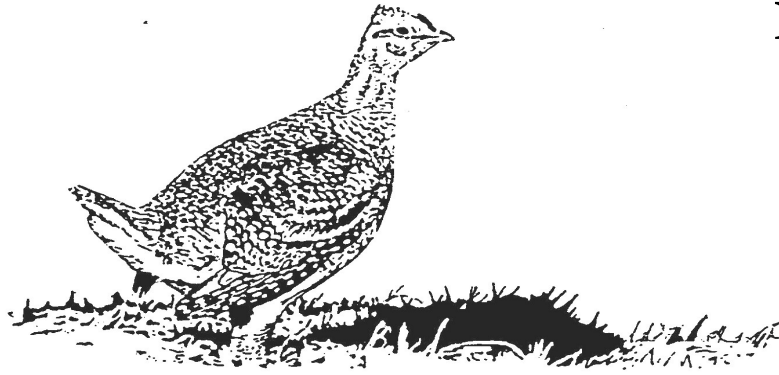


# WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 90

Summer 2019

## SHARPTAIL WORKSHOP

*By Jim Evrard*

The Wisconsin/Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Research and Habitat Management Workshop, sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), was held at the Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center in Grantsburg on May 29 and 30, 2019. The WSGS supported the workshop by contributing grass-fed beef burger for the Wednesday night cookout through the generosity of WSGS Board Member Ashly Steinke. The WSGS contributed an additional \$228 towards campfire dinner food and beverage. About 35 persons attended the workshop including WSGS Board members Mike Cole, Bob Dumke, Dave Evenson, Jim Evrard, and Ashly Steinke. Ed Frank WSGS counselor was also present.

The workshop was put together by Bob Hansen, WDNR Northwest Barrens biologist and Jodie Provost, MDNR wildlife biologist. Speakers included: Hanson; Provost; Dr. Benjamin Zuckerberg, UW Madison; Mark Witecha, WDNR Madison wildlife staff; Charlotte Roy, MDNR wildlife researcher; Christofer Pollentier, WDNR Madison wildlife researcher; Lori Knosalla, graduate student from the UM Duluth; and Dan Eklund, U.S. Forest Service wildlife biologist. Nicole Butler, St. Croix Valley Association, provided audio-visual support for the speakers.

Subjects presented and discussed included: sharptail status, range, and population and hunting harvest numbers in both Minnesota and Wisconsin; Minnesota and Wisconsin habitat management efforts; testing an audio roadside sharptail roadside survey technique and using trail cameras on sharptail leks; Wisconsin sharptail management plan; sharptail genetics, potential pesticide impacts upon sharptails; sharptail nesting and brood rearing research; and management of shrubby wetland habitat with fire. It is unknown if the workshops proceedings will be made available.

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# FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

*By Dave Evenson*

Sunday, April 28, 2019 – I composed this message in my head as I returned from one of the best annual meetings at Crex Meadows. Great speakers yesterday, lots of activity and optimism throughout all our best sharptail range. A frosty cold morning, watching sharptails at 50 yards from the warmth of the truck – a female on the grounds had the cocks all riled up. Tremendous acreage of mechanical and fire activity on the landscape (your Pittman-Robertson dollars at work – keep buying guns and ammo, thanks!).

We met this morning in the Crex Interpretive Center and while waiting for the coffee to brew, I looked over Lyman Lang’s name tag pinned to a bulletin board. I remember Lyman for his big grin, his hip boots and his hand-held brush saw – hours he spent with that combination.

It also turned out to be a morning of the biggest prescribed fire that I knew of ever attempted by the Wisconsin DNR. After I returned to the crew HQ after breakfast, I watched the units pull out, fire equipped pickup after pickup, dozer after dozer, heavy units and specialized low-ground-pressure tracked vehicles. I tried to come up with a guess of the value of the rolling stock and gave up at a million dollars. I was told there were 30 trained and certified staff from Forestry and Wildlife Management in the fire crew (of course up at Moquah they use helicopters, and in that case a million is barely a down payment!).

Kyle Anderson, Glacial Lake Grantsburg (GLG) supervisor led us on the tour, and his discussion of the mechanical treatment had been similar – they treated hundreds of acres with bulldozers, skidders and roller choppers, all good-sized machinery of great value.

I couldn’t help comparing what I was seeing with “go big or go home” that you see on farms today with half-million dollar combines or construction outfits or logging crews with even more expensive equipment. But, I have to also reflect and thank Lyman and his peers for all the work they did keeping the properties together to get to the position we are today.

