

Pheasant News and Notes

April 2018



Trivia Question

What is the historical significance of the following quote: “Increasing the extent rather than the quality of nesting habitats in established pheasant range has about as much promise as anything we can see as a general management measure.”

Farm Bill and USDA News

Dave Nomsen, our Board member from Pheasants Forever, Inc., gave the rest of the Board a Farm Bill update at their meeting last week in conjunction with the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Norfolk, VA. Dave reported that negotiations in the House Ag Committee had broken down over new potential provisions in the nutrition title of the bill. Committee Democrats are demanding that Committee Republicans show them details of the proposed changes, which at this point the majority has been unwilling to do. This may lead the Republicans to introduce a partisan bill rather than working towards the committee’s long-stated goal of reaching a bipartisan consensus. Ranking member Colin Peterson (D-MN) has predicted that if the majority bill as currently conceived is introduced, it may not have enough votes in the full House to pass.

On the Senate side, the two marker bills introduced recently that could have the most impact on CRP are the [GROW Act](#) (S. 2557), which keeps the CRP cap at 24 million acres, limits new enrollments to certain low-quality soil types, and shifts the program’s focus away from large-block enrollments; and the [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\) Improvement and Rural Water System Access Act of 2018](#) (S. 2614), which allows more targeting of CRP acres to benefit species of economic importance, allows more frequent routine haying and grazing of CRP with some sideboards and payment reductions, and eliminates emergency CRP haying and grazing. There was much discussion about both bills in the Agriculture Committee and working group meetings at the North American. The GROW Act has some particularly troubling provisions for pheasant managers, and Pheasants Forever (among others) has been working to provide some of the bill’s sponsors [Senators Ernst (R-IA), Grassley (R-IA), Brown (D-OH), and Casey (D-PA)] with the science that backs up these concerns, especially regarding the acreage cap and large-block enrollment limitations.

In sum, it doesn’t appear that either the House or Senate Ag Committees are coalescing around a consensus approach at this point, let alone finding agreement between the two chambers. There is speculation that if a bill does not move forward by the end of April, it will likely not be taken up again until 2019. Ranking member Peterson has been quoted as saying he would now bet on a one-year extension to the current Farm Bill.

In happier news, the omnibus spending bill that passed last month contains some slight increases in funding for Conservation Technical Assistance for USDA, and for the first time in a number of years did not cut funding elsewhere in the agency. The full FY 2019 USDA budget summary can be found [here](#).

Notes from Around the Pheasant Range

The Technical Committee traded some emails a few weeks ago about Kernza, a variety of intermediate wheatgrass being selectively bred for grain production. National Geographic [ran an article](#) last month about the “Menu of the Future,” and Kernza made the list (it’s featured just below the cricket flour – yum). A perennial grass crop that is [harvested after the nesting season](#) would certainly seem to hold great potential as pheasant cover, so let’s hope its toehold in the market expands.

Earlier in March, I sent the Technical Committee a link to a [Sporting Classics Daily article](#) that seemed to go a little overboard describing the significance of research on eyeworm infestations in Texas bobwhites, which in turn got the attention of quite a few hunters. Pheasants and other galliforms have also been found to harbor this parasite for many decades. Our Texas and Oklahoma agency partners, who have not been collaborators on the bobwhite research to date, are mulling some research questions of their own on this subject and passed along [the view of Tall Timbers Research Station](#) as a good assessment of the current science. Jeff Prendergast (Tech Committee, Kansas DWPT) subsequently wrote that they had collected about 250 heads each of pheasant and quail this past season to look at eyeworm prevalence and distribution, and hopes to have the results available this summer.

I heard some references at the North American to a [recently published article](#) (see full citation in “Recent Literature” below) that was critical of state wildlife agencies’ claims that our game management decisions are based on science. The authors used 11 criteria to measure how “science-based” the hunting management plans provided by the states were, and concluded their “results raise doubt about the purported scientific basis of hunt management across the United States and Canada.” In looking at [the list of “hunt management plans” they reviewed](#), it appears that many might be federal aid documents rather than stand-alone species management plans, and no national plans were included in their analyses. Regardless, we might be hearing more about this critique in the future.

Some disappointing news: [overwintering monarch numbers were down for the second straight year](#).

Finally, thanks to T.J. Fontaine of the Nebraska Coop Unit for sending along these [old school pheasant recipes](#) (literally) from the Agriculture Experiment Station at South Dakota State University. Here you’ll find about as many pheasant recipes as Bubba had for shrimp in *Forrest Gump*, and the authors (pictured at the end) look like they might give you a whack with a ruler if you messed up their instructions.

Pheasants in the Media

[Fighting for love: Dominant male pheasants learn faster](#)

[South Dakota gubernatorial candidates share plans to boost pheasants](#)

[King Celebrates HSUS Score of Zero by Sharing Family Pheasant Soup Recipe](#)

[Traditional archers enjoy challenge of pheasant hunting in annual shoot](#)

[Boy Scouts of America dismissed from lawsuit filed by Utah hunting guide who was shot in the eye during a pheasant hunt](#)

[Rooster tales - Agricultural practices, farm bill funds tighten noose on wild game populations](#)

[Archaeopteryx 'flew in bursts like a pheasant', scientists say](#)

Recent Literature

Pauly, B. J., T. J. Runia, A. J. Solem, C. D. Dieter, and K. C. Jensen. 2018. Ring-necked pheasant nest success and habitat selection in central South Dakota. *Great Plains Research* 28:39-50. (I don't think this is available quite yet but will be soon.)

[Artelle, K. A., J. D. Reynolds, A. Treves, J. C. Walsh, P. C. Paquet, and C. T. Darimont. 2018. Hallmarks of science missing from North American wildlife management. *Science Advances* 4: eaao0167.](#)

Trivia answer

The quote is the concluding sentence in the very first article published in the *Journal of Wildlife Management* (Volume 1, pages 3-20). The article, "The Evaluation of Nesting Losses and Juvenile Mortality of the Ring-necked Pheasant," was written by Paul Errington and Fred Hamerstrom in 1937. May all our management recommendations stand the test of time so well.

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>.