



**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

**National Wildlife Refuge System**

# **News Release**

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For Immediate Release  
February 23, 2024

## **Refuge “Boomer Blind” Available to Public**

A prairie chicken viewing blind is available to the public on Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge this spring. From the blind, observers can see the spectacular annual mating ritual of the Greater Prairie Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*) in an activity known as “booming”. This primitive ceremony pits bird against bird as male chickens stake out territory to attract hens for mating. The most dominant and aggressive males will hold the center of the “booming ground”, also known as a lek. Younger males on the edge of the lek will challenge the older males. Males confront each other by aggressively jumping high in the air and striking each other with feet, wings, and bill in ritualistic fighting. Prairie chickens have a distinctive pinnae or long feathers on each side of their neck. While on the booming ground, the males raise these feathers exposing bright yellow air sacs. The air sacs expand while making their distinctive low booming sounds.

The prairie chicken blind at Hamden Slough Refuge is located 10 miles northwest of Detroit Lakes. A new blind was constructed with the help from the Friends of the Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District and the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society. The new blind is much roomier and can seat 5 adults comfortably. The public may reserve the blind by calling Rebecca Esser at 218-844-3406 or emailing [Rebecca\\_esser@fws.gov](mailto:Rebecca_esser@fws.gov). Reservations are required and taken on a first-come-first served basis, but are at no cost to the public. A confirmation letter, information package including tips to make for a great experience, and map will be sent after reservations are made. The best time for viewing the booming ground activity is during the month of April into early May.

Millions of prairie chickens once thrived in the prairies of the central United States, but their population rapidly dwindled with the loss of prairie habitat. Today in Minnesota, the greater prairie chicken only survives in a few counties in the western and central part of the state. Grassland conservation helps secure a future for the greater prairie chicken in Minnesota and beyond.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the National Wildlife Refuge System that includes more than 560 refuges nation wide. Within Becker County, the Service is represented by the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge, Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge, and the Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District. Becker County enjoys an impressive diversity of both plants and wildlife as a result of its location where the eastern deciduous forest meets the prairie. Plan a visit to experience Tamarac, Hamden Slough, or one of the many Waterfowl Production Areas and enjoy your public lands.