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### Review of *Grassland Grouse and Their Conservation* By Paul Johnsgard

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**Grassland Grouse and Their Conservation.** By Paul Johnsgard. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002. xiv+157 pp. Illustrations, bibliographical references, index. \$34.95 cloth.

The first two chapters of *Grassland Grouse* deal with the extinction of the heath hen and the almost certain disappearance of the Attwater's prairie chicken. They paint an accurate but thoroughly depressing picture of these losses. Paul Johnsgard clearly points out how, despite our "best" efforts, populations can slip into extinction. In these initial chapters, he sounds an alarm over the plight of a unique group of North American birds and their rapidly disappearing habitats.

The three middle chapters, which describe the status and population trends of lesser prairie chickens, greater prairie chickens, and sharp-tailed grouse, all species indigenous to the Great Plains, provide valuable insight into changes in Great Plains landscapes and their effects on native grouse. Johnsgard thoroughly documents changes in the populations and habitats of these species and also describes the impact agricultural development within the Great Plains has had on them. His synthesis carries an easily detected undertone of warning that these grouse species could follow the fate of the heath hen. Intended or not,

these chapters also imply criticism of the effectiveness of resource agencies in conserving declining species. Johnsgard provides several examples of states lacking data on their grouse populations and indicates that one state agency terminated population monitoring efforts when the hunting season on sharp-tailed grouse was closed.

Given the attention to detail in the first five chapters, the final two are disappointing. Johnsgard's treatment of sage-grouse appears to be added as an afterthought. He has omitted recent references, is somewhat repetitious, and provides a generally shallow treatment of the two sage-grouse species.

The summary chapter would have been an ideal place to discuss population and habitat monitoring techniques, shortcomings of current data, and the direction of future conservation efforts. Instead, Johnsgard provides relatively useless information perpetuating erroneous beliefs about fire, forbs, and sage-grouse, and strongly implies that a population of greater prairie chickens in Kansas declined because of research efforts. The author provides no supporting evidence or references for his statements.

Although the first part of the book provides valuable information on populations and habitats, the overall work seems hastily written. There are numerous errors of fact and some misspelling of names. The volume contains unsubstantiated statements and speculation that may mislead readers. Although *Grassland Grouse* will not be very useful as a reference text for those in the front lines of conservation battles, it will still help many lay people understand the plight of these unique species. **John W. Connelly**, *Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Pocatello*.