

Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Reintroduction to Middle Park



Area 9
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Personnel

Blue Valley Ranch

Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse

Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus

- One of six subspecies of Sharp-tailed Grouse
- USFS and BLM list them as a species of special concern
- They occupy a much smaller range now than they have historically



Middle Park

- Middle Park was inhabited by Sharp-tailed Grouse as late as the 1950's
- The lower Blue River drainage was identified as excellent Sharp-tailed Grouse habitat by Richard Hoffmann, a retired grouse researcher for the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

Blue Valley Ranch



- Located in the lower Blue River drainage south of Kremmling
- Was the release site for a total of 91 female and 58 male grouse from 2006-2008.

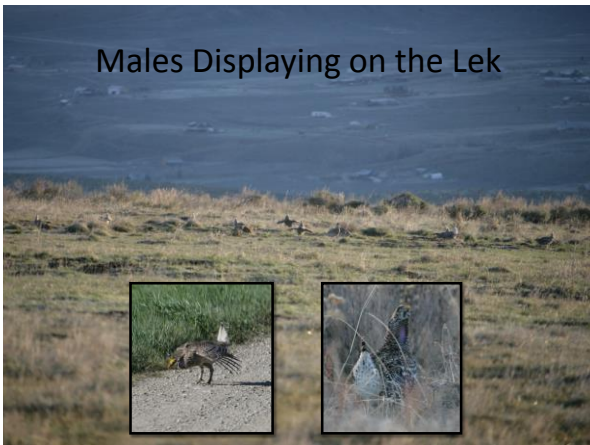
Grouse Trapping



Lek

- The sites where grouse perform their breeding rituals
- The same sites are used year after year
- Males display and posture to attract females
- Males establish and defend a small territory in the lek with more dominant males in the center
- Females visit the leks and choose a mate from among the displaying males
- The breeding season lasts from late March to early June
- Grouse arrive on the lek 30 minutes before sunrise and stay until about 3 hours after sunrise

Males Displaying on the Lek



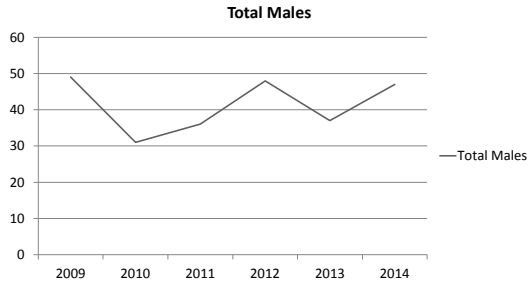
Monitoring

- Radio collars
 - Provide location data
 - Help locate leks
 - Locate nesting areas to determine nesting success
 - Determine cause of mortality
- Vegetation transects
 - At nesting locations
 - Cover type, species, density, height
 - Distance from nearest lek
 - Distance from roads/man-made objects
- Lek Counts
 - Monitor population trends



Lek Counts 2009-2014

From 2 established Leks on Blue Valley Ranch



Nesting

- Occurs from early May thru June
- Nesting sites require adequate cover from terrestrial and avian predators. The grouse seem to prefer bunchgrass for nesting cover.



Winter habitat

- Sharp-tailed Grouse move from grass/low shrub habitat in spring/summer/fall to a tall shrub habitat in the winter
- Will roost in burrows in the snow
- May only feed once a day in harsh weather



Outlook

- Sharp-tailed Grouse reintroduction a success
- Population doing well on Blue Valley Ranch but not expanding to other suitable habitat
- May try to relocate more grouse in the near future

