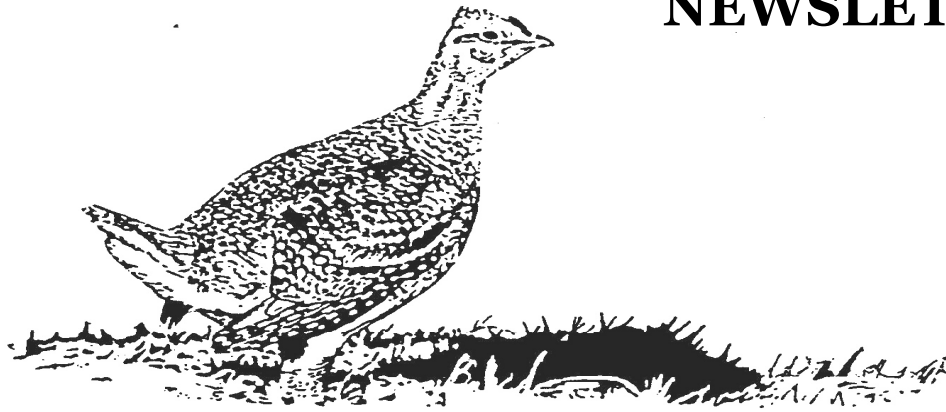


WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 79 Spring 2016

FINAL REMINDER—ANNUAL MEETING

The annual membership meeting of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (WSGS) that will take place on Saturday and Sunday, April 16th and 17th in the St. Croix Inn located on the shores of beautiful St. Croix Lake in the village of Solon Springs. This is an opportunity to say goodbye to winter and hello to spring!

The WSGS membership meeting will begin at 1 PM. in the banquet room of the Inn and will end at 3 PM. followed by a short informative sharptail program. The program will end with a drawing for door prizes and the annual art print raffle followed by a social hour prior to the catered dinner beginning at 6 PM. in the banquet room.

An early Sunday morning tour of sharptail habitat in the Barnes-Brule area is planned, followed by a group breakfast, ending the 2016 annual meeting.

A block of 15 rooms has been reserved in the St. Croix Inn at a special rate of \$50 per room with a slightly higher cost for rooms overlooking the St. Croix Lake. Call the St. Croix Inn at (715)378-4444 to reserve a room prior to the cut-off date April 10th.

A \$15 registration fee will cover the costs of the dinner and beverages and munchies during meeting breaks. A cash bar will be available. To register, send your name(s) and address, and the fee (\$15 per person) to WSGS, 102 East Crex Avenue, Grantsburg, WI 54840.

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WSGS WEBSITE

The WSGS website, “wisharptails.org”, describes our goals and objectives, projects, members of our board, membership and contact information, and electronic copies of recent newsletters.

Those members wishing to receive their newsletters electronically should check the appropriate line on the back page of the printed newsletter when renewing memberships or contact Jim Evrard at the WSGS address or the email address on our website.

REMINDER ABOUT YOUR WSGS MEMBERSHIP: The first line in your mailing label is the expiration date of your membership. Please remit your dues to maintain your membership. Dues are the main source of income for the WSGS.

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

by Dave Evenson

These are busy and exciting days for the Wisconsin sharptail world. The Glacial Lakes Grantsburg (GLG) Master Plan is finished and near approval. Within this plan is a concept that sharptail managers and WSGS have talked about and promoted for 20 years. It's called a partnership corridor, and it provides a template for regional partners, especially Burnett County Forestry, to collaborate with DNR and use forest management practices to create barrens habitat stepping stones, using regular rotational harvests in blocks that optimize both barrens wildlife habitat and timber management.

Just a few days ago, I and other WSGS members attended the first Open House looking at the direction that the Namekagon Barrens and Douglas County Wildlife Area Master Plan is headed. Not surprisingly, a lot of the same language from GLG has moved to this project. The plan has a long way to go, but WSGS is recommending a similar corridor all the way to Moquah, and I'm hopeful that it will happen. We will follow this plan as it develops.

One of the chunks of real estate within that hoped-for corridor is a parcel of Chequamegon National Forest being proposed for some serious timber harvest – called the Greenwood Project, near Moquah Barrens. Another parcel is on the Iron River National Fish Hatchery ownership – they have already committed to keeping some of their lands open.

