



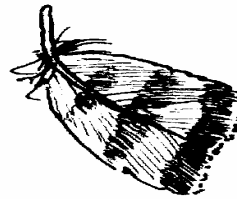
MINNESOTA PRAIRIE CHICKEN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume 50 No. 1 Winter 2024



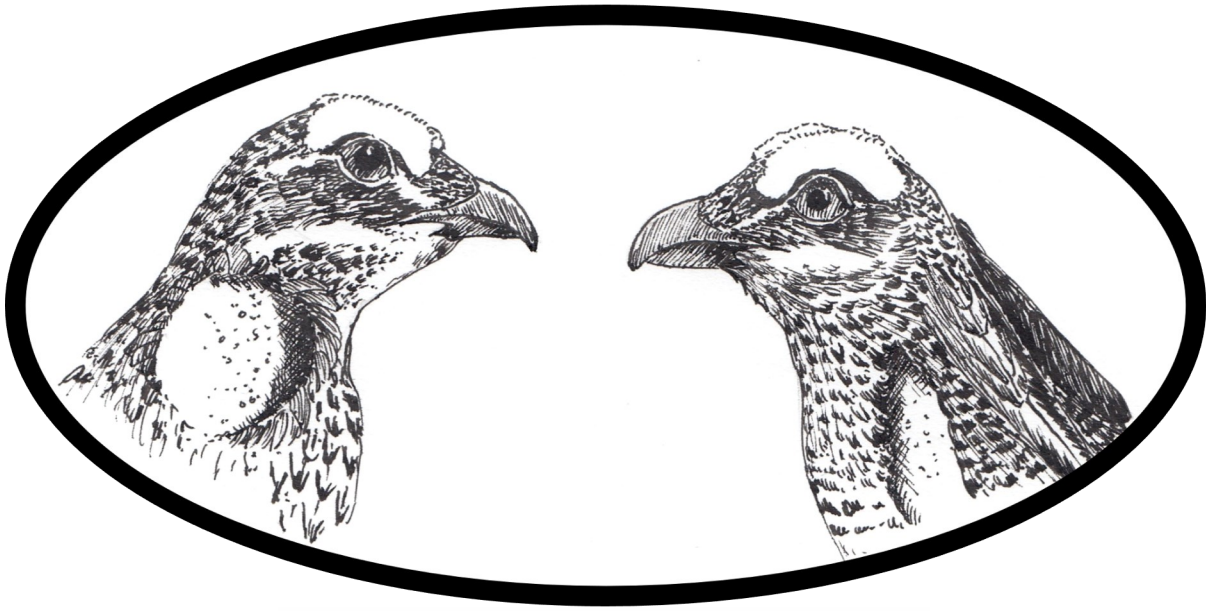
The scene above was seldom observed during the Winter of 2023-24 as snow fell infrequently and when it did it generally melted within days as the region often saw daily temperatures 5 to 15 degrees above average. An easy Winter for most wildlife.

Editor's Note: Late Winter greetings to our members and friends! March actually feels a little more like March which is a change after our very mild December through February. There's excitement on the Prairie as many migrant birds are already moving North. Editorial Correction: In the last edition, the proper term in Jim Urhinak's article is "Technolects; not Technolets"; my apologies. **The JOINT MPCS-MSGs Meeting is scheduled for the afternoon of 19 April with a full day of activities on the 20th in Crookston. Hope to see you there!! RHH**



FEATHER FEATURES

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Joint Gathering of MPCS and MSGS

Mark your calendars for 19 and 20 April 2024!. It will be a fine time when Minnesota's open-land grouse societies join wings in Crookston. Note that the meeting will be held at the Crookston Inn and Convention Center. It is located at 2200 University Avenue in the northwest part of Crookston. This is a change from previous information on the upcoming meeting. A field trip to local prairies east of Crookston will be held on Friday afternoon followed by an informal social Friday evening and the joint meeting to be held the following day. Special room rates are available for meeting attendees at the Crookston Inn. Other motels available in Crookston for overnights are the AmericInn, Cobblestone Hotel and Suites and Golf Terrace Motel. As usual, an early morning field trip will be scheduled along with "time in the blind". We should have several blinds available for those wanting to view either Greater prairie chickens or Sharp-tails. If you have any fundraising items to donate, they would be much appreciated. We look forward to seeing old and new friends!



