



THE MINNESOTA SHARPTAILER

Visit Us at Sharptails.org & Facebook

Winter 2023

It's MSGS Volunteer Brush Cut Habitat Days Again!



Itasca Community College students proudly display their Golden Saw, the traveling trophy for bringing the most brush cutters to Gun Lake WMA on March 26, 2022. Nineteen volunteers enhanced 40 acres and created \$4,000 of Conservation Partner Legacy grant match.

What: Hand cut brush on an organized Group Day, work self-guided any time from April 1 - 23 on any of the 3 sites, or do both.

Why: To enhance sharp-tailed grouse habitat, generate in-kind match for a Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) Grant for even more habitat work, and enjoy the reward of giving back for wildlife conservation. Not to mention the outdoors, fresh air, exercise, great fellowship, food, and chance to take home the highly coveted Golden Saw!

Where, When & Who to Contact to Sign Up:

La Qui Parle WMA (southwest of Appleton) - April 1 Group Day (April Fool's Day!) - contact Walt at walt.gessler@state.mn.us

Firebird WMA (northwest of Kettle River) - April 22 Group Day (Earth Day!) - contact Marshall at muzzdog@hotmail.com

Carp Swamp (south of Baudette) - April 15 Group Day - contact Gary at honkerharmony@gvtel.com

How to Sign Up for:

A Group Day - At least one week prior, email the site contact. A flier with directions and maps will be sent. Complete a volunteer agreement form and log hours with the site contact that day. Gather at the site by 9:30 am for a welcome, project, and safety briefing. Morning snacks and lunch will be provided. Work convenes by 3 pm.

Self-Guided Work - At least one week prior, email the site contact to get the volunteer agreement form, complete, and email it back. A flier with directions and maps will be sent. After working, email your number of hours worked plus travel time to the site contact.

How to Cut Brush: Take the flier with directions and maps, warm layers, hat, gloves, water-proof warm boots, snowshoes if deep snow, water bottle, snacks, charged cell phone, and very importantly, hand tools of a hand saw and/or loppers. Saws work well for larger diameter brush and small trees, and loppers best for smaller/whippy diameter brush. Power tools, such as chain saws, are not allowed. Cut all brush and small trees feasible (usually < 3 inches in diameter) within the project area. On Group Day, some hand tools will be available from MSGS, but please bring your own favorites if feasible to ensure enough tools for all.



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Greetings from Griz

Dave Pauly, MSGS President

The ‘godfathers’ of our successful conservation organization set forth a Vision. We have been laser focused during these past 37 years to bring the Mission to fruition! As we continue with our collective Vision Quest to enhance and restore the indigenous “Firebirds” to their cultural heritage in our traditions, it might be beneficial to use this reflection to help find your center and reset your passionate determination! It has provided me spiritual awaking many times.

My Owl Man

... He told me once, quite a few years ago actually, that moonlight will never over-shadow sunlight. He told me that again today, as if he knew I'd forgotten his wonder-filled phrase. He meant that good always triumphs over evil, that the sun will always rise, making for a new day with new chances. That if it all seems dark and dreary, just hang in there, better times are ahead.

I like him, especially on my difficult days.

He's older; he has more wrinkles. And he has had more problems in life. So, when I have one, he finds a way to make it seem less troubling, and maybe it was just "a trifling in life," as he likes to call it. He makes me understand wise - what a person with wisdom is. A someone who uses their knowledge, in the most efficient manner, he says. Well, perhaps, maybe just maybe, a person might not come out on top, not every time, but far better off, forever.

He gives me perspective I can feel.

He says stuff quietly, softly, like waving a feather can send that dismal thought right out of my hand, leaving me.

I can rub my hands with tiny grains of sand and wash away bits and pieces and fragments of my anger, or sing, sing until the pain stops. He told me once to stop talking and just breathe. So slow down sometimes, let the patience in life find you, when you can't find it.

He told me that once, today.

I like today better now!..

