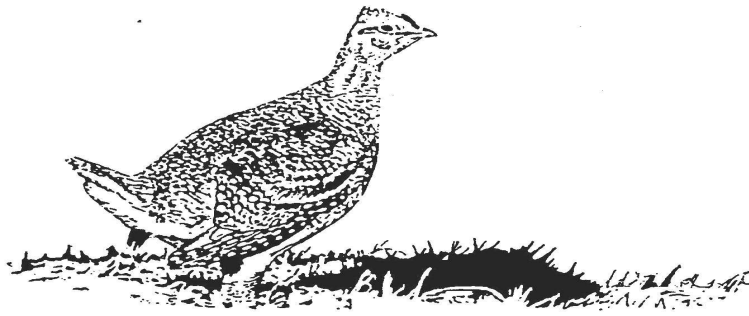


WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 63

Winter 2012

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2012 ANNUAL MEETING

by Jim Evrard

The WSGS annual meeting will be held on Saturday and Sunday, April 21 and 22 in Phillips, Wisconsin. The meeting location, lodging, and meal arrangements are not finalized at this time, but will be available in the next newsletter scheduled for early March.

The membership meeting will begin at 1 p.m. on Saturday with the program beginning at 3 p.m. We will hear from DNR staffers and researchers about progress in the Sharptail research project including radio tracking and the two-year translocation of birds from Unit 2 to the Pershing Wildlife Area. Following the program, there will be drawings for the art raffle and door prizes.

The social hour prior to the group dinner will begin at 5 p.m. with dinner at 6 p.m. We will probably be treated to an early Sunday morning tour of the Riley Lake and Kimberly-Clark wildlife areas, both Sharptail management projects. Following a group brunch in Phillips, the meeting will end.

WSGS HAS A WEBSITE

by Jim Evrard

The WSGS has gone high-tech – it now has a website, “wisharptails.org”. The WSGS Board decided early in 2011 to investigate the creation of a website as a means of creating more publicity for our organization and better communicating with the public and our members.

We solicited bids and Kim Wheeler, Friends of Crex Coordinator at Crex Meadows, was awarded the ‘contract’ to create a WSGS website. She did this work on her own time at a very reasonable cost to the WSGS, about \$150. The website describes our goals and objectives, projects, members of our board, membership and contact information, and electronic copies of the last two newsletters.

The website is maintained and supported by the Farmer’s Independent Telephone Company in Grantsburg. Their monthly fee for this service is only \$5.

Those members wishing to receive their newsletters electronically should check the appropriate line on the back page of the printed newsletter or contact me at the WSGS address.

We hope to change the content of the website periodically to reflect changes in the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse world.

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

by Dave Evenson

It was a fall day in the late 1980s and I was thinking – I need some friends. I was negotiating for the lease and life of the Namekagon Barrens, and my pleas for the valuable biotic community weren't stacking up too well against the cold economic facts of red pine. This was the same Namekagon Barrens that the Hamerstroms had made a centerpiece in their elegant call to arms in *Sharptails to the Shadows?* back in the early 1950s.

I was younger and more naïve then, filled with the spirit of the emerging science of biological diversity, and I thought at the time that perhaps this would be the last time that anyone would have to make the case for the value of the barrens – by the time another 25 years went by everyone would understand and appreciate the beauty and value and necessity of hanging onto these biological gems.

Of course, that group of friends I was searching for turned into the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (WSGS). Now the Namekagon Barrens has a Friends group of its own, as does the Crex complex and the Douglas County Bird Sanctuary. Biological diversity is better understood by more people than just ecologists, but still there are some who see the barrens as a good planting site for pine, or maybe a good place to roar around on ATVs. Most of that 25-year Namekagon Barrens lease is now up, and I think and hope that latest negotiations will go better than I felt mine were way back then.

I'm thinking these thoughts on a blustery December 23rd as I drive to the funeral of a friend and gentleman, former WSGS Board member, Blair Klein. Over a 20+ year time span we've all aged, and it's not surprising that some of the leaders of the Sharptail world are no longer with us. This is the third Board member funeral I've attended, and we've lost two others I wasn't able to attend.

