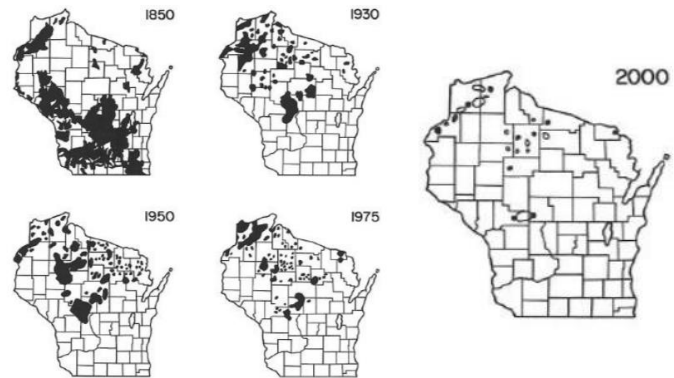




Protocol and Pledge Sharp-tailed Grouse Viewing Blinds

Welcome to Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area, home to the largest population of sharp-tailed grouse in Wisconsin and to a beautiful, globally rare habitat. All efforts must be made to maximize mating and brood success. Wisconsin Sharp-tailed grouse populations have diminished. There are even less now than what is shown in 2000.



Concerns that viewing blind use may reduce mating behavior have been confirmed. Recent Minnesota DNR research documented less mating behavior at leks when viewers arrived later or left earlier than recommended, compared to when people followed protocol. For this reason, **all users must agree to obey the Protocol to reduce disturbances during mating and to keep viewing blinds open to the public. Only visitors that sign and agree can reserve a blind.**

VIEWING PROTOCOL & PLEDGE

- **Be in the blind at least 45 minutes before sunrise** ([NBWA Sunrise](#)), the earlier the better. Females visit leks most often in early morning and are less likely to return later after being flushed. Be quiet and move slowly while in the blind.
- **Remain in the blind until the birds have left at the end of the display period (often roughly about 8:00 AM) or if birds are flushed by a predator.**
- **When you leave, close the door and windows, and leave quickly and quietly in case they wish to return to the lek.**

My reservation party and I will follow the above protocol because we value healthy, sustained populations of sharp-tailed grouse and want to keep viewing blinds available.

Users must agree to this Pledge when [reserving a blind](#).

Expectations and Proper Planning

Expect it to be winter-weather cold; dress warm and bring something hot to drink. In order to adhere to Protocol, we suggest you wait to drink your liquids until you are in the blinds and use the “bathroom” prior to entering the blinds. **Toilet is located south of St. Croix just off of Gomulak.** Birds typically dance 2-3 hours. Often birds flushed by predators will return within 5-20 minutes, especially if flushed early in the morning.

To assist us in our survey efforts, please **fill out the survey found in the blind and leave it in the folder.** This survey is used to estimate population numbers and determine harvest objectives. Males display an orange eye comb and a violet throat patch when they dance. Females do not dance and appear more slender in the head and neck because they lack the eye comb and throat patch.

To reduce disturbances, **park your vehicle by the posted parking area signs** on the firebreaks. We highly recommend you visit the blind at least once during day light prior to your reserved morning to help navigate in the dark. Look for a small sign that reads “STG Blind” for access location. A small flashlight may also be helpful. Enter the blind through the rear zippered panel. Each blind contains three, small, padded seats and comfortably accommodates three adults.

The best activity occurs when the sky is clear, winds are calm, weather is cool and females are on the dancing ground. If you arrive late, females are less likely to be present and activity will be reduced. Heavy precipitation and strong windy mornings limit lek activity.

You will be able to watch birds with binoculars and take photos through the window flaps on three sides of the blinds. Minimize movement and noise when in the blind.

Enjoy the show!

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