

Michigan Sharp-tailed Grouse Association March 2023 Newsletter

Greeting members and friends,

In the last few weeks between normal phone calls, conference calls and meetings involving sharpies, I've put in at least 20 hrs. and 200 plus miles, which is all good for our organization and our mission. And I am happy to report that although nothing earth shaking is happening, there are small steps of progress being made.

We have been asked to join a partnership with the Wisconsin and Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Groups, which will certainly benefit our little organization. One of the Wisconsin members has offered to do our social media, which has worked out great. Jodi Provost from the Minnesota group is putting together a summit of sorts for the three states. Jodi has a lot of ambition and is instrumental in the renewed interests in Sharpies. Heather Shaw (MDNR), who is our key supporter in the mid to western UP. set up a conference call with folks from WI & MN, which was super productive. It was certainly educational for me as a layman, to hear their history of Sharp-tailed Grouse management, some of the current projects and their success as organizations. Many ideas were discussed for future plans and they have offered us a ton support.

Our annual meeting that was held in Seney last August was well attended and I think very productive. A few new members attended and had some very good discussions. After lunch, Heather Shaw, MDNR acted as tour guide and took us to a couple of recent burn projects. A good time was certainly had by all. And as always, even though I have been on these outings for over 20 years now, I certainly learned many new things regarding the habitat. Thanks, Heather, for leading us and for your current efforts, your dedication is defiantly appreciated.

NEXT AUGUST I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A MEETING CENTERED AROUND THE WORK BEING DONE NEAR RACCO. I WILL SEND OUT AN ANNOUNCMENT ONCE THAT IS FINALIZED.

2023 dues are due, and again we will stay at \$25.00.

Our small but stable membership numbers enable us to help with some wildlife plantings, and pay for a couple of lunches for the youth groups who either participating in tree or seed plantings or attend the annual Ruffed Grouse Society youth pheasant hunts. We did get some new hats, but if you want to buy one. consider coming to or next meeting to get it. I know I'm a cheapskate, but it costs \$8:00 to send one in the mail.

I keep getting asked about the past hunting season, unfortunately, I have not seen any survey results for the last couple of years. I can tell you that the HAP properties were extremely busy and that I went there 3 unsuccessful times. The log in-out sheets were usually full. Also, from hunters that I know and through random conversations, people were seeing a large number of birds, just not in range or where you could hunt them.

Last year I mentioned the USFS grants for the Racco area, which are around \$85,000.00 and the plans are in place for some large burns, followed by plantings of warm season grasses. Let's hope Mother Nature co-operates and allows the burns to take place. Paul Thompson from the St. Ignace office of the Hiawatha National Forest is heading this up. Paul did a small test plot last year and was shocked how fast the birds found it. The purpose of the warm season grasses will be for insects that the birds need to eat and the avian cover it will provide for the sharpies. What never ceases to amaze myself and the professionals is how fast the birds respond to fire. One of the biologists from Wisconsin stated the same results, somehow these birds find these fires and show up almost immediately after. I know that these projects sound kind of simple, but they are extremely complex and time consuming, and expensive. One of the difficulties that Paul is working on currently is that he needs to plant Michigan native grasses and you just don't go to a feed and seed store and buy them, but he is working with a nursery for this source. Just a little tidbit of info that goes into a "little project like this".

Now to tie into the above subject. Last year we were gifted \$1,300.00 from a group of involved, upstanding conversationalist/hunters called the Michigan Upland Experience. Once a year they auction off a gourmet dinner that is delivered and served to the highest bidder, and I think it has usually been to a hunting camp. This money is then given to an upland group or project, where it will do the most good. And last year it was given to us. So, to put this hard earned and generously given money to the best use for Sharp-Tailed and Ruffed Grouse, I would like to help purchase seed for the Racco project and also a project that Heather Shaw is putting together, north of Shingelton. In the scope of what these projects cost, our donation might not seem very big, but for MSGA, it is a huge amount of money. We will also be able to add \$500.00 or so to that from our dues. My heartfelt thanks goes out to Steve & Karen Rodak, who are also MSGA members, the members of Michigan Upland Experience and especially to Brett Rohrscheib who won last year's dinner auction. You can learn more about their group by looking them up on Facebook.

It is lek survey, time again and I am enclosing a few attachments for those of you who might want to help. Jayne Roohr's (MDNR), phone number is listed but please remember that she is not a tour guide and she can't take you out to a lek sight. We are very fortunate to have Jayne working as a Wildlife Tech in Newberry she does a great job and has helped us out greatly.

My phone no. is 231-420-8600 that's it for now.

Michigan Sharp-tailed Grouse President Marty Sarrault