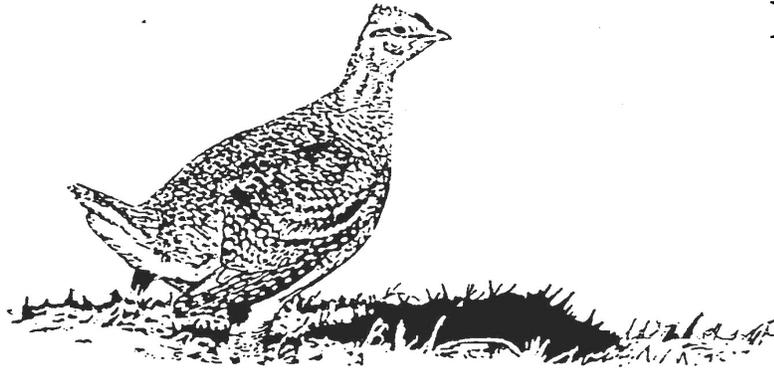


WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 94

Spring 2021

WSGS ANNUAL MEETING

August 21-22

Crex Meadows Wildlife Area

Our annual gathering of the flock will be later this year, August 21-22, and focused on Crex Meadows. We will meet, indoors if possible, outdoors if need be, but the meeting will go on. Planning of the program will continue through the summer, so there are not a lot of details for you yet.

It is our ardent hope that the steel sculpture of three sharptails on a dancing ground, our memorial to Jim Evrard, is complete at that time. We are recognizing Jim for his lifetime of service both to Crex Meadows and to WSGS. Many donations have come in to both the Friends of Crex and to WSGS, so we have about 75 per cent of artist's fee. We are confident other donations are forthcoming and we will be able to honor Jim in a place where his legacy will continue to educate future generations.

See you in August!

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FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

By Dave Evenson

I belong to a bunch of conservation and other non-profit organizations; you probably do as well. It struck me as I read the President's, or CEO's, or Director's reports, how many of them include the pandemic as part of their report. Thus far I've avoided the subject, partly out of pure cussedness, and partly because it hasn't affected our mission all that much. Yes, we missed getting to see you last year, and yes, prescribed burning under Covid agency rules has been reduced. We missed our annual art raffle, but your membership and generous donations really keep us afloat and create habitat.

As far as the bird and its habitat, good things are happening. Field work is by nature socially isolated, logging continues on, and new projects are coming on line. You can be proud that some of your money is helping this occur. Later in this letter you will read about some of them. Thank you for your continued support!

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

WSGS GRANTS- WORK IN PROGRESS

Riley Lake- Chequamagon National Forest

Ken Pemble reporting:

Here's a quick summary of work done this winter:

32 acres of leks and other habitats brushed or mowed.

2 sets of mower blades sacrificed to the rocks

23 hours of tractor usage plus countless hours brushing (and replacing blades)

7 historic leks cleared

2 suspected leks cleared

More work continues at Riley this winter, to date 300 acres has been roller-chopped and our Fire staff has masticated another 90. We are adding open space near the Far Northwest lek by converting an adjacent 20 ac Aspen stand to open. Riley Lake road will be ditched in the upcoming year which will hopefully provide better spring access.

And as always we plan to burn in 2021. We have some new fire folks who are ready to hit the ground running. If this maintenance shows results, I plan on repeating this annually. And if anyone would like to come to Riley and help count this spring, there's plenty of space, and the mowed trails make it easy to find the leks.

Thanks for your support, we couldn't have made such an effort without it.



Blade-wrecking rocks all over Riley Lake!

DOUGLAS COUNTY WILDLIFE AREA

By Greg Kessler



Contract roller chopping on Douglas County Wildlife Area

The WSGS project on the Douglas County Wildlife area was completed on late December by Future Forests (George Swanson, owner). His operator, Ben, completed ~50 acres of roller chopping in just over 2 days! This was an area of the most recent timber harvest that still has heavy woody encroachment and stumps that we cannot mow with our tractor or skid steers.

The total project cost was \$4,900 at about \$95/acre. This is slightly lower than usually for a small project as they were already staying Solon Springs doing a 400-500 acre project for Bayfield County on the Barnes Barrens and the newest addition, the Bass Lake Barrens. We also did 60-70-acres of brush mowing in this north unit and hope to burn it in spring of 2022.

NAMEKAGON BARRENS WILDLIFE AREA

By Nancy Christel



Ethan, Logan and Dylan out on Namekagon Barrens

Annually we herbicide the leafy spurge patch, which we have been able to keep under control and isolated where it first was identified. However, I missed the herbiciding window this spring because of the pandemic. So, I brought volunteer helpers, my three boys: Logan (12), Dylan (10) and Ethan (7) years old. They were very good workers, so I was impressed.