## 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: Vacant  
Secretary/Treasurer: Jim Evrard

Newsletter Editor: Jim Evrard  
Newsletter Compositor: Lauren Finch

### BOARD MEMBERS:

Mike Cole Ken Jonas  
Paul Kooiker Bruce Moss  
John Probst Ashley Steinke  
Bob Dumke

Website & Facebook Manager: Kim Wheeler

## 2019 WSGS ANNUAL AND SPRING BOARD MEETINGS

*By Jim Evrard*

The 2019 Spring WSGS Board Meeting began at 10:00 a.m. in the Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center on Saturday, April 27 in Grantsburg. Present: Mike Cole, Bob Dumke, Dave Evenson, Jim Evrard, Ken Jonas, Paul Kooiker, Bruce Moss, John Probst, Ashley Steinke and Ed Frank. Guests present were Brian Heeringa and Alexandra Lehner, U.S. Forest Service, Mark Witecha and Bob Hanson of the DNR, Bill Berg, Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society.

Secretary/Treasurer Jim Evrard asked the Board to approve a motion stating that Evrard is the sole WSGS member approved to sign checks from the U.S. Bank in Grantsburg. This was requested by the bank that also wanted copies of the WSGS incorporation papers. Apparently the request was prompted by new federal banking rules. The motion was approved by the Board.

WSGS membership stood at 170 members with 119 receiving paper newsletters and 51 receiving electronic newsletters. The WSGS checking account balance was \$5,216.82 as of 04/25/19 and the value of the 12-month CD was \$2,690.00 as of October 16 2018 (the maturation date) for a total of \$7,906.82.

The Board voted to grant \$750 to the DNR at Crex Meadows to retrofit an herbicide sprayer to kill persistent oak sprouts that are not killed by prescribed burning.

Ken Jonas, Mike Cole and Ashly Steinke offered to work with Kim Wheeler as a committee to develop a WSGS Facebook Site. Mark Witecha stated that we needed a new formula to assess allowable hunting harvest. Dave Evenson said that an additional 20 prints of Ruth King's sharptail painting were printed at a cost of \$25/print. Evrard also stated that an additional 50 Balzer sharptail cards were printed at a cost of \$2.15/card.

Potential 2020 WSGS awards were discussed with approval given to give a plaque to Ruth King for her contribution of sharptail art prints. It was also decided to explore obtaining blank award documents for another contributing artist, Buzz Balzer.

Bob Hanson discussed the upcoming (May 29-30) technical sharptail workshop at Crex Meadows. WSGS support offered was grass-fed hamburger donated by Steinke and up to \$200 for other workshop costs.

The summer board meeting has been tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, June 19th at the Bob Dumke home northwest of Danbury. Details will be distributed at a later date.

President Evenson called the 2019 Annual WSGS Meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday April 27 in the Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center's Auditorium. Approximately 25 people were in attendance. The meeting began with Jim Evrard giving the Secretary Report (all meeting minutes are published in the WSGS newsletters) and Treasurer's reports (see Board meeting minutes for details).

Dave Evenson and Bruce Moss were re-elected to the Board and Bob Dumke was elected to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Tom Ziegeweid (after 28 years of service to the WSGS!). Fourteen ballots were cast from 170 members (only 8 %!).

Evenson discussed WSGS activities during the past year including: 2018 annual and board meetings; letters of support for the 2018 sharptail hunting season, DNR prescribed burning; and U.S. Forest Service Greenwood Management Plans in the Bayfield Peninsula.

Brian Heeringa and Alexandra Lehner of the Washburn District of the Chequamegon National Forest presented a summary of the progress of the sharptail translocation project in the Moquah Barrens Wildlife Area in the Bayfield Peninsula.

*(continued on Page 4)*

In three years, 2017, 2018 and 2019, 160 sharptails (66 hens, 94 cocks) were trapped in NW Minnesota and released in the Moquah Barrens. The project spent \$152,000 in the effort and about \$57,000 remains. About 1,300 locations of radio-marked sharptails were recorded in three years. When the project started, only two cocks in one lek remained. In the spring of 2019, 25 cocks were counted in two leks.

Ashly Steinke reported on a meeting he attended in Minnesota regarding a Native American proposal to release elk just north of the state line (the St. Croix River) in that state. The implication is that the elk could easily cross the river into the Northwest Barrens of Wisconsin. Bob Hanson gave an update of the progress of the Northwest Sands Habitat Management Plan and Brian Heeringa and Alex Lehner discussed the progress of the cooperative project to translocate sharptails from NW Minnesota to the Moquah Barrens Wildlife Area. Guest Brian Finstad or the Barnes Area Historical Society discussed the cooperative project to create a tourist-based pathway from St. Croix Falls to Bayfield, following historical trails and roads.

