

THE MINNESOTA SHARPTAILER

PUBLICATION OF THE MINNESOTA SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY



P.O. BOX 3338
DULUTH, MINNESOTA 55803

SPRING FLING 2011



JOINT MSGS & MPCS SPRING FLING, APRIL 15 & 16

This early Spring 2011 issue of *THE MINNESOTA SHARPTAILER* is the formal announcement for what promises to be the greatest sharptail and prairie chicken event ever – the third joint meeting of the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (MSGs) and the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society (MPCS). These two “home grown” Minnesota conservation groups have championed the way for prairie (MPCS for 38 years) and brushland (MSGs for 26 years) management. One can only ponder where the prairie chicken and sharptail, and their respective open land ecosystems, would be today if these two organizations hadn’t come along.

Our most recent joint meeting was in 2005 at the Best Western Motel and Conference Center in Thief River Falls. On April 15 and 16, 2011 we are meeting in the same place, with an expanded program and list of activities.

Friday: On Friday April 15, there is the MPCS and MSGs Prairie Grouse Conference entitled ‘*Habitat and a Future for Typmanuchus*.’ It is intended for professional resource managers and prairie grouse enthusiasts alike. As you see by the enclosed tentative agenda, the day is jam-packed with great presentations from several natural resource agencies. It will be followed in the evening by a social.

Saturday: Saturday April 16 follows with the joint Spring Fling and Annual meeting of MPCS and MSGs. For the early risers there will be visits to blinds and a field trip, followed by breakfast. The joint meeting itself will feature more presentations on prairie and brushland management, as well as progress reports on various management activities. In the afternoon there will be separate annual meetings of each group. The tentative agenda is enclosed.

Registration and meals: The registration mailer is enclosed. Just complete it, enclose your check (you can also pay at the meeting), fold, and be sure to mail before April 1. The only cost for both days is the buffet, \$10 for each day. That’s right, there is no registration fee! Checks for the buffet should be made payable to Best Western. There will be a sponsored social on Friday evening. You are responsible for other meals (the Thief River Falls Best Western has an excellent restaurant and bar).

Lodging: A block of rooms has been reserved at the Best Western at the reduced rate of \$59/room. The Best Western is located on State Hwy. 32 in the southwest end of Thief River Falls. You should make these reservations yourself; please call 1-800-569-8123. In order to get the reduced rate, please mention the “Prairie Grouse Conference.”

Other information: You can find additional and updated information both at the MPCS website (www.prairiechicken.org) and at the MSGs website (www.sharptails.org). If you have any questions please call either Ross Hier (218-281-7325) or Jodie Provost (218-838-3553). Both groups will have merchandise for sale, and you can pay your dues as well (best to bring more than one check). You are encouraged to bring used, new, and handmade items to donate for the fundraiser.

This promises to be an educational and fun event. Feel free to come for any one day, or both.

dedicated to the management and restoration of sharptails
in Minnesota for the benefit of hunters and non-hunters

JOINT MSGS & MPCS MEETING AGENDA SATURDAY APRIL 16, 2011

05:30 Early A.M. prairie grouse viewing from a blind. Blind-use will be very limited this year (likely only one or 2 blinds). First called, first reserved. IF interested, please call Jodie Provost (218-927-7500 Ext 249) or Ross H. Hier (218-281-6063).

06:00 Meet at Best Western parking lot and depart for local field trips. (Please call Jodie or Ross to help us get a "head count").

The Chucklin' And Booming Begins in the Conference Room

08:30 Registration and Treats

09:15 Welcome & Call to Order by Brian Winter (MPCS) & Roche Lally (MSGs)

09:30 Field Trip Reports

09:40 "Science and Citizens Uniting for Grouse" - Dr. W. Dan Svedarsky

10:15 "Return of Sharptails to Agassiz NWR" - James Graham

10:30 BREAK

10:50 "Prairie Chickens and Wind Turbines" - Dr. John Toepfer

11:20 "Local Color" - Clifford Steinhauer

Feeding, Loafing & Cacklin' (Catered Buffet-style Lunch on Site)

13:00 "Photos From the Chicken Blind" - Craig Zlimen

13:30 "New Discoveries - Displaying Chickens & Sharps" - Gary Huschle

13:45 "Short Joint Meeting of MPSC & MSGS"

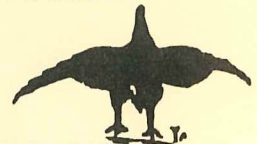
14:10 "Individual Society Business Meetings"

14:45 "Door Prizes & Fundraising" - Members ENCOURAGED to donate items.