MPCS and Natural Resources Lose an Icon: Earl Norris Johnson 1948-2024

By Terry J. Wolfe



Earl expounding (and educating) on the value, joy and importance of the Prosby Tract Addition to the Syre WMA in August 2021; a WMA near and dear to his soul.

There is a saying; “A person’s whole life occurred in that dash between the years.” Earl packed a lot into that.

He dealt with diabetes through the majority of his life. He beat the odds in reaching over 75 years. As a friend, often distant, I only knew parts of his life. He grew-up in Fertile and wrestled in high school at a time when Fertile was a powerhouse in wrestling. He enjoyed roaming the Fertile Sandhills; a young naturalist savvy enough to find some rare species of Tiger beetles.

We first met at the University of Minnesota (U of MN); Earl being a year behind me. A summer session at the U of MN’s Itasca Biology Station sealed our friendship. His ready smile brought something out in me. We nearly always exchanged smart aleck remarks such as, “You up

day?”. He tried to show me some wrestling moves in the grass of Itasca Biology Station but I was hopeless and he soon gave-up on that notion.

Earl and Dotz married shortly after the Itasca session, just 2 weeks before Sue and I were married in the fall of 1969. After our Itasca session, a number of us got together for numerous years at Christmas time. Of course, none of us had much money but one year Earl surprised everyone with a Christmas tree ... a highly decorated little Paper Birch tree!

After college we both worked in the Land Unit of the Game and Fish Division of the Department of Conservation (now Department of Natural Resources) in St. Paul. When I moved to Crookston in the early 1970s to become the Area Wildlife Manager, Earl took my position in the Land Unit. That position was instrumental for both of us to “learn the ropes” of land acquisition along with meeting people helpful in getting to move into field positions.

After his stint in the Land Unit, Earl got his first field position which found him and Dotz moving to Slayton in southwestern Minnesota. We weren’t in touch as often during that time in our lives although meetings sometimes brought us together. Eventually, he broke loose from the pheasants and moved back into prairie chicken country where he was known by most wildlife folks. As the Area Wildlife Manager in Detroit Lakes (the station he remained at until his retirement), he got to know a lot of people and that helped him garner many acres of grasslands for the public and prairie wildlife. He had a passion for prairie chickens and their beautiful grassland habitats. Occasionally, the Crookston burn crew was invited to assist the Detroit Lakes crew on prescribed burns. It seemed like Earl would always assign us to the line where “wet-lining” wasn’t needed but the hip boots we never had were. That happened several times on the wildlife management lands just west of Syre.

Earl and his setters hunted many of our local species and he favored double-barreled (side by side) shotguns. Woodcock and three species of grouse, including prairie chickens, were favorites. I recall a deer hunting trip in late November in the Norris Camp country. We tent camped in plenty of snow with night-time lows below zero. Not knowing any better, we survived and each brought a deer home.

In his later years as Wildlife Manager, one of his interests turned to bats. He developed a bat house that he promoted around the countryside. He often lead evening field trips to listen and watch for bats. Armed with

trusty electronic “Bat Detector” device, I recall how he led a group of wildlife types around the neighborhoods of Fertile. Somehow the police never showed-up as we pointed and gazed at various attics of homes during the walk.

Earl had way more hobbies and interests than I knew about. He collected double-barreled shotguns, shot double-barreled shotguns, kept honey bees, raised and trained English setters (big on that hobby!), crafted leather items, carved antlers, gardened (at least assisting), sang, and I think in recent years, fished. Timberdoodles were a serious passion in both fall and spring. He used his setters to find spring hens and broods for banding purposes. No fall harvested woodcock ever went into the hunting vest without first being aged and sexed! For many years, he was the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources’ representative at the national Woodcock Wing Bee. He was also the record keeper and top-notch story teller at the Pine Ridge Grouse Camp.

As the long-time Treasurer of our society, he was an unsung hero. He spent so much time in that position and provided great detail as our Treasurer Reports became quite extensive over the years. He kept us up-to-date with Internal Revenue Service requirements although I pondered at times, who would go to jail, the Treasurer or the board member moving to approve the Treasurer’s Report?!

Earl was a good model for all of us ... be active and maintain a lot of interests along with a great smile! He will be so missed.



The Adventures of Tympie Nuchus

By Ross H. Hier



Calling All Kids!

The Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society is once again sponsoring a youth art contest. Any visual or written art form is welcome. Get those creative juices flowing and share your prairie-inspired art!

Prizes will be awarded to a winning entry in each of three age categories: 6 and under, 7-12, and 13-18. Entries must be received by March 31, 2024. Submit your masterpiece to Sara Vacek (saravacek5@gmail.com or 57368 490th St, Appleton, MN 56208).

Please complete and include the form below with your art submission. Please do not put the artist's name on the front of the artwork.



*2023 winning entry in the 13-18 category
Audra Reiffenberger, Sauk Centre, age 16*



The Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society is a non-profit wildlife conservation organization devoted to promoting and supporting through public education the preservation, management, and restoration of native prairie and open landscape habitats that are key to the survival of this endemic North American prairie grouse

Artist Name _____

Artist Age _____ Artist Grade _____

Artist School _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Do you want the original artwork returned? ☐ Yes ☐ No



MPCS Scholarship For 2024

By Sara Vacek

The Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society (MPCS) is pleased to announce that we will once again award one scholarship in the amount of \$1,000.00 to an undergraduate college student who has completed at least three semesters (or equivalent) in wildlife sciences, natural resources management or closely related field. For complete scholarship guidelines and application materials, please visit the MPCS Website:

<https://www.prairiechickens.org/mpcs-scholarship-application>

Please see the next
pages for the 51st
Meeting Registration
Form and Agenda!!!



MN Prairie Chicken Society &
MN Sharp-tailed Grouse Society
Joint Annual Meeting

April 19-20, 2024

Crookston Inn & Convention Center
Crookston, MN

- Pre-registration encouraged by *mail* or *on-line* by April 10, 2024
- Registration costs include Friday bus tour, Friday evening snacks, Saturday lunch & snacks.
- Cost DOES NOT include MPCS Annual Membership (please renew online or below if you have not for 2024)

+++++

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Email _____ Phone _____

Register ASAP!
Send registration to:
MPCS c/o Phil Doll
40492 490th St
Perham, MN 56573

Registration = \$55.00
Student registration = \$25.00
2024 Membership = \$15.00

Additional Donation =\$
Total Enclosed= \$ _____

Checks payable to MPCS

Fri. Bus Tour ____ Yes ____ No
Fri. Evening Social ____ Yes ____ No
Sat. Habitat Tour ____ Yes ____ No
Sat. Viewing Blind ____ Yes ____ No

OR
Register online with **PayPal** at
www.prairiechickens.org



Joint Meeting
 of the
Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society
 and
Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society



*Living on the Edge –
 Prairie Grouse in the Aspen Parkland and Beyond*

April 19-20, 2024

Crookston Inn and Convention Center

SCHEDULE

Friday, April 19

12:30 Meet at the **Tri-Valley Bus Garage (1345 Fairfax Avenue)** on the SE corner of Crookston along Highway 2.

Get name tags, field trip handout, and water bottle.

1:00 Depart with orientation comments by DNR.

Route: Out H-2 to County 46, south by TNC's Pankratz Prairie, MN DNR's Tympanuchus WMA, scenic ridge overlook, then to Burnham WMA and finishing at Glacial Ridge NWR

2:00 Stop at the Maintenance Shop. Display of maps/posters, restroom break, and orientation talks

Topics: Habitat restoration on glacial ridge by Jason Ekstein

On-going management and the Big Burn by Gregg Knutson and Ben Walker

3:30 Continue tour of Glacial Ridge and view site of the "Big Burn" and brush/prairie management.

Friday, April 19 continued

5:15-8:30- Registration and finger foods in the **Ballroom, Crookston Inn and Convention Center**

Informal presentation on the artwork of the Ding Darling award winner, Ross Hier. Cash bar (\$5.00 beer, \$6.00 wine). Meals can be purchased in bar and brought to Ballroom.

Get organized for early morning field trips to view chickens and sharp-tails at Pankratz Prairie, Tympanuchus WMA, and Glacial Ridge NWR.

The conference, raffle and displays will be in the Ballroom. **Consider donating raffle items! You can bring them Friday afternoon or Saturday morning.**

Saturday, April 20

8:00 Registration and refreshments – **The Ballroom, Crookston Inn and Convention Center**

Dan Svedarsky, emcee

9:00 Opening remarks -Brian Winter (MPCS) and Mike Chalich (MSGs)

9:10 Field Reports.

