Sharp–tailed Grouse
Tympanuchus phasianellus

Aves — Galliformes — Phasianidae

CONSERVATION STATUS / CLASSIFICATION

Rangewide:	Vulnerable subspecies (G4T3)
Statewide:	Critically imperiled (S1)
ESA:	No status
USFS:	Region 1: No status; Region 4: Sensitive
BLM:	Regional/State imperiled (Type 3)
IDFG:	Game bird

BASIS FOR INCLUSION
Low and declining populations throughout it range; habitat degradation in Idaho.

TAXONOMY
Seven subspecies of sharp–tailed grouse have been described (Connelly et al. 1998) but only six presently exist. The Columbian sharp–tailed grouse which is found in Idaho is the smallest of the subspecies.

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE
This species ranges from Alaska south to Colorado and from Washington to west–central Quebec. Occurs as a year–round resident in grass–shrub habitats in central Washington, southern Idaho, eastern Oregon, northern Nevada, northern Utah, southwestern Wyoming, western Colorado and possibly western Montana. In southeastern Idaho, Columbian sharp–tailed grouse are reasonably widespread in shrub and grass habitats adjacent to or in mountainous foothills. This species also occurs in south–central Idaho along the Nevada border and in an isolated portion of western Idaho (Meints 1991, Connelly et al. 1998).

POPULATION TREND
Columbian sharp–tailed grouse have declined significantly throughout their range during the 20th Century. Connelly et al. (1998) estimated that this subspecies occupies <10 to 50% of its former range in the U.S. and >80% of its historical range in British Columbia. However, populations have recently increased in some portions of the species' range because of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Population increases related to CRP have been especially evident in Idaho, which currently has more of this subspecies than any other state. Additionally, Columbian sharp–tailed grouse have been reintroduced to parts of Nevada, Idaho, and Oregon (T. Hemker, pers. comm.).

HABITAT AND ECOLOGY
Columbian sharp–tailed grouse occupy a variety of habitats generally characterized by dense stands of herbaceous cover and a mixture of shrubs. This subspecies also will use grain fields for feeding and may develop leks (traditional display sites) on agricultural fields. Leks form the hub of breeding habitat. Breeding habitats are

dominated by relatively dense herbaceous cover (including both grasses and forbs) and shrubs (Connelly et al. 1998). Broods depend on areas with abundant forbs and insects, often with a high diversity of shrubs and interspersion of cover types. Habitat requirements are narrower in winter than in other seasons. Sharp–tailed grouse often rely on riparian areas or deciduous hardwood shrub stands during winter. However, if conditions are very mild, birds may use agricultural lands and CRP fields at this time. Columbian sharp–tailed grouse eat a variety of buds, seeds, herbaceous matter and fruits. During spring and summer, insects are an important food for juvenile grouse. The average size of first clutches varies from 11–12 eggs and incubation ranges from 21–23 days (Connelly et al. 1998). In Idaho, clutch size for initial nests averaged 12 eggs but averaged 10 eggs for renesting attempts (Meints 1991). Chicks grow rapidly and complete most body growth by 12 weeks of age.

ISSUES

Population declines have generally been related to habitat loss, degradation from livestock grazing, and fire suppression (Connelly et al. 1998). Small populations may be limited by genetic constraints (M. A. Schroeder, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, pers. comm.).

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Protect and maintain habitats, avoid disturbance to breeding complexes (lands within 2 km radius of occupied leks), monitor breeding populations, augment small populations by transplanting birds, and translocate grouse into suitable habitats when possible (Geisen and Connelly 1993).

