

10. What is a Lek?

You may wonder what these Prairie Chickens are doing. They are dancing on their *lek*! A lek is an assembly area where animals such as grouse and prairie chickens, display courtship behaviors in an attempt to attract females for mating. Sometimes these 'lek' grounds are referred to as booming grounds. Each spring, before and during mating season, male Prairie Chickens will gather on their lek to dance and perform their booming, or drumming display.

These displays often lead to fighting and some rather extravagant maneuvers as they try to do outdo one another. Typically, 25-30 birds will gather on a lek at the same time. As you can imagine, this is quite a site to see, and to hear. Watch and listen to these male Prairie Chickens on their lek, paying special attention to the air sacks on their necks.

(natural sounds of the prairie chickens)

Grouse, such as these Sharp Tailed Grouse, also use leks to perform their mating rituals.

Grouse and Prairie Chickens will return to the same lek year after year. As a matter of fact, it is thought that some leks have been the sites of these rituals for thousands of years.

Habitat loss or destruction has taken a toll on the population of these species. It is important that we do our part to respect and preserve these leks so these creatures can impress us with their displays for many years to come.