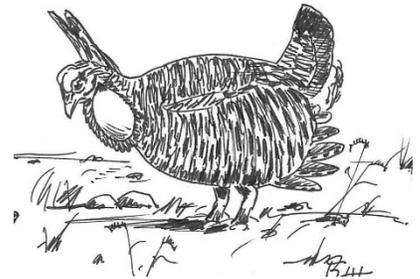


GUIDE TO PRAIRIE GROUSE VIEWING

Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge, near Crookston, Minnesota

Reserve your chance today for an experience of a lifetime. In April, small 3-person blinds are placed on the dancing grounds or leks of Greater Prairie-Chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse near Crookston, Minnesota. Blinds are placed adjacent to the lek so they do not disturb the birds, yet are close to the action. Past blinds have been close enough so that birds occasionally perched or danced on top of them to the delight of the human visitors. Greater Prairie-Chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse are shy birds. Every precaution should be taken to minimize disturbance during their courtship display.



*Greater Prairie-Chicken by Ross Hier,
Area Wildlife Manager, MnDNR*

GUIDELINES FOR USE OF PRAIRIE GROUSE BLINDS

1. Arrive and settle in the blind no later than 60 minutes before sunrise (while it is still very dark), or 5:30 p.m. for evening viewing. Keep in mind that blinds are typically at least a ½ mile walk from the parking area. Usually you want to be leaving the parking area at least 80 minutes before sunrise. The prairie chickens usually come to the booming grounds in the dark and begin booming before daylight. You will hear them before you can see them. The best displays are at sunrise if the birds are not disturbed earlier in the morning. If you arrive late, the birds will flush from the lek or dancing ground and will probably return, but the display will not be as spectacular. Arriving early assures the best show. A sun rise and sun set table is on the last page.
2. This is a self-guided visit. Therefore, it is best if you can visit the site the day before since it will be dark when you go to the blind in the morning. Typically there are reflectors every ~200 feet that will guide you to the blind. Bring a strong flashlight. Some paths to the blind use either a different color reflector or, more commonly, 2 reflectors in the same location to indicate a major change in direction. Ground fog will greatly reduce the visibility of reflectors. In such cases, have one person remain at the last reflector while another moves forward to find the next reflector. Two strong flashlights are a must in this situation.
3. Your reservation is only for the morning unless you specifically reserved an evening blind.
4. ***Please be quiet and not disturb the birds.*** Whisper in the blind. Noise may scare the prairie chickens away from the blind.
5. Ideally you should wait until the prairie chickens have left the lek before you leave the blind. Being frightened by people emerging from the blind may disrupt their breeding pattern and they may not return to the lek in future days. They *tend* to leave between 8 and 10 a.m.; please stay in the blind until at least 8:00 am.

6. Be sure to take all items you brought to the blind with you when you leave.
7. Be sure to close all doors and windows.

HINTS TO MAKE YOUR VISIT TO THE BLIND MORE ENJOYABLE:

1. Wear warm clothes (winter gear is a good idea, especially early in the season). The winds on the prairie are very cold and there is not much room in the blind to move about to warm yourself. If it is cold, leave the viewing windows closed until after sunrise to conserve warmth. Also, you should wear waterproof footwear as several blinds are on wet prairie and you will not see the puddles in the early morning darkness. Some require knee boots!
2. You may want to bring a snack and something warm to drink. (However, keep in mind that it may be 4 hours before using a restroom.)
3. It is a good idea to bring binoculars and/or cameras. It is also fun to bring video cameras, but a little tricky to keep up with the prairie chickens.
4. Be on the lookout for migrating swans, ducks, geese, white-tailed deer, northern harriers, winnowing snipe, sharp-tailed grouse, and other wildlife.
5. Appreciate that these blinds and this morning's spectacle are possible through the efforts of wildlife managers and conservations working in concert with state, federal, and private (e.g., The Nature Conservancy), and professional conservation organizations (e.g., Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society).

Please review and fill out the survey sheets located inside the blinds so that we can track the activity at the lek throughout the season. Usually it is a simple count of males and females on the lek. THANKS.

Reservations are required for the blinds as these opportunities are limited. There is typically a waiting list so if you cannot keep your reservation, please cancel it as soon as possible.

- Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge – call Crookston Chamber of Commerce, 218-281-4320; 1-800-809-5997; crookstoncvb@rrv.net

Looking for Lodging? Visit the Crookston Chamber of Commerce website at <http://visitcrookston.com/lodging/>

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKENS, VISIT THE FOLLOWING LINKS:

- Greater Prairie Chicken account, <http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/id/framlst/i3050id.html>
- Greater Prairie Chickens in Minnesota, <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/rsg/profile.html?action=elementDetail&selectedElement=ABNLC13010>
- Greater Prairie Chicken in Wisconsin, <http://dnr.wi.gov/wnrmag/html/stories/2006/feb06/pchick.htm>
- Greater Prairie Chickens in Missouri, <http://mdc.mo.gov/nathis/birds/chickens/>
- Greater Prairie Chicken research in Missouri, <http://www.suttoncenter.org/research/grouse-research/greater-prairie-chicken/>

MAPS – GLACIAL RIDGE PROJECT / GLACIAL RIDGE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service maintains three (3) relatively large blinds and each have three chairs in them. Your reservation is only for one blind unless you specifically reserve more than one blind. The GPS coordinates below are in map datum 'WGS 83' in degrees, minutes, seconds. For all blinds, the drive time from Crookston is 30 - 35 minutes. A brisk walking pace in the dark, following reflectors, on uneven prairie is ~2 miles/hour. Get there early and enjoy the show!

Driving Directions from Crookston to ALL blinds begin the same. Starting on US Highway 2 at the bridge over the Red Lake River in Crookston, drive east ~10.2 miles to the intersection of US 2 and Polk County Road 44 (hereafter, US2/PC44).

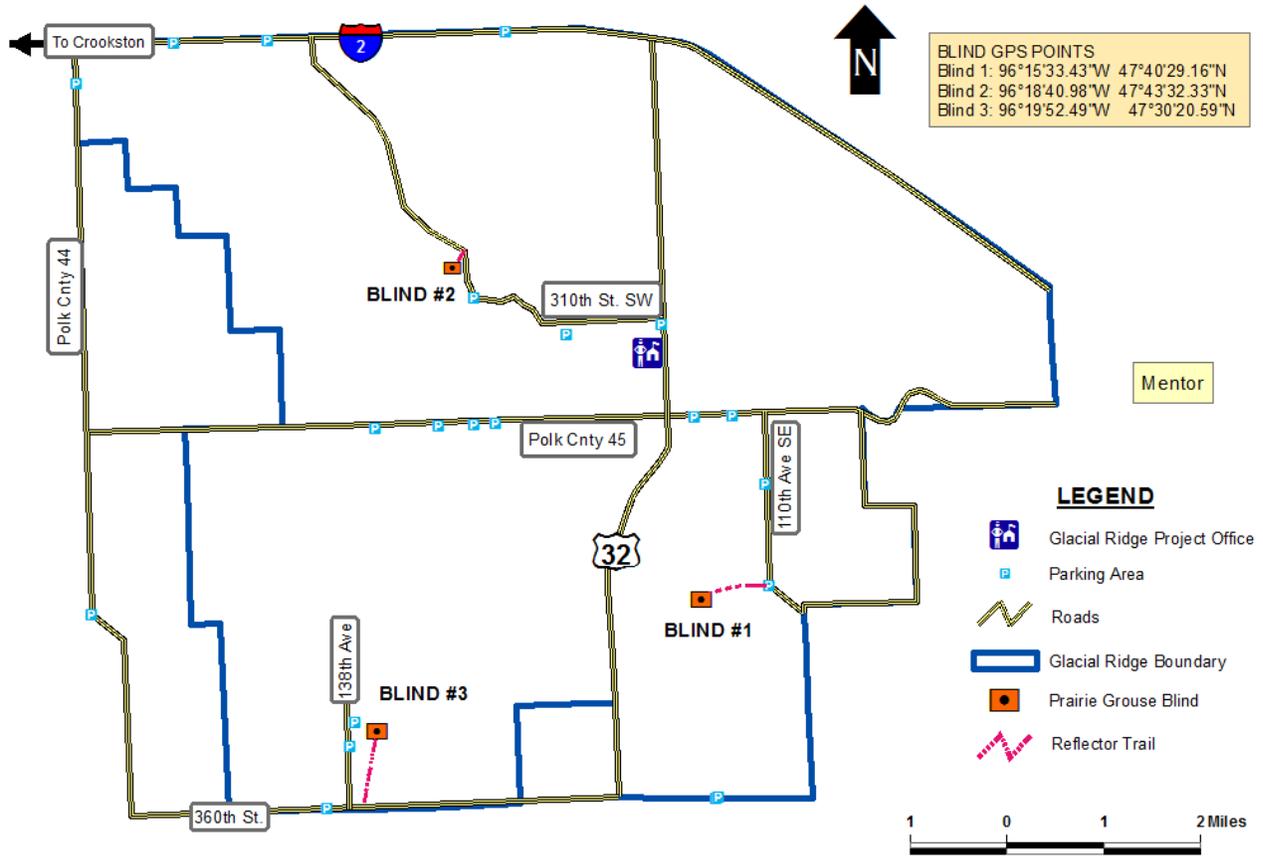
- Blind 1:** From US2/PC44 continue east for 6.0 miles, turn south (right) on Minnesota State Highway 32, drive south 4.0 miles to Polk County Road 45. Turn east (left) on PC45 and drive 1.0 miles. Turn south (right) on 110th Avenue SE and drive 1.8 miles to a refuge parking lot on the west (right) side of the road. Park and follow the trail of reflectors west 0.8 miles to blind on top of a beach ridge. ****HIKERS DELIGHT - WATERPROOF KNEE BOOTS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**** There is a ditch to cross with water 1-2 feet deep at this writing. There is a temporary bridge but still a significant amount of water in the area. GoogleMap Directions: <https://goo.gl/maps/n7aCRcVlBv>
- Blind 2:** From US2/PC44 continue east for 2.5 miles, turn south (right) on the gravel pit road, drive south-southeast 3.1 miles. *Alternately, From US2/PC44 continue east for 6.0 miles, turn south (right) on Minnesota State Highway 32, drive south 3.0 miles, turn west (right) on 310th Street SW and drive ~2.5 miles west-northwest.* Pull off as far as safely possible and park on the side of the road. Walk through the open gate on the south side of the road and follow the reflector trail ~350 yards to the blind. GoogleMap Directions: <https://goo.gl/maps/f6xrwGjsbgG2>
WARNING: The road is actively used by large trucks hauling gravel. Be alert and give them space.
- Blind 3:** From US2/PC44, turn south on Polk County Road 44 and drive 8.1 miles. Turn east (left) on 360th Street and drive 2.6 miles (~1/3 mile east of 138th Ave SW). Pull to the side of the road at the location of the double reflectors. Follow the reflector trail north for ~0.75 miles. The 25-minute-walk to the blind is easy and dry. GoogleMap Directions: <https://goo.gl/maps/mgDLnSmyhjk>

