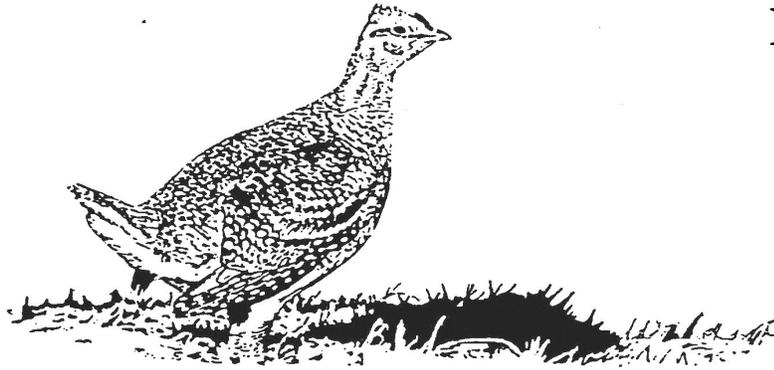


# WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 86

Spring 2018

## 2018 ANNUAL MEETING

The 2018 WSGS annual meeting will take place on Saturday and Sunday, May 19 and 20. The meeting will be held in the Legendary Waters Resort and Casino in Red Cliff on the Bayfield Peninsula. A tour is scheduled for the Moquah Barrens Wildlife Area, site of the massive cooperative 3-year project to bolster the native sharptail population by transplanting and releasing sharptails from northwest Minnesota. This year the WSGS meeting will take place at the same time as the Chequamegon Bay Bird Festival headquartered in Ashland.

A block of rooms is being held for those attending the annual meeting. Those attending the meeting must make their own room reservations by calling (715) 779-3712 or (800)226-8478. The room cost is \$90. Meals will be ordered from their restaurant menu.

## MOQUAH SHARPTAIL TRANSLOCATION PROGRESS

*By Jim Evrard*

Brian Heeringa, Wildlife Biologist and Alexandra Lehner, Biological Technician for the Washburn District of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest provided the latest information about the progress of the cooperative project to restore a viable population of sharp-tailed grouse in the Moquah Barrens in northern Bayfield County. The WSGS serves as a financial conduit for federal project funding including using U.S. Forest Service funds to employ Alex.

Brian reiterated that 69 sharptails were captured in northwest Minnesota and transported and released in the Moquah Barrens this past spring. Ten of the birds (five males and five females) were fitted with radio transmitter collars. A technician funded by the Red Cliff Band of the Ojibwa Indians tracked the radioed birds after release. More recently, Alex was hired to continue tracking the birds this fall into the winter.

Three of the radioed sharptails (two females and one male) were found dead and two birds slipped their radio collars, one near the Ashland airport and the other in the Barrens. Two of the surviving five radioed sharptails remained in the Barrens until May and two other radioed birds moved to the agricultural land west of the Barrens and north of Highway 2 where they were detected through July.

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## FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

*By Dave Evenson*

**Rainmakers for Hire:** Your WSGS Board is going to start advertising our skill at bringing rain to the land simply by scheduling a meeting/outing. We figure that next year, if the Dakotas are still dry, we should be able to find some government or agricultural group out there willing to pay our way out just to get a good rainfall.

We started perfecting our technique in 2012, scheduling a mid-summer camp-out in one of Wisconsin's sandiest corners, the Eau Claire Lakes on the Douglas-Bayfield line. We planned to sit around a picnic table and conduct the business of WSGS. Ha! We ended up in the Barnes Ranger Station garage listening to thunder and watching a grand summer storm roll over the jack pine.

We were unsuccessful at attracting rain for a couple of years, but then again in mid-September of 2015, we had a meeting that brought an inch of rain to Crex Meadows, topping off the flowages just in time for duck season.

In 2016, we went a bit overboard, scheduled a meeting near the Namekagon Barrens, and got the multi-million dollar storm that washed out bridges and culverts all across the Northwest, some of them still not replaced. It rained so hard we couldn't even get to our campsites, and had to fall back to an alternate site. We'll try not to repeat that level of performance.

