

*Spring/Summer 2014*

# **THE MINNESOTA SHARPTAILER**

*Publication of the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society*

**Remembering Wayne Hoshal**

**Landscape Genetics Of Prairie Grouse:  
Answering Age-Old Questions  
with New Methods**

**PF Farm Bill Biologist  
Placed in Aitkin**

**Mike North Becomes  
DNR Forest Game Bird Coordinator**

**"Whooping It Up on The Minnesota Prairie!"**

Dedicated to the management and restoration of Sharptails in Minnesota for the benefit of hunters and non-hunters.





Hello Sharptailers,

MSGS recently lost a longtime volunteer, supporter, and friend, Wayne Hoshal. Wayne was one of our originals, with us from the early years. Wayne always brought a sense of diplomacy to our Board meetings. He was the one who was looked up to when he spoke. Wayne's wisdom & eloquence were unmistakable. I will miss Wayne, and so will anyone who ever had the pleasure of meeting him. Be sure to read Bill Berg's wonderful tribute to Wayne's life.

*Roche Lally*  
President

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## DID YOU KNOW...

- There are 7 subspecies of Sharp-tailed grouse in North America; Alaskan, Northwestern, Northern, Prairie, Columbian, Plains & New Mexican.
- The Plains Sharp-tailed grouse resides in Minnesota.
- The Columbian is the rarest of the subspecies.
- The New Mexican Sharp-tailed grouse went extinct in the late 50's.
- Sharptails are often referred to as "chickens", most likely confused with their distant cousin, the Prairie Chicken.

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**Front cover:** The late Wayne Hoshal volunteered for the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society since 1986. In this cover photo, Wayne is shown standing next to one of the preservation blinds that he maintained in northern Aitkin County. For more on this outstanding conservationist, see the article inside.

**Back cover:** MSGS President Roche Lally strategizes with MSGS member Joe Hapy on a very late season hunt!

## MPCS ANNUAL MEETING

Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society will hold it's annual meeting on 4/26/2014 in Twin Valley, MN.

For more information contact  
Earl Johnson @ 218-847-3529

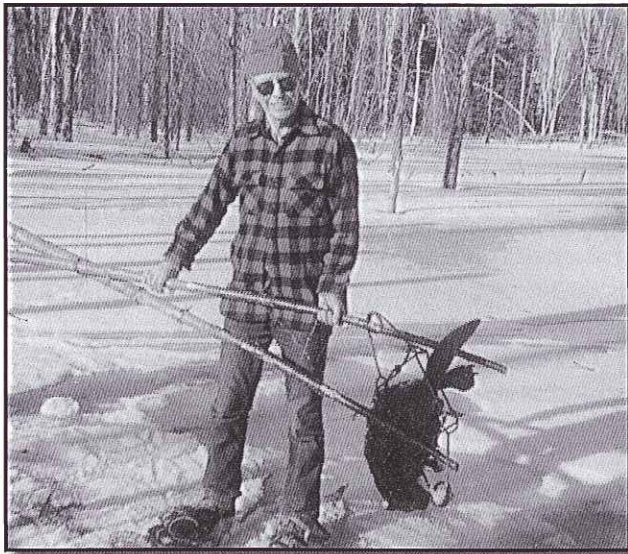


## REMEMBERING WAYNE HOSHAL

By Bill Berg

I first met Wayne Hoshal at the Department of Natural Resources Office in Grand Rapids about 1985. Wayne had been at the Fisheries Office just down the hall, and one of the Fisheries folks sent him down my way. Little did I know then that this was the beginning of a friendship that would span three decades, and how closely we would journey through life together.

I learned from Wayne that he was raised in Calumet, Minnesota (just northeast of Grand Rapids), that he was a WW II Veteran, and he had just retired from a career with the Department of State Foreign Service that spanned three decades. When he and his wife Jean were serving in Germany, they had two children, Ann and Neil. Wayne and Jean raised their kids well; Ann is a career Army National Guard soldier, with two Middle East tours completed, and Neil is an over-the road truck driver.