At lunch time, I showed them which trees to look at on the horizon to find the vehicle, while I continued to work. I told them to stick together and I would call to them when they were ready to come back. Basically, they would follow my voice to get back to me. They returned with no trouble.

When we finished, my oldest started to leave, and I told him he had to wait for the rest of us. Dylan and I found a couple more seed heads on our last check, so I told my youngest (who was loaded with bags full of seed heads) to walk forward, meet up with Logan and go back to the truck. My youngest of course is too small to see over the brush to return safely to the truck. To him, he was in a forest. Dylan and I took care of the last couple and returned to the truck.

I loaded everything into the truck and jumped in the drivers seat. It's important to know that my children are avid readers and so it is often silent in the backseat because they are so immersed in their books. So, I jumped in the front seat, turned on the vehicle, put it in drive and said, "Ready for some ice cream?" Dylan said, "Sounds great, but shouldn't we wait for Ethan?" I said, "WHAT!?!?" I turned around and, yep, his seat was empty. So we went running back into the barrens yelling his name until he replied a very quiet, distant "Mom....." He had gone east instead of west when he didn't see my oldest waiting for him, and he had put on some distance. He was fine, not really even fazed, but a bit tired with his little legs and his arms full of bags. I wasn't happy with my oldest. At times I still say to him, "Listen to what I say, don't let the barrens happen again!"

Mother of the Year award, right?

NOMINATIONS FOR WSGS BOARD MEMBERS

The terms of three WSGS board members John Probst, Paul Kooiker and Ashly Steinke expire this year. Nominations are being sought for three-year terms for the three positions. All WSGS members in good standing can be nominated by themselves or by other members. Send nominations to:

**WSGS
102 East Crex Avenue
Grantsburg WI 54840**

WSGS TREASURER REPORT AUG. 26, 2020 – JAN. 21, 2021

Expenditures

Wis. Dept. of Nat. Res. - Namekagon Barrens WA Work	\$2000.00
Wis. Dept. of Nat. Res. – Douglas Co. WA Work	\$1500.00
Website Maint. Fees	\$ 19.80
Newsletter Printing – Anderson Graphics	\$ 200.00
USDA Forest Service – Riley Lk. Habitat Work	\$1700.00
Postage Stamps	\$ 80.00
Postage Reimbursement Business Mailings - Paul Kooiker	\$ 55.00
JEM Sculpture – David Groenjes, Withdrawal	\$1375.00
Wis. Wildlife Federation - Affiliate Org. Membership Dues	\$ 125.00

Total \$7054.80

Deposits

Membership Dues	\$2730.00
Merchandise Sales	\$ 66.00
Jim Evrard Memorial Donations	\$1235.00
General Donation to WSGS Acct.	\$ 540.00

Total \$4571.00

Gain/Loss -\$2483.80

Checking Account Balance Aug. 25, 2020 \$15196.72

Checking Account Balance Jan. 21, 2021 \$12712.92

Jim Evrard Memorial Acct. \$4482.00

General Fund Acct. \$8230.92

Current Paid Memberships 70

TO: WISCONSIN ELK PLANNING COMMITTEE FROM: WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY

Re: Comments on 2020-2030 Elk Plan

The Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (WSGS) is a thirty year old non-profit conservation organization, dedicated to sharp-tailed grouse, and especially to the habitat that supports them. These include large open grasslands, shrub and young forest lands, and other open natural landscapes such as bogs. The same habitats that are good for sharptails are good for elk.

Sharp-tailed Grouse are interesting birds in their own right, well known especially for their colorful courtship behavior on dancing grounds, as well as being a challenging upland game species native to Wisconsin. However, as charismatic as they are, most people would consider the elk a most charismatic megafauna. WSGS would look forward to a day when both species thrive in the same open habitats.

WSGS was pleased to note that all of the areas where where sharptails now or recently have existed in Wisconsin are included in your map of suitable elk patches (page 11), 1-5 being the great Northwest Sands, 11 being the Northeast Sands and 14 and 15 covering the Central Sands and Bogs. This is not surprising. Elk are grazers and these open areas are excellent summer range. Furthermore,

due to the soil types there are few farms where elk might cause crop damage. And most of the landscape is owned in large parcels, by federal, state, county or private timber companies. These areas also have relatively few high volume traffic roads.

Regarding the objectives set (page 73) WSGS is in support, and would point out that especially Objectives A, B and D could well be pursued on our open sandy habitats which also are mainstays for sharp-tailed grouse.

Objective A: Strive for a sustainable elk population in suitable habitats where public acceptance for elk is high

Objective B: Minimize elk/human conflicts

Objective C: Conduct research to address management needs and decisions related to elk

Objective D: Develop communication strategies and outreach tools to increase public understanding of the ecological, cultural, social, and economic influences of elk in Wisconsin.

