



MINNESOTA PRAIRIE CHICKEN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Winter 2005 Vol. 31, No. 2



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MPCS Award from the Wildlife Society

By Brian Winter

In February 2005, the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society, that means all of you, was honored with the Conservation Award from The Wildlife Society, Minnesota Chapter. The Conservation Award is given yearly by the Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society to an organization or institution that has shown an outstanding commitment to Minnesota's resources. "No organization fits this criterion better than the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society", stated Janet Boe who presented (Paul Anderson MPCs Board Member) and Brian Winter (MPCS President) the award at their annual Banquet in Fergus Falls.

We were recognized in part because we have helped sponsor a study of the winter ecology of prairie chickens in northwestern Minnesota, initiated the Prairie Chicken Restoration Project in the Upper Minnesota River Valley, sponsored a Prairie Chicken Workshop for prairie managers in the Lac Qui Parle area, provided funds for the creation of 3 Prairie Chicken Educational Trunks, helped sponsor yearly Prairie Day Celebrations, built booming ground viewing blinds for public use in Otter Tail and Norman counties, and funded the purchase of burn equipment for MN DNR burn crews. In addition, we hold an annual meeting each April, award our own Friend of the Prairie Chicken Award, publish a quarterly newsletter, and host a website.

We appreciate The Wildlife Society award and thanks belongs to the MPCs board and our entire membership for tireless efforts promoting this wonderful prairie bird. Take a moment to pat yourself on the back for a job well done. We thank the Wildlife Society for this wonderful recognition. Janet when on to say in her presentation of the award at their annual banquet "the group is one of the premier organizations in western Minnesota when it comes to prairie conservation and restoration". That ought to make you proud to be a member and supporter of the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society.



PICTURED ABOVE: Paul Anderson, Brian Winter and Janet Boe, TWS Awards Committee Chairperson.

Joint MPCs-MSGs Spring Meeting - April 15 & 16

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by Ross Hier

Please join us late Friday afternoon and into the evening on April 15 as we have a little "lekking behavior" starting around 17:00. We will have cheese, cold cuts and cracker trays available. Potable items will be on your own terms. This will be a great opportunity to mingle with various grouse enthusiasts and admirers of open landscapes. So join us for some "whooping" and "cacklin".

On Saturday, April 16 we will have much more than just a meeting going on starting mid-morning. Well before that, those that desire to go on an early morning field trip will have the chance to do so. We will likely have trips to brushland habitats courtesy of someone from the Thief River Falls Wildlife Office and one that will take folks southward towards Hwy 2 to view more open grassland-type habitats and critters there. If you plan to go on a morning field trip, be at the Best Western Motel parking lot by 05:00. Sorry ... no refreshments will be available at that time.

Those that would like to see prairie chickens up close on the 15th, 16th or 17th need to call Ross H. Hier (218-281-6063) to reserve a blind. It is about a 40 minute drive from the Thief River Falls area to the various chicken viewing blinds located south of U.S. Hwy 2.

Plan to be at the Best Western by 09:00 or earlier for Registration and chatter. The Registration tables will open at 08:30. This year's meeting will cost attendees \$10.00 for morning and afternoon refreshments. Attendees can also renew their society memberships at the same time. Please find below the remainder of the agenda. **We'll be happy to see you at this great event!! Travel safely now!**



See
The
Meeting
Agenda
On the
Next
Page!

