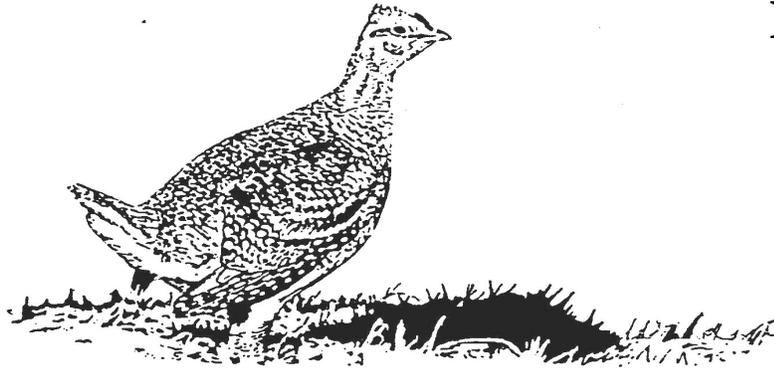


# WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 92

Summer 2020

## 2020 WSGS MEETING NEWS

In April, 2020 your WSGS Board postponed our regular Annual Meeting to a tentative date of July 25. At this time the Board is cancelling it for this year. We will miss seeing each other this year, but sure hope you can make it to the April 2021 meeting.

While the main reason for holding the meeting is to share information and meet each other and have fun, it also is the place where we gather a good portion of our working capital for the coming year. We will not have an art raffle this year, and many members also pay their dues at the meeting. We would remind you to check on your dues, and consider adding a little extra if you are in a position to do so. Another action you can take, if it suits you, is to **get your newsletter by email**. Postage and printing are about half of the internal costs of running this organization. Thank you.

The other item which has not yet occurred is Board elections. In this newsletter we offer a slate of four candidates- one more than usual due to the deaths this year of past Board members Jim Evrard and Bob Dumke. Please submit your ballots by July 31, 2020. Thank you.

Our newsletter schedule is also off. We have enough information to print a double newsletter right now, but have chosen to make this one about the basics. You'll be getting another newsletter in fall which will include remembrances of Jim and Bob, and a bunch of updates on happenings in the sharptail world. Some of those you will be able to see on our Facebook page or website before they hit that newsletter- go check it out!

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## 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.

So, as everyone in the world says, like us on Facebook!

# FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

*By Dave Evenson*

Happy Birthday to us! Thirty years ago, in 1990, Wisconsin didn't have a sharptail advocacy group. I'm sure I looked across the state line at Minnesota's five year old Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, and probably at the long established Society of Tympanuchus Cupido Pinnatus (STCP), formed in 1961 advocating for Wisconsin's prairie chickens. Thus we began with a mailing list of sharptail managers, foresters, sharptail hunters and pretty much anybody I had an address for.

In the years following, Michigan established a Michigan Sharp-tailed Grouse Association, and even Ontario came up with a Sharptails Forever group. I believe the Ontario group is inactive. Michigan's group ebbed to near nothing, but is again vital, after sharptails have thrived and limited hunting is now permitted in the far eastern end of the Upper Peninsula. STCP has also run its course in Wisconsin, leaving the prairie chicken without a strong advocacy group.

During the early years, since I was a Wisconsin DNR employee, I avoided holding office, although I was always lurking around whenever WSGS met. Now, for probably longer than is healthy for an organization, I've been allowed to be your president. For even more years than that, Jim Evrard was our workhorse, and for me, my sharptail conscience. Jim really ran this show, whenever it got to be too long between board meetings (and fishing trips), I could expect a call or email from Jim- "Say, Dave isn't it about time?" Jim, with help from others surely, pulled off only the second time the mostly western Prairie Grouse Technical Conference came to Wisconsin.

But what a year to have a Thirtieth Birthday! Pretty hard to celebrate this year. April meeting date came and went, and we still don't have clarity on what's the best course. Nonetheless, a lot of good things are happening on the sharptail front- you'll read some of them here, and others are in the works. And WSGS is in the midst of them all. Happy Birthday WSGS!

