

Making a Difference for Wildlife

Hundreds of local conservation projects are undertaken annually by SCI Chapters. They are reinforced by many notable conservation initiatives funded by the SCI Foundation.



Sharp-tail Grouse Population Survey
Southeastern Idaho, USA
Total Funds: \$40,000



ONCE FOUND from British Columbia to Utah, the Columbia sharp-tailed grouse now occupies less than 10 percent of its original range, with about 90 percent of the remaining U.S. population in eastern Idaho.

Vegetation succession, overgrazing, and conversion of upland habitat to agriculture or subdivisions are considered the primary reasons for this decline. In 1995, with thousands of acres of habitat so converted, sharp-tails were petitioned to be listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Yet, Idaho Fish & Game (IDF&G) biologists felt that sharp-tail populations were increasing due to Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) areas providing secure nesting and brood-rearing habitat. This said, actual distribution and population data were lacking. IDF&G needed funding support to collect those data.

Following an SCI Idaho grant of \$12,600, as well as sizable donations from SCI Idaho members Bob Hudman and Eric Krasa and Pheasants Forever, the IDF&G survey, conducted between spring 2002 blizzards, found that grouse were well distributed throughout the project area. Fifty-six new leks were identified over 59,000 hectares of eastern Idaho. Habitat suitability data also were collected, and it was noted that heavily grazed areas accounted for fewer leks.

Future plans include an expanded survey next spring to provide a regionwide assessment of sharp-tailed grouse population. These data will help to prevent an unjustified ESA listing and benefit grouse conservation and management.