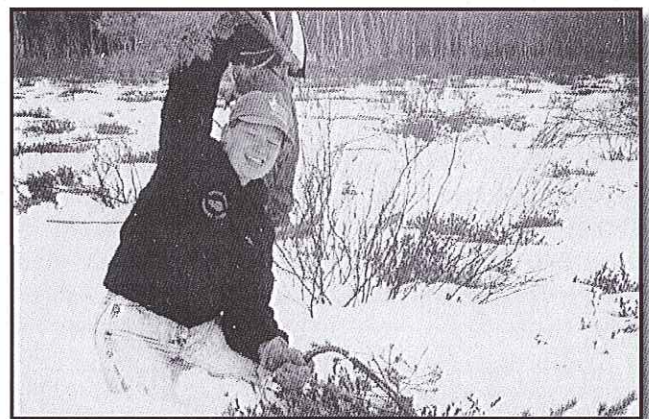
*Wayne was at home in the outdoors, whether counting sharptails, fishing for autumn splake, pulling a beaver dam from a local trout stream, or downhill skiing anywhere between northeastern Minnesota or Montana. Here he is shown holding a beaver on Bill Berg's trapline in northern Itasca County.*

There were two great aspects about knowing Wayne. One was that he was an educated, intelligent, and distinguished individual, retiring as Chief of the U. S. Diplomatic Courier Service, and he could tell great stories. One I recall was when he was fishing on the border of (what was then) West and East Germany, he would let his line and bobber drift under the fence into

the East German side. He said the East German border guards frowned, but let him do it. He also told the story of when he carried Diplomatic Courier Documents between Pakistan and Afganistan, he rode a donkey or camel when passing through the Khyber Pass. Can you imagine doing that today?

The other great part of knowing Wayne was that he wanted to volunteer with DNR. So I took him along on ruffed grouse drumming counts, sharp-tailed grouse dancing ground surveys, predator scent post census, and winter track counts. Others in our Research Group had Wayne help with deer trapping and bear den checks. Wayne was an avid trout fisherman, and an artificial fly purist, and a co-founder of the Grand Rapids Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Thus he volunteered with the DNR Fisheries folks too, going along on many stream trout surveys and removing beaver dams.

Wayne was full of history. His dad remembered abundant prairie chickens around Calumet in the early 1930s in the Pinnacae Meadows area, which was then a large farming area for the iron miners at the Hill Annex Mine. Yes, most of northern Minnesota had scattered prairie chicken populations back then, after the large-scale logging and land clearing for agriculture. And Wayne remembered the last of these, too, and watched the sharptails move in after the prairie chickens were gone. Eventually, Wayne took a liking to sharptails, and together we spent countless mornings in northern Aitkin County counting sharptails and maintaining observation blinds. Often after, we had breakfast in the historic cafes in Palisade or Hill City.



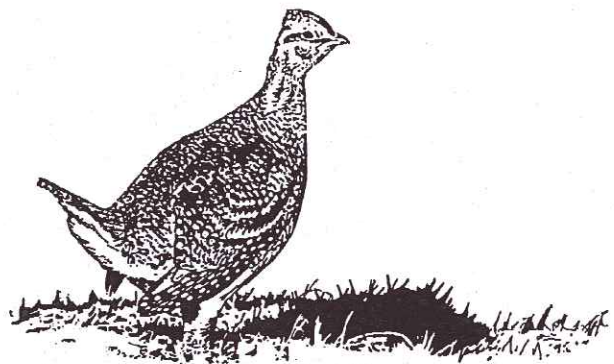
*Ann Hoshal, then a Grand Rapids High School student, gleefully cuts a tree on the very first MSGS brush cutting project in 1993. The site was just north of Hinckley. Ann is a mother and a career U. S. Army-Minnesota National Guard soldier, having completed two Middle East tours, and is just a couple years from her eligible 20 year retirement.*



