

Saskatchewan Sharp-Tailed Grouse Survey

by Dr. STUART HOUSTON, Yorkton.

A province-wide survey of the Sharp-tailed Grouse, commonly called "prairie chicken" is being undertaken as a Jubilee Year project of the Yorkton Natural History Society. The Yorkton branch of the Saskatchewan Fish & Game League has pledged its support.

The Sharp-tailed Grouse is our provincial bird emblem, and its decreasing numbers in some districts is a cause of grave concern.

Knowledge of our upland game lags far behind that of other species of game and fish. Management of our waterfowl is on a scientific basis, with aerial population surveys made yearly by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and co-operating provincial and federal agencies and Ducks Unlimited. Our chief fishing areas are studied in detail as to depth of water, food and oxygen content, etc. and the available harvest from these lakes can be estimated quite accurately. Similarly our antelope population is counted yearly, and with careful management we have had a tenfold increase in beaver production.

However, I doubt whether anyone can make even a rough estimate of our Sharp-tailed Grouse population;

we don't even have a yardstick to compare yearly to see whether they are increasing or decreasing. In some districts they have decreased greatly, in others they seem plentiful. It is suspected that as land is cleared, roadsides scrubbed out, crops sprayed, and different harvesting methods used, that the province can no longer support as many Sharptails. Yet we do not know how many Sharptails a good section of land should be able to support, for any given type of habitat. And if we do not know the size of the Sharptail population, it is difficult to say whether the number killed in a year's hunting is a serious factor or not.

For these reasons, a trial survey is being undertaken. It is felt that any farmer interested in wildlife should be able, at least better than anyone else, to give a reasonable estimate of the number of sharptails residing on his own farm. This survey depends entirely on the co-operation of the farmers. Results will be made available to the provincial game department.

Please fill out the following form and have your neighbors send similar information.

TO:
Sharp-tail Count,
c/o Cliff Shaw,
Yorkton, Sask.

Name of Farmer

Address

Sec. Twp. Range West of meridian.

Size of farm

Acres broken Acres wooded

How many sharptails wintered on your farm?

How many pairs appear likely to nest on your farm?

Is there a sharptail dancing ground on your farm?

Help us learn more about our provincial bird emblem during Jubilee Year. Please mail this form to Cliff Shaw, Yorkton, during April 1955.