9:20 The Setting – Where Forest Meets the Prairie - Bob Seabloom (UND retired) & Dan Svedarsky (U of MN Crookston retired)

9:45 Prairie-Chicken and Sharp-tailed Grouse Hybrid Research Update - Katelin Goebel, DNR

10:10 Sharptail and Chicken Studies in ND and NW Minnesota and Aerial Censusing - Cailey Isaacson, UND

10:35 Break - Jodie Provost, emcee

10:50 Informal Prairie-Chicken Survey & Hunt Report - Charlotte Roy, DNR

11:00 Vegetation Control to Improve Sharp-tailed Grouse Leks in the Manitoba Interlake Region – Ambroise Percheron, Sharptails Plus

11:25 The Pheasants Forever, MPCS, and MSGS Partnerships – Sabin Adams, PF, Rob Baden, MPCS, James Meadow, MSGS

12:10 **Lunch provided**

Ross Hier – emcee

1:00 Greater Prairie-Chicken Nest Success and Vegetation Response to Conservation Grazing – Jamie Horton, BSU

1:25 Wind Power Development and Habitat Acquisition Challenges - Dave Trauba, DNR

1:50 The Midwest Prairie Grouse Summit – What Next? - Jodie Provost, NAGP

2:15 Annual Meetings of the Societies - Brian Winter (MPCS) and Mike Chalich (MSGs)

3:00 Raffle and refreshments

4:00 Adjourn

FEES

\$55 for professionals

\$25 for students

Registration includes all meeting expenses and meals.

PRE-REGISTRATION by April 10 is encouraged for a food head count, etc.

Option 1: Mail a check payable to MSGS: OR Mail check payable to MPCS:

Gretchen Mehmel

2788 Bankton Rd. SW

Baudette, MN 56623

Phil Doll

40492 490th St.

Perham, MN 56573

Option 2: Venmo to @mnsharptails, and include your name.

Option 3: Register at www.sharptails.org/product/spring2024/

Option 4: Register at www.prairiechickens.org/mpcs-annual-meeting

American Tactical Cavalry SX O/U RAFFLE TICKETS \$20

Call Kyle Arola at 218-689-5178 for raffle ticket purchase options.



12 gauge|3 inch|Engraved|Ejectors|Wood stock|Variable chokes

CONTACT- Please reach out to Kyle Arola for any questions regarding the event at (218) 6895178 or kyle.arola32@gmail.com

LODGING - A block of 40 rooms has been reserved at the **Crookston Inn and Convention Center**. All are encouraged to stay there. Call 218-470-1000 and ask for the “grouse conference” to reserve your room. A special conference rate of \$113.43 (includes tax) is available, and includes an egg and meat continental breakfast for room guests. Other munchies will be available for walk-in registrants.

