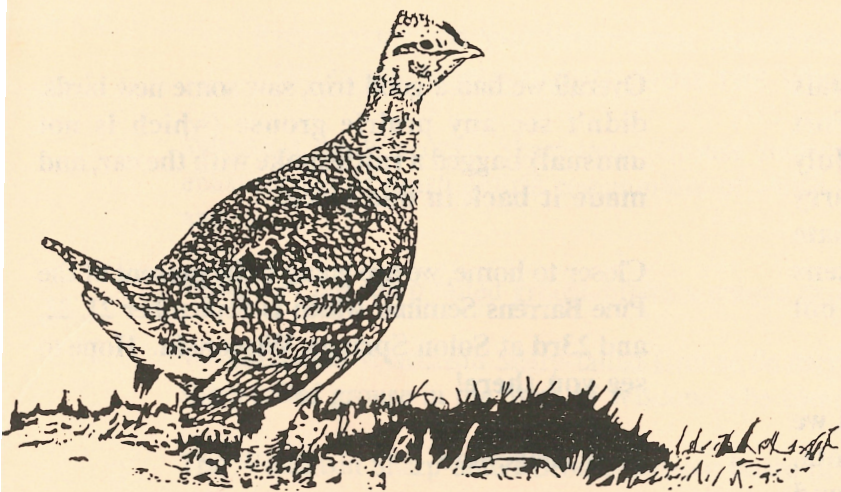


WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Volume 8

Fall, 1993

PRAIRIE GROUSE SYMPOSIUM

The Wisconsin Chapter of the Wildlife Society is sponsoring a grouse symposium on February 24, 1994 at the Inn on the Park, Madison. Wisconsin's native grouse, including the prairie chicken, sharp-tailed grouse, ruffed grouse and the spruce grouse, will be the subject of the symposium. Information on the life history, status, and management of the four grouse species will be presented.

WSGS members interested in attending the symposium should contact either Bill Vander Zowen, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources - WM/4, Box 7924, Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7921 or Bruce Bacon, Department of Natural Resources -Ranger Station, 3291 State House Circle, Mercer, WI 54547 for more information.

PINE BARRENS WORKSHOP

A workshop title, "The Future of the Pine Barrens in Northwest Wisconsin", is being held on September 21 -23, 1993 at the St. Croix Inn in Solon Springs.

One objective of the workshop, sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, is to exchange research and management information on the pine barrens community including soils, insects, plants, herptiles, birds, mammals, economics, and recreation. This will include a presentation on sharp-tailed grouse by Larry Gregg, researcher with the WDNR. Initiation of the process of developing a landscape-scale, integrated management plan for the pine barrens is another objective of the workshop.

For more information and registration materials, contact Jim Evrard, Department of Natural Resources, Box 367, Grantsburg, WI 54840 (715-463-4893). Space is limited so early registration is urged.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It was a trip one will never forget as five individuals from Wisconsin including myself, left for Fort Collins, Colorado on July 24th and returned July 29th. They included Paul Kooiker from Crex, Larry Gregg from research, Jim Kier and his graduate student Dan Golner who work with prairie chickens at Buena Vista, and myself representing WSGS, (not on your money)!

Our first stop was a short one but interesting as we looked at a 2-3 acre prairie remnant near Eyota, Minnesota. This piece of history was never plowed and contains some unusual and rare plants. The Tuck's cap lilies were blooming that day, along with the scarlet tick trefoil that I had never seen.

We arrived in Valentine, Nebraska and proceeded to luckily find motel rooms as we wanted to see the Valentine NWR before dark. Should we have been ten minutes late, we may have been sleeping in our truck. One of the staff from Valentine NWR, Len McDaniels, took us on a tour of both Valentine and Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuges. Some of the highlights were the Texas Longhorn Cattle, buffalo, elk, and a patch of prairie white-fringed orchid, growing next to a slough. This plant is federally endangered.

