

Sharp-tailed Grouse



Gordon Court

Sharp-tailed grouse are unique birds that thrive in grasslands, foothills and parkland. Suitable habitat for them has significantly decreased causing a large decline in their population. Disappearing native grasslands and intensive grazing systems are both linked to declining populations of sharptails.

Displaying Male

In the spring male sharp-tailed grouse display themselves on dancing grounds or leks by puffing out their air sacs, outstretching their wings, sticking out their tails and pounding their feet on the ground. Large numbers of males will perform at once and defend their individual territory on the lek while females stroll among them to choose a mate.

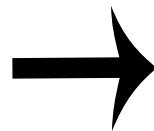
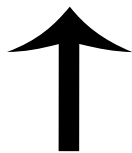
Sharptails are designated as a 'sensitive' species in Alberta and efforts to maintain their habitat have been ongoing since 1994.

Life Cycle

September - March

Need high, dense grass and shrubs for cover and warmth.

Focus on foraging for food, hiding from predators and keeping warm.

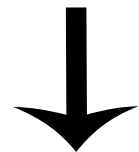


March - May

Need short grass for movement and visibility.

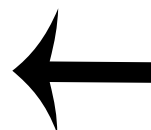
Females visit dancing grounds to choose displaying males, usually during sunrise.

Females build nests within 1 mile of their lek once snow melts.



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Female



June - August

Need many different grass heights. Low grass for feeding but high grass and shrubs to hide in.

Eggs hatch and chicks are reared for 6-8 weeks then are independent.

May - June

Need high, dense grass and shrubs for cover.

Females lay eggs daily for up to 14 days then incubate them. Males are not involved with parental care.

Beneficial Management Practices

The best decision you can make for all species at risk is to preserve your native grasslands.



Record where and when you see active leks and report your sightings to **MULTISAR**.

General:

- Maintain woody areas, especially along stream banks and draws.
- Minimize pesticide use, especially around leks, nests and water bodies.
- Use zero or minimal tillage to leave cover and food for grouse.
- Use flushing bars on haying equipment to avoid killing wildlife.
- Do not approach known leks or nests within 500m between March 15 and July 15.
- Seed low yielding land or abandoned cultivation back to native grasses or to permanent cover for use as a tame pasture.

For grazed land:

- Create variability in each pasture or between adjacent pastures. A range of grass heights and litter cover is desirable.
- Avoid grazing on native prairie between March and mid June.
- Restrict grazing in woody and riparian areas by fencing off or using salt blocks and watering sites to attract livestock elsewhere.
- Allow periods of rest after grazing.
- Optimize forage use by adjusting stocking rates based on precipitation, time of use and range condition.
- Base rotational systems on available forage instead of scheduled calendar dates.
- Monitor and maintain records of range condition, in and out dates, areas that need rest and areas that are untouched.

Industrial Guidelines:

- Ask companies to abide by set back distances and time restrictions (no disturbance within 500m of leks March 15 - June 15 and no installations of roads or facilities within 500m).

For more information see the [MULTISAR Grazing BMP Factsheet](#) and the [MULTISAR Industrial Guidelines Factsheet](#) in your binder or online at www.multisar.ca.

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