." Many commented on the challenging walking conditions and the thick overgrown cover.

Which lends me to share the first axiom of hunting Zone 2: The terrain is generally nasty to walk on. Much of the area was replanted to red pine with a tree plow, which leaves furrows, after the jack pine budworm outbreak a few years ago. I found the best way to hunt this area is to walk the tote roads, walk the main road edges (which few hunters do), if you are going to brush busting, stay on top of the ridges.

One of our WSGS members I met that weekend commented on the negative aspect of hunters driving their vehicles on the tote roads that dissect almost every section of this area. I totally agreed with him! Axiom #2: Don't drive on tote roads! You are ruining your hunt and others also, walk the roads.

Axiom #3: The birds in this area really favor thick overgrown cover. Zone 2 birds must have some ruffed grouse genes in them. I seldom see them out in newly cutover areas, or areas that look like prairie. Sharptails really need these thicker hummocks of young trees to loaf and hide in. This is also very essential winter habitat.

Axiom #4: There are more sharptails in Zone 2 than you may think there are, judging by one days worth of tramping around. This area is large and will be in a state of flux in the future as old habitat grows taller, and the paper companies keep clear cutting new areas. Zone 2 birds seem to move around a lot more than sharptails I've hunted in other zones.

Persistence pays off! If a legal musky is a fish of 10,000 casts, then sharptails are the bird of the 5 mile walk. I figure I average about 5 miles of walking for every bird I bagged. I did manage to fill my tags on the opener, but after walking ten to twelve miles. Good luck and have a safe hunt in 2005.

Ziggy

NEXT ISSUE: Sharptail hunting in the gopher state (make sure you bring your hip boots)

## BOARD MEETINGS

### October 22, 2004, Spooner

The meeting was called to order by President Dave Evenson at 10:15 a.m. Jim Evrard gave the Treasurer's Report with the following balances: certificate of deposit - \$2,125.74 as of 9/30/04 and checking account - \$4,180.83 as of 10/22/04, for a total of \$6,306.57.

Dave told the group that he and Jim E. wrote two articles about the WSGS for publication in the magazine newsletter of the North American Grouse Partnership. WSGS will be sent 20 extra copies of the magazine that will be distributed to Board members and members of the Committee of Counselors. Remaining copies will be used to tell our story when needed.

Jim E. said a block of rooms has been reserved at the St. Croix Inn, Solon Springs for the night of April 23, 2005 for our annual meeting. Sandy Prevost will cater the brunch at the Inn on the morning of April 24. Another caterer will be sought for the dinner at the Douglas County WA building. Reservations for rental of the building will not be accepted until Jan. 1, 2005.

Blair Klein offered to donate a framed Redlin print for the annual art raffle. Dave said we have one Gromme print remaining. Jim E. reported the price of the Gromme print has risen 300% in four years. Ed Frank talked about having a special fund raising project to build our treasury for future projects. Blair discussed his idea for a special showing of a film about waterfowl.

The terms of office for Blair, Ed, and Jim E. expire in 2005 and all three want to stand for reelection.

Ed discussed the DNR's prairie chicken management plan that is being presented for approval this month. The land acquisition goal is 9,000 to 15,000 acres that Ed thinks is realistic and the WSGS should support the plan as presented. The Tympanuchus Cupido Pinnatus group wants a larger acquisition goal of 50,000. Jim E. commented that the acquisition goal could always be increased in future updates of the plan.

Dave passed out copies of an email message from Todd Naas, DNR wildlife biologist at Ashland, that outlined progress in the proposed sharptail restoration project near Ashland.

Dave will call the US Forest Service for more information about the proposal to clearcut and eliminate 8,000 acres of spruce plantations in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. Dave will support any work done near sharptail habitat. After some discussion, Bob Dreis made a motion that was seconded by Jim Wilson and passed unanimously, to join the Friends of the Bird Sanctuary (FOTBS). It was suggested that the WSGS explore a possible Memorandum of Understanding with the FOTBS, share mailing lists, and act as a sponsor for our 2005 annual meeting.

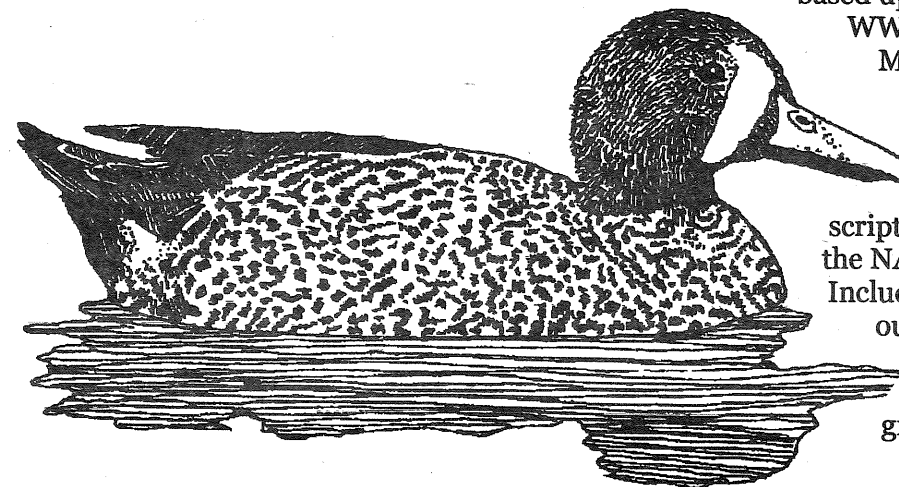
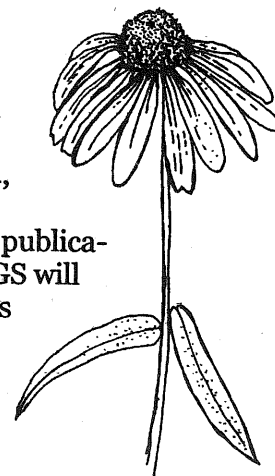
After another discussion, Ed made a motion, seconded by Blair, and passed unanimously, to join the Wisconsin Wildlife

Federation (WWF) as a statewide affiliate based upon the good recent work of

WWF Executive Director George Meyer. The cost would be

\$125/year, which would entitle the WSGS to three delegates and 25 newsletter subscriptions. Newsletter sub-

scriptions would follow the list for the NAGP newsletter distribution. Included in Ed's motion was to drop our membership (\$250) in the Wisconsin Outdoor Alliance if more action is not taken by the group.



