

# Douglas County Grouse Management Project Field Notes

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1948

**April 23** – Bill Feeney and I flushed 2 sharp-tails from a small booming ground about 200 yards southwest of Wildner's mail box. Time – 4:15PM. This is in NE NE Sec. 15.

Wes Newcomb saw 2 sharp-tails budding in aspen trees in open field just north of county M in SW SE Sec. 16, on April 21.

Feeney, Claire Wildner and I cruised most of the project area by car in afternoon and did not see any grouse.

**April 27** – I flushed 3 sharp-tails at west end of field in NE NE Sec. 16 at 330 PM.

Found one coyote scat containing white snowshoe rabbit hair and bone fragments; on course in NE SW Sec. 16. Scat was old.

One redtail hawk seen in SE NW Sec. 15.

**April 28** – One male marsh hawk seen in SW NW Sec. 15.

Three sharp-tails on Sec. 15 booming ground at 830 AM. I watched them until 845. Two of the birds were displaying, while one remained inactive.

Found 5 owl pellets under a jack pine near trap line #2B marker. They were old and all contained white hair and bone fragments of snowshoe hare. Under the same tree was a partially gallinaceous bird skeleton, species unknown.

Found 2 coyote scats in jack pine clump at plant quadrat #4B. One was old and contained white snowshoe hair and bone fragments. The other did not seem to be too old, although it contained deer hair, bone and hoof fragments, apparently of a fawn.

Found 2 deer antlers in same clump that had been gnawed by small rodents.

Five sharp-tails were all booming on Sec. 15 booming ground when I arrived at 430. They were still there when I left at 530.

**April 29** – C.F. Garvey and I flushed one sharp-tail from E. edge of NE end of clearing in NE SE sec. 16 at 9 AM.

No grouse on Sec.15 booming ground at 9 AM, but flushed 3 sharp-tails about 100 yards west of it. This booming ground is about 15 x 7 yards in area and is bean shaped around the peak of a small knoll.

Five birds were on Sec. 15 booming grounds at 330. A male marsh hawk made a pass at them at 410, and the birds flushed to a spot 200 yards SE. Four birds returned at 420 and began dancing at once. The fifth sharp-tail returned at 421 and joined the others. All the birds flew to the booming ground. They were still booming when I left at 445.

Could find no evidence of booming or booming grounds in Sec. 11. Could not find any birds south of county M, although this area needs further investigation.

**April 30** – No grouse on or near Sec. 15 booming ground at 630 AM.

Three striped spermophiles and one red squirrel seen on burn area today.

**May 6** – No sharp-tails on Sec. 15 booming ground from 430 to 500 PM.  
3 upland plover seen near booming ground.

**May 7** – No sharp-tails on Sec. 15 booming ground at 1030 AM or 1 PM; 2 on booming ground at 600 PM.

Saw 4 upland plovers, 1 redtail and 1 pair of marsh hawks in sect. 14 today.

Ted Holzer flushed 4 sharp-tails and 2 ruffed grouse in north end of sect. 11 on May 3.

Two sharp-tails were flushed on the May 1 field trials in SE ¼ of Sec. 11 near Soo line tracks. Claire Wildner thinks they are nesting in that area.

The Alfred Etienne family reports sharp-tails increasing, although they did not know of any booming grounds.

**May 8** – Al Etienne reported a flock of 45 sharp-tails at Wildner's corner on county M at about 6 AM on May 6.

**May 12** – Flushed 1 sharp-tail near plant quadrat 3C at 4 PM. 1 ST feeding on aspen catkins in Sec. 15 at 5 PM. This bird also fed on something at the top of a 25' jack pine. No birds on Section 15 booming ground at 530 to 600 PM.

Several upland plovers in "sky dance" during afternoon. Saw a total of nine plovers within a half-mile of sec. 15 booming ground.

**May 13** – George Halazon and I cruised area for booming grounds from 430 to 730 AM and saw 14 sharp-tails as follows:

Sec. 11, SE NE – 1, feeding on jackpine top.

SW SW – 2, feeding on aspen catkins.

Sec. 28, SE NE – 2, flushed from ground, but not booming.

NE NE – 1, see following note.

