

Bird Symbols of Canada

Part 8

Saskatchewan

Provincial Birds: Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanachus phasianellus*)

According to the Canadian Government website¹, Saskatchewan adopted the Sharp-tailed Grouse as its Provincial bird in 1945. I have not been able to go back that far, but I did find in the Saskatchewan Legislation database the consolidated “Provincial Emblems and Honours Act 1988-89” which was last updated in 2019. Part II, Article 7 of that Act states:

“Bird Emblem: The bird known ornithologically as Tympanachus phasianellus and called the “sharp-tailed grouse” is the bird emblem of Saskatchewan. 1995, c.29, s.4.”

The Canadian Government website suggests that the Sharp-tailed Grouse is known colloquially as a “Prairie Chicken”.

eBird Canada says about this bird:

“Pale grayish-brown chickenlike bird, found in open spaces with mix of grasses and shrubs. Often on the ground or perched high in trees. Look for whitish tail with pointed tip, slight crest, wings spotted with white, and sparsely marked pale belly. In early spring, males gather at display site and dance to attract females: look for tail cocked up, wings held out, and purple patch of exposed skin on neck. Sexes alike. Most similar to prairie-chickens but note paler belly and pointed tail.”²

The distribution map on eBird for the Sharp-tailed Grouse indicates that it is a native resident of North East and Central Canada (but not the Eastern seaboard provinces) and the Northern, Central States of the USA. It is also present in parts of Alaska.

The Sharp-tailed Grouse is a bird that is hunted by man. The online magazine “Project Upland” describes aspects of this bird:

“The is one seriously charismatic bird. If you’ve ever seen videos of sharp-tails doing their tell-tale dancing competitions, you were likely hooked immediately. They are fascinating birds to watch and to hunt. Furthermore, the open habitats they live in are equally beautiful and captivating in their own way.”³

Project Upland describes the bird’s natural habitat as comprising open grasslands and/or short brushlands (with limited tree cover). As regards diet, the Sharp-tailed Grouse will feed on cereal grains, as well as insects such as grasshoppers. The bird will also dine on fruits and berries.

¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/provincial-territorial-symbols-canada/saskatchewan.html#a72>

² <https://ebird.org/species/shtgro>

³ <https://projectupland.com/grouse-species/sharp-tailed-grouse-hunting/finding-sharp-tailed-grouse-habitat-2/>

There is only the one stamp from Canada that features the Sharp-tailed Grouse and it is one that is impressive. This is part of the 2016 mini-sheet, also issued in a stamp booklet, shown below:

2016 [Provincial] Birds of Canada



Image source: <https://www.canadapost.ca/>

I have included a scan of the booklet, because the Sharp-tailed Grouse features on the cover.

Keith Martin was the illustrator for this first set in a series of three issues (the others in 2017 and 2018). Designer Kosta Tsetsekas came up with the idea for this three-year project.

Canada Post priced the booklets (10 stamps) at \$8.50. It issued 400,000 of them. All of the stamps have a “Permanent” value (designated by the “P” in the Maple Leaf logo). The stamps were valid for domestic rate postage.

The FDC which incorporates the mini-sheet is shown overleaf. This also has impressive, complementary artwork:

2016 Birds of Canada – Mini sheet FDC



Image source: <https://www.canadapost.ca/>

Canada Post issued 11,000 of these FDCs.

I did wonder if the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation had issued any stamps featuring the Sharp-tailed Grouse, but I was not able to find any from the limited searches that I was able to complete.