The meeting then moved from the Crex Center Auditorium to the Education Room where the drawings for the door prizes and art raffle took place. Bruce Moss and Dave and Sue Clausen were the big winners of the framed, signed and limited edition art prints by Owen Gromme, Ruth King, and Buzz Balzer. Moss later donated the print back to the WSGS.

The catered dinner (featuring roast beef and broast chicken) was served to 19 persons in the Education Room of the Crex Center. A social hour including hors d'oeuvres and beverages (including a new locally-brewed beer flavored with Crex wild rice) preceded the dinner. Paul Kooiker donated wild rice for the beer that was donated by the Brickfield Brewery of Grantsburg.

There was an early Sunday morning auto tour of the DNR efforts to restore sharptail habitat to bring back the sharptail numbers that Crex had supported in the past. The abundance of wildlife, especially waterfowl and related birds, added much to the tour. Crex staff led the tour. Some of the habitat restoration viewed had been funded with WSGS grants.

## **WSGS MEMBER NEWS**

*By Jim Evrard*

Recently the WSGS received the largest contribution in our collective memory. A new member sent a check totaling \$1,400! He instructed that the money be used for a WSGS life membership, a Ruth King sharptail print, two WSGS caps (blaze orange and tan), two WSGS cloth patches, 2 WSGS decals and the balance as a donation.

We are a small non-profit organization managed by a staff of unpaid volunteers. Our annual operational budget is about \$2,500 that is generated by membership dues, raffle income, merchandize sales and donations. Our annual grants for sharptails and their habitat ranged zero in some years to \$10,000 in other years depending upon our financial situation. Member contributions are important.

In 2019 the WSGS made grants to buy jack pine seed in a cooperative project with an industrial forest in the Northwest Sands (\$980); to modify a herbicide sprayer at Crex Meadows to control oak spouts (\$750); and supported a sharp-tailed grouse technical workshop sponsored by the Wisconsin and Minnesota DNRs that was held at the Crex Meadows Wildlife Education and Visitor Center (\$200).

The WSGS now has a Facebook page. WSGS board members Ken Jonas and Mike Cole teamed up with Kim Wheeler and developed a WSGS Facebook page. Look for it for the latest WSGS news.

## SPRING SHARPTAIL NUMBERS AND HUNTING PERMITS\*

*By Jim Evrard*

2019 sharptail counts were up 38% in managed areas this year with 161 dancing males compared to 117 displaying males counted in the same areas in 2018. Another 39 males were counted in unmanaged areas this year compared to 45 in 2018. Total displaying male grouse counted in 2019 were 206 males compared to 173 in 2018, a 19% increase.

Looking at the past 13 years of spring male sharptail census numbers (2007- 2019), there has been a decline from around 200 birds counted in managed areas and 200 in unmanaged areas during the first three years of the period 2007-2009. During the next ten years (2010-2019), sharptail numbers counted dropped significantly both in the managed and unmanaged areas. From 2010 to the present, the number of displaying male sharptails counted in managed areas bounced around, but roughly stabilized at an average of about 25% lower than the first three years of the annual census. However, in the unmanaged sharptail habitat that was censused, the number of displaying males dropped a whopping 75%.

In the thirteen years, there was a limited sharptail hunting season in all but four years (2013, 2014, 2017 and this year, 2019). There was a limited hunting season in 2018, but there will be no sharptail hunting in Wisconsin this year. This decision was reached upon the unanimous recommendation of the DNR's Sharp-tailed Grouse Committee. The Committee also decided not to issue hunting permits in 2018, but was overruled by the Wildlife staff in Madison after an appeal was made by the WSGS to take advantage of the temporary increase in sharptails in Deer Management Unit 8 as a result of the Germann Road wildfire.

According to the formula developed some years ago to determine if hunting seasons were warranted, if 25 or more displaying males were counted in a deer management unit, a limited sharptail hunt could be allowed in that unit. This year, the number of males counted in Unit 8 was 78, Unit 9 - 27, and Unit 10 - 25. Unit 8 contains both the Namekagon Barrens and the Douglas County Wildlife Areas (WAs) while Unit 10 contains the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area (WA). Despite this formula, there will be no sharptail hunting this fall.

The 25 hunting permits issued for Unit 8 in 2018 resulted in 11 sharptails reportedly taken by hunters (a 44% hunter success rate). That did not result in fewer displaying males in Unit 8 this year, actually there were 14% more males counted in 2019 than in 2018. It appears that hunting, at the level allowed by the limited hunting permits, does not have an impact upon sharptails as they now exist in Wisconsin, despite some research concerns.