We finally arrived in Fort Collins, Colorado on Sunday, July 25th and got settled in. This was the first joint meeting of the Prairie Grouse Technical Council and Western States Sage/Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Workshop. The next two days were filled with seminars presented by the "best of the best" prairie grouse experts from all over the country, representing many agencies.

Two field trips to sites in Colorado to see sage-grouse habitat and newly introduced prairie chickens were the frosting on the cake.

Overall we had a good trip, saw some new birds, didn't see any prairie grouse (which is not unusual) bagged a rattlesnake with the car, and made it back in one piece.

Closer to home, we are going to be present at the Pine Barrens Seminar which is September 21, 22, and 23rd at Solon Springs, Wisconsin. Hope to see you there!

Tom Ziegeweid

BYLAWS CHANGE PROPOSAL

Mark Randall has submitted the following change to the bylaws which will be discussed at the next spring meeting.

Article 1. Purpose and Objectives

Purpose

The purpose of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, hereafter referred to as The Society, shall be the preservation and enhancement of the sedge meadow, bog, savannas consisting of three types, the oak openings, the oak barrens and the pine barrens, and tall shrub communities, as described by John T. Curtis, of which the sharp-tailed grouse is a key indicator species.



WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY

RESOLUTION TO THE WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT FROM THE WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY.

WHEREAS the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society was created to support the preservation and enhancement of brush prairie communities of which the sharp-tailed grouse is a key indicator species, and

WHEREAS the sharp-tailed grouse offers a unique experience for upland bird hunters in Wisconsin, and

WHEREAS the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society desires that the tradition and opportunity to hunt sharp-tailed grouse in the State of Wisconsin be continued,

The Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society Board of Directors, under the direction of its membership,

RESOLVES that the Bureau of Wildlife Management be requested to promulgate the following rules affecting the hunting of sharp-tailed grouse in Wisconsin:

- I. A permit shall be required to harvest sharp-tailed grouse,
 - A. An application form shall be required for the permit,
 1. A fee shall be charged to pay for administrative costs related to issuing the permit,
 2. This application shall not be included with the purchase of a Conservation Patron license;
 - B. This permit shall be issued in accordance to the quotas set by the Bureau of Wildlife Management,
- II. A quota system for sharp-tailed grouse shall be devised by the Bureau of Wildlife Management,
 - A. Such quotas shall be determined by the Bureau of Wildlife Management using the best available data with the objective of having acceptable harvest goals for sharp-tailed grouse to protect and enhance the resource and still have hunting opportunities with the bag limits outlined below,
 - B. To save on costs, it is suggested that the initial quota areas be identical to those used for deer hunting;
- III. A seasonal and daily bag limit and hunting season shall be set,
 - A. The seasonal bag limit shall be two (2) sharp-tailed grouse per hunter,
 - B. The daily bag limit shall be one (1) sharp-tailed grouse per hunter,
 - C. There shall be one continuous season, with the length and opening date to be determined by the Bureau of Wildlife Management.

Signed this 14th day of June, 1993, for the Board of Directors by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James F. Shurts".

James F. Shurts
Vice President
Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society

**WSGS ANNUAL MEETING
APRIL 23-24, 1993**

Our third annual meeting was held at the Sandhill Outdoor Skills Center with about 25 people attending.

Friday evening we enjoyed the camaraderie of meeting old and new friends, and got organized for the morning sharptail dancing observations. For the first time we had decent weather for our observing and everyone who went out got to see dancing sharptails or prairie chickens if they chose to go to Buena Vista. Many thanks to Mark Randall, Mike Zeckmeister, and Jim Keir for their cooperation with the blinds.

Tom Ziegeweid presided over the annual meeting. Election results for the board were: one year term - Jim Shurts, Bob Dreis; two year term - Dave Evenson, Tom Davis; three year term - Dan Dessecker, Tom Ziegeweid, and Jim Evrard. Thanks to everyone who ran for the board and don't be too smug if you didn't get elected, we just might come calling in the future!