Dance On, Grouse On, Carry On,

~Griz

David C Pauly

President | Habitat Projects Coordinator

Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society

Griz@scicable.net / 320-279-1777



Board of Directors:

Executive Board

President - Dave Pauly

Vice President - Kyle Arola

Secretary - Martha Minchak

Treasurer - Jillian Fejszes

Regional Representatives

NW MN - Gary Huschle

NE MN - Marshall Deters

SW MN - Walt Gessler

SE MN - Ray Marshall

Coordinators

Habitat - Dave Pauly

Newsletters - Jodie Provost

Website/Facebook - Matt Breuer

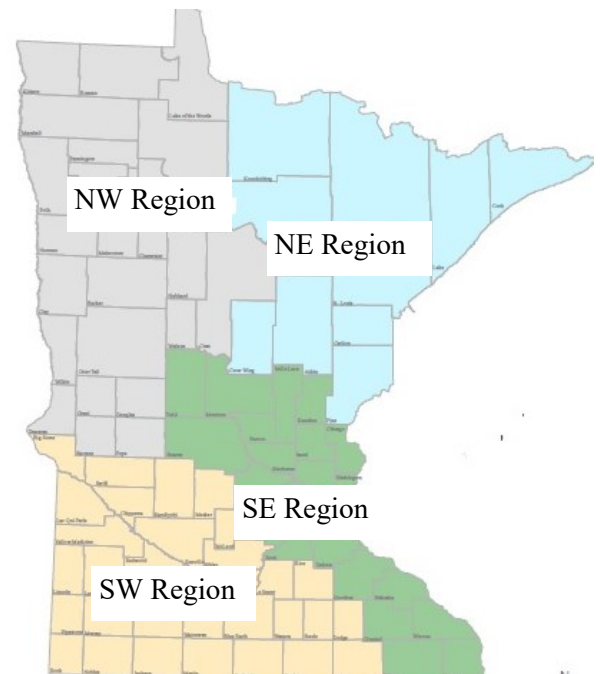
Membership - Dave Dickey

Fundraising/Merchandise - Bailey Petersen

Student Advisor - Bill Faber

Honorary Directors

Roche Lally, Bill Berg, Jamie Slade



The Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society is dedicated to the management and restoration of sharptails in Minnesota for hunters and non-hunters.

Saunter “The Grouse Trail”

at Pheasant Fest, Feb. 17-19, 2023 in Minneapolis

Firebird Fans, you’re invited to shake off the winter blahs by venturing to National [Pheasant Fest](#) on Feb. 17-19 at the Minneapolis Convention Center. Visit the MSGS booth along a special [“Grouse Trail”](#) as well as the many other booths, vendors, and activities the Fest offers. Grouse conservation groups including MSGS, MN Prairie Chicken Society, WI Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, Ruffed Grouse Society, and North American Grouse Partnership will have their own row of booths beside the Public Lands Pavilion. A free social hour will occur on Sat. at 4 pm. Fest goers who visit all 5 grouse booths will be eligible for door prize drawings. And a grouse viewing blind will be set up for those getting spring fever.

Consider volunteering to work a shift at the MSGS booth to shoot the breeze with fellow grouse enthusiasts, garner support for sharptail, and give back to our mighty organization. Contact Jodie at jodie.provost@yahoo.com.

Give Back—Join the MSGS Team

2022 Call for Election Candidates & Volunteers

Team Firebird is seeking nominees for our Annual MSGS Board Election. Nominations are now open for President, Treasurer, and NE and SW MN Regional Representatives (see map to left). All serve two year terms to proudly represent you. We have a wealth of passionate sharptail enthusiasts in our member ranks and conservation community with skills, time, and connections to share. Please get involved on MSGS’s Board by nominating yourself or a worthy friend.

Volunteers are also needed on our team to assist with overseeing sponsorships and fundraising, habitat projects, outreach, policy, Spring Fling, and more. Everyone’s contributions are needed to sustain a strong team and greatly appreciated. The reward of giving back is great and the people you work alongside amazing! Contact President Dave Pauly with questions and to submit nominations or your interest in serving on a team by April 1 (Griz@scicable.net, 320- 279-1777).