### 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.



## WSGS JOINS FACEBOOK

*By Ken Jonas and Mike Cole*

As stated in our webpage, “The objectives of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society are to publicize the sharptails’ plight in the state; educate the public and resource professionals about sharptails; encourage the management of sharptail habitat; promote both hunting and non-hunting recreational use of sharptails; and influence both state and local decisions that will benefit sharp-tailed grouse and other barrens species”. In order to be effective at working toward these objectives in today’s world, it seemed inevitable that sooner or later our organization was going to have to become more immersed in digital communications than the stand-alone web site.

After some discussion, the WSGS Board voted to have the WSGS join the popular social media site known as Facebook. As many of our members already know, Facebook is a free American online social media and social networking service that is used by millions of individuals and organizations world wide to share information with other Facebook participants that provides updates or perspectives about topics of mutual interest. Social media participation has shown to be an effective means of connecting with existing friends and allies, and is especially relevant with younger people who may be less inclined to read a paper newsletter or magazine. The Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (MSGS) reports great results, indicated through increased membership and engagement by their followers due to the efforts on their Facebook page. Viewing the information portrayed on the MSGS Facebook site and hearing of their positive results were definitely a part of the motivation of our organization to join the Facebook ranks.

Now that you might be interested, this is the top posting that you’ll see when you log in to your Facebook account and take a look at the new WSGS site “<https://www.facebook.com/Wisharptails.org/>” *“Welcome to the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse society’s Facebook page. We are a group of people from diverse backgrounds with the common goal of protective and managing the Sharp-tailed Grouse population in Wisconsin. We will be highlighting information and activities of our organization as well as contributions and actions of others related to sharptails and their habitat in our state. We’ll also share research findings, photos and stories of interest that relate to this unique early successional species over the larger geographic area inhabited by the bird. Hope you enjoy”*

We’ve a lot to learn about how this works best, but the potential is high and your Facebook administrators Mike Cole and Ken Jonas are enthusiastic about making the site active and dynamic. Please send them ideas or sharp-tailed grouse related information for posting on this site.

If you are a Facebook user or plan to be, please look for the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society page, give us “LIKE”, follow us and share with your friends!

*The WSGS website, “[wisharptails.org](http://wisharptails.org)”, has recently been updated, and describes our goals and objectives, projects, members of our board, membership and contact information, and electronic copies of recent newsletters.*

## WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY PROJECTS 2015-17

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Recipient</u>	<u>Project</u>
<b>2015</b>	\$1,500	Namekagon Barrens WA	Habitat management
	\$1,000	Crex Meadows WA	Habitat management
	\$500	Wis.Soc. Ornithology	Bird Atlas II
	\$125	Wis. Wildl. Federation	Membership support
	\$35	N.Am. Grouse Partnership	Membership support
	\$50	Friends of Crex	Membership support
	\$50	Friends-Bird Sanctuary	Membership support
	\$50	Friends-Nam. Barrens WA	Membership support
<b>Total: \$3,310</b>			
<b>2016</b>	\$1,000	Crex Meadows WA	Habitat management
	\$1,500	Namekagon Barrens WA	Habitat management
	\$32,408	Moquah Barrens WA	Sharptail translocation
	\$125	Wis. Wildl. Federation	Membership support
	\$35	N.Am. Grouse Partnership	Membership support
	\$50	Friends of Crex	Membership support
	\$50	Friends-Bird Sanctuary	Membership support
	\$50	Friends-Nam. Barrens WA	Membership support
<b>Total: \$36,218</b>			
<b>2017</b>	\$3,000	Namekagon Barrens WA	Habitat management
	\$2,000	Crex Meadows WA	Habitat management
	\$300	Friends of NW Barrens	Printing brochure
	\$20,667	Moquah Barrens WA	Sharptail translocation
	\$125	Wis. Wildl. Federation	Membership support
	\$35	N.Am. Grouse Partnership	Membership support
	\$50	Friends of Crex	Membership support
	\$50	Friends-Bird Sanctuary	Membership support
	\$50	Friends-Nam. Barrens WA	Membership support
<b>Total: \$26,277</b>			

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

**CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL:** For those receiving electronic newsletters, the coded expiration date of your membership is located on the first line of the mailing label following your name (example John Doe 02-15-19 , your name followed by the expiration date February 15, 2019).

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Street/PO Box \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Would you like to volunteer for:**  
\_\_\_\_\_ Board of Directors  
\_\_\_\_\_ Newsletter articles  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other

**Members wishing to receive their newsletters electronically should check the appropriate line below when renewing memberships.**

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)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Raymer sharptail limited edition print (\$60)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Balzer 5" x 7" sharptail note card, wrapper and envelope (\$4)  
(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

