



## VALENTINE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

39679 Pony Lake Road  
Valentine, Nebraska 69201  
402-376-1889



### 2023 Prairie Grouse Viewing Blind Information

Prairie Grouse (Greater Prairie Chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse) are very shy and vulnerable birds. Please take every precaution to minimize disturbance during their courtship display so that the grouse will continue to occupy the lek.

#### Regulations:

1. Arrive in the blind 1 hour before sunrise. Keep in mind it is slightly over a 1/2 mile walk from the parking area. Prairie grouse usually come to the booming grounds before daylight. You will most likely hear them before you see them.
2. Please be quiet. Noise may frighten the prairie chickens and sharp-tailed grouse away from the blind.
3. Wait until the prairie chickens and sharp-tailed grouse have left the ground before departing the blind. If frightened by people emerging from the blind, it may disrupt their breeding pattern and they may not come back for others to enjoy the show. They *tend* to leave between 8:30 am – 10 am.
4. Be sure to take all items you brought to the blind with you when you leave.
5. **Be sure to close the door when you depart the blind!**

#### Additional Info:

The blinds are difficult if not impossible to locate in the dark unless you find them the day before during daylight hours. You should plan time to scout out the blind locations before your morning visit. When scouting the blinds, it would be a good chance to determine how long it will take you to walk to the blind and/or how long it takes to drive from where you are staying to the parking areas.

The blinds are small so the old saying three is a crowd is true. Four can “fit” in the blinds. There are three chairs in the blind for sitting and openings for viewing and photography. The sharp-tails and prairie chickens are close to the blind.

The Sandhills Prairie Refuge Association (SPRA), the volunteer support organization for the Fort Niobrara and Valentine National Wildlife Refuges, have provided comfort boxes for the benefit of visiting birders and photographers. Each comfort box contains a wool blanket, 3 seat cushions, and hand warmers in a small plastic tub. For more information on the SPRA, please take an opportunity to review the brochure within each blind.

Dress warmly and enjoy the sights and sounds of the prairie. Rubber/waterproof boots and flashlights/headlamps are a must for walking to the blinds in the morning.

If you are unable to walk to the blinds, we can recommend other locations where you can view the grouse from your car. If you decide not to come, please call so we can make the blind available to others.

### **Directions to Sharp-tailed Grouse Blind:**

The blind is located near Tom's Lake (see map). Park just off Highway 83 on the approach to a gate located just south of the lake. There is a large "grouse blind" sign here. The parking area is about 0.1 mile south of mile marker 184. The gate posts have signs delineating the grouse blind parking area. The actual blind is about 0.6 miles east and a little south. You can see the top of the 6-foot-tall brown colored blind from here in the daytime, better with binoculars. It is on top of a hill. With a flashlight or a headlamp, you should be able to follow the two-track trail to the blind. There are several posts with reflectors between the parking spot and the blind to guide you along the way. There is one electric fence to cross; the gate is open, and the fence is not on. There are reflectors on the blind which will show up if you hit them with a flashlight beam. The GPS location for the parking spot is N 42° 28.539' W 100° 32.488' and for the blind N 42° 28.263' W 100° 31.848'. The walk to the blind should take about 20-25 minutes.

