

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

by Dave Evenson

Here's the saga of the Wilde sharptail painting. Back in 1992, when WSGS was barely a few years old and searching for identity and funding, artist Jonathan Wilde made us an incredible offer. I know Jonathan by his reputation, and by his art, which is second to none among contemporary Wisconsin artists, although I don't believe I've ever met the man. His gift was a large detailed oil painting of a flushing flock of sharp-tailed grouse on a Riley Lake autumn day. WSGS raffled off this painting and of course I wanted to win it. But since I didn't win, I was well pleased when then vice-president Jim Shurts was the winner. Jim was invaluable in those early days, steering us through constitution and by-laws and getting non-profit status.

Fast forward almost twenty years to last summer. Jim Shurts let us know that he would return the painting to WSGS, for another fund-raising event. The Board decided to raffle it again. Once again, I put my dollars in the game and once again I wished that I would win it. But it was not to be. The name drawn was none other than our secretary-treasurer Jim Evrard. And once again, if I couldn't win it, I am well pleased that Jim is the new owner. Nobody in Wisconsin works harder or is more passionate about sharptails and sharptail habitat than Jim. As you know, in addition to secretary-treasurer he has long been newsletter editor for us. When he can, he gets us some press in Wisconsin Outdoor News. And he often serves as my conscience and advisor in bringing key issues to my attention.

Nominations sought for WSGS Board

The terms of Board Members Jim Evrard, Ed Frank, and Blair Klein expire this year and nominations are being sought for three-year terms for the three positions.

Anyone interested in running for the board or wanting to nominate someone for the board, please contact Jim Evrard, 630 N. Pine St., Grantsburg, WI 54840 or (715) 463-2446 or evrardsc@grantsburgtelcom.net by April 1, 2011.

Sharptailed Grouse

~submitted by Mike Vogl

*Sovereign prince of the pine barrens,
booming, dancing entertainer of spring dawns,
one of the last authentic
American icons of pioneering days,
signal the urgency to preserve and restore
our precious wild heritage.*

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: Ed Frank John Zatopa
Dave Clausen John Probst
Blair Klein Paul Kooiker

STATUS OF SHARPTAIL RESEARCH PROJECT AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

by Jim Evrard

In a recent telephone conversation with Sharon Fandel, DNR Assistant Upland Bird Ecologist, I learned that the DNR's Wildlife Policy Committee reviewed and approved plans in December for the 2011 sharptail research project and the draft update of the Wisconsin's sharptail management plan.

The 2010 sharptail trapping objectives of the research project were only partially successful. The goal was to capture, fit with radio transmitters, and release 25 sharptail hens at each of the two study sites, Crex Meadows and Namekagon Barrens.

No hens and only seven cocks were captured at Crex Meadows. The effort was more successful at the Namekagon Barrens with seven hens and 29 cocks captured. Six of the hens were radioed and released. Since few hens were captured, it was decided to also radio cocks at the Namekagon Barrens and fourteen cocks were radioed and released. As of November 29th, Two radioed hens and nine radioed cocks were still alive. Of the sharptail deaths, predators killed six, one was legally harvested, one died from injuries suffered during capture, and one died of unknown causes.

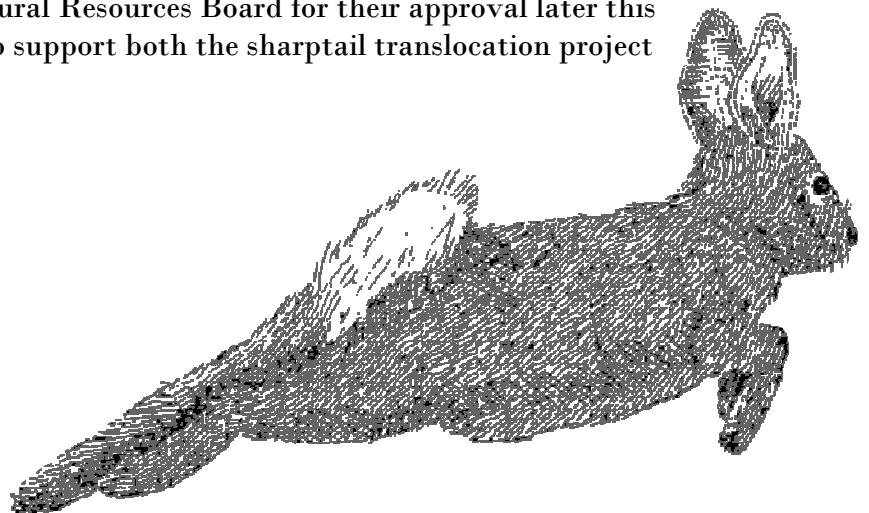
Those directing the research project (Scott Hull from the DNR and Scott Lutz from the University of Wisconsin-Madison) tentatively decided to end the field portion of the research project at the end of 2010. However, following a meeting with the WSGS Board in December, it was decided to continue the trapping and radioing portion of the project for another year as originally planned.