www.prairiechicken.org

MPCS AND MSGS SPRING FLING

PRELIMINARY AGENDA

SATURDAY, APRIL 16

- 9:00AM** RETURN FROM BLINDS AND FIELD TRIPS
- 9:00-9:30** INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME, MODERATOR **BILL BERG**
- 9:40** THE DOMINANT COCKS STRUT THEIR STUFF—MESSAGES FROM THE MPCS PRESIDENT **BRIAN WINTER**, AND MSGS PRESIDENT **ROCHE LALLY**
- 9:50** “THE BOOMING AND THE DANCING.” BRIEF REPORTS FROM PARTICIPANTS ON THE SATURDAY MORNING FIELD TRIPS AND OBSERVATION BLINDS.
- 10:00** DNR’S PERCEPTION OF PRAIRIES AND PRAIRIE CHICKENS, AND SHARPTAILS AND BRUSHLANDS, BY **LARRY NELSON**, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF DNR DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGASSIZ NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE’S COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION PLAN, AND PLANS TO RESTORE AN OPEN LANDSCAPE, **MARGARET ANDERSON**, AGASSIZ MANGAGER, AND **GARY HUSCHLE**, AGASSIZ BIOLOGIST
- 10:20** THE NEW GLACIAL RIDGE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, **JASON CKSTEIN**, THE NATURE CONSERVANCY AT GLACIAL RIDGE NWR.
- 11:00** A BIRD’S ERE VIEW OF THE PRAIRIE; A PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY BY **KELLY KRABBENHOFT**
- 11:20** MANAGING PRIVATE LANDS FOR BRUSHLANDS AND PRAIRIES, WHAT THE DNR AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE CAN DO FOR YOU. **JODIE PROVOST** AND **BLANE KLEMEK**, DNR PRIVATE LANDS SPECIALISTS FROM AITKIN AND BEMIDJI, AND **AL GUSTAFSON**, NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE, THIEF RIVER FALLS.
- 11:50** PRIORITIZING SHARPTAIL AND PRAIRIE CHICKEN RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT IN MINNESOTA. **MIKE LARSON**, DNR’S NEW GROUSE BIOLOGIST, GRAND RAPIDS.
- 12:10** RECOLLECTIONS OF PRAIRIE CHICKENS AND SHARPTAILS OF YESTERYEAR, AND RAISING GROUSE IN CAPTIVITY. **CLIFFORD STIENHAURER**, MINNESOTA.
- 12:30—1:30** BREAK FOR BUFFET LUNCH AT POOLSIDE, FUNDRAISING, AND MERCHANDISE SALES.
- 1:30-3:30** SEPARATE BUSINESS AND INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS FOR MSGS AND MPCS
- 3:30** RAFFLE PRIZE DRAWINGS
- 4:00** WRAP UP AND ADJOURN

**Please be generous— your contributions benefit the birds and will be split by MPCS and MSGS to be used as match dollars for grants.*



My first edition! Thanks once again to Rhonda for her good work and enthusiasm. I came to the MPCS by way of Earl and my love for prairies, and fresh air. I'm currently working as a contract employee for Ducks Unlimited in Detroit Lakes restoring wetlands and prairies through the USDA Wetlands Reserve Program. My family and I truly love the area and its many outdoor activities. Since arriving I have heard many good things about the MPCS board and members. They have the respect of many professional colleagues and prairie enthusiasts throughout the Midwest. I look forward to the work ahead and the predawn flight of many Prairie Chickens.

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RESTORING THE GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN TO WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA – 2004 PROGRESS REPORT

Dr. John E. Toepfer, Society of Tympanuchus Cupido Pinnatus, Plover, WI 54467
David R. Trauba, Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources, Watson, MN 56295
Sara C. Vacek, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Morris, MN 56267

This past year, 2004, marked the sixth year of efforts to restore the once native greater prairie chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus*) into vacant grassland habitats in west-central Minnesota. In April 2004, 101 wild greater prairie chickens (48 cocks: 53 hens) were trapped and translocated to 9 different sites within the 1,512-km² project area. This was the second year of large-scale April releases and brings the total number of greater prairie chickens released since 1999 to 432.

Number of birds by sex and release site,

April 2004: Twin Lakes WPA 12 (6 cocks: 6 hens); Dismal Swamp WPA 9 (5 cocks: 4 hens); Mosquito Ranch 13 (7 cocks: 6 hens); Shelstad Tract 11 (5 cocks: 6 hens); Rothi WPA 17 (12 cocks: 5 hens); Big Stone NWR 9 (4 cocks: 5 hens); Sleeping Bison 12 (4 cocks: 8 hens); Hegland 13 (5 cocks: 8 hens); Chippewa Prairie 5 (5 hens). All of the hens and 39 of the cocks were radio-marked to monitor survival, movements and nesting.