Sec. 15, NW SW – 1, flushed from edge of jack pine thicket.

NE NE – 7, on or near booming ground. See following note.

Sec. 28 NE NE – at 530 AM, a lone cock sharp-tail was observed to display and hoot just west of road from county M to Stukey's. He occupied a strip about 15 yards long (N-S) and 3 yards wide. This area had only 2 visible dropping, and is apparently little used. I doubt if it is used regularly at all. This bird danced for 15 minutes by himself, and then displayed 3 times at upland plovers, which flushed immediately. About 550 AM this cock flew off the west and disappeared. Booming grounds and cocks must be lacking in this area to produce an individual performance like this, which indicates (to me) a low population.

Sec. 15, NE NE – at 625 AM there were 6 cock sharp-tails in the sec. 15 booming ground, although activity was not as great as it was when this booming ground was passed but not counted about 515 AM. At 630 the birds had started to work away from the booming grounds, walking slowly and feeding. About 645 a lone sharp-tail flew in from the southwest and began feeding on catkins in a 12' aspen south of booming ground at south edge of trail. The birds on the booming ground then walked back to the ground and began displaying again. The bird in top of tree began to hoot intermittently. Four birds ran toward the tree, stopping and dancing as they went. When they had just about

reached the trail, the bird in the tree (about 10 yards away) flew off. The four birds went back to the booming ground and began displaying sporadically. This was at 700 PM. At 705 the first bird flew off the booming ground and by 710 they had all left and the booming ground was deserted. Was the cock hooting in the aspen a stranger?

Saw 1 large doe deer in the field in SW SW Sec. 22.

Alex Yorman told me one of his planting crew found a sharp-tail next with 4 eggs “several miles” east of Solon Springs on May 11. Alex knows location of nest.

**May 14** – Mead Church told me that he has lived in his present location in section 10 for 54 years. Up to 20 years ago as many as 200 prairie chickens used the field across the road from his house in NE NW, Sec. 15 as a booming ground each spring. He used to hide in his cow shed, which is still there, and watch the birds. Since then the number of birds declined and the booming ground is no longer used. Mr. Hanson, down the road from Church, says three or four sharp-tails danced on this ground last spring.

**May 17** – Douglas county burn today. Began 1115 AM, ended 1245 PM. Wind NW to W, moderate; partly cloudy. Vesper sparrows on burned area immediately after fire was out. Found many dead grasshoppers and 1 dead smooth green snake (*Liopeltia vernalis*), but not other wildlife casualties. Flushed 1 ST from edge of burn in NW SW 15 at 330 PM.

**May 28** – Looked over burn and food patch with Ed Carlson. Burn looks good, but needs rain before soil samples can be retaken. Vegetation has not advanced since May 17. Flushed 1 sharp-tail 100 yards SW of sect. 15 booming ground. Booming ground had 1 or two fresh droppings in it. Found several large droppings from egg-laying female sharp-tail in A. Hanson’s clearing at north edge of burn.

Puccoon in blossom in several places.

Section 36 – Mrs. Volker reported very few grouse this spring. She said there was at least 1 booming ground on their farm, because they could hear birds on it every morning SE of farm house. We could not find anything in the immediate vicinity, but found a small ground (5 yds by 3yds) ½ mile SE of house that might be prairie chicken rather than sharp-tail. Saw no birds on area from 130 to 300 PM. Found sharp-tail skeleton lying under telephone wires at roadside ¼ mile south of farm house. Also found several droppings from egg-laying females. Found a dead cock sharp-tail in road at intersection of county S and town road on section line between sections 6 and 31 in T45N and T46N, R10W. Might have been a wire kill. Very dead.

**June 8** – Found fresh grouse droppings in burn near trap line 2B. No sharp-tails seen. Willows sprouting from base very profusely.

**June 9** – Heard one sharp-tail cackle on burn near plant quadrat 4B, but did not see it. A. Hanson has not seen any nests. I could not find any nests either in two hour search.

Saw 2 male marsh hawks and 1 red-tail near Mead Church’s place.

Etienne broke his tractor. Delay will probably be short.

**June 10** – Fire killed all aspen less than 3” DBH. 3” trees average 10 years old (ave. of 10). Largest tree killed by fire was 4 1/2” DBH and 14 years old. Some of jacks apparently killed by fire are seemingly going to pull through. Too early to tell yet.

