

# Pheasant News and Notes

November 2017



**Post-Halloween Trivia Question:** What classic Mel Brooks movie features a pheasant in its opening scene? (Answer below.)

## **Farm Bill Update**

Pheasants Forever's Dave Nomsen and Jim Inglis report that Farm Bill drafting activity is picking up, with House Ag leadership saying they'd like a bill written by the end of the year. The Senate seems to be on a slower track, but regardless, now is a good time to remind your congressional delegation about what your state needs to deliver effective wildlife conservation. [PF just released a "call-to-arms"](#) to their membership, and it has some good pointers regarding messaging. I'm currently working on a letter to send to Ag Committee members on behalf of the Plan partnership, and will send a review draft to the Management Board for comment soon.

During the Management Board's October conference call, we talked about potentially weighing in on improvements to the CRP Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) to help direct more acres into the pheasant range. Sal Palazzolo mentioned the AFWA CRP Working Group's white paper on this subject, and I have since talked to Andrew Schmidt (AFWA's Ag Policy lead) about the status of that work. As Sal mentioned, EBI reform has not found a receptive audience at FSA, but Andrew hopes that once a new Under Secretary is confirmed the issue could find better footing. (As a reminder, Bill Northey, Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture, has been nominated as Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation, the new agency that now covers FSA, NRCS, and the Risk Management Agency. His nomination's Senate Ag Committee hearing was October 5<sup>th</sup>, and he still awaits confirmation.) I will keep in touch with Andrew and Todd Bogenschutz (the CRP Working Group's chair) to see what our partnership can do to help the cause when it's "go time."

## **Steve Rinella Named 2018 Pheasant Fest Keynote**

Steve Rinella, host of the Sportsman Channel's *"MeatEater,"* will be the keynote speaker at Pheasants Forever's 2018 National Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic in Sioux Falls, SD. The event runs Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup> through Sunday, the 18<sup>th</sup>, with Rinella speaking at the banquet Saturday evening. You can check out his website [here](#); he should be a good draw.

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

Nicole Davros reports that she and her colleagues have finished the last field season of their Minnesota pheasant nesting and brood-rearing habitat study, and are now in the analysis stage. They had both hens and chicks radio-tagged and thus were able to monitor several aspects of reproductive behavior and survival on and around some of their public areas. Both Nicole and Lindsey Messinger plan to present preliminary results at the upcoming Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Milwaukee. Nicole has an ongoing study of the effects of insecticide spraying on brood behavior, and may start some weather effects modeling and cover crop work in the near future. (She also sent along this cool video of [Delta Waterfowl's nest searching drone.](#))

Speaking of cover crops, Stan McTaggart reports the Illinois Natural History Survey recently concluded a study on cover crop effects on bird use. A popular account of the research got picked up by a number of science and ag news services; you can find the original story [here](#), and the actual peer-reviewed science paper is [here](#). Nothing specifically on pheasants, but it's a start.

To close the cover crop subject, Jeff Prendergast says the Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit's pheasant/cover crop study was hampered by low nest success this summer (their first field season), yielding few radio-tagged broods to monitor. They will likely add an extra field season to make up the shortfall. As far as I know, this is the first and only project looking specifically at pheasant use of cover-cropped fields, so we're all pulling for the research crew to be blessed with abundant data in the coming years.

Regarding recent literature, Travis Runia passed along this new dissertation from South Dakota State University:

[An Integrated Evaluation of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program in South Dakota](#)

Lindsey Wszola recently graduated from T.J. Fontaine's lab at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and her Master's thesis is now available:

[Mapping the Ecology of Information: Hierarchical Habitat Selection by Nebraska Pheasant Hunters](#)

Lastly, yet another reason to take kids hunting – it makes them smarter:

[Evaluating Relationships Between Hunting and Biodiversity Knowledge among Children](#)

### **USGS's Species of Greatest Conservation Need database**

The U.S. Geological Survey just released a new national database listing the Species of Greatest Conservation Need as defined in the state wildlife action plans (SWAPs), which can be accessed [here](#).

Bonus trivia question: according to the database, which state has pheasants on their current SGCN list? If you said Illinois, you get a gold star. Pheasants were the only introduced game bird to make a state list (they were also on Ohio and Rhode Island's lists in 2005). Regarding a few other resident game birds (besides the obvious sage-grouse and lesser prairie-chicken), northern bobwhite are currently on 25 state lists, ruffed grouse are on 18, sharp-tailed grouse are on nine, and even wild turkey made one (you gotta love Texas!). The only native species that did not make a 2015 state list are California quail, Gambel's quail, rock ptarmigan, willow ptarmigan, and plain chachalaca.

Trivia answer: *Young Frankenstein*. This wall art appears just after the opening credits. As if you needed another reason to love the movie.