## 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: Ken Jonas  
Secretary/Treasurer: Ken Jonas

### BOARD MEMBERS:

Mike Cole  
Paul Kooiker Bruce Moss  
Ashley Steinke

Newsletter Compositor: Lauren Finch



## **CITIZEN SCIENTISTS TO RESCUE WSGS SPRING SHARPTAIL SURVEYS**

In this year of COVID 19, Wisconsin DNR wildlifera were told to work from home, and prohibited from doing field work, other than those items that were directly related to public safety. This meant no spring surveys for woodcock, ruffed grouse, sharp-tailed grouse. The US Fish and Wildlife Service even decided they could not do the spring waterfowl surveys. Thus data trends of decades old will have a blank spot in the year 2020.

It certainly isn't that the wildlifera didn't want to do these surveys: they were chafing at the bit to get out there, but "Orders is orders" and they couldn't. Into this gap WSGS volunteers stepped forward, and provided survey coverage for many of the traditional area and some coverage on newer areas like the Germann Road Fire area and industrial forest clearcuts in the growth from the Five Mile Fire area of 1977. USFS personnel were allowed to do the surveys at Moquah and Riley Lake, so those areas were surveyed as well.

Another bright spot is the emerging use of trail cams for lek activity. Snapshot Wisconsin, a statewide DNR program, did an initial tryout of cameras on prairie chicken booming grounds and a few sharptail dancing grounds. Employees of Hancock Forestry, owner of many tracts in and near the Germann Road fire also placed their own trail cameras. It's a work in progress, but the cameras certainly show promise for detecting presence of birds on a suspected dancing ground. Obtaining actual counts is harder, depending on topography and vegetation.

Results from the counts were similar to 2019 in the southern range, at Crex and Namekagon Barrens, but lower in the northern range. There is some speculation about either breeding season 2019 or the hard winter in the north. Crex had about 25 males both in 2019 and 2020, and Namekagon Barrens about 53-56. As always, many sites had an unknown number of sharptails seen or heard not right on the leks, out in the marshes or other places not gotten to.

As of this writing, there will not be permits in 2020. The WSGS board sent a letter to the DNR to point out that Unit 8 (NBWA and part of Douglas County Wildlife Area) could have permits by the existing DNR plan.

### **Ballot- WSGS Board (vote for four)**

**Mike Amman** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mike Cole** \_\_\_\_\_

**Trevor Hubbs** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ken Jonas** \_\_\_\_\_

**Write-in** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail in by August 7, 2020 to:**

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

## WSGS BOARD ELECTIONS

*We have four vacancies this year. Normally we would have collected ballots at the annual spring meeting- this year please submit your ballot by mail on or before July 31, 2020.*

My name is **Mike Amman** and I have been a forester with the Bayfield County Forestry and Parks Dept. for 17 years. Prior to that I worked for the Burnett County Forest as their Assistant Forest Administrator for 1.5 years. I graduated from UW – Madison in 2001 with a degree in Forest Science. I am originally from Cross Plains, a small town just West of Madison where I grew up hunting and fishing with my dad and two brothers. About 15 years ago I transitioned from a being a serious bowhunter to a serious ruffed grouse and woodcock hunter. A couple years ago I added an annual trip to North Dakota to hunt sharp-tails and huns. I currently sit on the sharp-tailed grouse advisory committee as the WCFA representative. It is nice to know there are sharp-tails in WI and on the forest I work on and I feel passionate about ensuring their long term viability in WI. I am married and live in Ashland with our two dogs (Weimaraner 9 yrs, English Setter 8 weeks) and a cat.