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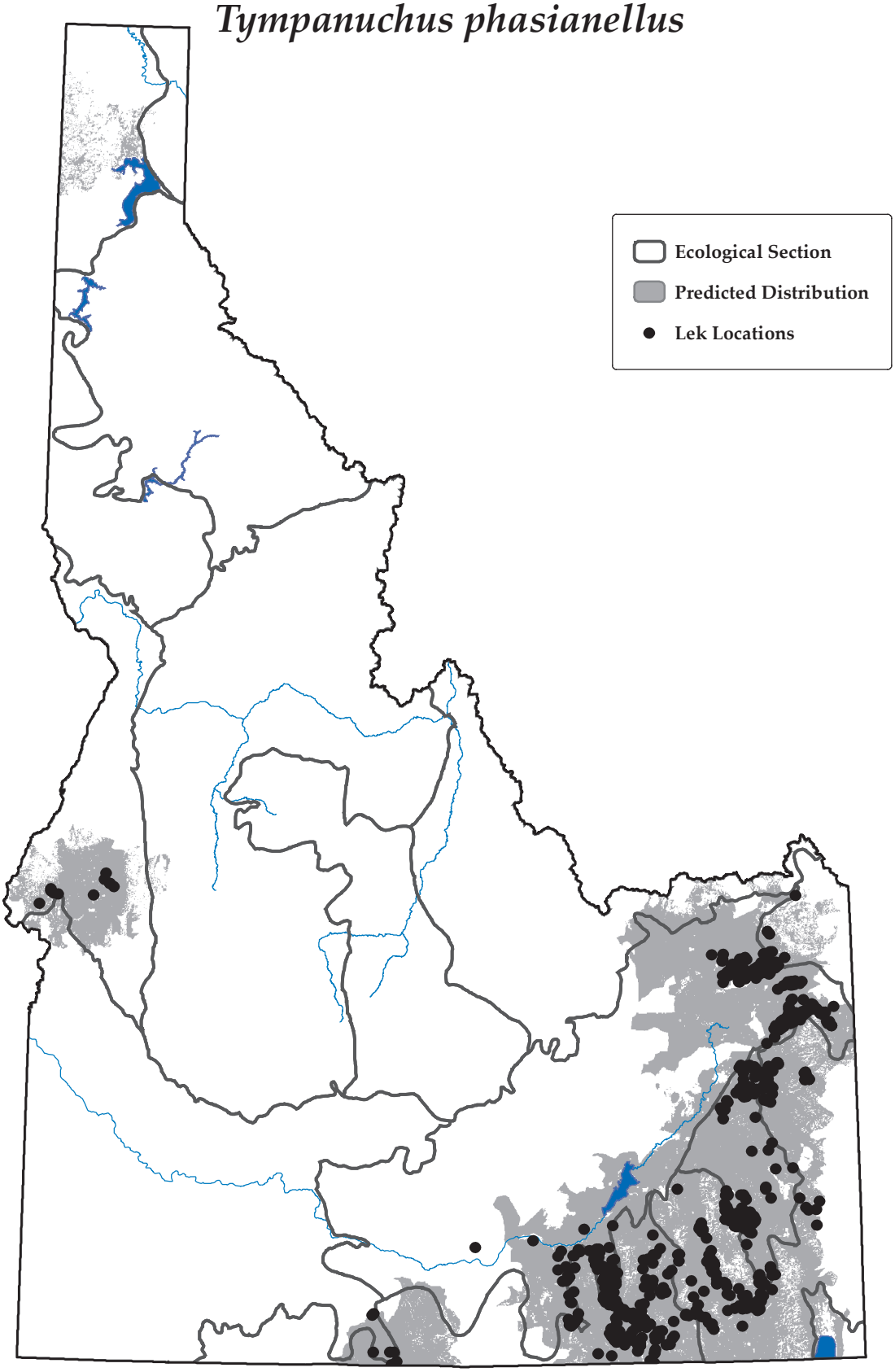

Map created on September 22, 2005
and prepared by Idaho Conservation Data Center.
Sources: Point data are from Idaho Conservation Data Center, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (2005). Predicted distribution is from the Wildlife Habitat Relationships Models (WHR), A Gap Analysis of Idaho: Final Report. Idaho Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Moscow, ID (Scott et al. 2002). Predicted distribution is approximate (for more information, go to http://www.wildlife.uidaho.edu/idgap/idgap_report.asp).

0 20 40 80 Kilometers

0 20 40 80 Miles