Don Bronk, Jim Wilson, Dave Biegel, Bob Dreis and Blair Klein – these were fine thinkers and workers, fun people to be around. Were it not for the WSGS I'd likely not have known these great gentlemen. As I said at the top of this essay – I needed some friends, and through the WSGS I certainly found some friends, and I've been blessed in that.

WSGS BOARD NOMINATIONS SOUGHT

The terms of Board Members Paul Kooiker, John Probst and John Zatopa expire this year and nominations are being sought for three-year terms for the three positions. Any member interested in serving on the WSGS Board or any member wishing to nominate a fellow member to the Board, please write WSGS Secretary/Treasurer Jim Evrard, 102 E. Crex Ave., Grantsburg, WI 54840 or call at (715) 463-2446 or email at evrardsc@grantsburgtelcom.net.

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

Mike Dziki

John Probst

Bruce Moss

Paul Kooiker

Newsletter Editor:

Jim Evrard

WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY FINANCIAL STATEMENT

01/01/11 through 12/31/11

Checkbook Balance as of 01/01/11		\$12,384
Certificate of Deposit as of 10/16/10		\$2,532
Total cash assets as of 01/01/11		\$14,916
INCOME:		
	Memberships	\$1,328
	Sales	\$182
	Donations to Research Project	\$715
	Raffle/auction	\$35
	Annual Meeting Income	\$70
	Interest on Checking Account	\$1
	Interest on Certificate of Deposit	\$36
	Total Income	\$2,367
EXPENDITURES:		
Projects:	Crex Meadows Acquisition Event	\$102
	Sharp-tailed Grouse census	\$140
	Sharptail Translocation Event	\$84
	Total Projects	\$326
Dues:	N. Am. Grouse Partnership	\$35
	Friends of Crex Meadows	\$55
	Friends of the Bird Sanctuary	\$50
	Friends of the Nam. Barrens	\$30
	Wisconsin Wildlife Federation	\$60
	Total Alliance Dues	\$230
Membership Services:	Newsletter	\$751
	Website development	\$148
	Website maintenance	\$5
	Office supplies	\$88
	Recognition Plaques	\$85
	Total Membership Services	\$1,077
	Embroider caps	\$90
	Total Sales Items	\$90
	Non-profit report to Wis. Sec. State	\$10
	Raffle License	\$25
	Total Expenditures	\$1,758
Checkbook Balance as of 12/31/11		\$12,992
Certificate of Deposit as of 10/16/11		\$2,568
Total Cash Assets as of 12/31/11		\$15,560

Submitted by James O. Evrard, Sec./Treas., 12/31/11

SPRING SHARPTAIL CENSUS RESULTS

By Jim Evrard

Sharon Fandel, DNR Assistant Upland Bird Ecologist, provided the following numbers of Wisconsin's displaying Sharp-tailed Grouse counted in 2011.

Managed Property*	Number of Displaying Males	Non-managed Areas	
Crex Meadows WA	16	Unit 2	66
Douglas County WA	42	Unit 9	9
Moquah Barrens WA	5	<u>Units 19, 24, and 25</u>	<u>26</u>
Namekagon Barrens WA	21	Total:	101
Pershing WA	9		
Riley Lake WA	15		
<u>Dike Seventeen WA</u>	<u>0</u>	Grand Total:	209
Total:	108		

*Kimberly Clark and Wood County WAs numbers were not available

This has to be one of the lowest spring Sharptail counts in recent history and does not bode well for the future on the species in Wisconsin.

An examination of the spring counts of displaying males in Crex Meadows reinforces this concern. From a high of 132 birds in 1998, the population has plummeted to a low of only 16 cocks this spring.

Year	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11
Count	117	132	111	112	73	61	61	53	49	38	45	40	24	20	16

This was the reason to begin the present research effort to determine the reason(s) for the precipitous decline. Having determined that the Wisconsin Sharptails have lost much of their genetic diversity, another effort is being made to correct this problem through the translocation project.

ART PRINT RAFFLE

The WSGS is again conducting a raffle for three, framed, ready-to-hang, limited edition art prints depicting Sharp-tailed Grouse. Sharptail art is rare either as prints or originals.