Help Find Sharptail in Southwest MN in April

MSGS is seeking volunteers to again help search for sharptail in southwest MN from April 1 to May 15. In recent years, MSGS has collected observations of prairie grouse there to gauge evidence of and potential for viable breeding populations. Despite poor April weather in 2022, the first organized effort found one lek with 12 birds in Yellow Medicine County and other sightings. If you are interested in helping or have questions, send an email to sabin.adams@hotmail.com. Please spread the word to interested others. Watch Sabin’s video from last year [on “The Bird Tales”](#).

Nominees Sought for MSGS’s 2023 Service to Sharptails Award

MSGS is seeking nominees (a person or group) to recognize for their significant impact on meeting MSGS’s mission. The recipient can be a landowner, contractor, researcher, manager, writer, conservation organization, teacher, or other. To nominate a dedicated Firebird Fan, submit a brief explanation of why you think the nominee is worthy and any supporting material to MSGS President Dave Pauly at Griz@scicable.net by April 1. Thank you!

Provost Receives Hamerstrom Award



The Hamerstrom Award, established in honor of [Fred and Fran Hamerstrom](#), pioneers of prairie grouse research and management (pictured below), was presented to Jodie Provost and Jim Pittman at the [34th Prairie Grouse Technical Meeting](#) (PGTC) in Lewiston, Montana last fall. This award was first given in 1991 and has now been presented to 28 individuals and organizations.

Jim was recognized for his instrumental contributions to greater and lesser prairie-chicken research and management in Kansas, and Jodie for her significant contributions to sharp-tailed grouse habitat management and outreach in Minnesota during her DNR career and volunteer work with MSGS.

Jodie is shown to the left with Dr. W. Dan Svedarsky, one of her favorite conservation heroes and inspirations. Dan is a Hamerstrom Award recipient himself (1995), as well as a few others that Minne-

sota Firebird Fans likely know, including John Toepfer (2003), Bill Berg (1999), Terry Wolfe (2013), MN Prairie Chicken Society (2011), and of course MSGS (2017). Jodie is the third women to receive the Award after Fran Hamerstrom (1991) and Patricia McDaniel (2015).



MSGS Life Members Recognition

MSGS members are our life blood and muscle in meeting our mission to manage and restore sharptail in Minnesota for hunters and non-hunters. Hence, we figured it was high time we recognize our 46 Life Members. To them, we are massively grateful for their support. Interested in becoming a Lifer? Go to [sharptails.org](#) and click the Join tab.

Robert Abear
Mason Brothers Co.
Dennis Coulter
Steve Finney
Brian Goodspeed
Sheryl Gudvangen
Dana Isaacson
Wayne Jacobson
Bill Kirchner
Martha Minchak
Raleigh Nelson
Donald Roberts
Steven Roberts
Scott Roberts
Thomas Soule
John Guillemette
Brian Hiller
Lee Hemness Family
East-central Spurs PF Chapter
John Loegering
Brian Pauly
Marilyn Vetter

John Buckentine
Ted Dick
Kurt Estenson
Craig Andresen
Roland Hanson
Terry Lydell
Scott Laudenslager
Paul Spyhalski
Jack Matta
William Berg
Jim Burdine
Marshall Deters
Douglas Forgit
Greg Hoch
Earl Johnson
Mark Johnson
Jim Koehler
Jeff Larson
Dave Pauly
Jodie Provost
Scott Rall

Kenneth Reed
Earl Roed
Michael Whitt

Marilyn Vetter, [new Pheasants Forever President and CEO](#), has been a Life Member with MSGS since 2019. She is the third CEO in Pheasants Forever's 40 year history, a dedicated volunteer, bird dog lover, and passionate about the habitat mission. Hear her speak at the upcoming [Pheasant Fest](#) in Minneapolis.



A Pictorial of Recent Sharptail Habitat Projects

Because Pictures Are Worth A 1,000 Words

& YOU Make All of These Projects Possible Through [Outdoor Heritage Funds](#)

A brush whackin' late summer burn on TNC lands in NW MN. Some of 4600 acres of fire TNC aided in 2022.



Thief Lake WMA brush mow to be followed with a burn.



Halma Swamp WMA brush mowing with Jaarraff Quad Track Linebacker.