Lutz and postdoctoral research Matt Reetz will continue on a study linking centers of sharptail abundance with areas have extensive wild fire histories. While this information is interesting, many sharptail researchers and managers generally knew it and it would do little to answer questions like the causes of the recent decline of sharptails in Crex Meadows.

It was also decided to continue moving sharptails from Unit 2 to the Pershing Wildlife Area. Unit 2 is mostly industrial forest land that was opened up by extensive clearcutting in the 1990s to salvage jack pine killed by the jack pine budworm. Sharptails there are doomed due to extensive tree planting and forest growth in the old clearcuts.

The sharptail management plan is being amended to include these recent decisions. The plan will also include an intensive review of management activities in Wisconsin sharptail management areas to determine if any management activities are detrimental to sharptails.

The plan will be presented to the Natural Resources Board for their approval later this year. The WSGS has committed funds to support both the sharptail translocation project and the sharptail research project.



WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY FINANCIAL STATEMENT

1/1/10 through 12/31/10

Checkbook Balance as of 01/01/10	\$9,729.38	
Certificate of Deposit as of 01/01/10	\$2,487.56	
Total cash assets as of 01/01/10		\$12,216.84
INCOME:		
Memberships	\$2,436.00	
Sales	\$133.62	
Donations to Research Project	\$1,599.00	
Art Raffles	\$1,285.00	
Interest on Checking Account	\$0.99	
Interest on Certificate of Deposit	\$44.72	
Total Income		\$5,499.33
EXPENDITURES:		
Projects – Riley Lake Brush Cutting	\$61.27	
Total Projects		\$61.27
Dues:		
N. Am. Grouse Partnership	\$35.00	
Friends of Crex Meadows	\$55.00	
Friends of the Bird Sanctuary	\$50.00	
Friends of the Nam. Barrens	\$30.00	
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation	\$60.00	
Total Alliance dues		\$230.00
Membership Services:		
Newsletter:	\$1,013.69	
Office Supplies	\$109.59	
Recognition Plaques	\$73.74	
Total Membership Services		\$1,197.02
Sales Items:		
24 embroidered WSGS caps	\$224.17	
40 Balzer prints	\$1,050.00	
Total Sales Items		\$1,274.17
Non-profit report to Wis. Sec. State		\$10.00
Raffle License		\$25.00
Total Expenditures		\$2,799.46
Checkbook Balance as of 12/31/10		\$12,384.43
Certificate of Deposit as of 10/16/10		\$2,532.28
Total Cash Assets as of 12/31/10		\$14,916.71

ADDITIONAL SHARPTAIL RESEARCH FUND DONATIONS

The following contributions have been recently received for the sharptail research fund:

Patrick Hendrick - - - - -	\$300
Dave Evenson - - - - -	\$200
Mowry Smith III, Menasha - - - - -	\$50
Jeffrey Gabriel, New London - - - - -	\$50
Gary and Penny Shackelford, Milton - - - - -	\$50
Mike Vogl, Elm Grove - - - - -	\$30
John Talbot Jr., Cumberland - - - - -	\$25
Thomas Bendorf, Lac Du Flambeau - - - - -	\$25
Fred Hennessy, Gordon - - - - -	\$14
Allan Jabar, Ripon - - - - -	\$10

The WSGS does offer premiums based upon the amount of the contribution:

- A donation of \$50 to \$100 will receive a WSGS logo embroidered cap;
- Those donating \$100 to \$150 will receive a Louie Raymer limited edition sharptail print;
- A donation of \$150 or more will receive either a Buzz Balzer or a Ruth King limited edition sharptail print;
- Those donating \$300 or more will receive a print of choice (Raymer, Balzer, or King) plus a life membership in the WSGS.

