

GREATER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN

Tympanuchus cupido (Game species, Colorado and other states)

THE GREATER PRAIRIE-chicken looks similar to the lesser prairie-chicken, except that the air sacs on the neck of the males are orange, rather than red-dish-purple. These air sacs are inflated during courtship displays each spring.

As recently as 1989, Colorado's greater prairie-chicken population numbered only about 6,000-10,000 birds, most of which were in Yuma County in the northeastern portion of the state. This population level was primarily a result of conversion of grasslands to croplands, with a contributing factor of livestock overgrazing.

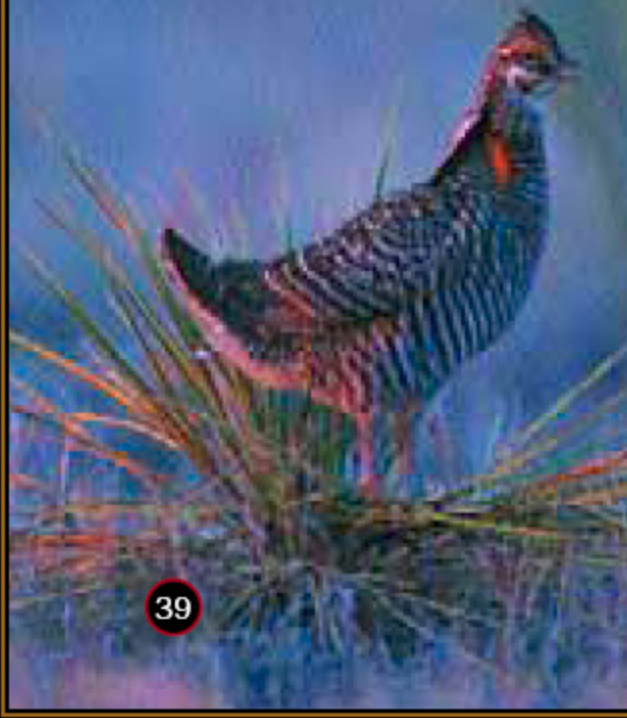
With the development of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a U.S. Department of Agriculture program, much of what had become croplands was restored to grasslands. Recovery efforts also relied heavily on cooperative management between agencies and private landowners to conserve and improve and re-establish native prairie. This, along with some reintroductions of greater prairie-chickens to unoccupied habitat, combined to allow the population to increase to the point where a limited hunting season was allowed in 2000.

Besides the limited

hunting season, greater prairie-chickens offer excellent wildlife watching opportunities. Local communities sponsor watchable wildlife events, and private landowners allow prairie-chicken watchers access to their lands to observe prairie-chickens during the peak of the breeding display season, usually in April.

All of these interests have combined to make the recovery of the greater prairie-chicken from a Colorado threatened species to a Colorado game species possible.

Federal and state agencies, along with private landowners, worked together to restore greater prairie-chicken populations.



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