About the same time, the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society was formed, and Wayne immediately took a liking to the new organization. Soon, he volunteered to help, and in a big way. Wayne became the MSGS Membership Coordinator, an unpaid position that he held for almost 30 years. It was Wayne who received the MSGS membership applications and mailed membership cards to new and renewing members. It was Wayne who so faithfully stuck address labels and stamps on MSGS newsletters, and hauled them to the Post Office. It was Wayne who tended to the details of ordering MSGS prints and plaques for members, and award recipients, and mailing and shipping them. I don't recall that he ever requested financial reimbursement, except for the cost of the newsletter postage. It was Wayne who ordered year plaques for college students from several schools to place in their MSGS "thank you" prints. It was Wayne who made the arrangements at local restaurants for the gala MSGS Brush Cut breakfasts. It was Wayne who presented the plaques to students at these events. It was Wayne who so generously contributed financially to MSGS for land acquisitions, like Gun Lake WMA. It was Wayne who brought folks to a sharptail blind to watch the morning dance. It was Wayne who registered folks at the MSGS Spring Flings, and yes, it was Wayne who sold raffle tickets there, too. It was Wayne Hoshal who basically kept MSGS going through most of MSGS's history!

Several years ago, Wayne developed some heart trouble, and had a valve replaced with one from a pig. That worked very well, except that Wayne turned slightly blue when he got cold. It was alarming to see that at first, but he handled it well, and kept active with daily workouts at the Grand Rapids YMCA. He also loved grouse hunting and trout fishing, and we explored old logging camps together. Several years ago Wayne was diagnosed with prostate cancer, and he did everything right, such as all treatments and follow-up exams. He didn't really let this slow him down, but that darn PSA kept on bouncing around and gradually increasing for several years, despite several treatments. Recently Wayne called to say that he was feeling pretty good, and in good spirits, but that he was again switching treatments. Just one week later, I received a call that Wayne was gone. He died at age 86. His full obituary follows.

WAYNE DONALD HOSHAL, age 86, died January 16, 2014 at the Grand Itasca Hospital. He was born April 8, 1927, in Sioux Falls, SD, the second of eight children of Floyd and Jennie Bly Hoshal. In 1937 the family moved to northern Minnesota, settling in Calumet. Wayne loved the surrounding woods and nature and considered the area "God's country". Graduating from Greenway High School in 1945, he immediately enlisted in the U.S. Navy and was stationed on Kwajalein Island in the Pacific for the duration of World War II. After the war, Wayne returned to Minnesota and graduated from Itasca Junior College and the University of Minnesota. Awaiting acceptance into the U.S. Diplomatic Courier Service, he worked as a bellhop and doorman at luxury hotels in West Palm Beach, Florida, Camden, Maine, and Lake Placid, New York. In 1953 he received the call to report to Washington, D.C. to begin a 32-year career as a Diplomatic Courier. Posted to Panama City, Panama, Frankfurt, Germany and Manila, Philippines, Wayne traveled to almost every country in the world carrying messages too secret to be transmitted by cable. In 1970 he married the love of his life, Jean Lessner, in Washington, D.C. They were posted to Germany where their two children were born. Wayne retired from the Department of State in 1985 as Chief of the Diplomatic Courier Service and moved the family to Grand Rapids, MN. If desired, memorials in Wayne's name may be made to the Second Harvest Central Food Bank, and mailed c/o Jean Hoshal at 18867 Addair Rd. Grand Rapids MN 55744. A celebration of Wayne's life will be held on Saturday, April 12, 2014, 11 AM to 2 PM, at Timber Lake Lodge in Grand Rapids.





**"WHOOPIING IT UP ON THE MINNESOTA PRAIRIE!"**  
**A SUCCESS - 30TH PRAIRIE GROUSE TECHNICAL COUNCIL MEETING**

*By Jodie Provost*

Over 70 prairie grouse enthusiasts, hailing from University of Manitoba to Texas A & M, flocked together at Crookston, Minnesota last fall to hear reports and research findings, share good stories and good food, walk the prairie, strengthen old friendships and build new bonds. The 30th Prairie Grouse Technical Council (PGTC) Meeting was held October 10-12, 2013 on the campus of University of Minnesota, Crookston. This gathering was last hosted there in 1987 and biennially rotates around North America's grasslands to allow attendees to experience the broad array of conditions our charismatic prairie grouse species inhabit.

