

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO MONITOR EASTERN WASHINGTON SHARP-TAILED GROUSE LEK

There's nothing like a Columbian sharp-tailed grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*) display to usher in a Northwest birdwatcher spring! Spokane Audubon Society, in partnership with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Spokane Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), is seeking volunteers to experience this pleasure.

Volunteers will assist with data collection on the status of sharp-tailed grouse and greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) for the Lincoln County Prairie Grouse Recovery Project centered on WDFW's Swanson Lake Wildlife Area and BLM lands in the ***Lake Creek drainage 10 miles south of Creston***. Using WDFW protocols, data collection activities will include lek monitoring, tracking newly released radio-marked birds, and assistance with translocation. Training will be provided by project staff and volunteers.

Lek monitoring and translocation will occur during March through May 2013. Volunteers will register and track hours with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. ***Mileage reimbursement and per diem will be provided*** through an ALEA grant managed by the Spokane Audubon Society.

The Lincoln County Prairie Grouse Recovery Project, overseen by the WDFW, is considered essential to the survival of sharp-tailed and sage-grouse in Washington. Both species are state listed and the sage-grouse is a federal candidate for listing. Habitat degradation and fragmentation are the main contributors to the dramatic population declines of the past several decades. Recent recovery efforts, including the Lincoln County Prairie Grouse Recovery Project, show evidence of stabilizing the state's population of both species.

For seven years, the WDFW has captured sharp-tailed grouse in Idaho and translocated them to the Recovery Area to bolster a greatly diminished residual native population and improve genetic diversity. Greater sage-grouse were extirpated from this historic range by the end of the 1980s. The WDFW has translocated sage-grouse from Oregon for the past five years to re-establish a population in the area. The wildlife recovery efforts have been accompanied by the acquisition of public lands by the WDFW and the BLM and public and private habitat restoration work.

Trans-located birds are radio collared and tracked to determine home range and reproductive activity and success. Annual lek monitoring provides the state's census data for both species. These data and other research have yielded valuable information to support habitat restoration decisions. Volunteer assistance with data collection is an important contribution to the recovery efforts.

***Volunteers may participate in one or more counts that include an afternoon training and count grouse at leks the following morning.*** Scheduled counts TBA March-May. Bring binoculars and wear warm clothes. For more information about volunteer opportunities or to register for training, contact Kim Thorburn, Spokane Audubon Society, at [kthorburn@msn.com](mailto:kthorburn@msn.com).