

# Pheasant News and Notes

January 2018



## Trivia Question:

Did William Shakespeare (1564-1616) reference pheasants in any of his plays? (Answer below)

## Farm Bill and USDA News

In case you missed the email notice in the holiday blur, Senators Steve Daines (R-MT) and Michael Bennet (D-CO) introduced the [Voluntary Public Access Improvement Act](#) in the U.S. Senate, which would reauthorize and strengthen the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) by increasing funding for the program to \$150 million over 5 years. This marker bill is heartening for AFWA, Pheasants Forever, and our partnership, given that this level of funding is just what we asked for in our [various priority documents and request letters](#). Here's hoping it makes it through the budgetary meat grinder to come.

Also recall Representative Vicky Hartzler (R-MO) introduced HR 4298, the [CRP Grazing Flexibility Act](#) back in November. Members of AFWA's CRP Working Group (led by Todd Bogenschutz of IA) had some initial discussions about the merits of this bill, and the reviews were largely positive. The bill would eliminate the 25% payment reduction for grazing on CRP tracts under certain circumstances, but there was still some confusion about whether this would permit grazing on land enrolled in practices that currently prohibit it. It appears AFWA will likely support the gist of the bill and offer suggested clarifications; Pheasants Forever has also expressed support.

The House Ag Committee has released [a new landing page for Farm Bill-related information](#). Lots of good stuff there, including links to the Committee's ongoing activities related to the bill and their "Farm Bill Friday" blog. As we know, the House is likely to introduce their bill before the Senate does, so this is a good site to watch.

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship has [announced a demonstration program](#) to provide a \$5/acre discount on producers' crop insurance premiums in exchange for the establishment of cover crops. The goal of the program is to improve water quality through increased cover crop adoption, and the discount is applied directly through USDA Risk Management Agency's payment process. This might be a good model for state wildlife agencies looking to incentivize pheasant-friendlier conservation practices on croplands. It also hints at the potential funding partners that might be out there if we could identify cover (or companion) crop management systems that were most beneficial to pheasants and other wildlife. We can certainly make some educated guesses at this point, but some specific research would be useful.

## Notes from Around the Pheasant Range

In December I got a webinar tour of the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture's predictive pheasant habitat model from Sean Fields, the JV's Science Coordinator. Staff from the Playa Lakes Joint Venture, who have developed their own regional model, also sat in on the discussion. Along with [the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture's work published a few years ago](#), that now makes three JV's with landscape-scale pheasant models. The next step is figuring out how to stitch them together into a coordinated planning

tool. I discussed this concept with the USDA-FSA's Skip Hyberg again last month, and he may have some funding to support construction of such a tool – the idea would be to build something we could add other geographies and species onto over time so USDA could better predict the national implications of policy changes on pheasants and other species of interest. After the PPJV has a chance to put some finishing touches on their model, I will organize a conference call with all the principle parties to begin fleshing out a project proposal for Skip; let me know if you want to participate in the call.

Tom Keller (Tech Committee, Pennsylvania Game Commission) worked up an initial outline for the Committee's recommendations on pheasant translocations and distributed it to the other members (Al Stewart of MI, Jeff Prendergast of KS, and Robert Perez of TX) who agreed at the Utah meeting to work on the document. That group will be turning the outline into a review draft in the coming months. Thanks again to Tom, Al, Jeff, and Robert for volunteering to take this on.

Our Technical Committee membership in the Pacific Northwest is in a state of transition. Angelique Curtis, the Management Board and Technical Committee member for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, left her position in September and has not yet been replaced. The point of contact for most of Angelique's duties is Anis Aoude (360/902-2509), WDFW's wildlife chief. More recently, Dave Budeau, our TC member for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, retired at the end of October. Kelly Walton (503/947-6322) is the lucky staff member at ODFW that gets to do two jobs while they hire Dave's replacement (the position was advertised and has now closed). Good luck to Anis and Kelly while they hold down the fort, and we look forward to welcoming some new Tech Committee members soon.

The Nebraska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit plans on publishing several pieces of their research on pheasant hunter behavior together in an upcoming Wildlife Monograph. The WM editor has encouraged the idea, and writing is now underway.

### **Recent Literature**

I got a question the other day about the potential effects of wind turbines on pheasants. I couldn't find any North American research on the subject, but did find [this study from Poland](#). They found increased pheasant use near turbines, and hypothesized turbines were associated with a reduced threat of avian predation and increased availability of grit, particularly in winter. If anyone has any other information, please pass it along.