Firebird WMA hayfields restored to native plants in Carlton County.



Tree removal on Firebird WMA.



Gun Lake WMA restoration of ag fields to native plants that used winter seeding over snow.



And the key reason we do it.
Grouse On!



My Grand Slam of Prairie Grouse

By Gary Huschle



The late Dr. John Toepfer promoted the idea of a Grand Slam of Prairie Grouse to generate interest and educate about the plight of our native grouse, hoping that it would lead to financial and political support for grouse conservation. Roche Lally wrote about the Grand Slam on these pages several years ago. When John first promoted the idea it was legal to harvest Lesser Prairie Chickens in Kansas and so the basic concept was for a hunter to harvest each of the four prairie grouse species: Sharp-tailed Grouse, Greater Prairie Chicken, Lesser Prairie Chicken and Sage Grouse. Since then Gunnison Sage Grouse has been recognized as a separate species and it and Lesser Prairie Chickens cannot be hunted due to their precariously low populations and limited habitat. Now the Grand Slam would need to entail harvest and/or photographing five species.

In hopes of getting his idea to catch on, John invited Dave Trauba, Greg Septon, and me to accompany him on a Lesser Chicken hunt in the Cimarron Grasslands of Kansas in January of 2004. If we were successful this would give Dr. John a chance to have a Lesser Chicken in his hands to observe and the rest of us a chance at the Grand Slam. Dave Trauba and I traveled together to our destination and met up with John and Greg. We hunted for 3 days. One of the flushes was in front of John. We all yelled for him to shoot. He eventually got a shot off but not until he had the flock counted and probably sexed and aged. Over the course of three days we killed two Lesser Chickens and a couple quail. Both Dave and I shot at one of the Lesser Chickens we killed and Dave was gracious enough to let me claim it. It was an adult male! I then resolved to complete the Grand Slam by harvesting an adult male of the four huntable species and have a mount made of each.

At the time I had hunted and killed a lot of Sage Grouse and Sharp-tails when I lived in Montana for 10 years in the 1980s, but had never had one mounted. I would need to revisit Montana for the Sage Grouse and Minnesota had started having Greater Prairie Chicken hunts in 2003, so the opportunity for a mountable adult male Greater Prairie Chicken and Sharp-tail here in Minnesota would be possible. Surely the Sharp-tail would be easy since they are the most abundant and I could hunt them every year. And Sharp-tails could be hunted not only in Minnesota but maybe collect one on a North Dakota or Montana hunt too. My Gordon Setter, Goose, all ready had Sharp-tails to her resume and just added Lesser Chicken so maybe she could complete the Grand Slam too. My son, Cody, and I went to Montana to hunt Sage Grouse in September 2005. We each killed several grouse but they were young birds and not of mount quality.

I didn't draw a Prairie Chicken permit in Minnesota until 2006. I mostly hunted the new grasslands on The Nature Conservancy lands that would become Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge and State Wildlife Management Areas. The seasons in the early years of Minnesota chicken hunts were held in late October when birds are beginning to have full wings and readily flush, often out of range. But persistence paid off and Goose was finally on point in some old grass on a WMA tucked out of the wind. The bird I knocked down was an adult male and all of the wing feathers had

grown in – a bird worthy of mounting. That completed the grand slam as far as harvesting a bird, but was only two for the mounts. Goose didn't care. She now had completed the Grand Slam.

While hunting the Lesser Chickens in Kansas, I told Greg and Dave that I would be willing to guide a Sage Grouse hunt in Montana. It wouldn't be until October of 2012 that the three of us made time to make this hunt. We went during the last week of October, the end of the season to increase our chances of shooting a cock worthy of mounting. We hunted for several cold, windy days and on the last morning got into a flock of old cocks. We each knocked an old cock out of the big sky. The third mount was obtained.

To obtain a full winged mount worthy bird, one needs to hunt later in the season. Unfortunately on prairie grouse success goes way down after early October. I started making at least one hunt for Sharp-tails during the last week of November to try and obtain the elusive adult cock Sharp-tail. It wasn't until November 2019 that I was successful. I was following the dogs across a large hay field when they both went on point. Before I got close the birds flushed with most of them headed away in a hurry, but one made a mistake and flew the opposite direction angling across in front of me. I made the shot and hurried in to get to the bird before the dogs could remove any feathers. The Grand Slam of mounted birds was complete!

