

Viewing Sharp-tailed Grouse from the Blind



If you have never witnessed the annual courtship dancing ritual of male sharp-tailed grouse trying to impress and win the affections of the opposite sex, here's your chance! Medicine Lake Refuge has an observation blind near a sharp-tailed grouse dancing ground, providing an excellent opportunity to get an up-close view of this fascinating spectacle 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 commotion can be heard from more than a mile away.



The blind is available to the public seven days a week, mid-April through the end of 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 approximately a 2 1/4 mile drive east from the refuge headquarters, and only about 100 yards south of 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.

Click below to see a video clip (1meg) of the grouse dancing from the blind.

http://medicinelake.fws.gov/Recreation/grouse_blind.asf

TABLE OF SUNRISE TIMES (all times approximate)

Early April	05:45	Before Daylight Savings Time
Mid April	06:20	
Late April	05:30	
Early May	05:45	
Mid May	05:30	
Late May	05:15	
Early June	05:15	