



Forest Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Pine Ridge Ranger District, Nebraska National Forest & Oglala National Grassland

## Forest Service News Release

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### Sharp-tailed Grouse Viewing Blind

*Free for Public Use, Reservations Available*

**Chadron, NE., March 13, 2024** — The Pine Ridge Ranger District is offering a sharp-tailed grouse viewing blind that is free for the public to use. This will allow visitors the opportunity to witness the amazing courtship dances of the sharp-tailed-grouse. The viewing blind will be open to the public beginning Saturday, March 16, and will remain available throughout the mating season.

Every spring, male sharp-tailed grouse perform a mating “dance” to attract females. The areas where the birds perform this ritual is called a lek - the same lek site can be used for decades. The dances typically begin while it is mostly dark and continue for an hour or more after sunrise. The blind offers visitors near-by photo and observation opportunities as the grouse perform their lively spring courtship displays.

“The blind is located on the Pine Ridge Ranger District, off Job Corps Bypass Road, at a lek site that has been active for over a decade,” says Wildlife Biologist, Jacqueline Dailey. “Each year, this lek has had anywhere from 10-20 males dancing and competing for the female’s attention, it’s quite a spectacular sight!”

Visitors must arrive at least 30 minutes prior to sunrise, as this is when the birds are most active. Dailey cautions that the grouse may not display and disperse for extended periods of time if viewers are late to the blind. “Please plan to stay quietly seated in the blind for at least an hour after sunrise so as not to disturb the mating ritual,” said Dailey.

The blind was constructed in 2016 by a Veterans Crew from the Student Conservation Association. The SCA’s training program aims to assist returning veterans transitioning to civilian life and prepare for careers in conservation. Featuring numerous small viewing windows, the blind offers opportunities to observe and photograph birds in their natural habitat. With space for up to four adults, the blind is equipped with two adult chairs and one child chair, is unheated, and has an open sod floor. Visitors are encouraged to bring camp chairs, snacks, water, blankets for cooler weather, a flashlight, binoculars, and a camera for capturing this seasonal spectacle.

For more information and directions, please contact the Pine Ridge Ranger District office; 308-432-0300, or stop in Monday through Friday, 8am – 4:30pm at 125 N. Main Street, Chadron NE 69337.



*The sharp-tailed grouse blind, as set up for visitor use.  
Image by Jacqueline Dailey.*

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