This year we planned our summer meeting/camp-out for Gordon Dam Park, on the St. Croix Flowage. Again, we planned to conduct business around the picnic table, and again, we prevailed on our Forestry friends and took over the Gordon Ranger Station break room (Thanks, guys and gals, for giving up your afternoon break). We ate our evening meal at The Lookout, which we are told has a fabulous view of the Flowage, but on that day it was already dark at 5:30, with rain in sheets pouring over the windows.

Our fall meeting, at the McNeil farmhouse near the mouth of the Brule River, was again spectacular in delivering rain. A few of us met and fished the Brule in its glory on the day before the meeting [Ed's Note: Dave caught his first steelhead, but it was shy of the 26-inch size limit and was released]. That night from 3-5 inches fell over the Brule Watershed; the river was high and chocolate-milk colored when we got up on meeting day. No fishing for a few weeks at best.

Rainmakers for hire! Rates negotiable!



### 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

#### BOARD MEMBERS:

Mike Cole      Ken Jonas  
Paul Kooiker      Bruce Moss  
John Probst      John Zatopa

Newsletter Editor: Jim Evrard

Newsletter Compositor: Lauren Finch

## MINUTES OF OCTOBER 7, 2017 WSGS BOARD MEETING

*By Jim Evrard*

The WSGS Board met on October 7, 2017 at the historic McNeil farmhouse on the banks of the Brule River. Board members present were Mike Cole, Dave Evenson, Jim Evrard, Ken Jonas, Bruce Moss and John Zatopa. Paul Kooiker, John Probst and Tom Ziegeweid were absent. Guests were Ed Frank, Brian Heeringa, Dan Eklund and Alex Lehner.

President Evenson called the meeting to order at 12:15 P.M. Jim Evrard gave the Treasurer's Report: As of September 22, 2017 the WSGS checking account balance was \$2,633 and the CD as of 10/16/16 was \$2,662 for a total of \$5,295. There are no financial obligations, but we will have to rebuild our funds to be able to make any significant grants in 2018.

2017 Income Summary to 09/22 was \$1,910 memberships, \$460 art print raffle, sales \$210 and \$15,428 from the U.S. Forest Service for the Moquah Transplant Project for a total of \$18,925. 2017 Expenditures to 09/22 was a habitat grant to Namekagon Barrens \$3,000; habitat grant to Crex Meadows \$2,000; printing grant to Friends of the Northwest Barrens \$300; membership dues \$315; WSGS membership services \$1,245 (includes the newsletter); and Moquah Transplant Project \$15,413 for a total of \$22,153.

Jim stated that since the minutes of the annual and board meetings are published in the WSGS Newsletter, the Secretary's Report will not be read.

Dave gave a report of his attendance at the annual meeting of the Michigan Sharp-tailed Grouse Association held in the Upper Peninsula. The group is small (25 members), but they do have an annual hunting season in private land that is hayed once annually and is grazed.

Brian Heeringa gave a progress report for the Moquah Barrens Transplant Project. In 2017, 45 cocks and 22 hens were captured in Minnesota and released in the Moquah Barrens. Ten of the birds (5 males and 5 females) were fitted with radio transmitters. Two of the hens had broods some distance from the Barrens (south of Iron River and Maple). Three of the radioed birds were killed and their transmitters were recovered. Other transmitters were recovered after collar loss. One radioed cock from 2016 is still alive but his battery is weak. Apparently radioed birds leave hay fields once they are hayed. Brian is looking at old lek sites this fall. Feathers will be collected for genetic analysis.

Birds will again be trapped in Minnesota with a goal of 90 grouse (hens preferred) and released in the Moquah Barrens in 2018, the last year of the transplant, but there will be population monitoring in subsequent years. Both the Red Cliff and Bad River Bands of the Ojibwa Indians will cooperate in the project in 2018. Other cooperators besides the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the Wisconsin DNR and the WSGS include the Minnesota DNR, and The Nature Conservancy.

Alex Lehner will be hired as a WSGS Limited Term Employee (funded with USFS funds) to continue to follow the transplanted sharptails that still have functioning radio transmitters in order to learn seasonal habitat use, mortality, etc. She will work under the supervision of Brian Heeringa out of the USFS Washburn office. Alex also agreed to coordinate the \$1,750 DNR grant for citizen wildlife monitoring (censusing Moquah sharptails in the spring of 2018) with Northland College's Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society. This would involve Professors Eric Olson and Paula Anich.

