

# WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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Volume 15

Winter, 1996

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## Sharptail Hunting Legislation

1995 was the last sharptail season in Wisconsin with unlimited permits. The Natural Resources Board accepted the wildlife managers' recommendation to close the season until there is legislative authority to limit the number of permits to assure that hunting does not adversely impact populations. The Natural Resources Board also directed the DNR to work together with WSGS and other interested parties to see that permit number control occurs.

Jim Shurts, WSGS member, drafted language to accomplish reopening the season. This has since been reworked by the Legislative Reference Bureau. Assembly Bill 815 is moving through the assembly committee right now. By the next newsletter we will have more information for you about what you can do to help this bill along.



Thank You From DNR Secretary

Dear Jim:

The Fourth Governor's Symposium on North America's Hunting Heritage is over, but much was accomplished and an important new international strategy is being developed. Evaluations we received indicate conferees were challenged and energized by the program. Overall, the program was judged as "very good" to "excellent".

Important components of the Symposium's success were the colorful and informative displays. I sincerely want to thank you for taking the time, effort, and expense to provide the Sharp-tailed Grouse Society display for the Symposium. Having the displays nearby softened the feeling of being in an urban hotel.

President's Message  
From  
Thomas C. Ziegeweid

Happy New Year to all our very loyal members! I sure hope we don't get any more snow because I am about "shoveled out" for this winter. This winter could be the year we see some drastic checks in the populations of some wildlife species; most notably the critters who reply on finding their food on the ground. Deep snow doesn't seem to greatly hinder sharptail or ruffed grouse as these two species can find various tree buds to their liking. They also can tunnel in the snow to keep warm at night. Hopefully they will make it to spring and the chorus of dancing birds will greet us in April.

This year we're going to try to do for Central Wisconsin bog lands what we did in Northern Wisconsin industrial and county forests last year; find lots of sharptails. The annual meeting will be April 20th - 21st based out of Sandhill Wildlife Area. Chef John Kubisiak has the honors of providing the evening meal complete with Wisconsin buffalo meat! Look for details in the next newsletter.

They were a constant reminder of what we were there for and of what we value in life.

I am proud of the partnerships that came together to make the Symposium a success. On behalf of myself, the Steering Committee, and the Department of Natural Resources staff, thank you for your generous participation and support.

Sincerely,  
  
George E. Meyer  
Secretary

In April we will have our annual elections for board members. There are two openings. If you have ever wanted to serve on a board of directors, now is your golden moment. Almost all of the grant work that a new club goes through is completed. The original board that was elected six years ago will now be incumbent. If you live within a two hour drive of Spooner, Wisconsin, that would be ideal as we have two meetings a year at a restaurant there. I also have formed a steering committee for those of you who want to help out but cannot commit to being a board member. Whether you want to run for the board or want to be on the steering committee (this committee is not elected, strictly a volunteer position) please call Dave Evenson (715-822-3590), our newsletter editor, soon and he will put you on ballot in the next newsletter.

Thank you,  
  
Tom

WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY FINANCIAL SUMMARY  
5/25/95 through 12/25/95

Checkbook Balance as of 5/25/95.....\$3,294.82

INCOME:

Memberships	
Regular.....	\$260.00
Supporting.....	\$75.00
Contributing.....	\$50.00
Sustaining.....	\$100.00
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Total Memberships.....	\$485.00
Sales of caps and stickers.....	\$131.00
Interest.....	\$26.92
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Total Income.....	\$642.92

EXPENSES:

Tom Ziegeweid - WSGS display board.....	\$800.00
(outstanding debt)	
Newsletter printing.....	\$140.00
Newsletter postage.....	\$22.71
Ban Art - 36 caps.....	\$141.00
UPS - Shipping raffle art prints.....	\$19.91
Gov. Conf. Hunt. Heritage - booth rental.....	\$35.00
Wis. Sec. State - nonprofits annual report.....	\$10.00
File Box.....	\$14.72
Stamps and paper supplies.....	\$10.00
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Total Expenses.....	\$1,192.94

