



The prairie chicken in Minnesota has long been a relic of the tallgrass prairie. Originally, the prairie chicken was thought to only have occurred in extreme southern portion of the state. But as settlers moved north and forests were cleared, the prairie chicken range expanded. The expansion, however, was only short-lived. As more and more prairies were plowed, numbers dropped and the remaining prairie chickens were driven to inhabit either the high, dry sandy beach ridges of glacial Lake Agassiz or low, wet ground-both unsuitable for the plow.



*Photo Credit: FI Rust/Painet Inc.*

Today, the prairie chicken population in Minnesota is relatively stable, but low. Although the greater prairie chicken is not endangered or threatened, because it is uncommon and has very specific habitat requirements, the Minnesota DNR has designated the greater prairie chicken as a species of **special concern**. In order to help increase awareness of the greater prairie chicken and the tallgrass prairie ecosystem, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, together with a multitude of partners, has developed an environmental education website connecting children with nature. Every April, the lek at Hamden Slough Refuge is “booming” with activity. In order to capture that activity, a remote-digital camera is placed on the lek and fed into a website <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/hamdenslough/webcam/>

The “Streaming Chicken” offers live and archived videos of prairie chickens performing their mating rituals from the Hamden Slough lek. There is a web-activity that gives the students (or anyone) the experience of doing real field research by conducting different prairie chicken surveys, recording data, and making various graphs. In addition, links to general information on prairie chicken ecology, prairie-based curriculum, and contributing partners are also included on the website.

Other ways you can celebrate and learn about the Greater Prairie Chicken:

- Reserve the Hamden Slough prairie chicken blind during late March-early May; call (218) 847-4431 for more information.
- Reserve one of many other blinds in northern Minnesota-go to the following website: <http://www.prairiechicken.org/viewingopportunities.htm>
- Observe the prairie chickens from a distance by visiting Hamden Slough NWR.
- Check out the new and improved Prairie Trunk; full of a variety of prairie resources, lab and field gear, posters, videos, field guides, curriculum and more! Call (218) 847-4431 to reserve the trunk today.

Thanks to the following Partners for their many contributions to the Streaming Chicken Project:



Minco Technology Center



The Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society



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