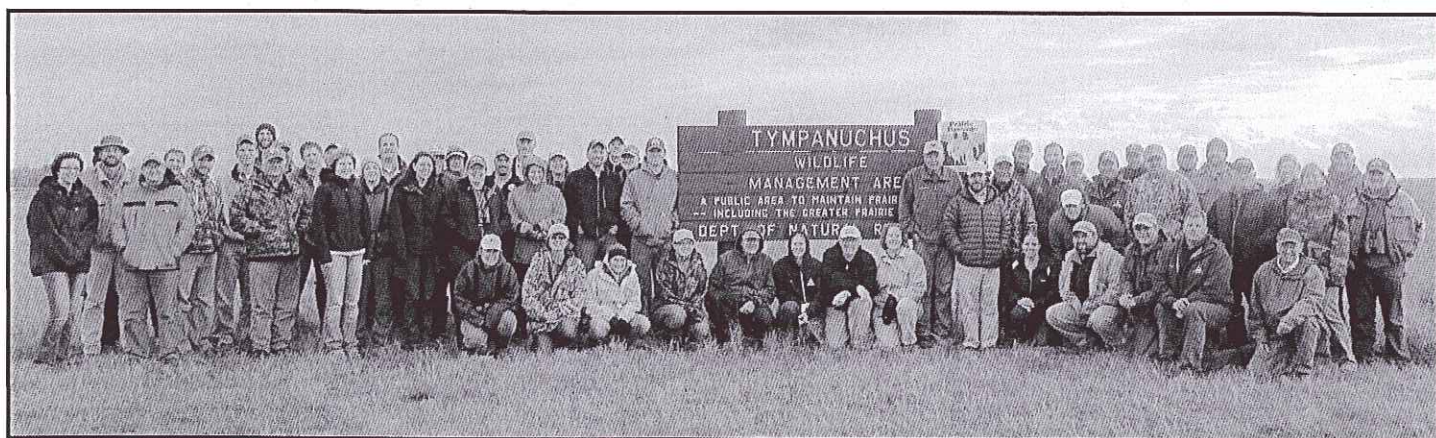
The gathering commenced with registration and a reception on Thursday evening. Participants on Friday and Saturday heard from professional biologists and graduate students about everything from the history of the PGTC to Audubon's Beef for the Birds Initiative, and Minnesota's Prairie Conservation Plan to morphological differences between lesser and greater prairie chickens. A highlight was Noppadol Paothong's presentation entitled "Why We Love These Gorgeous Birds Who Do Funny Things in the Spring." His adventures over the years while photographing prairie grouse to develop his book, "Save the Last Dance", were delightful to hear. May his book influence and inspire many!

Friday was polished off with a social, fundraiser, program and banquet in which the Hamerstrom Award, which recognizes individuals and organizations for ongoing efforts in prairie grouse conservation, was given. It is named in honor of famed Wisconsin prairie grouse

researchers, Drs. Fred and Francis Hamerstrom. The deserving recipients were Terry Wolfe, retired DNR Wildlife Manager and long-time prairie conservationist, Mike Schroeder of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Sutton Foundation, a public-private, nonprofit organization that has been involved in researching the greater and lesser prairie-chicken in Oklahoma and New Mexico for more than 15 years. Our own Bill Berg is a past recipient of this prestigious award. The evening closed with a presentation by Ross Hier (prairie manager, artist and story teller extraordinaire), sharing his story of inspirational friends and colleagues who make a difference in conservation.