**June 11** – Plowing of 20 acres buckwheat field completed today.

Harold Etienne reported seeing 1 doe deer, 1 raccoon, and two sharp-tail on burn at 530 AM.

**June 17** – Buckwheat planting completed today. Saw no sharp-tails on area.

**June 18** – No sharp-tails seen on area.

Upland plover must be nesting near east end of buckwheat patch, judging from disturbances they make.

**June 23** – Set control mammal traps. Buckwheat is sprouting.

**June 24** – Worked on electric fence.

**June 25** – Completed electric fence construction today.

**June 26** – Took up traps. Saw no grouse in last three days.

**July 23** – Electric fence is OK. Buckwheat starting to flower; insects present; 1 deer track in field. Buckwheat sprouting in old patch north of field is being eaten by deer.

Saw one male pheasant near stables.

Sharp-tail brood counts: 3 horses, 2-6 PM, north of M, saw 1 adult sharptail without brood in burn area. Hale on foot and in car saw female with 13 young able to fly 50 feet at south edge of Stuckey’s road 100 yards east of telephone line; also saw 4 adults just off road east of Mead Church place.

Ted Holzer reported brood of 10 “small” sharptails in sec.11 about July 10.

**July 24** – Sharp-tail brood counts: 3 horses, 930 to 1 PM, south of M, saw no grouse, 1 great horned owl, 1 redtail, 3 deer (1 was fawn), 2 pheasants which were ½ mile south of Wildner’s. Hale on foot and in car saw female with 6 young sharptails 100 yards south of sec. 15 booming ground; checked brood of 13 and they were still in same place as yesterday, counted 12.

Brood of 10 reported by Dr. Smith near Stuckey’s place.

**July 30** – Stuckey road sharptail brood not found today in last week’s location. Fence is OK; buckwheat all in bloom. Seen on area with Michigan student group: 1 buck and 1 doe deer in sec. 22, 2 marsh hawk, 1 redtail, no sharptails or upland plover.

Seen along Douglas county hwy S in sec. 6-45N-10W: 1 female with 3 young sharptails just able to fly.

**August 4** – Set burn traplines. Heavy growth of vegetation on burn area has almost obscured course #1 trail. Buckwheat electric fence OK; 3 deer tracks and 4 adult grouse tracks entered buckwheat on south side of field.

Saw no grouse today.

Kingbird nest: 2 yng about 4 days old, 5 feet up in 12 foot fire-killed aspen at south end of Trapline 1B (sec.15). This nest entirely exposed.

**August 5** – Tallied plant quadrats and checked traps. Grouse roosts in quadrates 1C, 4C, and 2 roosts in 1B. All were apparently sharptail except one in 1B, which might have been a ruffed grouse. Saw no sharptails today. Saw 1 deer near Stukey's corner North of M, 5 black ducks on pond just north of M. Liatris in bloom today.

**August 6** – Checked traplines. 5 deer (2 fawns) beds and 6 sharptail roosts in 20 yd. x 20 yd. open area north of course #1 and west of T1B. Grouse roosts looked like adult and brood of 5.

Buckwheat in full bloom today and photographed from north side.

**August 7** – Took up traps. Saw no grouse today.

**August 30** – sharptail road kill 3 miles south of Solon Springs on US 53: juvenile, sex not determined, 6<sup>th</sup> primary half-grown.

Seen on area – sparrow hawk 2, redtail 3.

Sharptail tracks numerous in roads, but saw no birds.

Many deer tracks in buckwheat. They are hitting plants quite hard on south edge of field. Seed is starting to set. Deer apparently going both over and under fence to get at milky grain.

**August 31** – Ted Holzer reported 8 sharptails (1 plus brood of 7) on road near mailbox.

2 male pheasants at stables, 930 AM. County workmen reported seeing a black bear near stables this morning. (?!?).

Flushed 3 sharptails along fence at west end of buckwheat field. They flew to center of field and lit there on ground among the buckwheat. These birds looked like a hen and two  $\frac{3}{4}$  grown young.

