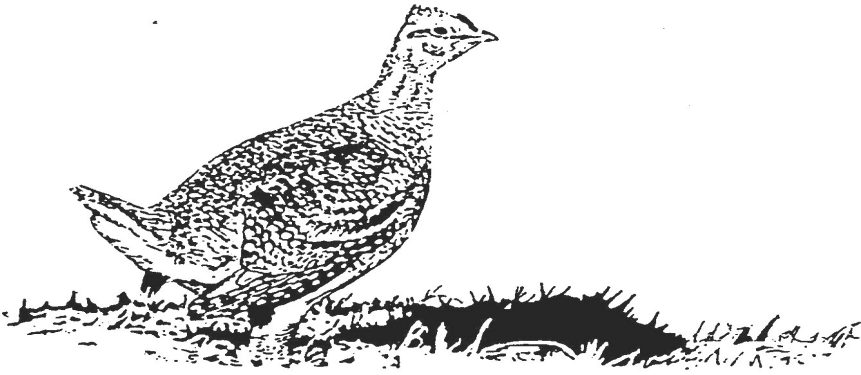


WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 82

Winter 2016-2017

MAKE YOUR RESERVATION NOW FOR THE 2017 ANNUAL MEETING

Be sure to attend the annual meeting of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (WSGS) that will take place on Saturday and Sunday, April 22 and 23, 2017 at the Heartwood Conference Center. The Heartwood Center is located on the south side of STH 77 west of the Chicog Town Hall and Fire Station, about 8 miles west of the village of Minong. The sharp-tailed grouse management area featured will be the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area (NBWA), located nearby in the far northeast corner of Burnett County.

The Heartwood Center is located in 700 acres of private woodland surrounding two lakes and the Namekagon River. The Heartwood Center was a former corporate retreat, composed of two luxurious lodges, duplexes, and cottages. This is not a ‘ma and pa’ resort.

The annual meeting will be from 1 to 5 p.m. in the Eagle Lodge Conference Center’s Norway Pine Room adjacent to the Eagle Lake Lodge. Following the formal meeting, there will be a cash-bar social from 5 to 6 p.m. in the Center’s bar and dinner will follow at 6 p.m. in the Center’s restaurant with those dining ordering from the menu. There will not be a WSGS meeting fee nor will meeting reservations be required.

A tour of the NBWA will take place early Sunday morning. Following the tour, we will return to the Heartwood Center for breakfast, ending the 2017 Annual Meeting.

Lodge room rates are \$99 plus 5% resort fee and 5.5% sales tax per room/night. Cottage rates are \$189/night plus fees and taxes. The ‘resort’ fee is a Washburn County surcharge to promote tourism.

Those attending the annual meeting will have to make their own room reservations. Call toll free at 800-577-4848 or call 715-466-6300, Fax 715-466-6306, email at “heartwoodconferencecenter.com”. Their mailing address is N10884 Hoinville Rd., Trego, WI 54888. Ask for a free brochure describing the Center.

One word of caution – the Heartwood Center’s policy prohibits bringing food or beverage into the Eagle and Pine Lodges unless they give express permission to do so, so that would eliminate the ‘socials’ we’ve held in our individual rooms in the past. I understand that food and beverage could be brought into the cabins if anyone of our group chooses to rent a cabin (if two members rented a cabin the cost would be the same as if two members rented each a room in the lodges).

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FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

by Dave Evenson

In the hunter-gatherer regime, with age I find myself becoming more gatherer and less hunter. Partly that comes from having more time in retirement to make maple syrup or plum jelly. And partly it comes from the fact that plum trees don't run away or fly away as I approach! (Shirley Anne says what I really am is a scavenger, and there some truth in that my eyes light up on seeing a pile of free hardwood pallets to kindle the syrup pan, as they do on finding a new bluegill hole).

You are probably reading this in the hungry time – snow and ice outside your door, but I started composing this letter after an unfruitful search for wild rice. This is the first year in twenty years that I harvested no rice.

