

News Release

UMN Crookston's Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society cleared 35 acres of bushland habitat in Roseau County.

By Michelle Christopherson, Director of Outreach and Engagement on Monday, April 5, 2021

CROOKSTON, Minn. - The University of Minnesota Crookston's Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society along with faculty, staff and other students cleared over 35 acres of bushland habitat in the [Palmville Wildlife Management Area](#) (WMA) in Roseau County last month. "It's the labs that provide the hands-on learning experience that convinced me to come to Crookston," said David Dunblazier, senior, natural resources. As a natural resource student, Dunblazier said all of his classes have heavy lab components where students get to take what is learned in the classroom and actually experience it, while learning the skills they need in their career.

John Loegering, Ph.D., Certified Wildlife Biologist, Professor, and Wildlife Extension Specialist said the Student Chapter sponsored the vans, the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society bought everyone lunch and while the student chapter led the effort they welcomed anyone willing to get outside to come along. Dunblazier said in class discussion evolved around managing land for late successional species or early successional species, and for this brush cut they were clearing Tamarack trees to reset the successional clock and maintain an early successional habitat for Sharp-tailed Grouse.



Thirteen students, and one faculty coordinated with Gary Huschle from the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, who sponsored the event, cleared about 35 acres of tamarack trees in an important area used by many brushland wildlife, such as the sharp-tailed grouse, American woodcock, golden-winged warblers, and others. "They had great fun," said Loegering. He went on to say that this is a fantastic hands-on experience where students can directly apply what they learn in class to habitat management on the ground. "Students did fantastic work to enhance this brushland for species like Sharp-tailed Grouse. Grouse-like cover types that are open and treeless with a few shrubs," he said. Loegering shared that the tamarack trees close in the area cleared are possible perch sites for predators. "Cutting them opens the landscape and improves the cover for many species, our work will open that brushland for the next 25 years or more," he said.

The fifteen volunteers logged ten hours each of time and those hours are valued at approximately twenty-dollars an hour. "The Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (MSGs) is a private non-profit professional organization and can use our hard work as an organizational match or buy in when they apply for grants, so that is \$3,000.00 dollars worth," said Loegering. He went on to say that the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society applies for grants that typically require a 5% match. "Thus, our work (\$3000) translates into an additional \$60,000 in grant funds, Loegering said. It's that additional money that will be used to pay for the prescribed fire crew or the winter bulldozer and brush shearing crew that will follow the students' efforts. "The work we did on Saturday was impactful beyond the habitat improvement," he said.

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