Checkbook balance as of 12/25/95.....\$2,736.69

Petty cash as of 12/25/95.....\$10.00

Submitted by: James O. Evrard  
Secretary-Treasurer  
December 26, 1995



## SHARP TALES

By Tom Ziegeweid

It was a cold, very windy Friday night the 13th of October, 1995 when I met Dave Evenson at the campground on the north side of the refuge at Crex Meadows. I had arrived well past my intended time of rendezvous with Dave and had a short conversation and packed it in and got a good night's sleep. The sound of Canada Geese and Trumpeter Swans calling into the darkness were just the proper elixir for the morning to come.

Dave and I woke to the sun coming up and drove to the open area near the Reed Lake School site. The wind was still blowing very strong. We proceeded to walk into the wind and Dave flushed a bird very close and managed a clean kill on his second shot. We walked to Wallin Overlook and started back walking with the wind, thinking how far the birds would probably flush. Luckily a bird flushed about forty yards and I made a good shot with my old double.

On our return to our vehicles we noticed other faithful hunters who usually show up for opener, namely Jim Shurts and his friend Harry Libby. They had also each bagged a bird. Jim, you should know, is not only a good hunter, but an excellent dog man. I was invited to dinner that evening with them and we had a good time hashing over the day's hunt. There are many good restaurants in the Crex area.

Opening days are usually easy, generally the birds are less wary, the weather fair. An interesting note on sharptails is after the opening weekend these birds get amazingly cagy and spooky. The next Sharp Tale will emphasize just that.

Well into the season, namely the last week of October, I and a bunch of regular buddies spend a few days at a deer shack better known as the "Garden of Eden" a few miles north of Pigeon Lake, near Barnes. The last few years we have more or less concentrated on ruffies in some of the new aspen patches in the area. After two years of my suggesting we try for sharptails, this motley crew in the photo below was ready to take the sharptail challenge. Fortunately the Barnes Ranger Station had permits for us on our way to the Deer Print Lake Fire Area. We spread out about 100 yards apart and decided to walk the section with the dead snags. The walking was challenging to say the least. Middle age crept up on this crew.

Fortunate we were to see a very large flock of forty plus birds fly by us and land about 3/4 miles away. Our strategy was to sneak into an area in a sort of circle around where we figured the birds had landed. A half hour later all hell broke loose as we flushed not only the birds we saw flying but probably at least 10-20 others. My pals managed to take two birds, which was super considering this was their first sharptail hunt. Most birds flushed out of range.

This whole area, as most of you know, was surveyed by our group at our spring meeting. The birds are doing well, and the papermills are extending their clear cuts. Hopefully this area will serve the birds well into the future.



## Fine Art Raffle

Last year we had a successful raffle for four wildlife art prints, and a good time was had by all. This year we have an even more stupendous offering for you. Jonathon Wilde, well known Wisconsin artist and a WSGS member has graciously donated a sharptail original titled Sharptails on Riley Lake. This is not a print. Any of you who collect art know

that there are not many sharptail paintings out there. This will be an excellent opportunity to win an original painting. You'll get your raffle tickets in the next newsletter, and the drawing will be at the annual meeting.



HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES? CHECK THE BACK PAGE!



## News From Other States

Last summer, the Minnesota Deer Hunter's Association and the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society combined efforts to help DNR acquire an 80 acre parcel of sharptail habitat near Zimmerman. With the help of the RIM Critical Habitat Matching Program, sufficient funds were raised. However, land acquisition by DNR in any county requires approval by the County Board. With help from several northern MSGS members who wrote the St. Louis County Board, the acquisition was approved on October 17th by an unprecedented 7 to 0 vote!

Deer hunters know the value of open lands to deer, especially during spring green-up, and MDHA would like to continue the partnership with MSGS to help DNR acquire more critical habitat parcels. If you have ideas, please contact the MSGS office.