No rice for me is an inconvenience, a disappointment, but certainly no tragedy. As I think of the Native Americans who came before us it may have been life threatening. Certainly the combination of fish, game, berries and rice needed to be adequate to stay alive.

I don't know if Fred Strand coined the phrase, but that's where I heard it first – 'The Beautiful Bountiful Barrens.' And there is much truth in that title. Big game and small, scores of fishing lakes, berries and greens and wild rice lakes all abound in that part of Wisconsin we know as the Barrens. There is no better, more bountiful ecosystem. So enjoy all facets of your Beautiful Bountiful Barrens. I Certainly do.

Thanks, Dave Evenson



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

Newsletter Editor: Jim Evrard

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mike Cole Ed Frank

Paul Kooiker Bruce Moss

John Probst John Zatopa

Newsletter Layout/Webmaster: Lauren Finch

WSGS BOARD ELECTION

The terms of WSGS Board Members Mike Cole, Jim Evrard and Ed Frank expire this year and nominations were sought for three-year terms for the three positions. Mike and Jim are seeking reelection. Ed chose not to run again. Ken Jonas is seeking election to the Board.

Mike Cole has been a member since 2009 and was appointed to the Board in 2012. He has represented the WSGS before the Natural Resources Board on sharptail issues. Mike lives in Grantsburg with his four German Shorthair pointers (and his wife!) and is an Engineering Manager for the Parker Hannifin Corp. He is the Chair of Duck Unlimited's Crex Meadows Chapter and is a sharptail hunter both here and in North Dakota. Mike is also on the Board of the Friends of Crex.

Jim Evrard is a retired DNR wildlife biologist from Grantsburg and a charter member of the WSGS. He became a Board member in 1991 and served as Secretary/Treasurer 1995-99, President 2000-03, and again Secretary/Treasurer 2004-present. Jim is also the WSGS newsletter editor; is active in the Friends of Crex; and since retirement in 2000, has written a conservation column in the Wisconsin Outdoor News. He also enjoys sharptail hunting here and in North Dakota.

Ken Jonas retired as the DNR's Hayward area wildlife supervisor early in 2016. He is a long-time member of the WSGS and first became involved in Wisconsin sharptails while managing the Dike 17 WA near Black River Falls. Ken moved north and continued his involvement with sharptail management in the Namekagon Barrens WA and later in the Pershing and Kimberly-Clark WAs. He is an avid deer, duck and upland bird hunter, hunting sharptails here and in the Dakotas.

(cut and mail or bring to the annual meeting)

Ballot – WSGS Board (vote for three)

Mike Cole _____

Jim Evrard _____

Ken Jonas _____

Write in _____

Mail to: WSGS
102 E. Crex Ave.
Grantsburg, WI 54840

WSGS OFFICERS HEAD WEST TO HUNT SHARPTAILS

By Jim Evrard and Tom Ziegeweid

Sharp-tailed grouse are still hunted in Wisconsin by a handful of hunters lucky enough to draw a very limited hunting permit. Tom “Ziggy” Ziegeweid and I chose to hunt sharptails this past fall in North Dakota and South Dakota where sharptails are plentiful and hunting licenses are unlimited.

I decided not to apply for a 2016 Wisconsin sharptail hunting permit due to the small number of permits available (25) and concern that if I did apply and was lucky to draw a permit, it would look ‘rigged’ (a commonly used word this past fall!) to my fellow sharptails hunters since I’m a retired DNR biologist and a long-time WSGS officer.

I decided to return to western North Dakota in early September to hunt sharptails in the ‘Badlands’ around Medora, something that I did lastly in 2011. My spouse Shirl and I left Grantsburg very early on a Sunday morning heading to western North Dakota where we earlier made a motel reservation to avoid not finding overnight accommodations.

We stopped in Fargo to buy my hunting license and arrived in Badlands village of Medora in the late afternoon. We checked into our motel and walked downtown for a cold beer and dinner in a cowboy saloon that was complete with swinging entrance doors.