The big deal, and certainly the most money that WSGS has ever had pass through our hands, is the effort to transplant sharptails from Minnesota to Moquah Barrens. Tom Doolittle, the Moquah wildlife manager, was successful in gaining a federal grant for this project. WSGS is involved as a cooperator, and much of our responsibility is exactly as stated above, receiving and paying bills. Jim Evrard and Fred Strand have found some challenges along the way with federal bureaucracy, but so far we've gotten it done. By the time you read this there may be more people checking out dancing grounds for trapping possibilities.

Spring is near, sharptail cocks are figuring out who's boss, and we'll soon see you at Solon Springs!

Thank you, *Dave Evenson*



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.

WSGS OFFICERS

President: Dave Evenson
Vice President: Tom Ziegeweid
Secretary/Treasurer: Jim Evrard

Newsletter Editor: Jim Evrard

Board Members:

Mike Cole Ed Frank
Paul Kooiker Bruce Moss
John Probst John Zatopa

Newsletter Layout/Webmaster: Kim Wheeler

WSGS BOARD ELECTION

The terms of WSGS Board Members Dave Evenson, Bruce Moss and Tom Ziegeweid expire in 2016. Nominations were sought for three-year terms for three positions in Newsletter No. 78. Evenson, Moss and Ziegeweid indicated they will stand for re-election. No other nominations were received as of March 4, 2016.

Dave Evenson is a retired DNR wildlife biologist and is our current president and was responsible for the creation of the WSGS. Dave, who lives in Cumberland, is an avid waterfowler and a self-professed Gordon MacQuarrie nut.

Bruce Moss is also a retired DNR wildlife biologist living in the Trego area. Bruce was instrumental in the creation of the Friends of the Namekagon Barrens and serves as an officer in that group.

Tom Ziegeweid is a retired businessman who was a WSGS Past President and current Vice President. "Ziggy" has been active in citizen conservation groups and is intense gatherer and consumer of Wisconsin's bounty of fish and game.

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BALLOT – WSG BOARD (vote for three)

Dave Evenson _____

Bruce Moss _____

Tom Ziegeweid _____

Write in _____

Bring to annual meeting or mail to: WSGS
102 E. Crex Ave.
Grantsburg, WI 54840



Your current board of directors: From left to right: John Zatopa, Paul Kooiker, Dave Evenson (kneeling), Bruce Moss, Ed Frank, Mike Cole, Tom Ziegeweid, Jim Evrad, John Probst.

2015 SHARPTAIL HARVEST

by Jim Evrard

Krista McGinley Pham, Assistant Upland Ecologist with the DNR's Bureau of Wildlife Management in Madison provided a summary of the 2015 Wisconsin sharptail hunting season.

There were 100 hunting permits with each permit valid for one sharptail issued for Deer Management Unit 8, primarily the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area (WA) in far northeast Burnett County. The hunting season ran for three weeks beginning in the last two weeks of October and ending in the last week of November.

A total of 154 hunters applied for the 100 permits. Of the lucky permit holders, 61 returned the hunting questionnaires that were sent with the hunting permits. Of the 61 hunters, 39 actually hunted sharptails. They spent a total of nearly 200 hours hunting sharptails with the average hunting trip lasting a bit less than 6 hours. On a scale of 1 to 5, the hunters rated their hunting experiences an average of 4.3, indicating they enjoyed the experience.

Twenty-three sharptails were reported bagged. Hunting reports of this type have various biases. I would imagine that hunters who succeeded in killing a sharptail would return their questionnaires at a higher rate than hunters who were not successful and the successful hunters would probably rate their hunting quality higher than unsuccessful hunters.

Minimum hunter success would be 23% (23 permits filled out of 100 permits issued), but it could be higher due to unreported harvest by those who failed to return their hunting questionnaires.

The impact of the sharptail harvest on the Namekagon Barrens WA sharptail population might be explained by a simple model. There were 81 displaying male sharptails counted in the spring of 2015 in the Namekagon Barrens. Assuming the number of female sharptails were approximately equal in numbers to the males, there could have been a spring population of 162 adult sharptails.

Also assuming an average production year, there could have been two young sharptails for every adult in the fall, meaning a total fall population of nearly 500 (162 adult and 324 young) sharptails.

I personally hunted sharptails for three half days in the Namekagon Barrens during the final week of the hunting season and was impressed with the large number of sharptails I saw in only a small portion of the wildlife area.

