

Grouse Viewing Blind Available at Medicine Lake Refuge

If you have never witnessed the annual courtship ritual of male sharp-tailed grouse dancing to impress and win the affections of the opposite sex, here s your chance! Medicine Lake Refuge has placed an observation blind near a sharp-tailed grouse dancing ground, providing an excellent opportunity to get an up-close view of this fascinating ritual of nature.

Each spring the males return to traditional dancing grounds, called leks. With white tails pointed skyward, they stomp their feet at a frantic pace, creating a drumming noise. Between dances, they make gurgling noises by expelling air from the purple sac located on either side of their neck. On a calm day, their carrying-on can be heard from more than a mile away.

The blind is available seven days a week, now through mid-May on a reservation basis. The blind comfortably houses two to four people and three camp stools are provided. Dancing is most intense during the morning hours, but evenings can also yield some action. Morning visitors should plan to arrive at the blind about one hour before sunrise and stay until the birds are done displaying for the day (usually 1 to 2 hours after sunrise). The blind is a short drive from the refuge headquarters, and only about 100 yards off the road. Reservations and directions can be obtained at the Refuge Headquarters (789-2305 ext 101 or 109). Don t forget your VCR and camera!

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