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## WSGS BOARD ELECTION

The terms of WSGS Board Members Paul Kooiker, John Probst, and John Zatopa expired in 2017. Nominations were sought for three-year terms for the three positions in Newsletter No. 85 and one was received. Kookier (and Probst) decided to stand for re-election.

**Paul Kooiker** retired from the DNR in 2008 after serving as a wildlife biologist in Neillsville and Grantsburg. He was the Glacial Lake Grantsburg Work Unit Manager, including the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area, for 18 years and the Area Wildlife supervisor for Barron, Polk, Washburn and Burnett counties. Paul is a charter WSGS member and has been a Board Member since 2009. Paul continues to reside in Grantsburg.

**John Probst** is a retired research biologist formerly employed by the U.S. Forest Service at their North Central Forest Research Center in Rhinelander. John has extensive experience with early successional barrens species, particularly the Kirtland's Warbler. A long-time member of the WSGS, John joined the WSGS Board in 2010. John lives in Rhinelander.

**Ashly Steinke** operates Sedge Wood Farms that produce grass-fed beef. Ashly earned a BS degree from UW-Stevens Point and a MS degree from South Dakota SU. His experience includes being the NCS County Conservationist for Taylor County and a biologist for the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association. Ashly, a WSGS member since 2014, has hunted sharptails in four states and in Canada.

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### BALLOT – WSGS BOARD (vote for three)

**Paul Kooiker** \_\_\_\_\_

**John Probst** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ashly Steinke** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**(continued from Page 3)**

It was decided that the WSGS Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, May 19. According to custom, there will be a Board meeting in the late Saturday morning, the annual membership meeting in the afternoon and an early Sunday morning field trip. This will take place during the Chequamegon Bay Bird Festival. Ashland will be crowded for that event so Jim will contact the Red Cliff Casino to reserve rooms for the meeting along with a meeting room as we did in 2016. It might be possible for the WSGS to sponsor a display table in the Great Lakes Visitor Center in an effort to gain more WSGS members.

It was also decided to award a joint WSGS plaque(s) to Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society's Bill Berg and Jodie Prevost for their help and support in the Moquah Barrens Transplant Project.

No progress was made with the potential Jim Hale book. Jim will check with the DNR for the possibility of the existence of old WCD and DNR historical photos. Printing of the resulting book in cooperation with the student chapter of the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point could be explored.

'Ground truthing' of the Grand Foot Path project of the Friends of the Northwest Barrens will take place this fall. The Path evolved from a foot trail to a road from Fort Snelling in St. Paul to Madeline Island. Bruce and Dave are involved in this project. The Fish Lake, Crex Meadows, Namekagon Barrens, The Douglas County and the Moquah Barrens wildlife areas will be featured in the tour route.

Recent changes in DNR personnel that might impact Wisconsin sharptails include Pete Engman promoted to Assistant Wildlife Management Bureau Director in Madison and Steve Hoffman promoted to Area Wildlife Supervisor for Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Polk and Washburn counties. Steve was presented with a framed WSGS award in 2017 for his 2016-17 sharptail habitat management efforts.

Hoffman also stated that a recent workload analysis showed that the Grantsburg Wildlife Work Unit should have two wildlife biologists and an additional three wildlife technicians.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 P.M. after which, many of the group enjoyed liquids on the roofed porch watching the chocolate-colored Brule River rushing to Lake Superior. The flooding river was responding to an overnight rain storm (3.1 inches). The group then enjoyed a Brat Dinner including Huckleberry Pie before leaving for home or retiring to their McNeil Lodge beds.

**SUPPORT THE WSGS – BUY A CAP**

We still have a small supply of embroidered tan or 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.



*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.*

## ART PRINT RAFFLE

The WSGS will again conduct a raffle for three framed, signed, limited edition, ready-to-hang-on-your-wall sharp-tailed grouse art prints. Sharptail art is rare either as prints or as originals. The WSGS is offering three colorful prints by Owen Gromme, Buzz Balzer, and Louie Raymer.



The Dean of Wisconsin Wildlife Artists, the late Owen Gromme's print, "On the Rise" depicts two flushing sharptails in aspen savannah habitat that might be found in the Pershing Wildlife Area.