SHARPTAIL PAINTING RAFFLE RESULTS

The drawing for the Jonathon Wilde oil painting, depicting a flock of sharptails flushing from the bog habitat of the Riley Lake Wildlife Area, was held at the Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center in Grantsburg on December 15, 2010.

Crex Meadows Wildlife Educator Ali Cordy Thomas drew the lucky ticket from a bowl held by Friends of Crex Coordinator Kim Wheeler. The drawing was witnessed by Steve Hoffman, DNR biologist at Crex Meadows, and Don Anderson, Friends of Crex Volunteer.



Jim Evrard held the lucky ticket drawn for the painting donated by former WSGS Vice President Jim Shurts. A profit of over \$500 was realized for the WSGS and will be used to further the cause of the sharp-tailed grouse in Wisconsin.

The WSGS appreciates the generosity of the following donors: Richard Ayres, Darryl Bizub, Terrance Clark, Dave Clausen, Mike Cole, Rodney Cole, Dave Evenson, Jim Evrard, Ed Frank, Fred Hennessy, Paul Kooiker, Jay O'Connell, John Talbot, Jr., Larry Thompson, Bill Smith, Fred Strand, Mike Vogl, Len Wurman, John Zatopa, and Tom Ziegeweid.

AFIELD WITH ZIGGY

by Tom Ziegeweid

Ideal Habitat -- Its been a longtime since I've hunted in what one would describe as "ideal" ruffed grouse habitat. Last October I hooked up with some of my gopher state cronies from the Duluth area and met them at Thief Lake WMA in northwestern Minnesota. We stayed at a bear hunting cabin that a farmer we know well had made out of a converted granary.

The area had been sort of clear cut, but there were patches of older aspen left along a gravel road and trail system that had clover growing on it. This was private land so it hadn't been hunted all season except by our group.

This patchy habitat had all the rotting slash left on the ground, creating an almost impenetrable wall of wood. Thank goodness for trails around the property. This place was just infested with ruffies and snowshoe hares.

I bagged one snowshoe for our annual hasenpfeffer dinner, but could have shot a bushel basket full of them. It was fun just to try to spot them on the ground before they took off. Some had white ears already.

Needless to say we bagged around 25 ruffies out of an area of about 20 acres. This was the best grouse trip I have ever been on in my life.

As I look at all the "woods" I hunt as I do my autumn routine, I am beginning to be concerned about the lack of succession setback that obviously is not only affecting sharptails but ruffs as well. Too many woodlands are getting too old everywhere.

Beans and CRP – Soybeans are an incredible cultivar! They are not only used for animal feed, but the whole world depends on them for a myriad of cosmetic and food additives. Wild game birds and animals love 'em! There is nothing in the natural world that has the nutrition and calorie power, short of maybe acorns, that soybeans have.

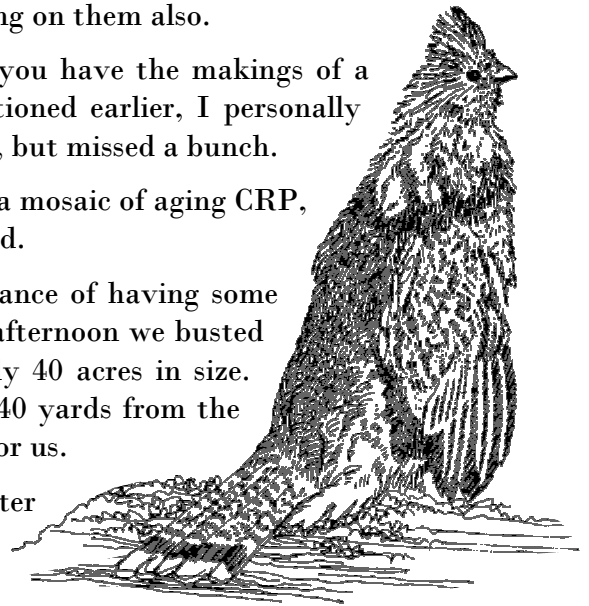
The crops of the ruffies that we bagged at Pershing WA this fall were stuffed with beans. This was reflected in the unusual body fat content that was present when we cleaned them. Some of the turkey and sharptails I've shot recently had been feeding on them also.