**Trevor Hubbs** I'm an outdoorsman and a dog person. I grew up running hounds after coyotes and panthers in southern Illinois In high school I worked as a duck and goose guide and helped train the club's Labradors. After the Army I got really involved in pointing dogs and have been traveling around the country with my Irish setters chasing birds ever since. I'm excited about sharptail grouse because they are not only fun to hunt but fun to be around I love native birds and the places they live and feel its my duty as a steward of the land to preserve and improve the wild places I enjoy so much so that others may also enjoy them. I work in the custom home industry as a consultant for different builders and installation companies throughout Wisconsin and the UP. I've lived and hunted in a lot of different places around the U.S. and can tell you that Wisconsin has something special that not everyone has. I'm excited to be a part of this organization and hope I can add value to the mission.

**Ken Jonas** I was born and raised in central Wisconsin and have been a life-long resident of the state. I attended and graduated from college at UW- Green Bay in 1977 with a B.S. in biology and a population dynamics option. Started working in the field of wildlife management for the state of Wisconsin in 1978 on the wild turkey re-introduction program and continued working for them in varying capacities around the state, retiring as an area wildlife supervisor in 2016. I first encountered sharp-tailed grouse while on a hunting trip to Manitoba in 1983 and became a dyed in the wool STG hunter thereafter, pursuing them with English setters in at least 6 different states and one province through the years. I've also had the good fortune to work on management for sharptails on four different properties in Wisconsin during my career with DNR including the renowned Namekagon Barrens, and have come to consider myself a dyed in the wool sharp-tailed grouse enthusiast before anything else. I've been a long time member of the Wis. Sharp-tailed Grouse Society and have served on the WSGS Board of Directors for the last 3 years recently becoming Treasurer for the organization after Jim Evrard's passing earlier this year. I hope to continue serving this fine organization with your support as a board member, working towards maintaining STG as a viable, permanent member of Wisconsin's fauna.

**Mike Cole** I live in Grantsburg and work as a Manufacturing Engineer for Parker Hannifin there. I was appointed to the WSGS board in 2012, then elected in 2014 and 2017. Ken Jonas and I run the WSGS Facebook page. I am also the chairperson for the Crex Meadows chapter of Ducks Unlimited. I own five German Shorthairs. Two of them are retired, but were the subject of amusing Jim Evrard columns over the years describing our Sharptail hunts in Wisconsin and North Dakota. The three younger dogs are still living their upland hunting adventures in Crex, Namekagon Barrens, Fish Lake, Douglas County and North Dakota. Jim Evrard introduced me to hunting Sharptails in NW Wisconsin in 2008, and I was fortunate to harvest one here as recently as 2015. I tend to get a few each year with the dogs while exploring central North Dakota. While we probably won't ever have Sharptail hunting in NW Wisconsin like Gordon MacQuarrie wrote about, the potential to help rebound our existing population and pursue them on occasion is why I would like to remain a member of this fine Board.

## WSGS TREASURER REPORT JAN. 1 – JUNE 1, 2020

### Expenditures

#### ***U.S. Forest Service Grant – Moquah Barrens STG Project***

Salary - 1 contract employee 18 weeks .....	\$12458.69
Genetic Analysis of STG Feathers, UW Madison.....	\$32000.00
Supplies – Outdoor Interp. Disp., Camera, Binocs, etc.....	\$2888.39
<i>Sub-total</i> .....	<i>\$47347.08</i>

#### ***Wis. Sharp-tailed Grouse Society Business***

Checks, Checking acct. fees.....	\$45.63
Newsletter and postage .....	\$40.00
State Raffle License .....	\$25.00
Website Development and Maintenance .....	\$126.10
Org. Memberships .....	\$50.00
<i>Sub-Total</i> .....	<i>\$486.73</i>

**Grand Total .....** **\$47833.08**

### Deposits

#### ***USDA Re-imburements – Moquah Barrens STG Project Grant***

Salary for Contract Employee 20 Weeks .....	\$13758.29
Various Supplies, Outdoor Interp. Display .....	\$949.00
Genetic Analysis of STG Feathers .....	\$32000.00
<i>Sub-Total</i> .....	<i>\$46707.29</i>

