

# Pheasant News and Notes

February 2019



## Trivia Question

Jane Goodall's *The Chimpanzees of Gombe: Patterns of Behavior* won The Wildlife Society's book of the year award in 1988. What two books about upland game birds won TWS's award in the years directly before and after Dr. Goodall was honored?

## Farm Bill and USDA News

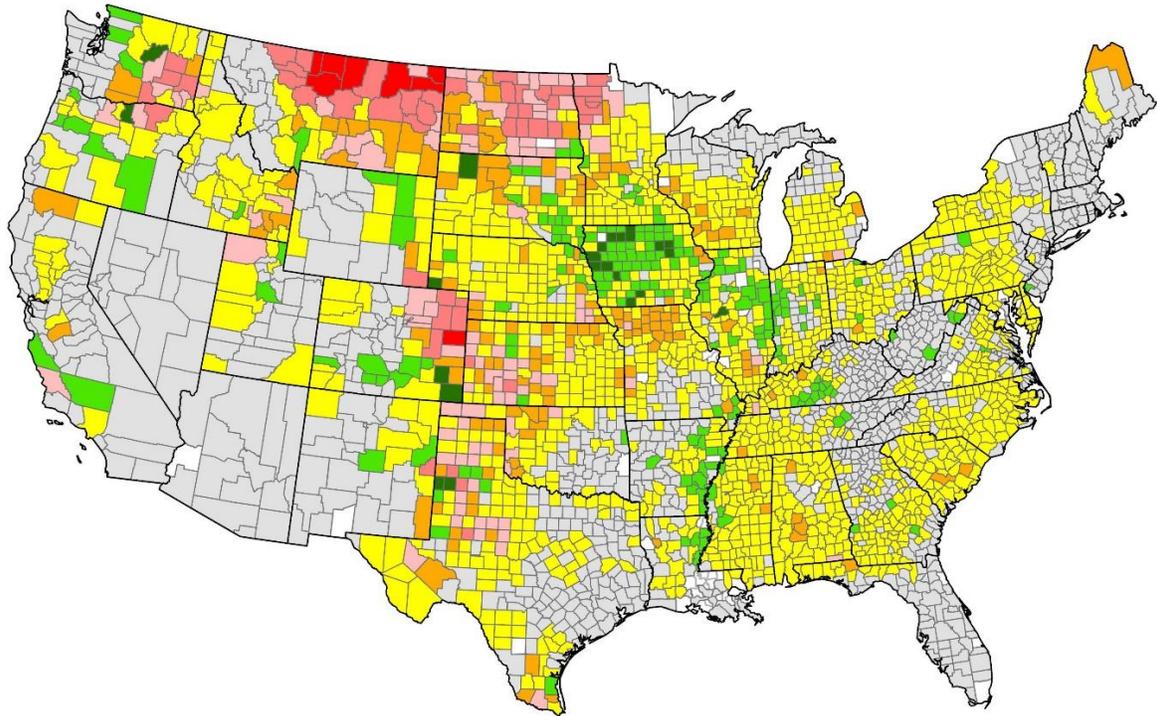
All USDA staff are now back to work after the partial government shutdown ended last week, at least temporarily. NRCS staff generally worked as normal throughout the shutdown using reserve funding, whereas FSA staff were either furloughed or worked without immediate pay through most of the stoppage. Everyone hopes lawmakers can find agreement on long-term funding disputes before the current continuing resolution expires February 15<sup>th</sup>.

The shutdown obviously delayed FSA's work on implementing and interpreting the 2018 Farm Bill. I mentioned last month that the new law allocates 60% of available Conservation Reserve Program acres each year to states following the Secretary's "consideration" of historic state proportional enrollments during 2007-2016. I provided one method USDA might use to adhere to that provision but mentioned there could be other interpretations of the language. One alternative could be to more strictly define a state's current target acreage going forward as equaling its average enrollment during 2007-2016. This might mean the states that are currently above (or not as far below) their historic enrollment might be allocated few or no acres out of that 60% until proportional enrollments more closely match those during 2007-2016. The winners and losers under this interpretation can be identified by looking at how far states are above and below their historic acreages relative to other states.

For context, I looked at 2017 deviations from 2007-2016 average enrollments by county (Figure 1). Not surprisingly, relatively few counties gained significant acreage given the reduction in the national CRP acreage cap over this period. Of the counties that did gain acres, quite a few were in Iowa, with a smattering among several other states. The most consistent losses of acres were in Montana and North Dakota.

Since the new Farm Bill deals specifically with relative percentages of total enrolled acres by state, Figure 2 shows the data in this format. I calculated the percent changes in total enrollments in 2017 versus the 2007-2016 averages (i.e., if a state had 5% of the national enrollment in 2017 and 4% of the national enrollment during 2007-2016, it gained 1%). The states depicted in warmer colors would thus have more to gain by USDA trying harder to reestablish the 2006-2017 proportional enrollments, and the greener states would have more to lose.