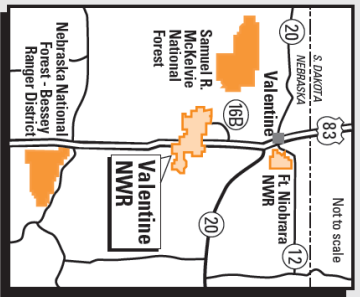
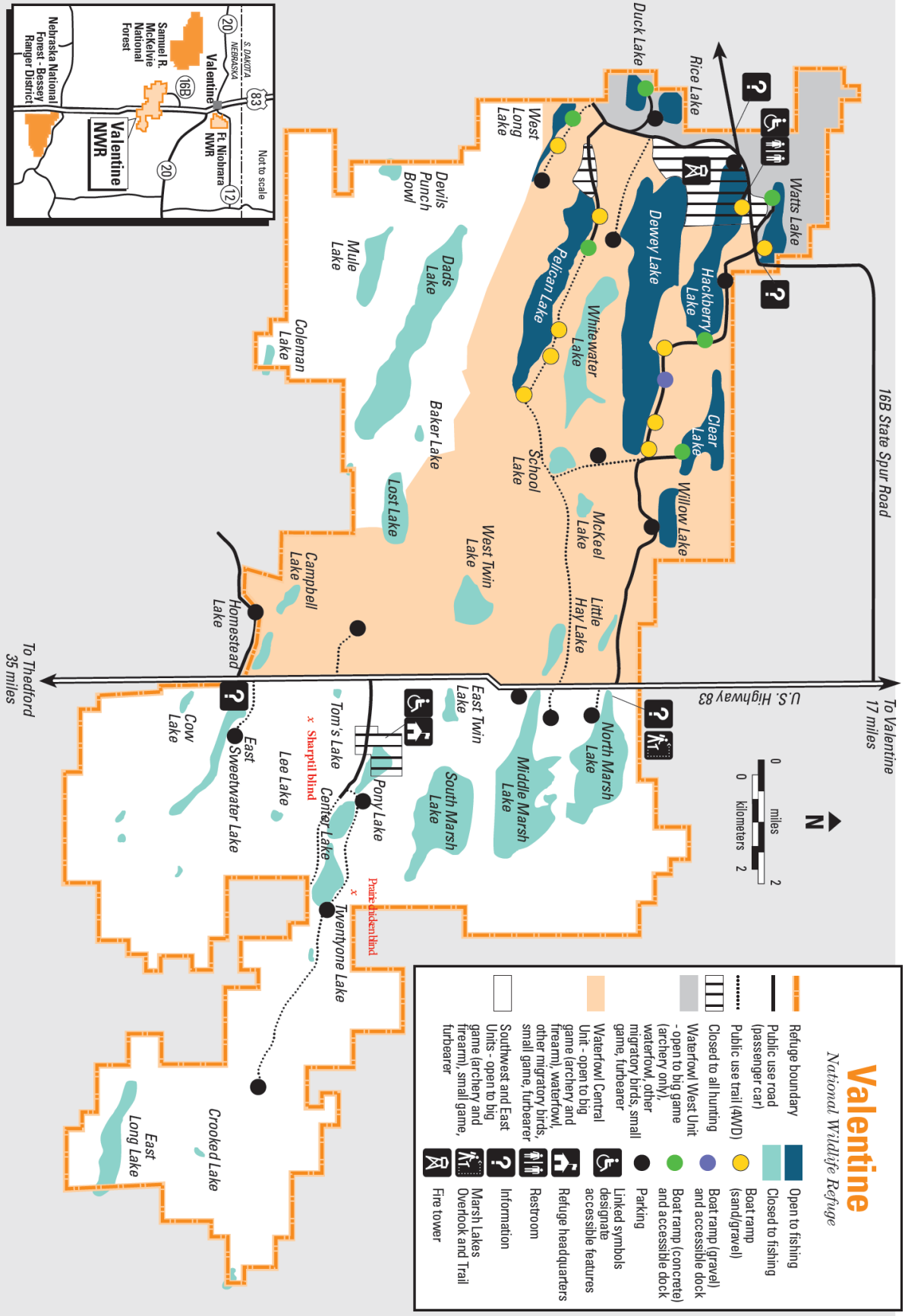
### **Directions to Greater Prairie Chicken Blind:**

The viewing blind for prairie chickens is located north of Twenty-one Lake (see map). The blind is accessed by heading east off Highway 83 as if coming to the refuge office at Pony Lake (there are signs along the highway for this turn off). From Highway 83, drive about 2.2 miles east to the turn for the East End Access Trail, and then proceed another 2.6 miles on this trail. There is a sign on the left side of the trail marking the place you should park (parking spot GPS coordinates N 42°28.46928, W 100°27.4281). The refuge road and trail are rough and rutted, so a 4-wheel drive or AWD vehicle with high clearance is recommended. It is **HIGHLY** recommended to visit the parking area during the daytime to ensure you know how long it takes to get to the blind and to assess your vehicle's ability to navigate the roads. From the parking area, you'll follow a string of reflectors to the north to the blind. The walk to the blind is about 0.2 miles on mostly level but uneven ground; GPS coordinates for blind are N 42°28.604202, W 100°27.402168. Drive time from the Highway 83 to the parking spot is about 20-25 minutes, and the walk to the blind 5-10 minutes.

# Valentine

## National Wildlife Refuge

- Refuge boundary
- Public use road (passenger car)
- Public use trail (AWD)
- Closed to all hunting
- Waterfowl West Unit - open to big game (archery only)
- Waterfowl, other migratory birds, small game, furbearer
- Waterfowl Central Unit - open to big game (archery and firearm), waterfowl, other migratory birds, small game, furbearer
- Southwest and East Units - open to big game (archery and firearm), small game, furbearer
- Open to fishing
- Closed to fishing
- Boat ramp (sand/gravel)
- Boat ramp (gravel) and accessible dock
- Boat ramp (concrete) and accessible dock
- Parking
- Linked symbols designate accessible features
- Refuge headquarters
- Restroom
- Information
- Marsh Lakes Overlook and Trail
- Fire tower



To Theedford  
35 miles

168 State Spur Road  
17 miles  
To Valentine

U.S. Highway 83

Not to scale

S. PARKER  
83  
NEBRASKA  
20  
Valentine  
12  
Ft. Niobrara  
NWR  
Valentine  
NWR  
Nebraska National  
Forests - Bessey  
Rangeland District