This year we will be offering artwork by Wisconsin's Ruth Maslowski King, featuring a Sharptail dancing grounds in the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area. Ruth donated the original and printing rights to the WSGS. This is a limited edition of only 100 signed and numbered colored prints.

The second print is by Louie Raymer, a Minnesota artist that lived in Wisconsin for a period of time. His artwork depicts a group of Sharptails dancing in the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area. The print was donated to the WSGS by the Friends of Crex.

The final print is by the well-known late Minnesota artist, Les Kouba. This rare historical print show a group of Sharptails in a wheat field being harvested. The scene is more typical of western prairies than Wisconsin.

The art print raffle has been the major fund-raiser for the WSGS. Income from memberships covers the costs of the newsletter and other member services but raffle income provides the money for special projects. Raffle tickets will be available in the next newsletter.

2011 ANNUAL MEETING

By Jim Evrard

The 2011 Annual Meeting was held on April 30 and May 1 at the St. Croix Inn in the Village of Solon Springs in the far northwest corner of the state. Twenty-five people were in attendance.

President Dave Evenson called the business meeting to order at 1:20 p.m. Secretary/Treasurer Jim Evrard reported that the Secretary's Reports for the past year were published the newsletter as was the 2009 Financial report.

As of April 29, 2011, a total of \$2,179 has been contributed for the Sharp-tailed Grouse research project since the campaign began. The WSGS has 210 members, 192 paid and 18 complimentary including politicians, conservation organizations, and significant donors.

Jim Evrard and Ed Frank were reelected and Mike Dziki was elected to three-year terms on the WSGS Board. Board Member Dave Clausen resigned due to new Natural Resources Board Chairman time demands and Blair Klein was appointed to serve the two years remaining in Clausen's term.

Evenson summarized 2011 WSGS accomplishments. The WSGS participated in the development of the DNR's Sharptail Management Plan; raised funds for the DNR's Sharptail research project; encouraged the acquisition of a 240-acre tract in the Crex Meadows WA; assisted in the DNR's intra-state Sharptail trap (from Unit 2) and transfer (to Pershing WA) project; and voted to provide \$2,000 as a partner in the DNR's Glacial Lake Grantsburg's \$100,000 habitat project. Evenson discussed the possibility of establishing a WSGS web site and Face Book page to try to attract youth to the WSGS.

Dave then introduced Scott Walter (not Walker!), the new Upland Game Bird Ecologist on the DNR Madison staff. His staff assistant Sharon Fandel gave the group an update on the status of the Sharptail management plan that is to be submitted to the NRG for approval in May.

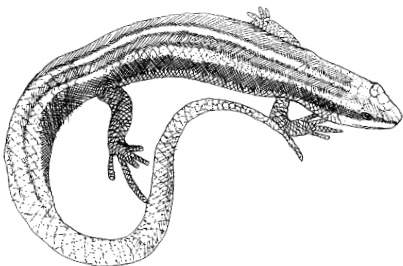
Finally, Fred Strand ended the program with a discussion of the Northwest Sands Management Plan in which habitat management plans for the special management units in the Northwest Sands will be coordinated along with the connecting public forests to hopefully form a corridor of Sharptail habitat from the Fish Lake WA in Burnett County to the Moquah Barrens WA in Bayfield County.

Following the formal business meeting, Evenson presented Jim Shurts, WSGS charter member and former board member, with a plaque commemorating his 20+ years of service to the WSGS. Door prizes were then drawn, followed by a social hour, and a catered dinner. Dave Clausen won the silent auction for the 2011 WSGS Annual Meeting wing-bone turkey call made and donated by WSGS Member Greg Wheeler.

Early the following morning, a group of hardy souls consisting of Mike Cole, Dave Evenson, Jim Evrard, John Wetzel, and John Zatopa were guided by Fred Strand on a short tour of Unit 2. An overcast sky with a strong wind blowing rain and snow flurries accompanied us as we were shown lek traps used to capture and move Sharptails to Pershing as well as managed Sharptail habitat in Mott's Ravine Natural Area in the Brule River State Forest and the Bayfield County fuel breaks.