MSGs Winter Board Meeting Summary

by Martha Minchak, Secretary

The MSGS board convened via zoom on Jan. 3, 2023 from 3:30 to 6:30 pm. Present were President Dave Pauly, Vice President Kyle Arola, Secretary Martha Minchak, Treasurer Jill Fejszes, Newsletter Editor Jodie Provost, Regional Reps Gary Huschle - NW, Marshall Deters - NE, and Ray Marshall - SE, and Student Advisor Bill Faber.

Officer reports included the need to seek nominees for the spring election as well as other volunteers (see pg. 3). A committee was formed to seek nominees. Total membership sits at 244, including 46 Life Members (see pg. 4).

Regional reports included deep snow in the north and a wealth of projects in NW MN including shearing, mowing, timber harvest, prescribed fire, and buckthorn treatments, courtesy of MDHA and MSGS CPL grants (see pg. 5).

Several habitat projects across sharptail range made possible with CPL grants to MSGS are in progress or nearing completion. They include sites at La Qui Parle WMA, Carp Swamp, Rat Root River, Thief Lake WMA, Rutledge WMA, Kroschel WMA, Baudette Wildlife Area, Littlefork River WMA, Mille Lacs WMA, Cloquet Wildlife Area, and Aitkin Wildlife Area. Go Griz!

Outreach discussion included prep for a booth at Pheasant Fest on the "Grouse Trail" (see pg. 3), a booth at MN TWS annual meeting, the need for more merchandise, how to improve upon Give to the Max Day, seeking corporate sponsorships, winter newsletter items, prep for spring Brush Cuts to generate CPL match, the DNR Window on Wildlife Cam on a lek again, participation in the DNR Roundtable, help surveying for SW MN sharptail again, website update needs, collaboration with PF's East-central-MN Spurs, and engaging DNR in implementation of our MN Sharp-tailed Grouse Management Plan.

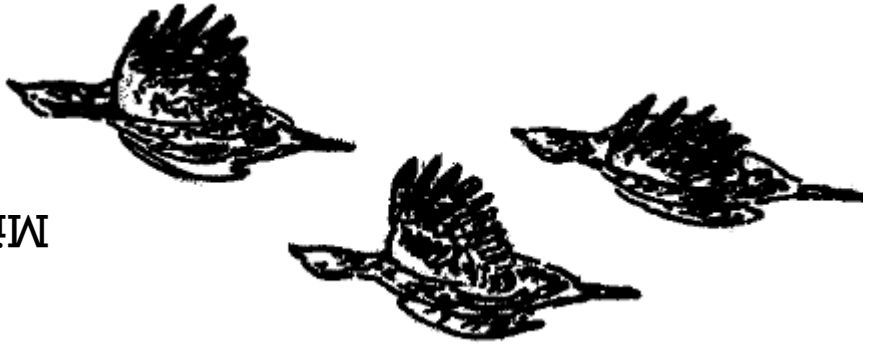
The next board meeting will be held on Sat., Aug. 26, 2023 at the LaPorte picnic shelter.

Sharptail Short Shots

- [DNR Window on Wildlife](#) for the 2nd year in its existence will again feature a sharp-tailed grouse lek in April.
- [MN Prairie Chicken Society](#) will hold its **50th Annual Meeting** on Saturday, April 22, Earth Day, at Rothsay. Congrats to our sister organization! Let's be sure to celebrate with them!



**Minnesota Sharp-tailed
Grouse Society**



MSGGS values its members, communications and funds. To reduce newsletter mailing costs, con-serve funds for other important outreach and habitat opportunities, and allow special communications via email, members are encouraged to provide their email addresses to membership coordinator, Dave Dickey, at 99whitetail@gmail.com. MSGGS will not share members' email addresses. Hard copies of newsletters will continue to be mailed to members with no e-mail address and/or those that desire a hard copy.

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