Pete Robertson and coauthors recently evaluated long-term changes in the efficiency with which released pheasants increased the harvest (wild and released birds combined) on shooting estates in Great Britain. They found efficiency has declined, with most of the drop occurring during 1990 to 2005. The trend could be due to changes in habitat, disease prevalence, or predation, but their data were insufficient to figure that part out.

[Pheasant releases in Great Britain: long-term and large-scale changes in the survival of a managed bird](#)

If you're like me and it's been a few years (or decades) since you learned the latest data analysis techniques in grad school, the methods now referenced in publications can seem pretty mysterious (e.g., what the heck is an N-mixture model? Sounds like a blender on a late-night infomercial.) Luckily, I stumbled upon [this book](#) by Larkin Powell and George Gale that is wildlife data-specific and explains several of the newer approaches in a very understandable way. To top it off, the book is available as a free download in pdf form. Thanks, Larkin and George!

## **Pheasants in the News**

Once again, pheasants generate valuable public services, including crime-fighting.

[Pheasant hunters bag burglary suspects in Oregon](#)

## **Pheasants on the Plate**

*"I'm making this presumption that you want to live vividly... What is a diet of vividness but to live vividly, to see vividly, to write vividly... We start at the base with garlic. Without garlic forget it. Garlic should be bought in odd numbers. You should get one pound, three pounds, five pounds, seven pounds of garlic." --Jim Harrison*

In our day-to-day work in conservation, sometimes the deeper point of what we're doing can start to slip into the background, and we need ways of resisting this when we feel it happening. Why do we spend our time working for pheasants? Everyone has their personal reasons, but most would agree pheasants repay our efforts by making our lives more vivid. Flushed underfoot, what is a pheasant but a bolt of pure vividness? If we shoot straight and know how to cook, that same quality ends up on the plate, as well. There's no accounting for taste, as they say, but including an occasional recipe in our pheasant conversations helps remind us that the vivid is worth fighting for.

## **Pheasant and Garlic Soup**

This is a bastardized version of a meatless Spanish garlic soup recipe. Since it calls for diced meat, birds that took the brunt of the pattern work well here – save the nice-looking ones for dishes where the game is the star rather than a supporting actor. You can use the meat from a whole rooster if you want, but getting two batches per bird doubles the enjoyment.

Ingredients:

3 T olive oil

15 cloves of garlic, sliced thin

2½ T smoked paprika

2/3 t cayenne pepper (or to taste)

1 pheasant breast filet and the meat from 1 thigh, both cut into smallish cubes

5 c chicken stock

Salt (to taste, depending on how salty your stock is to start with)

2 beaten eggs (optional)

4 c toasted croutons made from a baguette (day-old bread works best)

Heat the olive oil in a pot over medium-low heat, then add the garlic and sauté until it just starts to soften. Add the spices and stir until moistened by the oil, add the meat and stir until the cubes are just separated, then add the stock (the trick is to get the stock in there before the garlic starts to brown, which turns it bitter). Increase the heat and simmer until the meat is cooked through, then adjust the salt if needed. If you're up for something interesting, dribble in a couple of beaten eggs while quickly stirring the simmering pot, resulting in an egg-drop soup kind of thing which sounds weird but adds a nice richness (and if you're like me, you'll start involuntarily humming Paul Simon's "Mother and Child Reunion" as you add the eggs, because the song's title was supposedly inspired by a chicken-and-egg dish on a Chinese restaurant's menu). Ladle soup into bowls, top generously with croutons, stop humming and eat. Serves four.

\*\*If you would be so kind, please send your favorite pheasant or other upland game recipes for future use in this space. Reading only what one person thinks tastes good is boringly incomplete.

### **Trivia answer**

Pheasants were probably brought to England by the Normans around 1400, but apparently Shakespeare referenced them only once – in *The Winter's Tale*, Act IV, Scene 3:

Shepherd: My business, sir, is to the king.

Autolycus: What advocate hast thou to him?

Shepherd: I know not, an't like you.

Clown: Advocate's the court-word for a pheasant: say you have none.

Shepherd: None, sir; I have no pheasant, cock nor hen.

Autolycus: How blessed are we that are not simple men!

Yet nature might have made me as these are,  
Therefore I will not disdain.

Amateur translation: Autolycus mocks the shepherd's ignorance for not offering a pheasant in exchange for a royal audience, so in Shakespeare's time, pheasants must have literally been gifts fit for a king.

Timeless truths: pheasants are valuable, and some people are jerks. Happy New Year!

*This update is brought to you by the National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan and Partnerships. Our mission is to foster science-based, socially-supported policies and programs that enhance wild pheasant populations, provide recreational opportunities to pheasant hunters, and support the economics and social values of communities. You can find us on the web at [www.nationalpheasantplan.org](http://www.nationalpheasantplan.org).*