Objective E: Provide recreational and cultural opportunities associated with elk

WSGS believes that elk will be found on the areas where sharp-tailed grouse also are found, sooner or later. Wandering bulls have been seen on the Namekagon Barrens, near the Minnesota state line, whether wandering from the east or the west is unknown. Plans for elk reintroduction in Minnesota are proceeding, just across that line on the map from our NW Sands. Sooner than natural dispersal would include either assisted dispersal from Wisconsin's herds, or translocation from Kentucky or other sources, We believe that if you survey the public, and the large landholders, in the open landscape areas you will find interest similar to your approval rates in the present areas.

In summary, WSGS supports this plan. We thank you for the opportunity to comment. And remember the open barrens!

Approved by WSGS Board, January 21, 2021

MINUTES OF WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY BOARD MEETING

January 26, 2021, 7PM

Virtual Meeting held via Zoom

Present: D. Evenson, B. Moss, K. Jonas, M. Cole, A. Steinke, M. Amman, T. Hubbs, P. Kooiker, E. Frank, J. Shurts, F.Strand

Treasurer's Report

Ken reported our general fund balance is \$8770. Expenditures over the past five months totaled \$7054. This included a total of \$5200 for habitat work at Namekagon Barrens, Douglas County, and Riley Lake. A down payment of \$1375 was made for the Evrard memorial sharp-tailed grouse statuary.

Current paid up membership is 70 with renewals continuing to come in.

Annual Meeting

The Board set a date for the annual meeting, August 21-22, 2021 to be held in Grantsburg. The Crex Education Center will host the meeting, provided state buildings have re-opened by then. Memory Lake Park is an alternative site.

The annual meeting will include a tour of recent Crex barrens management activities, and will feature the unveiling of the Jim Evrard memorial sharptail display.

Elk Management Plan

The 2020-2030 Elk Management Plan is currently in draft form and WDNR is accepting public comments on the plan. Dave Evenson submitted a letter of support to the Elk Planning Committee indicating WSGS's support for the plan, and noting that sharptails and elk prefer similar habitats; ie open barrens habitat.

The plan describes the NW Sands, the NE Sands, and the Central Sands as “possible” elk range. It was noted that Minnesota is working on an elk release project in NE Minnesota, just across the state line from the NW Sands.

Update on Bayfield County Pine Barrens Research Proposal - Mike Amman and Fred Strand

The two primary goals of the proposed research are to 1) Develop a long-term monitoring program for wildlife communities on the Barnes Barrens and to 2) evaluate habitat use of sharptails on Barnes Barrens and surrounding areas to inform landscape-level plans for additional open areas. The research will be conducted by the Natural Resources Research Institute affiliated with the University of Minnesota Duluth. Sharptails will be tracked using GPS tags as opposed to radio collars.

Dave Evenson submitted a letter of support for the proposal on behalf of WSGS

WSGS is interested in helping fund this research, but Board members were interested in reviewing the proposal before committing funds. Mike A. e-mailed the proposal to all board members.

WSGS Board Issues

Terms of Ashly Steinke, John Probst, and Paul Kooiker are up this year. Steinke and Kooiker offered to serve another term. Evenson will contact Probst.

Dave will work on deciding the length of terms for various Board members.

We should continue to solicit new volunteers to run for the WSGS Board.

Website/Facebook

The WSGS website needs to be upgraded to allow membership renewals and dues payments as well as donations. Ken will work with Kim Wheeler to facilitate this change.

The WSGS Facebook site would have a link to our website. Current Facebook membership is 230 members.

Evrard Memorial

The quote for the 3-bird statuary was \$6250. With the down payment of \$1375 and a balance of \$3942 in the Memorial Fund, we are still a little short. However, we should have no problem reaching our goal with donations still coming in, as well as more donations via Friends of Crex.

Spring STG Surveys

WSGS volunteers intend to again assist in conducting spring breeding surveys. Will advise Bob Hanson of our intent. Bob has recently been assigned as statewide STG coordinator.

Next Board Meeting

Subject to the Covid situation, we tentatively set April 22, 2021 as our next live board meeting.

Ashly volunteered the use of his family’s cabin at Sand Lake in Burnett County.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm Submitted by Paul Kooiker

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!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

We are going to a primarily electronic newsletter, with hard copy only on request. This makes it impossible to send individual dues reminders, so the dues now will be annual for all, due in January for next calendar year.

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

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

Email: _____ Electronic Newsletter

Enclosed:

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

\$ _____ Donations in Memory of Jim Evrard *(will be put towards memorial statue)*

\$ _____ WSGS Logo Decal (\$1.50)

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

\$ _____ Tan or blaze orange Cap (\$15 – 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