15:15 DISPERSAL ... Travel Safely Back to Roost!

Registration Materials Are Within This Newsletter ... we hope to see you there!

Find all the MSGS/MPCS Spring Fling information at www.sharptails.org



HERITAGE GRANT AND CONSERVATION PARTNERS REPORTS

In 2002, the Heritage Enhancement Grants to conservation organizations began. The Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society applied for funding in 2002, and every year since then has applied for, and received, funding for brushland management projects on Wildlife Management Areas and Brushland Management Units. Management tools used have been shearing, mowing, prescribed burning, prairie grass planting, hand cutting, roller chopping, and herbicide. From Fiscal Years 2002 to 2010 (a State Fiscal Year begins 6 months early), \$687,652 has been granted to MSGS, and projects have been completed totaling acres. About two-thirds of the projects have been in the northwest sharptail range, with the remainder in the east-central range.

The FY 2010 Heritage Grants were allocated too late in 2010 to initiate any projects that normally would have been done in winter 2009-2010, but MSGS was very fortunate in this grant cycle to have received \$51,568 for six projects. With sufficient frost, most of these projects will be completed yet this winter, and three are already done at this writing. DNR Fish and Wildlife decided to not grant any Heritage funds in FY 2011 to any group, and MSGS hopes this program will continue in FY 2012. MSGS greatly appreciates the hard work of the DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife's Grant staff, led by Leslie Tannahill. Thanks so much, Leslie.

----- Complete form below, enclose payments if applicable, fold & mail before April 1 -----

**2011 MPCS & MSGS
PRAIRIE GROUSE CONFERENCE
& JOINT MEETING
PRE-REGISTRATION FORM**

Friday & Saturday, April 15-16, 2011
Best Western, Thief River Falls, MN

Name _____ Address _____

Organization _____ Phone _____

BUFFET: (The buffet is the only conf. & meeting cost. No additional reg. fee is needed.)

Please circle days you will eat the buffet:

Friday Conference Buffet - \$10

Saturday Joint Meeting Buffet - \$10

Total buffet amount enclosed \$ _____ (Make check payable to Best Western)

I'd rather pay when I arrive: _____

MEMBERSHIP DUES:

MPCS Membership - \$10 (Make check payable to MPCS)

**MSGS Membership – Regular \$5, Supporting \$15, Contributing \$50, Sustaining \$100,
Sponsor \$200, Life \$500** (Make check payable to MSGS)

Membership dues can also be paid at the gathering.

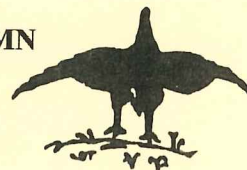
Please enclose checks, if applicable, fold (so the address on the reverse side of this mailer shows), and mail before April 1 to: Jodie Provost, 27267 Spruce Grove, Aitkin, MN 56431

Additional Information:

- Room Reservations – Best Western (800-569-8123). \$59/room. Mention the Prairie Grouse Conf.!
- Directions – Located at the southwest end of Thief River Falls on Hwy. 32
- For agenda details, see MPCS (www.prairiechicken.org) & MSGS (www.sharptails.org) web sites
- Questions – Contact Ross Hier (218-281-7325) or Jodie Provost (218-838-3553)



**Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society & Sharp-tailed Grouse Society
Conference on Habitat and a Future for *Tympanuchus*"
Friday, April 15, 2011
Best Western Motel & Conference Center, Thief River Falls, MN**



