

Wisconsin Sharptail Grouse Status 2007

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Abstract

The total number of dancing males on the 9 managed tracts in Wisconsin increased from 137 in 2006 to 194 this year, indicating a 42% increase in the sharptail population since last year. Despite this increase, the overall population has been gradually declining since 1999 (Figure 2). Survey efforts on unmanaged lands, conducted by the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society and other volunteers, indicated a slight increase in sharptail numbers in 2007, with a total of 206 birds found this spring compared to 196 last year.

Methods

Sharp-tailed grouse populations on managed properties were monitored by counting displaying males on dancing grounds. Dancing grounds were approached afoot or by vehicle and observations were made from blinds placed on dancing grounds. Male birds were identified with the aid of field glasses. A complete census of these displaying grounds was attempted on those properties designated as sharptail management tracts (Figure 1).

Sharp-tailed grouse surveys on unmanaged lands were concentrated within a portion of northwestern Wisconsin, primarily in deer management units 2 and 9 (Figure 1). Surveys on private lands generally involved selecting one or more blocks of the best available habitat and then conducting listening routes along roads transecting those blocks. Dancing grounds found within habitat blocks were approached and birds were flushed. The total number of birds flushed from each site was counted, with no attempt being made to distinguish sexes.

Surveys are a cooperative effort between DNR, USFS, GLIFWC, Northland College, members of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, and volunteers.

Results

The 2007 dancing ground survey indicated slight increases in sharptail numbers on nearly all managed sites including: Crex Meadows W.A., Douglas County W.A., Kimberly Clark W.A., Namekagon Barrens W.A., Pershing W.A., Riley Lake W.M.A., and Dike Seventeen W.A. (Table 1). Moquah Barrens W.M.A. observed the same number of sharptails as in 2006. One survey, in the Wood County W.A., was not completed this year.

Replicates of these traditionally surveyed areas are the most dependable index to changes in the sharptail grouse population.

Survey efforts on unmanaged lands resulted in a count of 206 birds in deer management units 2 and 9. This count was 5% higher than obtained during similar survey operations conducted in 2006.

Table 1. Sharptail Population Trends on Managed Lands from 1991-2007.

Number of Dancing Males on Sharptail Grouse Management Areas from 1991-2007																	
Property	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Crex Meadows W.A.	126	47	53	57	86	110	117	132	111	112	73	61	61	53	49	38	45
Douglas County W.A.	5	4	2	8	12	9	9	18	20	16	11	12	20	21	14	15	28
Kimberly Clark W.A.	56	32	20	20	28	20	15	25	40	39	5	9	4	n/a	0	3	9
Moquah Barrens W.M.A.	6	9	6	7	21	14	17	34	40	36	19	35	29	14	7	6	6
Namekagon Barrens W.A.	28	25	16	25	39	44	54	65	43	24	9	21	42	25	19	42	51
Pershing W.A.	37	34	24	16	26	30	43	34	22	**	19	13	3	16	11	16	28
Riley Lake W.M.A.	25	8	5	7	18	17	19	19	27	27	17	12	17	16	12	16	25
Wood County W.A.	54	13	11	16	19	18	10	17	18	6	0	8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Dike Seventeen	16	10	9	9	8	7	3	18	3	6	0	2	2	3	2	1	2
Total	353	182	146	165	257	269	287	362	325	284	159	173	178	148	114	137	194

*Not a complete count of dancing males.

**A few dancing males were present.

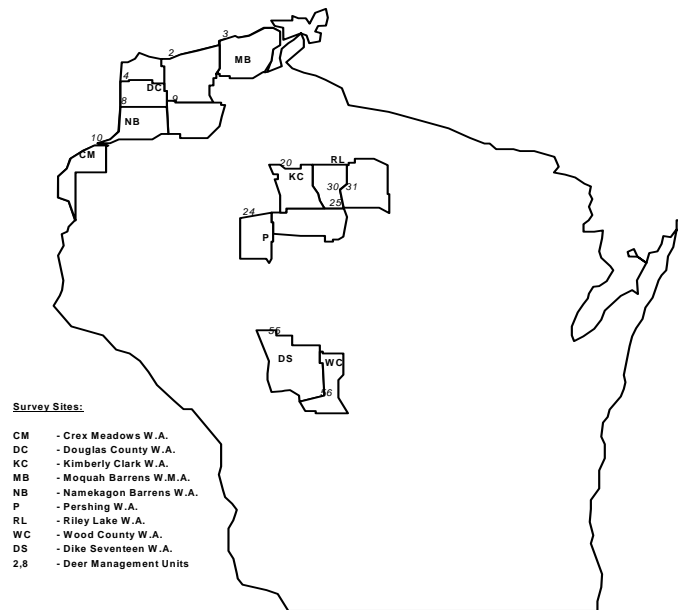


Figure 1. 2007 Sharptail survey area.

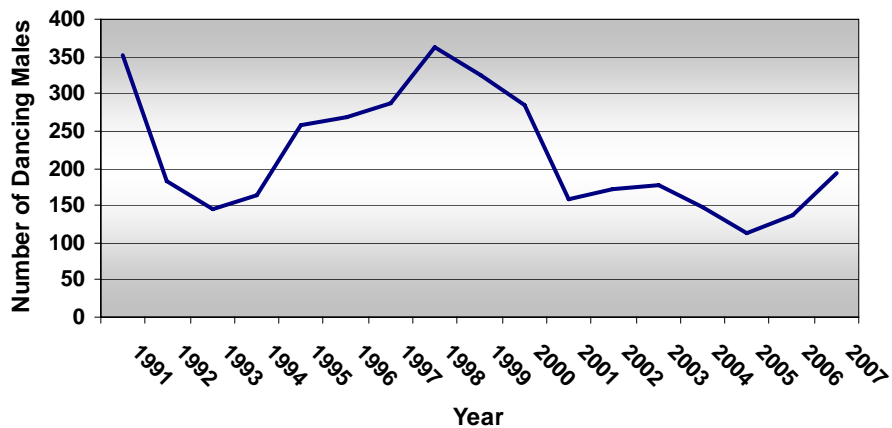


Figure 2. Number of Dancing Males on Sharptail Grouse Management Areas from 1991-2007.