A hunting harvest of about 23 birds would equal about 5% of the fall population. Hunting harvest is usually 'compensatory' in upland game birds meaning that the birds that are killed by hunters would die normally from predation and other causes throughout the winter. A hunting harvest of 23 sharptails would be a very conservative 12% of the total number of birds (193) that would normally die during the winter.

Actual mortality numbers for the Namekagon Barrens sharptail population might be considerably different than those in my simple model because of my assumptions. Actual sharptail population numbers would be difficult to determine without a considerable and expensive research effort.



Sharp-tailed Grouse face-off at Crex Meadows Wildlife Area. Photo by Jim Williams

ART RAFFLE

Your WSGS is again conducting a raffle for three framed, limited edition, ready-to-hang-on-your-wall art prints of sharp-tailed grouse. Sharptail art is rare either as prints or originals. The WSGS is offering three colorful prints by Wisconsin artists Gromme, King, and Balzer. This is an important source of WSGS funding.



The Dean of Wisconsin Wildlife Artists, the late Owen Gromme's print, "On the Rise" depicts two flushing sharptails in typical Wisconsin habitat.



The Ruth King print is a scene showing displaying sharptails in the northern unit of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area. The state recently acquired the wildlife area and land adjoining the north unit.



The Balzer print shows a winter flock of sharptails feeding on white birch buds on the edge of the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area's refuge.

The raffle ticket is printed below. Those wishing to enter the raffle should place your name and address on the ticket stubs, detach the stubs, and send with your contribution to:

WSGS, 102 E. Crex Ave., Grantsburg, WI 54840

WSGS 2015 ART RAFFLE TICKET

This raffle is being offered by the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society
 102 E. Crex Ave.
 Grantsburg, WI 54840

Wisconsin Raffle License R0016707A-16013

The drawing will be conducted at 4:00 P.M., April 16, 2016, at the annual meeting of the WSGS in Solon Springs, Wisconsin. Ticket holders need not be present to win. Winners will be notified by mail or telephone. No prize has a value over \$500. Suggested contribution is \$10/ticket or \$20/three tickets. No contribution is necessary to be eligible for participation.

(Keep this portion for your records)

(Detach here and send with contribution or mark "no contribution")

Name _____ Address _____ Phone _____	Name _____ Address _____ Phone _____	Name _____ Address _____ Phone _____
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RECENT HABITAT PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS

by Jim Evrard

It has been six years since the WSGS last reported on its efforts to improve Wisconsin sharp-tailed grouse habitat. In early 2010, the WSGS partnered with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in the second brush cutting project in the Riley Lake Wildlife Area (WA) in the Chequamegon National Forest east of Fifield. Students from the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point assisted personnel from the USFS and the WSGS.

In the same year, the USFS announced its intention to increase the amount of open land in the Moquah Barrens WA from 2,150 acres to 5,400 acres.

The DNR's Sharp-tailed Grouse Management Plan was approved in early 2012. The plan called for two "conservation areas", one in the northwest from Burnett County to Bayfield County and the other in the north central part of the state from western Taylor County to eastern Price County.

Later in 2012, a major land trade between the DNR and Burnett County was approved. The DNR would acquire the Namekagon Barrens WA and land lying between the northwest corner of the Crex Meadows WA and the Kohler-Peet Barrens in the Governor Knowles State Forest. Burnett County would acquire the Danbury and Kiezer Lake WAs plus some wooded portions of the Crex Meadows and Amsterdam Sloughs WAs. The paper work for the land trade was finally finalized in 2015.

In 2012, the WSGS granted \$2,000 for land acquisition and \$2,000 for habitat management in Crex Meadows WA and \$2000 for habitat management in the Namekagon Barrens WA.

The DNR with the help of the Conservation Fund acquired 4,478 acres of land owned by the private Lyme-St. Croix Forest for inclusion into the Namekagon Barrens WA. In 2013, the WSGS donated \$5,000 towards the funding of the acquisition project.

In 2014, the WSGS granted \$4,000 to the USFS for sharptail habitat work in the Riley Lake WA and \$1,000 to the DNR for habitat work in the Pershing WA.

In early 2015, the DNR acquired an easement on 21,189 acres of land owned by the private Lyme-St. Croix Forest north of Barnes along STH 27. The easement will assure that the land will not be developed and will continue to be open for public use, including hunting. There will also be DNR input into the management of the land. The area supported an irruption of sharptails following an outbreak of the jack pine budworm in the 1990s and continues to support sharptails.