We returned to Solon Springs at 9 a.m. for a dry and warm group breakfast in a local restaurant where we were joined by Bill and Ann Custer and John and Linda Probst.

The 2011 WSGS Annual Meeting officially ended following the meal.



BOARD MEETING MINUTES: April 30, 2011

By Jim Evrard

President Dave Evenson called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. in the St. Croix Inn in Solon Springs. Board members present were Dave Clausen, Dave Evenson, Jim Evrard, Ed Frank, Blair Klein, John Probst, and John Zatopa. Paul Kooiker and Tom Ziegweid were absent.

Secretary/Treasurer Evrard gave the Treasurer's Report: total WSGS worth as of April 29, 2011 was \$15,904.30 that included a checkbook balance of \$13,372.02 and a CD balance of \$2,532.28. A detailed summary was given board members for the total WSGS income and expenditures for calendar year 2010. Sharptail research donations as of April 29, 2010 totaled \$2,179.

WSGS Financial Obligations total \$9,100 (\$4,100 pledge for the Sharptail translocation and research projects and \$5,000 pledge for potential Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area acquisition). Membership numbers are 192—paid, 16—complimentary, and 2—life for a total of 210 members.

The Board approved a \$2,000 grant request by the DNR at Crex Meadows for a \$100,000 barrens habitat improvement project. The WSGS will partner with the Friends of Crex (FOC) on this DNR Turkey Stamp-funded project.

The Board approved paying 2011 Sharptail volunteer censusers \$35/census day, the same rate paid in past years. Evrard will contact the DNR Sharptail managers for a list of those volunteering.

Evenson then discussed the status of the DNR's Sharptail management plan that will be presented by DNR staffer Sharon Fandel later at the annual meeting. The Sharptail research project progress will also be discussed at the annual meeting.

WSGS Member Greg Wheeler donated two custom wing-bone and one box turkey calls to the WSGS. It was decided that the 2011 wing-bone call would be offered as a silent auction item at the annual meeting. The 2010 wing-bone call (with the Pershing WA inscription) will be sent to Pershing Manager Mark Schmidt for his disposal and the disposition of the box call will be made at a later date.

It was also decided that shirts with the WSGS logo and name will be investigated as possible sale items. Shirley Evrard will be contacted to help in this endeavor.

The Burnt Ridge acquisition at Crex Meadows was discussed. Dave Clausen said the Natural Resources Board approved the acquisition with the bulk of the money coming from federal Pittman-Robertson funds and the balance from state Stewardship funds. No WSGS funds will be needed. It was decided that some type of celebration when the State takes title will be in order and that celebration should be a partnership between the FOC, the Crex Meadows Chapter of DU, and the WSGS.

Clausen announced that he is resigning from the WSGS Board due to an added workload connected with becoming the NRB Chairman for the coming year.

The need for a WSGS web site was discussed with possibly a "facebook" effort as well. Dave will contact several people including Kim Wheeler of the FOC and Matt Breuer from MSGS who might possible create a web site for us. This is an effort to attract more young people to our organization. This would involve a setup charge and maintenance fees.

It was decided to have the summer WSGS Board meeting in the Chequamegon National Forest horse campground in Bayfield County when the blueberries are ripe (July). Dave Evenson will consult with Jim on the exact dates.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

BOARD MEETING MINUTES: June 21, 2011

By Jim Evrard

Dave Evenson called the meeting to order at 10 A.M. in the Great Lakes Visitor Center in Ashland. Board members and Councilors present included Dave Clausen,

Dave Evenson, Jim Evrard, Ed Frank, Bruce Moss, John Probst, John Zatopa, and Tom Ziegeweid. Paul Kooiker and Mike Dziki were absent.

Jim Evrard gave the Treasurer's Report: as of 7/17/11, the checking account balance was \$13,464.59; as of 10/18/10 the CD balance was \$2,532.28 for a total of \$15,996.87. The Secretary's Reports have been published in the newsletter.

Approximately 25 people attended the dedication event for the 240-acre Burnt Ridge Hunt Camp addition to the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area. The WSGS-sponsored event resulted in a photo and article in the local newspaper.