At dawn the next morning, we left our motel and headed into ‘our’ million-acre+ Little Missouri National Grasslands. We immediately began seeing western wildlife including mule deer, antelope and SHARPTAILS! We spotted nine sharptails along a ridge-top road. Parking the truck, the grouse flushed and it wasn’t until the fifth time we flushed them about a mile from the truck that I was close enough to the birds to shoot. I managed to knock down two sharptails. We saw six more grouse that day.

Shirl and I spent another night in the cowboy town and hunted another section of the Grassland the next morning. We flushed 14 more sharptails and I killed an immature bird. That afternoon we decided to drive north to Watford City to hunt another part of the Little Missouri National Grasslands that I had hunted years earlier.

Despite heavy traffic associated with the oil industry and Watford City still in the midst of the oil boom, we easily found a room in one of the better hotels.

Well before dawn the next morning, we left the hotel and headed west. Again we saw a lot of western wildlife including 23 sharptails. I took a shot at one of two flushed sharptails, but apparently it was too far for my steel shot (or I just plain missed it!). That ended my 2016 North Dakota sharptail hunt.

Ziggy also hunted western sharptails in the early fall, but in South Dakota. Tom hunted accompanied Roche Lolly, President of the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society who lives in Duluth and Joe Hapy from Rapid City, South Dakota, but formerly of Duluth. They hunted the opening weekend of the sharptail season in the Buffalo Gap National Grasslands, an enormous chunk of public land southwest of Rapid City and the Black Hills.

(Continued on Page 5)

WSGS WEBSITE

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.

Those members wishing to receive their newsletters electronically should check the appropriate line on the back page of the printed newsletter when renewing memberships or contact Jim Evrard at the WSGS address or the email address on our website.

Tom said the landscape is quite different from the Fort Pierre National Grasslands where he has hunted prairie chickens and sharptails for several years. The terrain has a semi- badlands look and is a mixture of flat land with gullies that are rather steep in spots. It is much drier than the rest of the state with only four inches of rain recorded in 2016, less than the average and as a result, the grasses were shorter than normal.

Ziggy and his two partners flushed well over a hundred sharptails on Saturday, the opening day of the hunting season, but only killed three birds. The shorter-than-normal grass was a definite advantage for the birds. Joe had never seen sharptails that wary in the years he hunted the national grasslands. In 2015, he had great hunting, getting his limit in nearly every outing.

Hapy also said that sharptails inhabit the upper elevation ‘alpine’ meadows in the Black Hills. The black Hills range up to 5,000 feet in elevation. Joe claimed that the sharptails use the meadows in the warm summer months, but migrate in big flocks to the lower prairie early in the winter.

Tom, Roche and Joe headed back to the grasslands on Sunday and flushed about 60 birds, but again bagged only three sharptails. It was the same story, most of the birds flushed well out-of-range.

The trio of hunters bagged six sharptails during their two-day hunt. They also saw a variety of western wildlife including mule deer. Ziggy also learned that there are pockets of habitat there that support a few prairie chickens. He remarked on the abundance of white-tailed deer and Merriam’s wild turkeys in Rapid city itself.

Tom ended his story of his first southwestern South Dakota sharptail hunt by stating that the panorama in the grasslands was great. They could see box-car buttes a few miles away with Mount Rushmore barely visible in the distance.

I and, no doubt, Ziggy look forward to chasing the Dakota sharptails in the future. We also hope that our efforts on behalf of Wisconsin sharp-tailed grouse result in being able to hunt them again in our own state.



Ross B. Young

• A Tradition in Fine Sporting Art since 1980 •

WSGS LOSES LIFE MEMBER LOUIE RAYMER

By Jim Evrard

Louie Raymer, wildlife artist and WSGS Life Member died on November 1, 2016. Louie was born on July 19, 1929 in St. Paul, Minnesota and grew up in Duluth. As a youth, he enjoyed fishing, hunting and the outdoors. Louie married the love of his life, Francis, on December 20, 1948 and their union produced three sons and a daughter.