In Michigan dancing ground surveys were again conducted this past spring by MSGA volunteers and staff of the MDNR to count birds attending active dancing grounds. Extensive surveys were conducted in the past and current agricultural areas of Chippewa County, a current stronghold for the bird. These surveys counted a total of 98 birds attending dancing grounds with 53 identified as males. Surveys in the Bullock

Ranch and Seney National Wildlife Refuge areas of Schoolcraft totaled 50 birds. Bird numbers increased slightly in the Bullock Ranch area, whereas, numbers on the Diversion Farm area of the refuge increased 100% over 1994 count numbers. This could be due to extensive habitat work (cuttings) the Fish and Wildlife Service has done in the past two years in this area.

Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Use Study. The study being conducted by Steve Sjogren of the U.S. Forest Service on habitat use of the bird in the Manistique, Michigan area continues. Steve is using radio telemetry and GPS mapping to plot out seasonal habitat use by sharp-tailed grouse. One female bird he had radio collared successfully nested and had excellent brood survival going into this fall. Jim Potter, MSGA member, assisted Steve with this project this past spring. In another radio telemetry project, four birds were captured and radio collared on the Diversion Farm area of Seney Refuge this past spring. Preliminary information suggests the birds did not travel too far from the dancing ground area during the summer months and three of the birds were still carrying active collars as of this writing.



## We Get Letters

To: Pat Savage  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Just thought I'd drop a note of appreciation for the work that you folks have done in managing the barrens.

So often you are contacted when things are not to other's satisfaction and too seldom are you commended for a "job well done". I can only express the thrill and excitement we Swedenborg's experienced this fall while hunting the barrens and seeing birds almost at all times roosting or in flight. It appears there were several large flocks that remained intact (and out of range) throughout the season.

Dear WSGS:

I came very close to not renewing membership this year because I believe that the continued open season on hunting these birds is a serious mistake. When I saw in the most recent newsletter the photograph of three recently shot sharp-tails. I added my own caption: **THERE GO THREE MORE SHARPTAILS THAT NO ONE ELSE WILL EVER ENJOY.**

How I wish that WSGS members would learn to enjoy these wonderful birds by watching rather than shooting.

Thanks again for keeping the sharptail "alive and well" in the barrens. We look forward to future walks in the pursuit of these wonderful birds even without gun in hand.

It is truly a magnificent sight!

Jim Swedenborg

*Editor's Note: Jim Swedenborg sent this letter to Pat Savage, DNR Manager of the Namekagon Barrens. Jim is a WSGS member.*

But WSGS is doing such a splendid job otherwise monitoring, maintaining habitat, etc. that I want to continue supporting that work. So my renewal is enclosed.

Best wishes,

Sam Robbins

*Editor's Note: Sam Robbins is one of Wisconsin's best known birders and author of Wisconsin Birdlife.*





PLEASE CHECK THE DATE ON YOUR MAILING LABEL BELOW TO  
DETERMINE IF YOU ARE PAID UP

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL**

(1996 Annual Dues \$10.00)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ dues

(Regular - \$10) (Supporting \$25)

(Contributing \$50) (Sustaining \$100)

(Sponsor \$200)

Dues are fully tax-deductible

**Volunteer Activities**

\_\_\_\_\_ Board of Directors

\_\_\_\_\_ Newsletter Writing

\_\_\_\_\_ Bird census work

\_\_\_\_\_ Publicity

\_\_\_\_\_ Education

\_\_\_\_\_ Fund Raising

\_\_\_\_\_ Other

Yes! Please send me:

\_\_\_\_\_ Deluxe corduroy dress cap (\$14.00 postage incl.)

\_\_\_\_\_ WSGS Logo Window Sticker (\$1.50 postage incl.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Total Amount Enclosed

Thank you for your continued support,  
Board of Directors

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO AND RETURN THIS APPLICATION TO:  
Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, P.O. Box 1115, Cumberland, WI 54829

WSGS

Box 1115

Cumberland, WI 54829