GLACIAL RIDGE NWR
 Location: W096 16, N47 42
 Rise and Set for the Sun

Day	Apr.		May	
	Rise	Set	Rise	Set
	h m	h m	h m	h m
01	0703	1956	0607	2038
02	0701	1957	0605	2040
03	0659	1959	0604	2041
04	0657	2000	0602	2042
05	0655	2002	0601	2044
06	0653	2003	0559	2045
07	0651	2004	0558	2046
08	0649	2006	0556	2048
09	0647	2007	0555	2049
10	0645	2009	0553	2050
11	0643	2010	0552	2052
12	0641	2011	0551	2053
13	0639	2013	0549	2054
14	0637	2014	0548	2056
15	0635	2016	0547	2057
16	0633	2017	0546	2058
17	0631	2019	0544	2059
18	0630	2020	0543	2101
19	0628	2021	0542	2102
20	0626	2023	0541	2103
21	0624	2024	0540	2104
22	0622	2026	0539	2105
23	0620	2027	0538	2107
24	0619	2028	0537	2108
25	0617	2030	0536	2109
26	0615	2031	0535	2110
27	0613	2033	0534	2111
28	0612	2034	0534	2112
29	0610	2035	0533	2113
30	0608	2037	0532	2114
31			0531	2115

Sunrise and Sunset Tables for the viewing area from
http://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/RS_OneYear.php

Prairie Grouse Viewing Blind Locations at Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge (2017)



Detailed images of the blind locations follow on the next page.

A full color, electronic version of this guide is available at: <http://z.umn.edu/PrairieChickenGuide2017>



Glacial Ridge NWR - **BLIND 1** (PRAIRIE CHICKENS) ↑



From Polk Cnty Hwy 45, go south on 110th Ave. SE for ~ 1 ¼ miles. At parking area, follow reflector trail west-southwest ~ 0.70 mile to blind. Cross wet area over small bridge.

Rubber knee boots recommended at this site.

GPS Coordinates
96°15'33.43"W 47°40'29.16"N

Detailed Maps of Blind Locations

Glacial Ridge NWR - **BLIND 2** (SHARP-TAILED GROUSE) ↑



From junction of Hwy. 32 and 310th St. SW, go west-northwest for ~ 2.5 miles. Park along side of gravel road. Pull off as far as safely possible. Go through open gate on south side of road and head south ~ 350 yards to blind, following reflector trail.

WARNING: The road at this site is regularly used by gravel trucks. Be alert and give them space.

GPS Coordinates
96°18'40.98"W 47°43'32.33"N

Glacial Ridge NWR - **BLIND 3** (PRAIRIE CHICKENS) ↑



Park on 360th St. SE about 1/3 mile east of the 138th Ave. SW junction (location is marked with double reflectors). Walk in to north, following the reflector trail for ~ 0.75 mile.

It takes roughly 20-25 minutes to walk to this blind, but the walk is dry and easy.

GPS Coordinates
96°19'52.49"W 47°30'20.59"N