Saturday began with a business meeting in which MSGS had an opportunity to share its activities and to encourage involvement. An afternoon field trip led by Terry to Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and Tympanuchus Wildlife Management Area was the climax of the day. Terry and Jason Ekstein explained the history and management of the neighborhood while perched very befittingly from stages of a tractor and mower in the NWR headquarters' shed. The rain came down, wind blew, and then, the sun chose to shine across the golden prairie as our group meandered through out it to explore and be inspired by its beauty. The day ended perfectly with socializing, much laughter (love the way those Missouri fellows talk), and a delicious meal of bison served outdoors at Booming Flats, home of Dan Svedarsky.

Many thanks to Dan, Chair of the 30th PTGC, and the individuals who helped make it happen, including MSGS for its financial contribution. Although the show went on, the participation of our federal employee colleagues was missed due to a government shutdown. Stay tuned for future PGTC gatherings in Missouri in 2015, and possibly Michigan in 2017 and Colorado in 2019! 🐾





## **LANDSCAPE GENETICS OF PRAIRIE GROUSE: ANSWERING AGE-OLD QUESTIONS WITH NEW METHODS**


*By Charlotte Roy*

Why did the prairie grouse cross the road/forest/crops?  
To find new habitat, of course!

The habitats that prairie grouse require have become increasingly fragmented as a result of competing pressures on the land. Key areas prairie grouse need are isolated from each other by large areas that are unsuitable for the birds. Some types of land use might be harder for the birds to cross successfully, maybe because of exposure to lots of predators, or because the birds are reluctant to pass through them. If the areas with habitat are too far apart, or too hard to get to, the birds might have a hard time colonizing new areas or moving to areas with potential mates.

The Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan is a collaborative effort of many conservation agencies interested in connecting open habitats for wildlife. This plan recognizes the importance of providing movement corridors (pathways) to connect isolated habitat areas. The Greater Prairie-chicken is identified by this plan as an indicator species for upland prairie and grassland habitat. Similarly, sharp-tailed grouse must be able to move among isolated brushland habitat areas. If we understand how prairie grouse move through the landscape, we can try to help them by providing corridors and allocating our efforts in ways that will help the birds the most.

Landscape genetics provides a tool to examine connectivity on the landscape by combining maps with genetic information. Birds sampled from areas that have successful movements among them will be more similar genetically than birds from areas that have been isolated from each other for a long time. This tool is much easier to use to look at animal movements than other techniques like radiotelemetry, which can be expensive and may require large numbers of marked animals if successful movements are infrequent. Landscape genetic methods have been used in recent years to identify barriers to movement in other birds like capercaillie, northern bobwhite, and prairie-chickens. Some movement barriers that have been identified in other species include human development, areas of non-habitat like forest, and distance.

This spring, a new project is beginning and several prairie grouse enthusiasts will use these techniques to try to understand how prairie grouse move through the landscape. We hope to be able to see if roads, forest, or other land uses pose barriers to prairie grouse. We will collect feathers from leks so that we can get DNA out of the feather tips. By looking at the genetic information together with spatial information, we will be able to see which areas the birds can move between successfully, as well as those that the birds can't seem to cross. That way, we can understand how to help connect the landscape for the birds so that we can enjoy them for ages to come! 

## **2014 BRUSH CUT SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY MARCH 22ND**

Mark your calendars for Saturday March 22nd, 2014 as the date that all MSGS members, families, friends and students are invited to join in our efforts to improve Sharp-Tailed Grouse habitat.

We will meet at the Palisade Café in the town of Palisade at 8:15 Saturday morning for breakfast provided by MSGS. After our meal an orientation will be given by a DNR representative, you will be required to sign as a DNR volunteer for the day, which protects volunteers should an accident occur. Cutting tools will be provided by MSGS, but feel free to bring your own non Power tools if you prefer.

After breakfast we will caravan to the work area. Dress for the elements, snow shoes should be brought if the conditions warrant them. At noon we will break for lunch provided by MSGS's great cooks. This will include the world famous "bog burgers" along with other great food. The crew usually quits work by 3:00 P.M.

We hope to see you all this year. This is a time when our Sharpies surely need our help!