Throw CRP into the adjacent soybean fields and you have the makings of a sharptail bonanza. On the Minnesota hunting trip mentioned earlier, I personally saw around 200 birds in four days and managed to bag one, but missed a bunch.

Most of the sharptails we saw were concentrated in a mosaic of aging CRP, soybean or cornfields, aspen woods, and state or federal land.

In recent articles I have tried to stress the importance of having some young to middle aged timber around for sharptails. One afternoon we busted 30-40 sharptails out of an aspen woods that was probably 40 acres in size. The birds would sit back in the woods and loaf about 30-40 yards from the edge. We tried to "corner them" but they were too cagey for us.

Sharptails need timber for "edge", loafing and winter cover, and for budding in the winter.



SHARPTAIL PUBLICITY

by Jim Evrard

Dan Small, outdoor writer and host of the Outdoor Wisconsin television show, wrote two articles about Wisconsin's sharp-tailed grouse that appeared in recent issues of the Wisconsin Outdoor News (WON).

The most extensive article, **Teetering on the brink: Wisconsin's sharp-tailed grouse**, described the history and current abundance (or more correctly, current scarcity) of the bird in our state. The article was published in the November 26th issue of WON. Sharptails have declined from being found in good numbers throughout northern and central Wisconsin to remnant populations presently found on scattered management areas and a few areas of private land.

Habitat loss is the reason for their decline since the legal sharptail harvest has been tightly controlled and very conservative in the last decade. The birds are now found in small isolated populations and are having genetic problems (inbreeding) that are possibly hastening their decline.

Small discusses the DNR's efforts to halt this decline that are outlined in the sharptail management plan that is currently being updated. He also discusses the current research project that is hoped will yield some detailed answers as to causes of the decline.

WSGS President Dave Evenson is extensively quoted in the article as are DNR biologists Sharon Fandel, Nancy Christel and Fred Strand.

Dan Small's October 1st WON article dealt with hunting sharptails along with hunting Hungarian or Gray Partridge. This article briefly discusses Wisconsin sharptail history and biology. Small also discussed hunting techniques and the procedure for obtaining the limited hunting permits.

These articles provide publicity that will hopefully keep the sharptail's plight in the public's eye. Presently it is the small number of sharptail hunters and a few birdwatchers that provide most of the political and economic support for the species in Wisconsin.

If the sharptail decline cannot be halted, the species will be placed on the state's threatened list and hunting will end. Hopefully hunters support for sharptails will not also end. Regardless if the species is hunted or not, it is the responsibility of the DNR to see that the birds do not disappear from Wisconsin.

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Check the date on your mailing label and please renew your membership if it has expired or is about to expire. The WSGS is a small organization and depends heavily upon membership fees to continue the fight for the sharp-tailed grouse and its habitat in Wisconsin. Our membership fees are low compared to most conservation groups and support all-volunteer members who serve as your board of directors and do the work of the society.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

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

Would you like to volunteer for:
_____ Board of Directors
_____ Bird Censusing
_____ Newsletter articles
_____ Annual Meeting
Other: _____

Enclosed:

\$ _____ Dues (Regular - \$10, Supporting - \$25, Contributing - \$50, \$100 Sustaining, \$200 Sponsor)
(Dues are fully tax-deductible)

\$ _____ **Donation of Sharptail Research/Translocation Projects**

\$ _____ WSGS Logo Decal (\$1.50)

\$ _____ 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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