- 9:00 Registration, Coffee and Visiting
- 9:30 Welcome – Moderators - Ross Hier, DNR & Jodie Provost, DNR
- 9:40 Prairie Grouse Partners & the Grassland Conservation Plan for Prairie Grouse – Stepping It Down - Joe Duggan, Pheasants Forever
- 10:05 Minnesota's 25 Year Prairie Landscape Conservation Plan – Greg Hoch, MPCCS
- 10:30 Climate Change Effects on Canadian Wildlife & Sharp-tailed Grouse – Kevin Teneyck, Canada TNC
- 10:55 Break
- 11:10 Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat (Lek) Model – Wes Bailey, MDNR
- 11:35 Grazing as a Habitat Management Tool for Prairie Grouse – Mark Hayek, NRCS
- 12:00 Lunch Buffet
- 1:00 Greater Prairie Chicken Ecology in Northwestern Minnesota - Nesting 1992-2010 - John Toepfer, Society of *Tympanuchus Cupido Pinnatus*
- 1:25 Prairie Chicken & Sharp-tailed Grouse Trends in the Dakotas & MN - Dave Trauba, MDNR
- 1:50 Break
- 2:00 Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage (LSOH) Funds: A Dream Come True, But How to Secure Them & Maximize Their Use – Ryan Bronson, LSOH Council
- 2:25 HOLY COW! Success with the first LSOH funds; Protecting Sharp-tail Habitat in East-central MN – Dave Pauly, MDNR
- 2:50 Break
- 3:00 Prairie & Brushland Management Reports – Open to Habitat Managers/Researchers from All Agencies/Organizations & States/Provinces (5-10 minutes apiece)
- 3:45 Group Discussion – Factors Limiting More & Better Habitat, & How to Address Them
- 4:30 Adjourn, Social, Sat. Registration, Blind and Field Trip Sign-Up, then supper on our own

Habitat Reports, continued from Page 2

The DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife began the Lessard-Sams small grants (Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program) after the successful "Vote Yes" Amendment, which added three-eighths of one percent to the state sales tax. In addition to the habitat acquisition grants MSGS has received (see the Fall-Winter *Minnesota Sharptail*), The Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society applied for and received a FY 2010 \$48,000 for a single large (600 acres plus) shearing project on the Roseau Lake WMA in Roseau County. This project began in early March 2010, and was two-thirds completed when warm temperatures shut down the project. Hopefully, this project will be completed later this winter. The Conservation Partners Small Grant program is tremendous because it is an excellent source of funding for projects done by conservation organizations like MSGS. But there is a down side, in that a financial match, far more than MSGS could afford for just a single project, is now required. Thus, MSGS has decided to not participate in the Lessard-Sams Conservation Partners Small Grants Program in the future, unless changes are made in that program that are more amenable to small conservation organizations like MSGS and MPCCS.

FROM:

**MINNESOTA SHARP-TAILED
GROUSE SOCIETY**

P.O. BOX 3338

DULUTH, MINNESOTA 55803

POSTMASTER: ADDRESS CORRECTION

REQUESTED

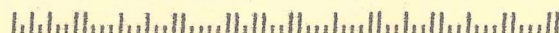


TO:



MEMBERSHIP EXPIRES ON THE DATE AFTER YOUR NAME. PLEASE RENEW TODAY!

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THIS WINTER, AND GROUSE

Bill Berg

Minnesota's four native grouse species are tough birds – they need to be in this harsh environment. And they react differently to winters, depending on snow cover, snow hardness, and temperature. Spruce grouse are perhaps the most hardy, with the southern extreme of their northern forest range just reaching down into northern Minnesota. Spruce grouse snow roost, and because of the conifer forests they prefer, they can almost always find roosting snow and cover. But because they're on the southern edge, spruce grouse are very susceptible to climate change, and in the last 50-70 years there has been a decline in numbers as the range moves northward.

Ruffed grouse are best known for their 10-year cyclic swings, and their dependency on aspen forests. Soft and deep snow makes snow roosting easy, but little snow or crusted snow makes the birds vulnerable to weather and predation. This winter, ruffed grouse had excellent roosting snow until the mid-February thaw, which was followed by sub-zero temperatures and hard crust. This crust, which easily holds an adult person, is an almost impenetrable barrier to roosting ruffs.

Prairie chickens also snow roost, but do not "dive" into snow. Based on work by Dr. John Toepfer, this winter's severity on the prairies is similar to that of 1996-97, when prairie chicken survival was about 38% as compared to 85% in open winters like 1997-98. The mean winter survival for winters 1992 thru 1998 was 70%. John has found that prairie chickens need access to food on the ground in order to survive, unlike sharptails, spruce grouse, and ruffs, which do fine on browse. John has found chickens that have spent 36 hours encased in their snow burrows.

The sharptail is one tough bird that's feathered all the way to the toes. Although it likes to snow roost, it also does fine in cold, open winters, perhaps because of the dense sheltering cover of the grass and sedge undergrowth in brushland habitat. Only somewhat cyclic compared to ruffs, a tough winter for ruffed grouse often means that sharptails come through just fine. The other advantage the sharptail has over the other three species is that it is both a browser that eats buds and twig ends, and a feeder of seeds and greens on the ground.