Metro Chapter

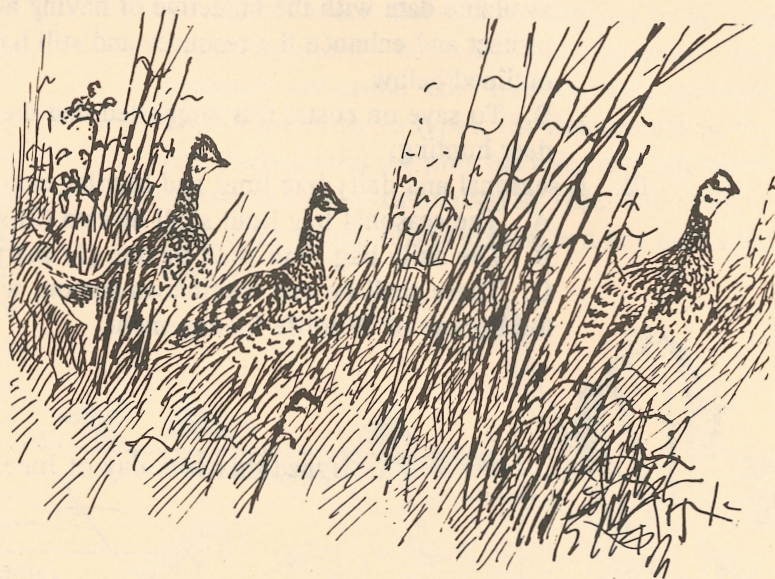
After discussion about a Southeast Metro Chapter, Tom Jancoski was appointed to chair a committee to see what could be done. If you are interested in helping this effort out give Tom a call (414-377-4685). Tom is already interested in putting up a display at the Schlitz Audubon Center. A charge to the board was made to formulate guidelines for chapter relationship to the state organization.

Hunting Restrictions

A lot of discussion took place about Myron Anderson's resolution (as published in the fall '92 newsletter). While there was general agreement with parts of the resolution it was voted down as written. We then voted on a series of hunting restrictions as possible recommendation to the DNR.

1. Statewide Closure - opposed
2. Closing more counties - opposed
3. Closing more portions of existing or potential core properties - passed
4. Quotas and zones - passed
5. Status Quo - opposed

The membership present then voted to have the board draft a resolution to be sent to the DNR based on these votes. Jim Shurts will write the first draft.



(Meeting continued)

Central Wisconsin Barrens Management

We discussed the increasing role that central Wisconsin public and private lands are playing in barrens/bog habitat. Mark Randall suggested a change to the bylaws to reflect the value of bogs, and will write it up for a vote at the next meeting. We voted to send a resolution to the DNR supporting barrens management on greater parts of state and federal areas.

Spread Eagle Barrens - Florence County

The Spread Eagle Area is being proposed for acquisition by the DNR as the one best example of a large northeastern barrens. While it does not now support sharptails (and perhaps never will again). We felt it was important to support this acquisition for the many other barrens values involved. We passed a motion to write a letter to the Bureau of Endangered Resources supporting this acquisition and indicating our willingness to further help if needed.

Volunteers

There is a potential for volunteer efforts in prescribed burning, surveys, seed collecting, or other items.

We finished with a thank you round of applause for the officers and a door prize drawing in which everyone went home with a prize!



Grassland Birds Declining, Research Finds:

Native birds in North America's grasslands have suffered steeper, more consistent, and more widespread declines over the past 25 years than any other U.S. bird group, according to research just released by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Service's data, collected via the annual Breeding Bird Survey, shows that 7 of the 12 bird species considered endemic to the Great Plains grasslands declined in numbers during the past quarter century. In the most trouble are the mountain plover. Franklin's gull, Cassin's sparrow and lark bunting. Mountain plover numbers have dropped to the point where that bird now is a candidate for the endangered species list.

The data show too that 16 of 25 other more widespread birds which sometimes use the grasslands also declined in number. Six of those eastern meadowlark, and grasshopper, Henslow's, lark, Brewer's and clay colored sparrows lost ground significantly.