#### ***Wis. Sharp-tailed Grouse Society Business***

Membership Dues .....	\$2245.00
Merchandise Sales .....	\$215.50
Jim Evrard Memorial Donations .....	\$1927.00
Certificate of Deposit Transfer to Checking .....	\$2764.46
<i>Sub Total</i> .....	<i>\$7151.96</i>

**Grand Total.....** **\$53859.25**

**Gain/Loss .....** **+\$6025.44**

**Current Checking Account Balance .....** **\$12449.84**

**USDA Re-imburement Pending .....** **\$1939.39**

### **Other notable Treasurer activities during the period:**

**File Wis. and Federal Tax exempt reports in lieu of income taxes**

**File Federal 1099 & 1096 Employee salary report for contract employee**

**File 2019 USFS interim performance report Moquah Project Grant**

**Enter into an agreement with UW Madison Pauli Lab for STG feather genetic analysis**

**Create a new WSGS checking account with US bank and spend down/close out previous account.**

***Respectfully submitted to the WSGS Board June 2, 2020***

***Ken Jonas***

*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.*

# WSGS BOARD MEETING MINUTES

## *Grantsburg Ranger Station, February 12, 2020*

Present: Kooiker, Moss, Steinke, Jonas, Evenson and guest Scott Nesbitt

**Treasurer's Report:** Ken Jonas reported on getting the accounts changed to his name, activity administering the USFS grant and membership. Net gain for the period September 10-February 10 is \$573.49, with a total balance in checking and CD of \$9023.98, with a great amount of ins and outs with administering the USFS grant.

Our CD is \$2758.37, in an Eau Claire bank, with only signatory Jim Evrard and Tom Ziegweid. Since the interest paid is so low it was determined that Ken should contact Ziggy and have the bank transfer the amount to our checking account.

We have 168 members on the newsletter list, 28 of which are complimentary copies. About half of our members are behind in paying dues. Paul made a motion to send out a reminder letter, Bruce seconded. Passed. We will also put an article in newsletter asking members to review status and pay if needed.

**Reorganization:** Splitting the job of secretary and treasurer will require a bylaw change, which we will propose at the spring meeting. Ken will continue as treasurer for a while, and Paul stepped up for secretary. Dave will work on this newsletter, with help from all, and assembly and graphics work by Lauren Finch. Paul made a motion that we get Lauren a \$100 gift. Bruce seconded. Passed. Ken moved that we award "Jim Evrard" awards as our major award. Seconded by Ashly. Passed

**Annual Membership Meeting:** We discussed possible presenters including Dan Eklund, Fred Strand or Don Bublitz re Moquah history, Alex Lehner re Moquah project, update from Bob Hanson, perhaps with a Steigerwalt forester, Minnesota Elk Reintroduction (Ashly will check) update on spring surveys by managers or technicians.

**Facebook, Website:** Facebook is going along well, web site needs more attention and new content. Both should be highlighted in the newsletter.

**Hunting season, Possible Listing:** We will put on agenda for April 18 meeting, with understanding that we will set up a meeting with DNR Wildlife and Research after surveys are complete, and before the DNR Sharptail meeting in June, likely in May. We'll also try to learn more about the listing process between now and then.

*Motion to adjourn, passed. Dave Evenson, Reporter*

## MINUTES OF WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY BOARD MEETING

### June 2, 2020 Big Wood Lake, Grantsburg

*Present: D. Evenson, B. Moss, K. Jonas, M. Cole, E. Frank, D. Clausen, P. Kooiker*

#### **Treasurer's Report**

Spent \$47,000, primarily on Moquah project and STG feather analysis.

Spent \$486 on misc. WSGS expenses

Closed out CD: \$12,500 in checking account

Receipts: \$2200 in membership dues and about \$2000 for Evrard memorial

Currently 69 paid members, and 70 unpaid or complimentary members. Need to contact lapsed members.