**September 1** – Sharptail tracks numerous on buckwheat road, but saw no birds.

Seen on area – redtail 2, sparrow hawk 1.

**September 2** – Saw no grouse in area along Stukey's road south of M. Saw 3 redtails.

**September 13** – Worked on stable storeroom for buckwheat.

Al Etienne reported two sharptails in spring burn area this morning.

Ted Holzer saw female and brood of 7 in sec. 11 on September 10. Said brood was "very young."

**September 14** – Worked at stables all day; raining most of the time. Harold and Al Etienne saw 3 ST in buckwheat field at 8 AM. 1 cock pheasant at stables most of day. Saw 3 redtail, 1 blue heron.

**September 15** – Set up buckwheat grouse feeders on all courses. Saw 1 doe deer South of M on course 2. Saw no ST, 4 redtails.

**September 16** – Saw 3 redtails, no ST.

**September 22** – Al and Harold Etienne reported 7 sharptails in buckwheat field on 9/20. 200 pheasants for field trials were released at feeders on 9/18. Saw 1 deer on road ¼ mile south of stables. Alex Yorman and I flushed 7 partridge in 1 mile between sections 16 and 17, 44N, 12W.

**September 25, 26, 27** – Field Trial flush counts. 9/25 AM: 1-1 ST, 2-0, 3-1 deer, 4-8 ST, 5-2 hen pheasants, 3 ST, 6-0, 7- 3 deer (1 buck), 9 ST. PM: 1-10 ST, 2-0, 3-0, 4-8 ST, 5-0, 6-3 ST, 7-0. 9/26 AM: 1-10 ST, 4-2 ST, 5-4 ST, 6-3 ST, 2, 3&7-0. PM: 1-10 ST, 7-2 ST, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6-0. 9/27 AM: 1-10 ST, 4-3 ST, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7-0. PM: 5-1 ST, 7-4 ST, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6-0. 9/28 AM: 1-1 ST, 2-2 ST, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7-0. PM: 4-2 ST, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7-0.

**October 4** – Brushing lines in sec. 26; seen – bear tracks, 2 partridge.

**October 5** – Seen while brushing in sec. 26 – 1 partridge. Saw 2 deer on M in sec. 14. Emergency fire duty in sec. 17.

**October 6** – 6 ST in buckwheat field at 8 AM. Seen while on fire in Sec.17 – 1 RG, 17 woodcock.

**October 7** – Seen while on fire duty in sec. 17: 6 deer, 12 woodcock, 4 partridge, 1 snowshoe hare.

Harold Etienne reports finding 4 pheasants released for trials that had been killed by hawks.

**October 8** – Seen at sec.17 fire area, morning only – 4 woodcock.

**October 13** – Saw flock of 25 ST at Wildner's mailbox corner.

**October 20** – Saw 16 RG and 1 snowshoe on section line between 16 and 17; 4 ST 100 yards east of road into stables on Wildner's road at 530 PM.

**October 21** – Saw 2 ST 2 miles north of Big Joe's on hwy 53, 730 AM; 3 RG on old dam road in Sec. 21.

**October 20** – Goose flocks over area: Canada – 125, 21, 62, 200; Blue – 40.

**October 27** – Saw 6 ST at Wildner's corner on M at 8 AM, 2 redtails, 2 marsh hawks.

**November 9** – Tallied plant quadrats in proposed fall burn area (sec. 23).

**November 10** – Checked grouse feeders. All OK, except need more grain. No grouse sign at any of feeders.

38 sharptails in buckwheat field at 3 PM. Sec. 15 booming ground is in use, but apparently not in evening. I watched it from 330-5 PM and saw no birds.

Field notes made by Ted Holzer, Solon Springs, at Solon grouse area:

**11/16/47** – afternoon temp 30 above – seen in sec.11 – 1 ST feeding on rose hips north of mailbox, 15 RG budding on aspen, 2 ST feeding on rose hips near Leo creek, 1 RG feeding on acorns, 3 RG feeding on weed seeds, 1 buck and 1 doe deer.

**11/22/47** – 20-30 ST feeding on sweetfern cones east of stables.

**11/25/47** – Sec. 10 – no bird sign, lots of snowshoe rabbit sign (up 50%), saw 5 doe deer.