Only the upland sandpiper and McCown's longspur have increased appreciably since 1966.

IN MEMORIUM

On June 20, 1993, Ned Norton passed away at the age of 43 of ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease). Ned was a good friend of Central Wisconsin Sharptails. As manager of the Sandhill Wildlife Area Ned was in some ways the "discoverer" of sharptails in good numbers there and on adjacent cranberry lands. Ned was a strong believer that in the one instance of cranberry culture, sharptails could be a by-product of land management, not so easily accommodated anywhere else. Ned took that conviction with him as he went to work as wildlife biologist for the Northland Cranberry Company. For an example of his work with prescribed fire and herbicides, look back at his letter printed in the fall 1992 newsletter.

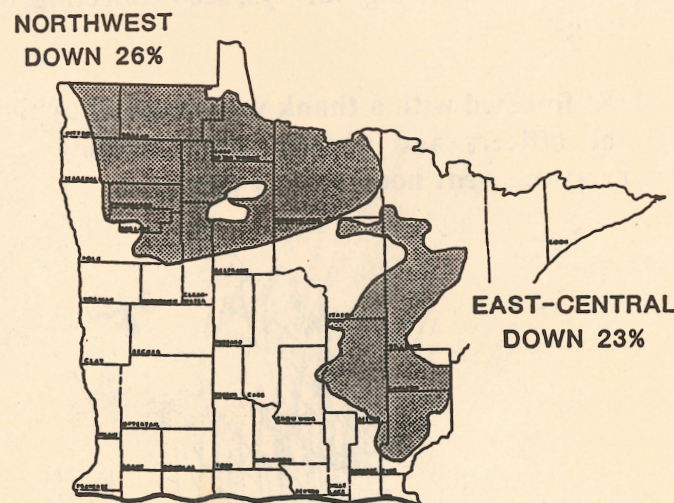
Ned is survived by his wife Patricia and children Elizabeth (age 13) and Charles (age 10). Friends within the Department of Natural Resources have set up an account to help with the education of Ned's children.

If you would like to contribute to this memorial fund, please submit checks, bank drafts, or money orders made out to "Elizabeth and Charles Norton" and mail to Joseph Haug, c/o DNR, 1681 2nd Ave. S., Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494-4770.

We also have received word of the passing of Bob Gunville of Whitefish Bay. Bob had recently joined WSGS and was part of a central Wisconsin deer hunting gang that has noted the changes in sharptail numbers over the decades.

SHARPTAILS DOWN AGAIN

According to Bill Berg, DNR's biologist who tracks sharptail numbers, the 1993 dancing ground counts are down again. On 123 dancing grounds in the Northwest range that were also checked in 1992, dancing males were down 26%. What's more disturbing, 76% of these grounds contained fewer birds than in 1992. In the East-central range, there were 23% fewer males on 106 comparable dancing grounds, and 73% of these grounds had fewer birds than last spring. Fifty-three percent of previously occupied dancing grounds in the Northwest, and 45% in the East-central range, were totally empty in 1993. That's zero! That's sad! Berg says that since 1981, the net sharptail decline has been 66% in the Northwest, and 77% in the East-central range. The only years of any modest increases were the RIM habitat management years, 1987-1990.



LETTERS FROM MEMBERS

Dear Tom and Dave:

My wife and I want to thank you for your extra efforts in making our first meeting and survey a very rewarding and enjoyable event. We also want to thank Mark Randall for his help in making sure we had suitable lodging as well as the threatened Blanding's Turtle that he took to a suitable site for release late that same night, only to get up at 0330 hours to make sure club members would get to the carefully selected sites for our morning survey. Thanks again, Mark.

Our first impression of a "Sharpie" displaying at 30 feet? WOW!! A peppier bird than the "chickens" we have enjoyed on their Buena Vista prairie lek. Plus the surrounding terrain, to me, is more aesthetically pleasing with its low swamp birch and smatterings of spruce groupings. Like a scene out of the past that could have been set before the first wandering hunter crossed the Bering Land Bridge from Siberia.