## **PF FARM BILL BIOLOGIST PLACED IN AITKIN & UPCOMING SHARP-TAILED GROUSE AND WOODCOCK WORKSHOP FOR LANDOWNERS**

*By Jodie Provost*

After a few years of persistence and patience, the pursuit to get more "boots on the ground", to assist landowners in implementing early successional brushland and forest habitat projects in Aitkin and Carlton Counties, has come to fruition. Jake Granfors was welcomed to the position on January 6 through support from the Farm Bill Assistance Partnership (Pheasants Forever, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Board of Water and Soil Resources, Legislative-Citizen's Commission on Minnesota's Resources) and other partners (Aitkin and Carlton County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Woodcock Minnesota, Ruffed Grouse Society, Riceland Whitetails Chapter of Minnesota Deer Hunters Association, Wildlife Management Institute, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and our own MSGS). What a testament to team work!

Pheasant Forever's has had farm bill biologists and assistants in the farmland region of Minnesota successfully assisting landowners for years with grassland and wetland habitat projects. So why not try the same approach for those habitat projects in the forest region that can't be conducted through timber harvest, such as mowing, shearing, prescribed burning, and prescribed grazing, to help sustain sharp-tailed grouse, woodcock and other wildlife populations requiring young habitats?

Jake will focus on assisting landowners in targeted areas of Aitkin and Carlton Counties with the greatest habitat potential for these unique native game birds. He will provide technical and financial assistance, including assistance in enrollment in Farm Bill programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program. He'll also assist landowners with shallow lake easements to protect and conserve important wild rice lakes and waterfowl habitat. Jake can be contacted at the Aitkin SCWD/NRCS office at [jgranfors@pheasantsforever.org](mailto:jgranfors@pheasantsforever.org), 218-927-6565 x107, or 130 Southgate Drive.

To learn more, stay tuned to MSGS's website for a workshop tentatively scheduled for Long Lake Conservation Center near Palisade on Saturday, May 3. The workshop will include information sharing on the biology and habitat management of sharp-tailed grouse and woodcock, and available assistance programs, time for landowners to develop project ideas,

a sack lunch, and field time to see examples of habitat sites. Pre-registration will be required to allow a head count for lunch and preparation of aerial photos for landowners. 🦋

## **MIKE NORTH BECOMES DNR FOREST GAME BIRD COORDINATOR**

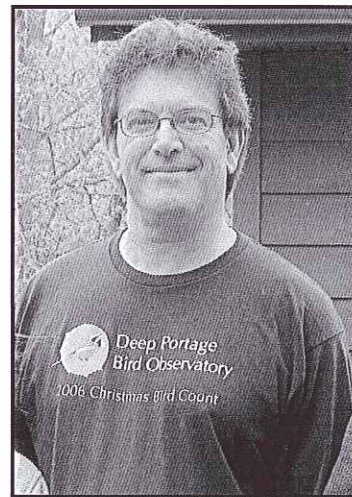
*By Jodie Provost*

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources recently hired Mike North as its new Forest Game Bird Coordinator. This position focuses on facilitating habitat management and recreation involving turkey, ruffed grouse, woodcock, ruffed grouse, spruce grouse and sharp-tailed grouse. Coordinating with partners is an important facet of the position.

Mike has worked for DNR since 1998, primarily in Ecological Resources as a Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist. Prior to coming to DNR, he worked for the U.S. Department of Interior for eleven years, including several years for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska.

He is a huge bird enthusiast and has a master bird banding permit which supports avian research for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Deep Portage Conservation Reserve, and Central Lakes College. Mike credits his conservation ethic to his parents and upbringing at a fishing resort in northern Cass County, and to his grandfather who was vice-president of the Izaak Walton League in Iowa and a colleague of Ding Darling.

Mike can be contacted at [michael.north@state.mn.us](mailto:michael.north@state.mn.us), 218-833-8642, or Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 1601 Minnesota Drive, Brainerd, MN 56401.





We have to walk  
faster

I figure about 7  
miles a bird this  
time of year



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