

A Guide to Viewing and Photographing Wyoming's Greater Sage-Grouse Ethically and Responsibly



Charles W. Schwartz

The greater sage-grouse is the largest species of grouse in North America. Each spring, male sage-grouse perform an elaborate sunrise display on communal breeding grounds known as "leks". While sage-grouse require sagebrush landscapes to survive, leks are often located in open areas where the males can be better seen and heard by females. The dramatic display makes viewing sage-grouse a popular recreational activity in March and April across much of Wyoming.

Unfortunately, there have been long-term declines in sage-grouse populations and sagebrush habitats across the West. This means additional conservation efforts are needed.

The Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan recommends that only a small number of lek viewing sites be publicized along with information on how to minimize viewing disturbance to the grouse. This brochure is designed to implement that recommendation.

When you follow the American Birding Association's Principles of Birding Ethics you prevent harm to sage grouse and their habitats. Respect and practice these principles while birding in Wyoming.

Your cooperation is needed to ensure protection and perpetuation of Wyoming's sage-grouse populations.



LEK VIEWING ETHICS:

- Arrive at lek sites at least one hour before sunrise.
- Don't drive onto the lek. Park away from the edge of the lek.
- Turn off the vehicle lights and engine.
- Use binoculars and spotting scopes to observe birds.
- Stay in your vehicle.
- Do not make loud noises or sudden movements.
- Do not leave until the birds do.
- Keep pets in your vehicle. Better yet, leave them home.
- Do not trespass on private land.
- Postpone your visit if roads are muddy.
- Be especially cautious with viewing activities during late March and early April when breeding activity usually peaks. Late April is a better time to visit because most of the breeding is complete but the males are still actively strutting. The weather is usually better too.

WHAT ELSE YOU CAN DO:

- Respect the birds providing your recreation.
- Always practice ethical and responsible bird watching.
- Keep pets under control and away from all wildlife. Dog training on sage-grouse outside the hunting season is not legal.
- Don't camp on desert springs or wet meadows in late summer.
- Restrict your ORV use in sage grouse habitats. Stay on established roads and trails. Off-road use in the spring can disturb or destroy nests.
- Visit WGF's sage-grouse web page to learn more about sage-grouse conservation:
http://gf.state.wy.us/wildlife/wildlife_management/sagegrouse/index.asp
- Report harassment of sage-grouse or any wildlife to the STOP Poaching Hotline: 1-800-442-4331.



Brian Maxfield

LEK VIEWING LOCATIONS:

These lek sites are relatively easy to access by following the instructions. Grouse activity may be affected by weather, predators or human disturbance so we can't guarantee the birds will be present every morning.

BAGGS

Upper Red Creek Lek - Take Hwy 789 north of Baggs about 7 mi to the Red Creek Rd (no sign), which is on the west side. This road is about 0.25 mi south of a large metal building that is on the east side of Hwy 789. Go west on the Red Creek Rd about 4.3 mi to an intersection and then go north (right) about 1 mi. The lek is in the road on a small curve.

BIG PINEY

Mobil Mowing Lek - Take Hwy 189 south of Big Piney for about 3.25 mi to the Calpet Hwy; turn west onto the Calpet Hwy; proceed west-southwest about 11 mi to Pinegrove Rd.; turn west onto the Pinegrove Rd and go about 0.25 mi; the lek is on the north side of the road.

BUFFALO

Christian I & II Leks - Take I-90 east of Buffalo about 10 mi to the Red Hills / Tipperary Rd. Take Tipperary Rd north until the pavement ends and the road turns to gravel. Go about 0.5 mi and turn right onto Luddecke Rd at the "Christian Jack Pine Ranch" sign. Cross Dry Creek and the lek will be on the bench to your right (south) as you drive up out of the creek bottom. If you continue southeast up Luddecke Rd approximately 3 mi, the Christian II lek is in a bowl just off the road to the south.

CASPER

Hat Six Lek - Take I-25 east of Casper to the Hat Six Rd (Hwy 253). Travel south on Hat Six Rd about 7 mi to County Rd 605. Turn left (east) on 605. The lek is about 0.25 mi down the road and is marked by a large sign.

CODY

Windy Flats Lek - From Cody take Hwy 120 south about 2.9 mi or 2.5 mi past WGF D regional office to first turn off to left (east). Take the gravel road east 0.8 mi past a large gravel pit on right. Stop on the hill and look 0.25 mi southeast to see the lek in a large flat along Sage Creek.

GILLETTE

Cottonwood Lek - From Gillette drive south on Hwy 50 about 14 mi. Turn Right (west) on the Napier Rd. Take the Napier Rd about 8 mi. The lek is on the left (south) side of the road but some males may strut on the road.

GREEN RIVER

North Halfway Hollow Lek - From Green River travel 20 mi south on Hwy 530. Take two-track road on the left (east) about 0.5 mi. Take next dirt road to the left for about 0.25 mi and park. Lek is to the east.

JACKSON

Moulton Lek - This lek is in Grand Teton National Park and is generally active in April and May. The Park Service has special viewing regulations to minimize human disturbance. A Park Naturalist leads tours at the site several days a week in the spring. Contact Grand Teton National Park Headquarters for more info.

KEMMERER

BLM Road Lek - Take Hwy 189 east/northeast from Kemmerer about 19 miles to the Opal Cut-off (Hwy 240). Go right (south) on Hwy 240 about 2 miles. There you will see a sign with directions to the lek. The lek is about 2 miles from the first sign. Travel east about 1 mile to another lek direction sign and then take another left (north) to the parking area.

LANDER

Twin Creek Lek - Take Hwy 287/789 southeast of Lander 8.3 mi to the Rawlins Jct. (Jct. Hwy 28 and Hwy. 287/789). Travel east on Hwy 287/789 about 9.7 miles (1 mile past the Twin Creek Road). Turn left (north) onto a pipeline road through a cattle guard. Stay to the right on a two-track road about 0.4 miles to the edge of a clearing in the sagebrush at the end of a pond dam. The grouse strut in the clearing and east along the two-track road past the dam.

MEDICINE BOW

Foote Creek 46 Lek - From Medicine Bow go south on County Rd 1 about 12.7 miles to Foote Creek. From the cattle guard on Foote Creek go 1.3 miles further south. Lek is about 100 yds off the east side of the road.

NEWCASTLE

Dunham 4 Lek - The lek is on private property. Use of binoculars or a spotting scope is a must. Turn west on the Dunham Rd off of Hwy 16 (at the north end of the Newcastle Airport). Drive approx. 3.5 miles. At the crest of a hill is a fence and cattle guard across the road. Lek is located about 300 yards north up the fence line and 300 yards west in an open flat.

PINEDALE

Speedway Lek - At milepost 73 on Hwy 191 (about 27 miles south of Pinedale) turn east onto the Muddy Speedway Rd (County Rd 113). Travel 3.0 miles and stop. The lek is about 400 yards south.

WALCOTT/SARATOGA

Pass Creek 24 Lek - From I-80 -At Walcott Junction take Wyoming Hwy 130 south about 10 mi. Turn left on Pass Creek Rd (County Rd 440) Travel east on this road about two mi. Lek is on the right side of the road.

WORLAND

Bluebank Lek - Go 14 mi east of Worland on Hwy 16. Turn south at the Bluebank Rd sign. Go about 1.5 mi and turn east onto the old Worland/Tensleep Hwy. Go about 0.25 mi turn south again on the Bluebank Rd. Continue south about 4 mi. Birds should be visible close to road.