Figure 1. Change in county CRP acres in 2017 compared with their 2007-2016 averages. Counties in gray had few or no acres; counties in white had missing data from USDA.



Difference between 2017 acres and 2007-2016 average

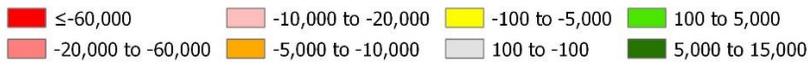
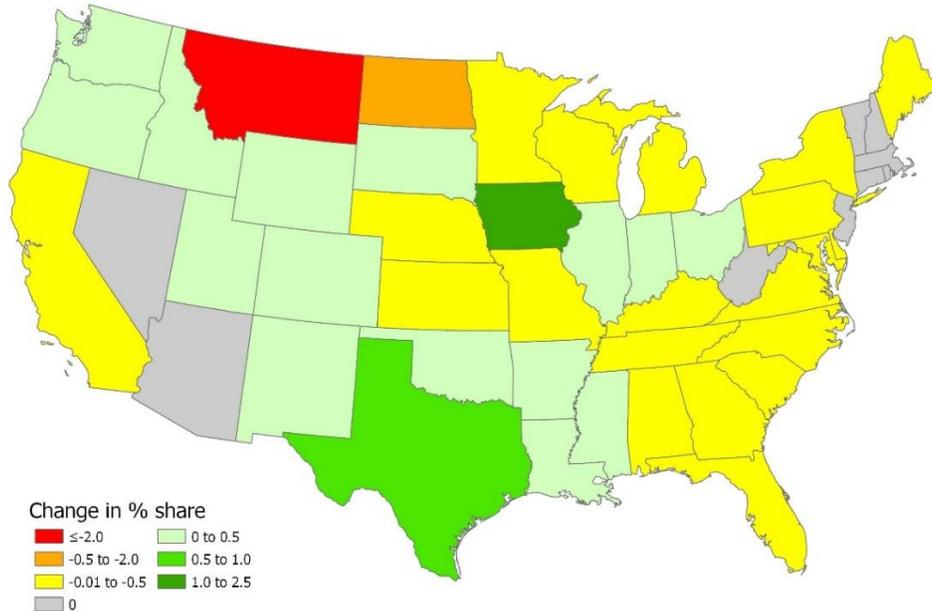


Figure 2. Percentage of national CRP enrollment a state in 2017 minus its percentage of the 2007-2016 total national acreage. Negative numbers indicate a decline in a state's share of national acres.



Change in % share

<span style="color: red;">■</span> ≤-2.0	<span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> 0 to 0.5
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> -0.5 to -2.0	<span style="color: green;">■</span> 0.5 to 1.0
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> -0.01 to -0.5	<span style="color: darkgreen;">■</span> 1.0 to 2.5
<span style="color: gray;">■</span> 0	

Since there will be comparative winners and losers among states in the pheasant range depending on how USDA interprets the new language, it is unlikely that our partnership will take a position on which interpretation is “correct.” It is clear, however, that lawmakers have codified a preference for the distribution of acres that occurred during 2007-2016, and USDA will need to operationalize that preference before this year’s required general sign-up.

Both the House and Senate have announced their new slate of agriculture committee members. New members (i.e., those that aren’t holdovers from 2018) from pheasant range states on the Senate side include Mike Braun (R-IN) and Richard Durbin (D-IL), and on the House side include Dusty Johnson (R-SD), Jim Baird (R-IN), Jim Hagedorn (R-MN), Antonio Delgado (D-NY), T.J. Cox (D-CA), Angie Craig (D-MN), Anthony Brindisi (D-NY), Jeff Van Drew (D-NJ), Josh Harder (D-CA), Kim Schrier (D-WA), Salud Carbajal (D-CA), Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ), and Cindy Axne (D-IA). You can find links to each committee on our [website](#).

Thanks to Todd Bogenschutz (IADNR) for the following item of note:

[USDA Report- Agricultural Conservation on Working Lands: Trends From 2004 to Present](#)

USDA also announced that due to the shutdown they won’t be releasing the results of the 2017 Census of Agriculture in February as planned. No new release date was immediately identified.

### **Notes from Around the Pheasant Range**

First, we have a new Technical Committee member from Oklahoma to introduce. Tell Judkins is the new Upland Game Biologist for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, where he formerly served as a game warden. Welcome, Tell, and we look forward to working with you on the TC!

In more Tech Committee news, big congratulations go out to Al Stewart of the Michigan DNR. Al (second from left) was [honored](#) with the first Michigan Pheasants Forever Lifetime Service Award – you know you’ve done something right when they create a new award to give you! Al has been a fixture on the state and national upland game management scene for many years and no doubt deserves the recognition. I learned from the link above that Al was recently a guest of Prince Charles to discuss woodcock (maybe someday he can use his royal connections to bring Meghan Markel around on the virtues of pheasant hunting). Congrats also to Mike Parker, who several of you know; he was honored at the same event for his work on Michigan’s pheasant initiative and grassland conservation efforts.