Booming Grounds - Twelve booming grounds totaling 70 cocks were located within the project area in early April 2004. Booming ground survey completed prior to the release of the additional birds described above. This is an increase over the 9 booming grounds with 49 cocks recorded in 2003. Number of cocks per booming ground: Chippewa Prairie N = 17 cocks; Chippewa Prairie S = 5 cocks; Shelstad Tract = 3 cocks; Hegland = 5 cocks; Sleeping Bison = 7 cocks; Plover Prairie = 11 cocks; Big Stone NWR = 1 cock; CRP South of Big Stone = 2 cocks; Twin Lakes WPA = 5 cocks; Rothi WPA = 3 cocks; Dismal Swamp WPA = 7 cocks; Miller Prairie = 4 cocks.

Nest Success – Thirty-two nests of radio marked hens were monitored in 2004. Nest

success (one egg hatched) was 65.6% (21 of 32). This is the highest nest success rate reported for the project area since 1999.

Ringed-necked pheasant nest parasitism -

Fourteen of 32 (43.7%) prairie chicken nests contained at least one ring-necked pheasant egg. One prairie chicken nest contained fifteen pheasant eggs and sixteen prairie chicken eggs. Parasitism rate by release site: Chippewa Prairie 69.2% (9/13); Hegland 50.0% (2/4); Sleeping Bison 33.3% (1/3); Plover 20% (1/5); Twin Lakes WPA 20.0% (1/5); Dismal Swamp WPA 0% (0/2). The incidence of pheasant nest parasitism appears directly related to pheasant density as indicated by pheasant crowing count surveys near nest sites. Pheasant eggs were removed from the parasitized prairie chicken nests.

Establishment Rate - Winter Release - 2003

–From 21 thru 28 November 2003, 24 radio-marked cocks were released at four areas with established booming grounds (resident birds). These cocks were released at Chippewa Prairie (9), Plover Prairie (8), Dismal Swamp WPA (4) and Sleeping Bison (3). All of these cocks survived to April and all established within the project area. Movements of cocks released in late fall/early winter were limited as 45.8% (11/24) established on the booming ground where they were released and 33.3% (8/24) established on an adjacent booming ground. The remaining six established on booming grounds 5-25 miles from where they were released. Overall, 79.1% (19/24) of the cocks released during late fall/winter established either on the booming ground they were released or on an adjacent booming ground.

Continued on page 6

RESTORING THE GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN TO WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA – 2004 PROGRESS REPORT

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Continued from page 5

Establishment Rate – Breeding Season Release – 2004 - Of the 45 radio-marked translocated birds located and known to have survived to summer (June 1 or nest establishment), 51.7% established within the project area. This is comparable to the 2003 establishment rate of 53.4%. Hens established within the project area at a rate approximately 12% higher than cocks, 45.0% versus 57.4%, in 2004. The establishment rate was highest for immature hens at 69.2% followed by adult hens 52.4%, then immature and adult cocks 43.8% and 45.8% respectively. In 2003 cocks established at a slightly higher establishment rate than hens 55.2% versus 50%. The exact reason for the high rate of establishment for immature hens in 2004 is not known but probably related to the fact that they have never nested and do not have a strong association or familiarity with a home nesting area. The overall 2003 and 2004 establishment rate was 52.4%. These relatively high establishment rates for translocated prairie chickens indicate that they are attracted to reside prairie chicken as related to reintroductions. Ph.D. dissertation. Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana. 533 pages.

Toepfer, J. E., R. L. Eng, and R. K. Anderson. 1990. Translocating prairie grouse – what have we learned? North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference 55: 569-579.

THE ADVENTURES OF TYMPIE NUCHUS

By ROSS HIER



Lysaker Prints to support Observation Blinds

By Earl Johnson

A donation of prints by Twin Valley, MN, artist Gene Lysaker will benefit two 501c3 tax deductible organizations: the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society and the Twin Valley Heritage & Art Center.