Also in 2015, the WSGS granted \$3,000 for habitat management in the Namekagon Barrens WA and \$2,000 for habitat management in the Crex Meadows WA. The WSGS has also pledged \$3,000 for land acquisition in the Douglas County WA.

In late 2015, the USFS's Chequamegon National Forest initiated a massive sharptail restoration project in the Moquah Barrens WA. A partnership with the DNR, the Red Cliff Band of Ojibwa Indians, and the WSGS, will improve and enlarge habitat and sharptails from northwest Minnesota will be moved to the Moquah Barrens WA. Hopefully this will help the remaining native sharptails recover their former numbers. If successful, the technique could be used elsewhere in Wisconsin to restore sharptail populations.



Dancing Male Sharp-tailed Grouse at Crex Meadows Wildlife Area. Photo by Ron Winch

AFIELD WITH ZIGGY

by Tom Ziegeweid

Grouse Fly? For many years I've encountered these cute but annoying "grouse flies" when I'm cleaning ruffed grouse. They are akin to having duck lice jump off their cooling host onto your hands when cleaning ducks.

I've never seen them on other species of game birds, only ruffies. They seem to be real prevalent on birds I bag in central Wisconsin, but maybe that is because I shoot more birds there than anywhere else.

Abut a month ago, I brought home two ruffies from Meadow Valley Wildlife Management Area and caught one of the bugs. I decided to investigate this critter. Was I about to discover a new insect species? I have a small magnifying glass on my Swiss army knife. Upon examination, the bug gave me all the indications it was a true fly of the order of *Diptera*. This order includes most of the annoying flies we encounter like mosquitoes and horse, deer, house and black flies.

When I went to the Friends of Crex potluck dinner in December, I took the fly along, which I had stuck under a piece of Scotch tape. Before I left, I along with Kristi Pupak and Steve Hoffman (DNR employees at Crex Meadows Wildlife Area) and D. J. Syring, a friend of Kristi's, had a spirited discussion on this insect. D.J. entered the name "grouse fly" into the Internet using his fancy telephone and low and behold, there it was.

The description and picture matched my specimen exactly. The bug is "clingy", has large eyes probably adapted to living in the dark, deep layers of feathers of a grouse, large front claw-like appendages to lock onto to its host to resist preening.

The bug is hard to kill, rubbery tough, won't die like a swatted house fly. The website mentioned that it is an "obligate parasite", which means it spends its whole life on its host. Having wings, it could likely fly to other host birds (which it probably has to in order to survive).

Louse Flies are in the *Hippoboscidae* family, a group of flies that use birds for hosts. This particular fly's scientific name is *Pseudolynchia canariensis*, and the insect's formal common name is Pigeon Louse Fly. They are found on wild and domestic pigeons, grouse, and according to Kristi's friend, they were on Guinea hens he used to raise.

Interesting that the "louse" is in the bug's common name. Lice are sightless, but this fly behaves like a typical louse. Lice are another separate order of insects.

Not surprisingly the Pigeon Louse Fly is a blood sucker like more of its Dipteran clan.

Editor's Note: The Pigeon Louse Fly prefers the blood of it's avian hosts, but an informal study conducted by G. Robert Coatney in 1931 discovered that when no other of it's preferred hosts were present, these flies would bite and feed on human blood. However, the study found that the flies would not live for very long or reproduce without their avian host blood. Some more interesting information about this species of parasitical fly can be found at <http://entomologytoday.org/2015/05/18/hippoboscidae-flies-live-birth/>. Check it out.

SUPPORT THE WSGS – BUY A CAP

We still have a small supply of embroidered tan and blaze orange caps for sale. The front of the cap features a colorful dancing sharp-tailed grouse under the black letters, WSGS. A strip of camouflage cloth covers the lower half of the cap and extends around the outside edge of the cap's bill. The size of the cap can be adjusted using a sturdy Velcro closure.

The cost of the cap is \$15 (shipping free) and can be ordered by using the renewal form on the back page of this newsletter. Please indicate the color you desire.

Caps may also be available at the Annual Meeting.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

Please check the date on your address label and renew your membership if it has expired or is about to expire. Dues are the main source of income for our small all-volunteer organization.

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

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

Enclosed:

\$ _____ Dues (**Regular - \$20, Supporting - \$30**, Organization/Business - \$25, Contributing - \$50,
Sustaining - \$100, Sponsor - \$200)

\$ _____ WSGS Logo Decal (\$1.50) (Dues are fully tax-deductible)

\$ _____ 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