The continue territorial calling of Sand hill cranes, jacksnipe, ducks, and bittern made it difficult to hear the sharptail cackles.

When no hens showed up one male flew up to the very tip of a spruce like a showoff kid. He probably was thinking, "Heh, I gave them my best dancing steps and crooning, where the heck are all the chicks"? Is this mating time or what?

What a sad thought if we lost old Tympanuchus phasianellus from his few remaining but dwindling haunts. He is, in my opinion, the grandest of our native upland game birds. A rare trophy to admire on his spring dancing lek, or as he busts out, clucking from a small birch clump on a crisp fall morning.

With the sharptail population declining at 2% per year, mainly because of loss of habitat, renewed efforts should be made in securing their survival. We're looking forward to future gatherings of the S.G.S. clan and hope to be of productive service to its objectives.

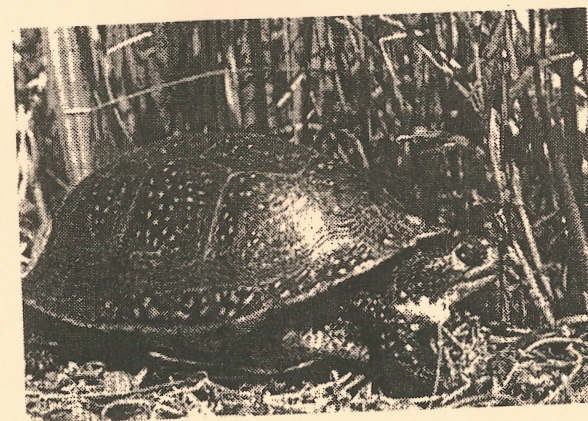
Sincerely,

Tom Jancoski

CAPS AND STICKERS

In this issue you received a WSGS sticker. We hope you will use it on your vehicle or somewhere that people can see it and ask you about WSGS. Additional stickers for your other vehicles are available at cost.

We also have a classy corduroy cap available. They are green with "Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society - Save the Barrens" in white lettering. These are available for \$10 plus \$3.00 shipping and postage. Contact Tom Zeigeweid, 2950 E. Wellington Drive, Eau Claire, WI 54703.



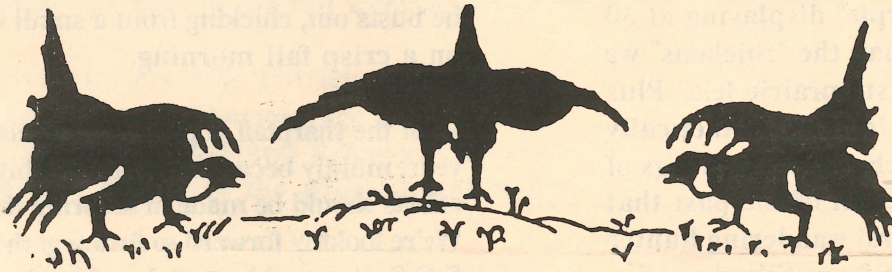
1992 HUNTING SURVEY RESULTS

In 1992 sharp-tailed grouse hunters were required to get a harvest permit before hunting. (This is again a requirement this year. You can pick up your free permit at most DNR stations in the north, or through Madison.) While DNR biologists have felt they had a good handle on the harvest through the years, this new data was very useful in confirming this.

The total number of applicants was about 500 with about half (242) of those actually pursuing sharptails. Active hunters averaged just over two trips each (504). Seventy seven percent of those trips were on public lands.

Sharptails are the true trophy bird in Wisconsin! An estimated 93 birds were harvested in 1992. The Namekagon Barrens, Crex Meadows, and Pershing Wildlife Areas accounted for 70% of the harvest; and five counties, Burnett, Taylor, Douglas, Price, and Rusk accounted for 92% of the harvest.

Thus you see that if you are a sharptail hunter in Wisconsin you are a rare breed and sharptail hunters who actually bag birds are even more rare. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find other articles on the future of sharptail hunting in Wisconsin.



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