Mr. Lysaker has donated his entire printing of 100 limited edition prints (12"x16"image) of his original painting "Foggy Morning Booming" (shown top right) of a prairie chicken rooster with two hens that shows the intensity of a spring morning on the prairie. Purchases of the \$75 prints will assist to build and maintain observation blinds available for the public to watch the courtship performance of Prairie Chickens on their "booming grounds". Two blinds are available, with one of them accessible to a wheel chair and given priority for handicapped persons. The blinds will be available for use from April 2 through May 22.

The Greater Prairie Chicken, formerly a species of special concern, has been restored to population levels supporting a limited hunting season that started in 2003 after closed hunting seasons since 1942. This bird occupies Minnesota from US Hwy 2 near Crookston south to the vicinity of Rothsay, MN. Successful effort to restore this bird to Big Stone and Lac Qui Parle Counties has shown promise with eight booming grounds established and growing in the last three years.

The Twin Valley Heritage & Art Center opened in 1996 to display museum artifacts and to inform residents and visitors of the history and the arts of this area's residents. The Center is located on MN Hwy 32 in the center of town and is open 9-4:30 Mon-Sat and 12:30-4:30 on Sunday.



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Prairie Chicken Observation Blinds Available

Reservations for blind use may be made for any day from about April 1 through May 30. Seating capacity of blinds is usually 3 to 6 persons.

General Rules for Use include:

Be seated inside the blind 45 minutes before Sunrise.

Stay inside the blind until after the birds are flushed or scared by a natural (external) cause.

Birds usually quit "booming" about 8:30 am.

Audubon, MN
218-439-6319

1 blind, 6.5 mi N
Hamden Slough NWR,
Mary or Mike

Crookston, MN
218-281-6063

1 blind, 10 mi SE
MN DNR, Ross Hier

Fertile, MN
218-637-2146 x 12

2 blinds, 10 miles N
Glacial Ridge Project, TNC,
Brian Kelly

Glyndon, MN
218-498-2679

2 blinds, 6 miles SE
The Nature Conservancy,
Sonia Winter

Twin Valley, MN
218-584-5658
Center

2 blinds, 2 & 5 miles SW
Twin Valley Heritage & Art
Center

Your call to volunteers at the **Twin Valley Heritage & Art Center** at **218-584-5658** can reserve the use of an observation blind and/or request your print of Gene Lysaker's "Foggy Morning Booming". The print cost of \$75 gives a charitable donation of \$65 to assist these organizations to fulfill their missions.

The prairie chickens start dancing and "booming" on the first warm mornings of February and March and will continue into the month of June. The peak of breeding activity and, thus, the most entertaining time to watch them is mid April through mid May.

Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society Membership

**Changing addresses?
Please keep in touch!
Send your new address to:
Earl Johnson,
14583 Co. Hwy 19**

Your gift and membership will help! A \$10 or more tax-deductible contribution will bring you the MPCS Newsletter and supports the Society's efforts to save Minnesota's prairie chickens and their habitats. The number in the upper right hand corner of your mailing label shows the year of your most recent membership. Renew your membership today!

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Email: _____

YES NO Amount
 _____ *Registration-joint MPCS-MSGs meeting* \$15.00

_____ *I would like to make a membership contribution.* _____

_____ *I would like to contribute to the Prairie Chicken Restoration Project.* _____

MPCS	T-Shirt	Natural ONLY	MED-XXL	\$10	Size _____
SHIRTS	Henley	Black ONLY	L-XL	\$20	Size _____
	Button Down	Natural ONLY	L-XL	\$25	Size _____
					Add \$5 S&H _____

Please add \$5 for shipping & handling(S&H)

Total \$ _____

The Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society is a nonprofit wildlife conservation organization exempt from Federal Income tax as described in Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions made to the Society are deductible by donors as provided in Section 170 of the Code. The Society's Federal Identification Number is 41-1327954. Please make your tax-deductible checks payable to the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society. Send to Earl Johnson, Treasurer, 14583 Co. Hwy 19, Detroit Lakes, MN 56501, 218/847-1578.



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