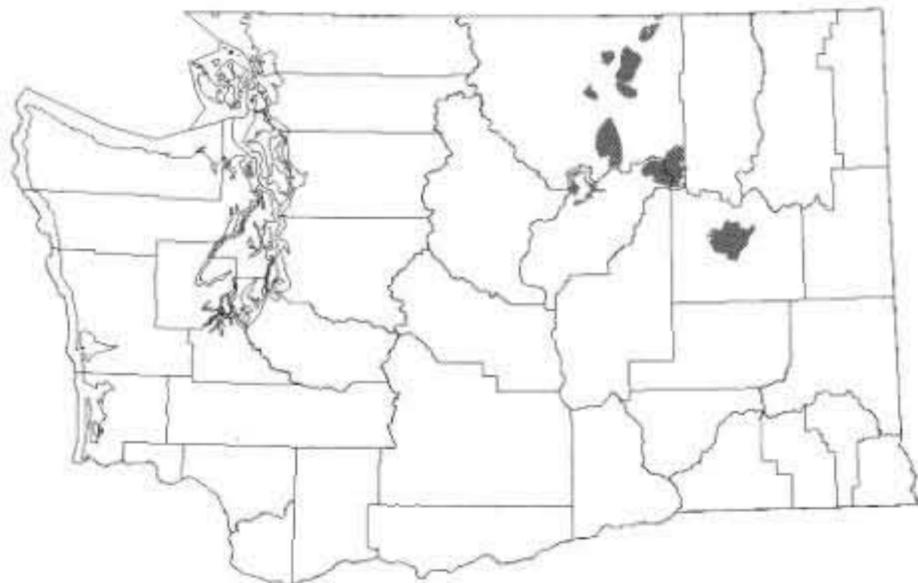


Sharp-tailed Grouse *Tympanuchus phasianellus*

Very local, uncommon resident in good-quality grasslands in n.c. Washington.



● Year-round

Subspecies: Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse, *T. p. columbianus*.

Habitat: Shrub-steppe, meadow steppe, steppe, intermixed with deciduous mountain shrub, and riparian habitat. Important habitat components include deciduous shrubs and small trees, sagebrush, fescue, and wheatgrass. Frequently uses cropland adjacent to native habitat and croplands that have been planted with grass as part of agricultural set-aside programs such as Conservation Reserve Program.

Occurrence: Sharp-tailed Grouse were historically distributed in expansive areas of grass, shrub-steppe, mountain shrub, and early successional stages of forest throughout w. N. America from Alaska to Minnesota, Utah, and Oregon. Noted decreasing from the 1860s on (e.g., Jewett et al. 1953), with loss of bunch-grass habitat one cause, and later similarly described by Weber and Larrison (1977), Smith et al. (1997), Stepniowski (1999) and in B.C. by Campbell et al. (1990b). They are now greatly reduced in range with Washington birds limited to small remnant habitats in Okanogan Co. at Scotch Cr. and Chesaw Wildlife Areas and Nespelem, Tunk Valley, Horse Springs Coulee, Bonaparte Cr., and Siwash Cr. areas in n. Douglas Co. at Central Ferry Canyon and W. Foster Cr. Wildlife Areas and n. edges of the county, and at Swanson Lks. Wildlife

Area in Lincoln Co. (MAS). Birds are occasionally observed in adjacent areas including the Omak/Okanogan and Havillah areas, nr. Withrow, and nr. Odessa (MAS). Recent observations include remnant birds in areas with extirpated populations including the Twisp, Winthrop, and Oroville areas (MAS).

Loss and fragmentation of habitat affects movements. Males form flocks associated with leks during breeding season, females often visit leks in small flocks. Birds migrate up to 34 km between breeding and winter range, with females tending to move further than males. Juvs. in other regions may disperse as far as 150 km. There may be some local movement from lower elevations to higher, forested wintering areas with snow depths adequate for roosting (Campbell et al. 1990b).

Populations have declined dramatically due to conversion of native habitat to cropland and degradation of the remaining uncultivated habitat because of overgrazing, shrub removal, and flooding associated with dams (see Connelly et al. 1998). Estimated 1998 breeding population in Washington was about 1000 birds.

Remarks: A Washington State Sharp-tailed Grouse management plan was developed in 1995 (WDFW 1995b). A statewide hunting harvest closure was implemented in 1988. Classed PHS, ST, FSC.

Noteworthy Records: Observations in 1964 nr. Deer Park, Spokane Co., and in 1974 nr. Yakima appear to represent extinct populations.

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