(continued from page 7)

Dave told the group that the Crex Meadows and Fish Lake wildlife areas and a block of land that includes the Namekagon Barrens and Douglas County wildlife areas and the land in between are included in the list of Important Bird Areas. Dave will pursue adding the Moquah Barrens Wildlife Area and will ask DNR's Mark Martin to pursue adding the Spread Eagle Barrens to the list. Ed asked about the Mott's Ravine Natural Area (barrens) and Martin will be asked about that area too.

Dave discussed having input in rewriting county forest management plans. Burnett County's plan is nearing completion with Jim E. having input. Member Fred Hennessey has agreed to represent the WSGS in the Douglas County Forest Plan rewrite. We need to find someone to become involved in the Bayfield County Forest Plan with Gus Smith's name being mentioned.

#### December 8, 2005, Spooner

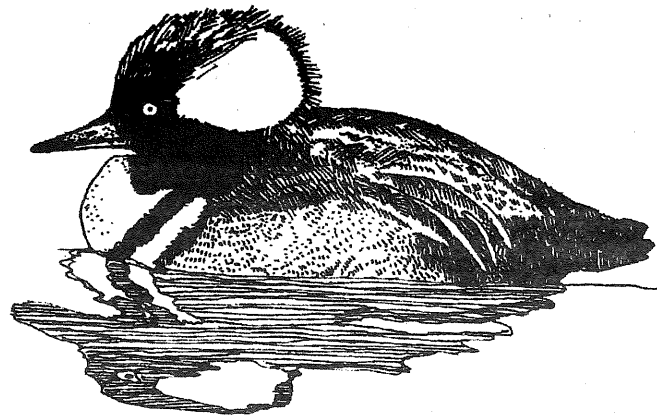
The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by President Dave Evenson. Treasurer Jim Evrard gave the financial report with a checking account balance of \$4,104.33 as of November 16 and a certificate of deposit balance of \$2,125.74 as of 9/30/04.

The WSGS is now a member of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation with the certificate of membership received. Jim will send 2005 dues to the Wisconsin Stewardship Network. The Board also decided not to renew membership in the Wisconsin Outdoor Alliance (WOA) due to: WOA's failure to achieve their goal of providing alternative funding for the DNR; WOA failure to notify the WSGS of meetings prior to the meetings taking place; and high cost of annual membership (\$250). This decision was supported by the decision of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology to also withdraw their membership in the WOA.

Jim will draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the WSGS and the Friends of the Bird Sanctuary (FOTBS) and submit it to the FOTBS for their consideration. Both Boards have to approve the MOU to make it valid. The WSGS Board felt a closer relationship was needed than just a paid membership. WSGS Board members Evrard and Bob Dreis are presently also FOTBS Board members. A major discussion item was a two-day sharptail workshop planned for late winter. The WSGS-sponsored workshop's purpose is to educate sharptail managers and advocates about the bird's history, ecology, and management in Wisconsin in preparation of rewriting the DNR's sharp-tailed grouse management plan.

Plans for the 2005 annual meeting of the WSGS were finalized and details of the meeting and the sharptail workshop will be presented in next issue of the WSGS newsletter, scheduled to be distributed in late January, 2005.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.



## 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.

## 2005 ANNUAL MEETING

By: Jim Evrard

Make plans now to attend the 2005 annual meeting on Saturday and Sunday, April 24 and 25 in the Village of Solon Springs in northwest Wisconsin.

The business meeting will be held in the lower-level meeting room of the St. Croix Inn beginning at 1 p.m. The program will begin at 3 p.m., followed by drawings for the art raffle and door prizes. At 5 p.m. we will motor to the historic log field trial building at the Douglas County Wildlife Area (DCWA). There we will have a social before being served a catered steak dinner. The newly-formed Friends of the Bird Sanctuary (FOTBS) will be our official host.

Following dinner, assignments will be made and maps and observation forms will be provided for those persons wishing to census sharp-tailed grouse in the Northwest Pine Barrens the following morning. The census will be coordinated with the FOTBS's annual sharptail census of the DCWA. FOTBS members and the public are also invited to our business meeting and program presentation as well as our 9 a.m. Sunday brunch following the early morning sharptail census.

The meeting registration fee is \$20 per person, which includes refreshments, the catered Saturday dinner and Sunday brunch, and registration materials. A block of ten rooms has been reserved at the St. Croix Inn (715-378-2287) but you must make your own reservation. Lakeside rooms overlook the beautiful St. Croix Lake.

For more information, contact Jim Evrard at (715)463-2446 or email at [evrards@grantsburgtelcom.net](mailto:evrards@grantsburgtelcom.net).

(cut on line and return with registration fee)

### REGISTRATION 2005 WSGS ANNUAL MEETING

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Make check/money order (\$20/person) payable to the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society and send to:

WSGS  
Box 367  
Grantsburg, WI 54840

**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

WSGS  
Box 367  
Grantsburg, WI 54840

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PERMIT No. 6