Speaking of Michigan, the state legislature and out-going governor [agreed to spend \\$180,000](#) on purchasing pheasants for release on public hunting areas this year. Lawmakers appropriated additional funds for the DNR to assess the effects of the releases on R3 efforts. It’s good news when a state chooses to promote upland game hunting with general funds, and we wish Michigan well for a successful program and continued funding in the future.

Staying on the general fund theme, new South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem requested a \$1 million appropriation from the legislature to fund a new Second Century Pheasant Habitat Initiative (2018 was the state's 100<sup>th</sup> annual pheasant season). These one-time funds will be used to match private contributions on a 1:1 basis via the [South Dakota Habitat Conservation Foundation](#).

Further, in her [budget address](#) to the legislature Governor Noem said, "It would be foolish to talk about those investments in habitat and not do something about predators. Coyotes are devastating our livestock, wild animal and bird populations. Other predators such as raccoons, skunks, and fox are devastating as well. I am proposing \$225,000 in ongoing funding to purchase new equipment, to fund more air control operations and other programs that proactively treat the predator issue that this state faces." One of those "other programs" she requested is a state-sponsored bounty on the "other predators" listed above, which has [drawn some fire](#) from the press. On a related note, the governor caused a bit of a stir with a recent [tweet about coyotes](#). We wish Tony Leif (Management Board), Travis Runia (Technical Committee), and our other friends at South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks all the best as they assist the governor in negotiating these new programs.

Finally, as you no doubt know by now, Pheasant Fest is this month (February 22-24) in Schaumburg, Illinois. The show schedule is now [online](#) and it looks like there's a little something for everybody. Thanks in advance to all the planners, presenters, vendor-wrangers, dignitary-hosters, and booth-dwellers who make the show such a success every year!

### **Pheasants in the Media**

[Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program honored by Pheasants Forever](#)

[New York pheasant release program reaches 100th year](#)

[Minnesota Pheasant Action Plan hits next phase with ups and downs](#)

[Feds have ruined a good pheasant spot](#)

[Prairie Public News: Difficult birds](#)

[Could electricity be farming's new weed killer?](#)

[Report reveals women are key to increasing conservation](#)

[Wintering monarchs more than double from last year](#)

[Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports webinar: Advancing R3 in 2019](#)

### **Recent Literature**

[Whiteside, M. A., M. M. Bess, E. Frasnelli, C. E. Beardsworth, E. J. G. Langley, J. O. van Horik, and J. R. Madden. 2018. Low survival of strongly footed pheasants may explain constraints on lateralization. \*Scientific Reports\* 8:13791.](#)

[Ucar, A., and M. Sarica. 2018. The relationships between egg production, age and the hatching traits of pheasants. \*Turkish Journal of Agriculture – Food Science and Technology\* 6:1311-1316.](#)

[Capstick, L. A., R. B. Sage, and A. Hoodless. 2019. Ground flora recovery in disused pheasant pens is limited and affected by pheasant release density. \*Biological Conservation\* \(early e-version\).](#)

[South, E. J., R. E. DeWalt, and Y. Cao. 2019. Relative importance of Conservation Reserve Programs to aquatic insect biodiversity in an agricultural watershed in the Midwest, USA. \*Hydrobiologia\* 829:323-340.](#)

### **Trivia Answer**

John Roseberry and Willard Klimstra won in 1987 for *Population Ecology of the Bobwhite*, and Dick Potts won in 1989 for *The Partridge: Pesticides, Predation, and Conservation*. Both were based on multifaceted analyses of long-term data sets and thus quickly became foundational literature among game bird managers. Arguably, Roseberry and Klimstra's influence was exerted most strongly in the realm of harvest management, whereas Potts' work popularized the "more insects = more game birds" paradigm that remains firmly entrenched to this day. (Not that Potts himself argued his results should be applied universally, it was just easier for us North Americans to adopt the paradigm than test it by repeating Potts' and his colleagues' arduous work here.) It's notable that Roseberry and Klimstra wrote skeptically of the insect hypothesis in their book because their data didn't seem to support it – a laudable approach for any biologist pondering emerging "hot topics," then or now.

Dr. Roseberry retired from Southern Illinois University's Cooperative Wildlife Research Laboratory in 2000 and still lives in Carbondale (according to his LinkedIn page). Dr. Klimstra passed away in 1993 (after winning TWS's Aldo Leopold Award in 1988), and Dr. Potts in 2017 (after joining Niko Tinbergen, Julian Huxley, and Ernst Mayr, among others, as winners of the British Ornithologists' Union's Godman-Salvin Prize). Who amongst our current lot of game bird professionals will be similarly honored for their life's work in 30 years? Time to get busy!

*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>.*