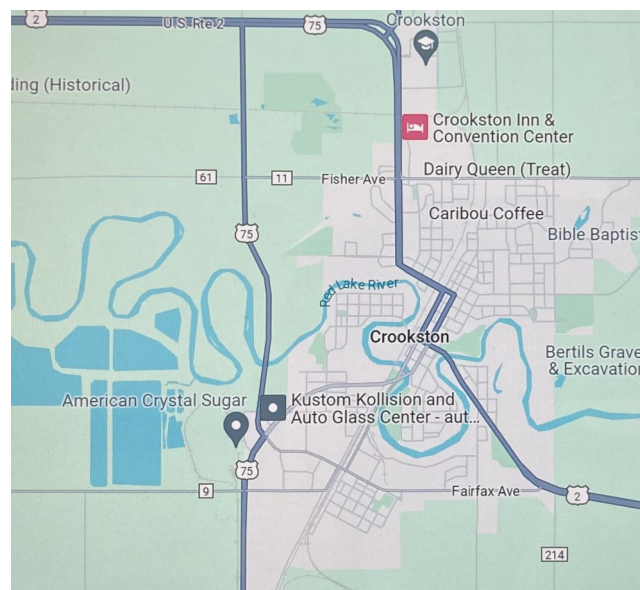
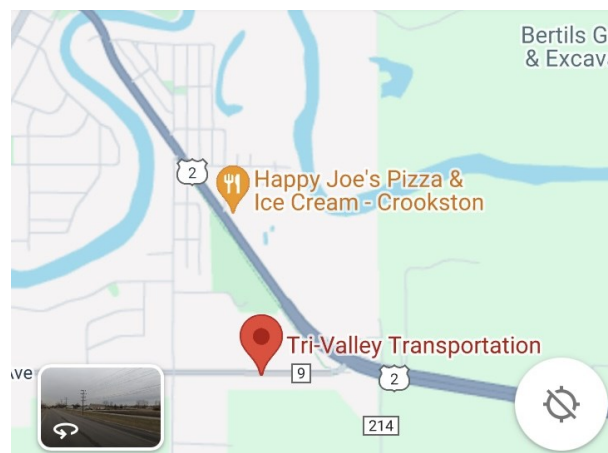
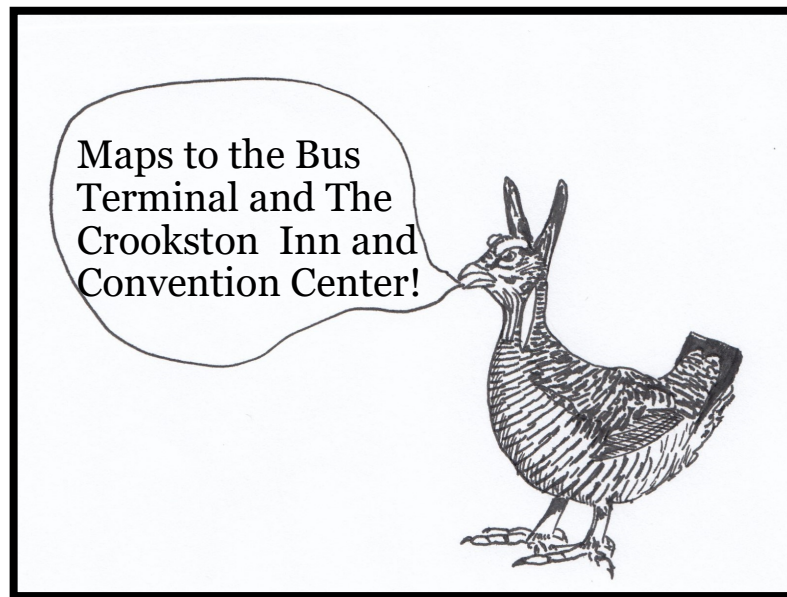
Check out:

MSGS at sharptails.org & facebook.com/sharptails.org

MPCS at prairiechickens.org

NAGP at grousepartners.org





Pieces of the Prairie



Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*): This very early Spring perennial is also known as King's Cup in parts of its range. In western and northern Minnesota, we know it to be one of the earliest bloomers in Spring. As seen in the image above, the fresh foliage and blooms are surrounded by last growing season's thatch. It is typically found in habitats in which one's feet will get wet when trying to photograph the plant. Often seen in road ditches or prairie swales or edges of ash swamps, it can produce great numbers of blooms and really "light up" the landscape in April and early May. The species contains numerous toxic chemicals and was generally not used often as a medicinal source by Native peoples.



MPCS Board Members

(Updated 10 September 2023)

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Terms Expiring in 2024

Terms Expiring in 2025

Terms Expiring in 2026

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Rob Baden

William E. "Bill" Faber

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Mpcs.web@gmail.com

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Mpcs.web@gmail.com

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Newsletter Editor: Ross H. Hier

Website Coordinator: Sonia Winter; Mpcs.web@gmail.com

Twitter Coordinator: Phil Doll; @M_P_C_S

Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society Membership

Your gift membership will help! Any tax deductible contribution or donation will bring you the MPCS Newsletter and supports the Society's efforts to save Minnesota's prairie chickens and their habitats. Renew your membership today!

The Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society is a non-profit 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.

- ☐ I would like to make a membership contribution.
- ☐ I would like to contribute to Prairie Chicken Habitat Improvement.
- ☐ I would like to renew my membership.

Or RENEW ONLINE with PayPal at: <https://www.prairiechickens.org/donate>

Name: _____

Address/City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

MPCS Newsletters Now Electronic

After a slow transition period from direct mailing to electronic newsletters, the board has decided to post all newsletters on the newly updated website. Newsletters will now be posted as a .pdf file and be in full color. We recognize that some members may still want to receive direct mailings so please contact Travis for direct mailing. The newsletters posted on the website will allow members to read past newsletters and share them with family, colleagues, educational institutions, or other conservation partners.

Take a look.

www.prairiechickens.org

