

Pheasant News and Notes

December 2018



Trivia Question

In what Christmas carol do pheasants make a cryptic appearance?

Farm Bill and USDA News

Party leaders in both chambers have reached agreement on a Farm Bill conference report. I had hoped to delay publication of this update until the report was officially available, but its release has been delayed until next week due to congressional calendar changes caused by the state funeral of former President Bush. That said, [Representative Peterson has publicly stated](#) the report includes raising the CRP cap from 24 to 27 million acres, with 2 million acres of that increase going to CRP Grasslands. Payments for general and continuous CRP enrollments would be capped at 85% and 90% of the local rental rate, respectively. Further, a general sign-up would be required every year, and public hunting would be required on most CRP permanent easements. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) will remain intact. I could find no reference to Senator Thune's proposed Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP) making the final cut, which is disappointing if true. Lawmakers appear to have largely punted on the forestry management issues that held things up in recent weeks, and the administration has indicated they might attempt some SNAP reforms with the authority they already have (or think they have, anyway) without changing much in the new bill. It's still possible Congress won't have a new bill passed by the end of the year, but it appears much more likely that they'll find calendar time to consider it as a stand-alone bill or, if time runs short, attach it to an omnibus spending bill expected to receive a vote by 2019.

Once a bill is signed into law, we will then get to work on identifying administrative opportunities that USDA might have to implement more pheasant-friendly policies in program implementation. Those would include resuming our conversation with USDA about a national early successional habitat CRP practice.

Notes from Around the Pheasant Range

Your Plan Coordinator was on the road again this month. At the end of October I attended a pheasant management workshop hosted by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife near Sacramento. Lots of familiar issues were discussed (loss of beneficial crop types in their primary pheasant range) but the specifics were unique (conversion of cropland to vineyards and almond groves). Peter Coates (USGS Western Ecological Research Center) also provided an overview of their multi-agency effort to study factors affecting pheasants across the state. Although they weren't the dominant effects, the team has found some interesting (negative) associations of pesticide use, corvid abundance, and turkey abundance with pheasant abundance (you can find their primary paper [here](#)). I appreciated the opportunity to speak a little about our Plan partnerships and learn about their good work, and look forward to finding areas of collaboration in the future. Thanks to Katherine Miller, Matt Meshriy, and Scott Gardner of CDFW for the invitation and hospitality, and to Al Eiden of PF for facilitating the connections.

On the way home from California I swung by Nebraska to participate in the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative's leadership workshop. I presented on upland game R3 issues and we discussed their implications for both our organizations. No doubt we will want to work together as some action items materialize on this front. Thanks again to the NBCI crew for the invitation to participate.

Finally, I spent a day in nearby Midwestern state discussing precision agriculture issues with a few PF and industry folks (more on that later as things develop), and a day in Colorado at the Playa Lakes Joint Venture headquarters hashing out a few more details of our multi-joint venture pheasant habitat modeling proposal. I'm hopeful we'll be able to get a final proposal to FSA within the next few days.

In other news, John Laux (Technical Committee, Nebraska) sent an update about their new "[Nebraska Upland Slam](#)" program. The program was inspired by Utah's similar offering we heard about at the Tech Committee meeting there in 2017. NGPC's program challenges hunters to harvest a Nebraska pheasant, bobwhite, sharp-tailed grouse, and greater prairie-chicken in a single hunting season, and to document their successes with photographs associated with the entry form. Those completing the slam receive a pin and online recognition, plus entry into a season-ending drawing for prizes, including a nice Browning shotgun. John says over 200 hunters from 14 states have registered to participate so far, and about 60 have completed their slam. With upland hunter participation declining, we certainly need to try more novel approaches like this to keep our folks motivated. Good luck to NGPC in the continued growth of this program!

Tom Keller (Technical Committee, Pennsylvania) passed along the photo below showing of the fruits of their pheasant restoration labors. Those of us who attended the Tech Committee meeting in Etters this fall will recall that youth hunting (by drawing) is the only pheasant hunting allowed on their pheasant restoration areas. [According to PGC](#), this year 40 youth hunters participated, and "after two mornings of hunts on four farms, 199 birds were flushed including 93 roosters, 45 shots were fired, and one long-tailed male ring-neck was put in the game bag of a very excited youngster."



Finally, I talked to Jeff Knetter (Technical Committee, Idaho) recently, and he mentioned that IDFG just completed an opinion survey of their hunters. An invitation to participate was sent to about 70,000 hunters with email addresses and they got 14,000 responses, including about 3,500 from people described as upland hunting enthusiasts. In a beautiful state with abundant public land supporting a half dozen native upland species, Jeff made the mistake of asking hunters what their favorite species to pursue was. The top answer: pheasants, of course. I can't argue with them, and I'm forever grateful that folks love pheasants, but why do people always most want what it's hardest for us to provide? Is it the law of supply-and-demand, or are upland game managers just inherently unlucky?

Pheasants in the Media

[Precision ag tools help boost pheasant numbers](#)

[Senator Thune speaks on the virtues of pheasant hunting](#)

[Representative King hosts annual pheasant hunt](#)

[New pheasant stamp already paying off for Pennsylvania hunters](#)

[Pheasant hunting, monarchs, habitat, dog's work, family: opening day in Illinois](#)

[South Dakota groups emphasize recruiting diverse hunters](#)

[Aberdeen lodge hosts women's-only hunt to kick off season](#)

[Pheasant season's underbelly: stripping, sex trafficking and small towns looking the other way](#)

[Veterans take to the field in special eastern Iowa pheasant hunt](#)

[Tory MPs' pheasant shooting party criticized by animal rights activists](#)

[French pheasant breeders say ferry companies refusing to transport game because of anti-hunt pressure](#)

[A vegetarian reporter explores a hunting dilemma](#)

[Women farmers out-earn their male counterparts](#)

[Farmer adjustments offset climate change impacts in corn production](#)

[How to cook The Prince of Wales' favorite dish: Pheasant Crumble Pie](#)

[Meghan Markle wears a traditional Maori cloak made from pheasant feathers to protect her during pregnancy](#)

My new second-favorite princess! (Sorry, but Buttercup from *The Princess Bride* is still #1.) No one but bird geeks probably think it's weird to have feathers from an exotic species adorning a "traditional" New Zealand Maori cloak, so we should probably just keep our mouths shut.



Recent Literature

No management-oriented pheasant literature this month, but a few related papers:

[Langley, G. J. G., J. O. van Horik, M. A. Whiteside, and J. R. Madden. 2018. Individuals in larger groups are more successful on spatial discrimination tasks. *Animal Behaviour* 142:87-93.](#) (Hen pheasants are used as the study subjects.)

[Ahlering, M. A., D. H. Johnson, and L. H. Hunt. 2018. Land ownership and use influence grassland bird abundance. *Journal of Wildlife Management* \(early e-version\).](#) Results suggest densities of several grassland bird species are higher on private versus public grasslands.

Trivia Answer

The Twelve Days of Christmas. Everyone knows about the partridge in a pear tree, but [according to some interpretations](#), “five golden rings” refers to ring-necked pheasants, keeping the song’s bird-based gift theme intact through seventh verse. So feel free to sing “five golden ring-NECKED PHEASANTS!” when you’re caroling this year – everyone loves a non-conformist know-it-all around the holidays.

Merry Christmas, everyone!

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 <http://nationalpheasantplan.org>.