Voted to give Treasurer Ken Jonas a \$100 annual stipend (DE/BM)

#### **Evrard Memorial**

Discussed a sharp-tailed grouse sculpture as a memorial for Jim at Crex Education Center. \$2000 received from private donations to date, with more likely to come. Will need to undertake a fundraising campaign to cover costs of a sculpture. Consensus was a metal sculpture located inside the Education Center, with accompanying verbiage recognizing Jim for all his contributions to WSGS and Crex.

Bruce and Ken will work with Shirley Evrard to decide exactly what we want prior to the start of fund-

raising. Dave Clausen will check with a metal sculptor in Frederic.

### **STG Spring Surveys**

All STG surveys were conducted by volunteers this spring since DNR staff were confined to working out of their homes with minimal field activities.

Results: Namekagon Barrens and Crex were similar to last year, while most of the more northern sites were down in numbers. It is recognized that the overall survey effort was down as well, which partially accounts for the overall lower numbers of dancing males.

### **Report of June 1 Sharptail Advisory Committee discussions and actions**

Kudos to all volunteers who helped conduct spring STG surveys

The advisory committee voted 12-1 for a closed STG hunting season this coming fall. Evenson, representing WSGS, was the lone vote in favor of a limited hunting season.

A review of species listings is coming up in the near future. There is concern that STG may be considered for threatened species listing.

Committee agreed to re-analyze PVA data using a zero harvest.

Ken agreed to write a WSGS manifesto – modifying last year’s document – for submission to the STG advisory committee. Will need to be done before the upcoming Policy Team meeting where the sharptail hunting season will be acted on.

### **Newsletter**

A brief discussion of newsletter items; Dave feels he has enough topics for a good start.

### **Kyle Anderson**

Kyle, project manager at Crex, gave the board a rundown of current and future activities on Crex.

Habitat: kudos to Kyle and Crex staff for accomplishing a tremendous acreage of barrens habitat work the past year, including very aggressive mechanical treatment. No prescribed burning was done this past year due to Covid 19 restrictions. Annual habitat goals for Crex/Fish Lake are 4000 acres of burning and 1000 acres of mechanical clearing. The only downside at this time is the probability of reduced funding for habitat work in the near future.

Elk: interest seems to be growing in looking at NW Sands as potential elk habitat. Minnesota is considering releasing elk across the St. Croix River in Pine County. The Elk Management Plan will be updated in the near future; board members seemed interested in providing input into the new plan.

### **Bass Lake Barrens**

Another barrens project that Bob Hanson is working on. Located between Moquah and the Barnes Barrens, this has the potential to become a valuable “stepping-stone” STG property.

### **Prairie Chickens**

The PC Management Plan re-write is underway.

Discussion on the feasibility of combining WSGS with PC supporters to create a “Prairie Grouse” support group. There was consensus that this was not advisable at this time. Concerns that would water down WSGS efforts, plus there is no longer a definable PC group. However the board is interested in monitoring progress on the PC plan and will submit comments and suggestions as appropriate.

### **WSGS Board Issues**

Two board vacancies at present, due to Jim Evrard’s passing, and Bob Dumke’s health issues which forced him to resign as board member.

Two candidates were offered: Dave Clausen and Mike Amman. Ken will check the membership renewals to find out if any of our members have expressed an interest in being on the board. Elections would occur at the annual meeting.

The annual meeting date has been (very) tentatively set for July 25, subject to Covid 19 developments. Discussed possible agenda items.

WSGS has funding available for STG related projects. Will contact property managers for project proposals.

*Meeting adjourned at 2 pm. Submitted by Paul Kooiker*

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

**CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL - For those receiving electronic newsletters, the coded expiration date of your membership is located on the first line of the mailing label following your name (example John Doe 02-15-19 , your name followed by the expiration date February 15, 2019).**

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 (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

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