Raymer's career as a commercial artist began in 1949. He moved to Minneapolis in 1957 and worked for several companies including Honeywell, General Mills and Federal Cartridge. He began his career as a freelance artist in 1958. In 1965, the Raymers moved to Yellow Lake, north of Webster, Wisconsin. From his lakeside home, he spent many hours photographing wildlife in the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area, using the photos as the inspiration for his successful career as a wildlife artist.

Louie and Fran joined the Friends of Crex (FOC) when it was created over thirty years ago. One of Louie's first contributions was the creation of the FOC logo (sharp-tailed grouse) followed by the donation of a beautiful original painting ("Spring Dance at Crex") depicting several sharptails on a Crex dancing ground or lek. Raymer also donated the printing rights of the painting to the FOC. The resulting prints were used to help raise funds for the construction of the Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center and still provide income for the FOC.

The FOC donated some of the prints to the WSGS for its annual art print raffle, a major source of income for our group. A total of fifteen signed, limited-edition and framed prints were offered in the 1995, 1997-98, 2000-2001, 2003-2008, 2010, 2012, and 2014-2015 art print raffles. In addition, Louis donated original paintings of black ducks and a turkey gobbler to the WSGS for their 2000 and 2001 raffles. The small original paintings were created by Raymer for entries in conservation and hunting stamp contests. In recognition of the substantial funds raised by his donated art work, Raymer was granted WSGS Life Membership.

In his last few years, Louie struggled with Alzheimer's Disease and died in a care facility in Sauk City, Wisconsin. Louie was gentleman. In his 'retirement' years, he and Fran would stop and visit the staff in the Crex Center on their journey from Minneapolis to Hinckley where they visited the casino and bike on a nearby state bicycle trail. Louie always had a smile and a glow about him. I considered him a friend and will miss him.

SUPPORT THE WSGS – BUY A CAP

We still have a small supply of embroidered tan and 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.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR THE MOQUAH BARRENS SHARPTAIL PROJECT

By Jim Evrard

In early December, Dave Evenson and I, representing the WSGS, met with Chequamegon National Forest wildlife staff, Dan Ecklund, Brian Heeringa, Carrie Nelson and Alexandra Lehner, and the WDNR's Todd Naas in Hayward to discuss plans for the 2nd year of the sharptail translocation project, moving birds from NW Minnesota to the Moquah Barrens Wildlife Area in Wisconsin's Bayfield Peninsula.

The first year of the cooperative project was summarized in detail in an article written by Tom Doolittle that appeared in the Fall 2016 WSGS Newsletter (No. 81). Briefly, 29 sharptails (13 hens and 16 males) were captured in northwest Minnesota in April 2016, transported to the Moquah Barrens and released.

According to the 2-year agreement with the Minnesota DNR (MDNR), there are still 169 sharptails, mostly hens, yet to be trapped, but Ecklund thought a reasonable number would be 40-50 birds. Hopefully, lessons learned from 2016, will increase the trapping efficiency in 2017. Ecklund and Heeringa will meet with the MDNR in January and travel to NW Minnesota in late March to prepare for trapping.

There is a need for volunteers, both for trapping the sharptails and transporting them to Wisconsin for release in the Moquah Barrens. The volunteers should be able to commit their time for periods of a week or so with a 3-day minimum. Five teams of 2 volunteers each are needed. Trapping is scheduled to begin on April 17th and end on May 12-14th, conditions permitting. Travel expenses (food, lodging, mileage) will be provided for the volunteers. A pre-trapping meeting for volunteers will be held in mid-January. There is also a need for volunteers to radio-track the sharptails once they have been released in the Moquah Barrens.

Those attending the Hayward meeting also discussed the need for a more intensive dancing ground or lek survey of the Moquah Barrens in the spring in an attempt to find displaying sharptails. It is hoped that the student chapter of the Wildlife Society at Northland College could cooperate in the spring census assistance.

Anyone interested in volunteering for this project should contact the WSGS by mail, email, or telephone. The WSGS address is given on the last page of the newsletter.



Illustration by: Paul Johnsgard



Kirtland's Warbler

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 han-
dling)

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO AND RETURN THIS APPLICATION TO:

Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, 102 East Crex Avenue, Grantsburg, WI 54840