It was decided that the WSGS would host a celebration for the DNR staff and volunteers who participated in the successful effort to trap and translocate Sharptails from Unit 2 to the Pershing Wildlife Area. A plaque commemorating the years of service for outgoing board member Blair Klein was ordered. The WSGS will donate a Ruth King art print to the Friends of the Namekagon Barrens for their annual fund raising event.

WSGS members Dave Clausen and Tom Davis should be thanked for their help in the DNR Board approving the DNR's Sharp-tailed Grouse management plan despite efforts by recent Walker-NRB appointees to include predator control in the plan. Dave Evenson will look into the possibility of input into the Sandhill/Meadow Valley/Wood County WAs master plan that has ignored Sharptails. Ed Frank stressed the need for a statewide Sharptail census to accompany the newly approved management plan.

The proposal by Kim Wheeler to develop a WSGS website was approved. Jim Evrard will work with her on this project.

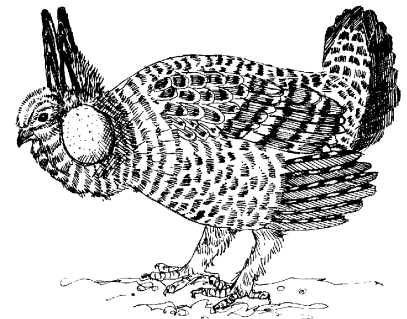
Following lunch, U.S. Forest Service Wildlife Biologist Scott Posner stationed at Washburn led an auto tour of the Moquah Barrens WA. The USFS prescribed burned 3,600 acres there this spring.

Following the tour, several board members picked blueberries in the barrens while others set up camp in the nearby federal Horseshoe Lake Campground. The group enjoyed a potluck dinner in the campground and five members remained to camp overnight and enjoy blueberry pancakes the next morning.

The meeting officially ended when the group departed the campground for their homes.

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.



BOARD MEETING MINUTES: December 8, 2011

By Jim Evrard

Dave Evenson called the meeting to order at 10:36 a.m. in his new home in Cumberland. Board members present were Evenson, Jim Evrard, Paul Kooker, Bruce Moss and Tom Ziegeweid. Ed Frank, John Probst, John Zatopa and Mike Dziki were absent.

Jim gave the Treasurer's Report: As of 12/05/11, the checking account balance was \$12,956.67 and the CD balance was \$2,956.67 for a total of \$15,524.53. The costs for the WSGS Website ("wisharptails.org"), which is now online, was approximately \$150 (\$100 to Kim Wheeler for website creation, \$47 to the Farmer's Independent Telephone Company for website registration and hosting, and \$5 for the first month's service).

The annual art raffle will again be offering framed, limited edition art prints by Ruth King, Louis Raymer, and/or Owen Gromme or Les Kouba. A raffle flyer will be developed to be sent with the upcoming newsletter.

The terms of Board member Zatopa, Probst, and Kooiker expire in 2012. A possible replacement for Mike Dziki who has yet to attend any meetings might also be needed. Evenson will develop the list of candidates.

Saturday and Sunday, April 21 and 22 are the dates for the annual meeting that will be held in the Phillips/Park Falls area. The program will involve the Sharptail research results and northwest sands management plan. Jim will make the meeting arrangements.

The meeting ended with a discussion of possible spring prescribed burning restrictions in the area affected by the July windstorm and possible closure of Sharptail hunting in 2012 depending upon spring populations.

The meeting adjourned at 2 p.m.

FORMER BOARD MEMBER LOSES BATTLE WITH CANCER

By Jim Evrard

Blair Klein, 73, died on December 18, 2011, after lengthy battle with pancreatic cancer. Blair had been a member of the WSGS board for nine years, losing the 2011 election by one vote. Klein was hurt by his loss, which was made more difficult by his opponent who has yet to attend any WSGS meeting.

Blair was born in St. Paul, Minnesota and educated at the St. Paul Academy, Princeton University, and the University of Minnesota Law School. He served as an assistant Minnesota attorney general before moving to Wyoming where he worked for Marathon Oil in Casper before engaged in private practice in Buffalo where is also served as justice of the peace.

After retirement in 1999, Klein returned to the Midwest where he managed the family's Big Rock Creek Farm just north of St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin. There he also served as town clerk for the Town of St. Croix Falls.