The Balzer print is reproduced on canvas that looks like an original oil painting. It shows a winter flock of sharptails feeding on white birch buds on the edge of the Crex Meadows Refuge.



Another Wisconsin sharptail management area is featured in Ruth Maslowski King's print featuring a sharptail dancing grounds in the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area.



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 East Crex Avenue, Grantsburg, WI 54840**

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### WSGS 2018 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 R0016707-A-95408**

The drawing will be held at 4:00 P.M., May 19, 2018, at the annual meeting of the WSGS at the Legendary Waters Resort and Casino, Red Cliff, Wisconsin. Winners will be notified by mail or telephone. No prize has a value over \$500. Suggested contribution is \$10 for one ticket or \$20 for three tickets. No contribution is necessary to be eligible for participation.

**(Keep this portion for your records)**

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**(Detach here and send with your donation or mark 'no donation')**

Name _____	Name _____	Name _____
Address _____	Address _____	Address _____
_____	_____	_____
Phone _____	Phone _____	Phone _____

## AFIELD WITH ZIGGY

*By Tom Ziegeweid*

**South Dakota Continued:** Just returned from our second trip to South Dakota a week ago. I was joined by Roche Lolly and Joe Hapy along with Reed Lolly, Josh Moeller and a new kid on the block, Brock Haines from the Ziegeweid hometown of Arcadia, WI.

We hunted for three and a half days at the Fort Pierre National Grasslands. With two tag teams (three ‘geezers’ and three ‘kids’), we trekked around 25 to 30 miles of prairie in search of elusive sharps and chickens.

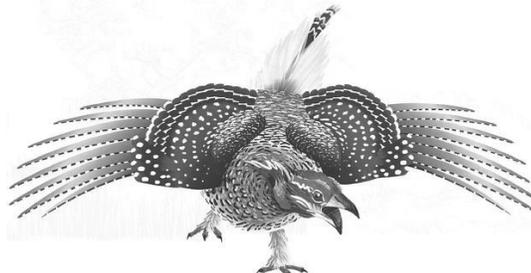
Talk about the vigor of youth! The kids bagged 26 birds (24 chickens, 2 sharps) and the geezers shot only 4 birds total.

Even though we were there over the third weekend of the season, there were very few hunters in the field or at the motel for that matter. Press releases from the DNR in both Dakotas earlier in the season painted a generally gloomy picture of bird hatch for upland bird species. This was more pronounced the farther west you went.

However, early fall rains greened up the grasslands pretty good. We saw lots of birds, as many as the better years. The problem was they were starting to flock up in large bunches; subsequently you couldn’t get close to them.

We all took home five birds as we share the wealth of those trips. Will surely enjoy eating them this winter.

‘Till next time  
Ziggy



**(continued from Page 1)**

The remaining radioed female moved south of Iron River and laid ten eggs. The nest hatched and the hen was seen with six chicks. The female was last seen in mid-October but two chicks were seen later. The hen was reported in November from the Bibon Swamp at least 12 miles south of the Barrens. Alex is looking forward to seeing if the hen returns to the Moquah Barrens this coming spring.

One translocated male that was radio-collared in 2016 immediately disappeared after release in that year, but reappeared in late March of this year on the FR 241 Lek or dancing ground and then left in mid-May and was located in June in agricultural fields 8 miles west of the Moquah Barrens. The furthest that any radioed sharptail moved was 22 miles to a location north of Maple. That bird was a hen and an empty nest was found but no chicks were seen while flushing the hen several times.

A minimum of ten sharptails were observed on the Forest Road 241 Lek this fall. The group had at least 8 males and 2 females. In early November, 9 birds (2 uncollared) were still using the lek. One of the males had ‘slipped ‘ his collar earlier; another male was from the 2016 release; and 5 males were identified from the 2017 release. There were also one to three birds using the former “Towerline” Lek.

A female sharptail was seen with three young in the Moquah Barrens, the first reported sharptail brood in the Barrens in more than a decade. Other sharptails were seen throughout the Moquah Barrens sitting in the tops of jack pine trees following a snowstorm.

It is probably too soon to determine if the translocation project will be successful, but with plans to capture more birds for release in the Moquah Barrens this coming spring, the future looks promising.

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

**CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL - The first line in your mailing label is the expiration date of your membership. 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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