Blair also was interested in forestry, conservation, hunting, fishing, and cooking. He served as an official of the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association, Ducks Unlimited, and the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society.

He is survived by five children, Horace Klein, Phillip Klein, Frederick Klein, Daphne Kaplan, and Kate Goldrick, 13 grandchildren, a brother, Alan Klein, and a sister, Kate Piper, and Eloise Morley.

Services were held at the First Presbyterian Church in St. Croix Falls, on Friday, December 23, 2011.

A FIELD WITH ZIGGY

By Tom Ziegeweid

Thoughts on the 2011 Hunting Season. The 2011 hunting season is history. I got out the last week in December to finish the season with turkey hunting.

The spring and early summer this year were cold and wet. Consequently the hatch on upland game birds was abysmal to say the least. Exception to this were prairie chicken and turkey hatches which seemed to be OK. Sharptail, ruffed grouse and pheasant populations have almost bottomed out all over the Midwest. Hopefully this nice open winter we are experiencing will give them some respite and carry over into 2012.

I ventured out to South Dakota to the Ft. Pierre National Grasslands for a prairie chicken hunt with some of my buds from Minnesota who have been there previously.

The hunting was good with each hunter bagging around five birds each. Our bag consisted of mostly chickens with a few Plains subspecies Sharptails included. I assumed prairie chickens would act like sharpies. Boy, was I wrong! Chickens are not as wary as Sharptails, they will hold tight and close like pheasants. Some flushed behind me as I walked along. Chickens are quiet and don't cluck when flushed.

As added bonus was seeing my first burrowing owl and a prairie rattlesnake. This trip was very reasonable in price; motels and eating joints were great.

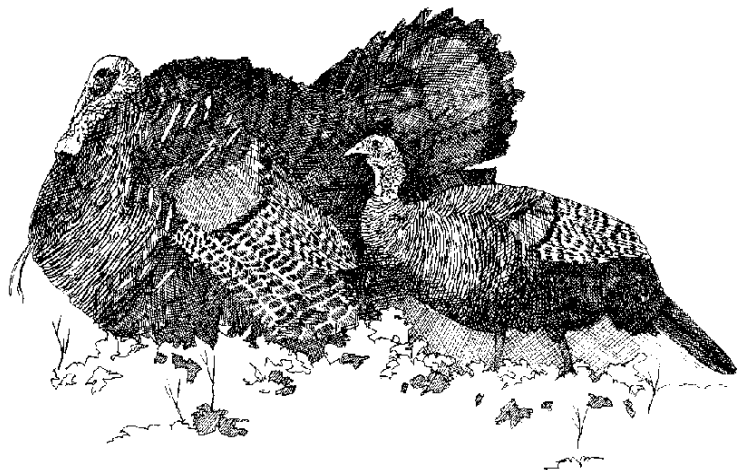
The waterfowl season was decent in Wisconsin and Minnesota this fall. It was warm in the prairies this year (warmer than here) and lots of birds stayed in the prairies until late in the season.

Birds were surprisingly abundant on the Mississippi River in November, but tended to not fly around out of the refuge. Crex Meadows was a consistent spot I found, with low hunting pressure. Crex is one of the few spots in Wisconsin that is not on the edge of Wisconsin that is decent hunting.

Most of the ducks in Wisconsin the last decade tend to be on the "edge" of the state, i.e. Great Lakes and Mississippi River. Some surprising hotspots this fall were Ashland, Wisconsin and Lake Pepin on the Mississippi for open water shooting.

I found ruffies to be considerably down from previous years, except there were fair numbers in thick, wet areas. There was a general consensus to that fact from other hunters I met on the road.

Have a great 2012! ~Tom



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

Name: _____ Would you like to volunteer for: _____ Board of Directors
Street/PO Box _____ _____ Bird Censusing
City: _____ State: _____ _____ Newsletter articles
Zip: _____ _____ Annual Meeting
Phone: _____ Email: _____

Do you want to receive the newsletter electronically? Yes _____ No _____

Enclosed:

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

\$ _____ WSGS Logo Decal (\$1.50) (Dues are 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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