

Pheasant News and Notes

July 2018



Trivia Question

When was the last national symposium for which North American pheasants were the primary topic?

Farm Bill and USDA News

Well, it's been a slow month on the policy front. Just kidding. On June 13th, the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee voted 20-1 to move their Farm Bill to the full chamber. The House then reconsidered the Farm Bill they initially rejected, passing it by a slim margin (213-211) on June 21st. The Senate then passed their bill on an 86-11 vote on June 28th. It calls for increasing the CRP cap from 24 to 25 million acres, and reducing rental payments from 100% to 88.5% of the county average. The House version calls for caps of 29 million acres (3 million of which go to CRP Grasslands enrollments) and 80% on payments. A conference committee (usually composed of senior members of the respective Ag Committees) will convene in the coming weeks to hash out a compromise bill before final consideration by both chambers. [News sources](#) list differing qualification requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and farm subsidies, as well as conservation programs (particularly the elimination of the Conservation Stewardship Program in the House version) as the major hurdles to overcome in conference.

Included in the final Senate version were a couple of ideas proposed earlier by Senator Thune of South Dakota. These include a new Soil Health and Income Improvement Program (SHIIP), which would retire land at a reduced rental rate under 3-5 year contracts and require an inexpensive cover crop be planted at the landowner's expense. Although SHIIP itself was authorized, no additional funding was authorized to implement it. Also included was Thune's idea to allow managed haying or grazing on one-third of a landowner's CRP acres each year in exchange for a 25% rental payment reduction on those acres. It's still a bit unclear how those new provisions will interact with emergency haying and grazing releases and mid-contract management requirements; more clarity may come out of the conference committee if this language remain intact in the compromise bill.

Also, this past month the Trump administration proposed a major reorganization of the federal government, including moving SNAP (i.e., the "food stamp" program) out of the Department of Agriculture and into a newly-named Department of Health and Human Welfare (currently Health and Human Services). The inclusion of SNAP in the USDA-administered Farm Bill has long been seen as necessary to rally simultaneous urban and rural support for both SNAP and commodity programs, so don't expect much enthusiasm for the idea in Congress, particularly from the farm states.

Notes from Around the Pheasant Range

Your Plan Coordinator had the pleasure recently of travelling to Bismarck, ND for MAFWA's annual Director's Meeting. Pheasant-relevant news from the meeting included the directors' final adoption of the Mid-America Monarch Conservation Strategy (the final version will available [here](#) soon), recent efforts to evaluate and improve state-federal cooperation on large-scale science applications (AFWA's initial evaluation is contained in this [white paper](#)), and the mention that six Joint Ventures are currently

partnering on mapping the remaining native grasslands in the Great Plains. Thanks to the North Dakota Game and Fish Department for hosting a great meeting.

South Dakota Pheasants Forever and the South Dakota Corn Growers Association are partnering on a program to establish habitat on saline and sodic soils in the state under five-year contracts. Landowners enrolling in the program get a one-time per-acre payment, plus free seed. This perhaps provides an example of soil health issues bringing private sector conservation and agriculture interests (and their money) together. You can read more on page 10 of [SDCGA's June newsletter](#).



Tom Keller has finalized the arrangements for the upcoming National Wild Pheasant Technical Committee meeting in Pennsylvania. The meeting is September 17-21 in Etter (also known as Goldsboro; the venue is at left); let Tom or me know if you have any questions or need a registration form. Tom has already prepared himself for your Three Mile Island jokes, so you're not going to catch him off guard. (And if you're too young to get Three Mile Island references, well hey, *good for you.*)

I recently put out a call to the Technical Committee for state project updates with which to refresh the [Current Research page](#) on our website. Nicole Davros sent some information along about their research on detecting effects of soybean aphid insecticides on grassland wildlife in Minnesota; that update is now posted, so feel free to take a look. Jeff Prendergast of Kansas also sent some information on a new project looking at the effects of grazing and planting diversity of CRP on game and non-game wildlife. Todd Bogenschutz relayed information about a new project in Iowa on the efficacy of using autonomous recording devices to detect bobwhite covey calls in the fall. Since it's not strictly pheasant research I didn't post it on the website, but the approach certainly may have relevance for pheasant monitoring, depending on how well it works. Feel free to contact Todd for more information.

Jim Douglas, our Management Board member from Nebraska, recently asked me if there was a need and desire to hold a pheasant symposium within the next year or two. I told him I'd check around to see what the states had going on research-wise (see above), then the group can better assess if we're collectively generating enough new material to support a full symposium. In my view, we probably can. As per the trivia question, I believe the last stand-alone North American pheasant symposium was held over 30 years ago, though several more recent Perdix conferences have included both partridges and pheasants. If we organized a symposium in the not-too-distant future, I could foresee including workshops on large-scale habitat modeling and revamping the National Plan, as well. We'll be discussing those items and new research at Technical Committee meetings, too, but a symposium might draw some valuable academic, federal, and NGO folks who don't (or can't) make it to our regular

meetings. Anyway, think about it – we can discuss the idea in the coming weeks and at our upcoming fall meetings. Feel free to send me your initial thoughts.

Finally, you may recall that we (along with three joint ventures and USDA-FSA) submitted a pre-proposal back in May for a Multi-State Conservation Grant to do some regional pheasant modeling work. We just got the word that we were not invited to submit a full proposal, so it's back to the drawing board. Several states have also been in contact with the University of Nebraska to construct some similar landscape-scale models, and UNL is working on clarifying per-state costs for that work. I'll pass this information along to the rest of the Technical Committee as soon as it becomes available to see if others are interested in participating.

Pheasants in the Media

[Michigan DNR seeking environmentally sensitive lands for habitat restoration](#)

[Scottish high school sparks debate over pheasant-butchering lesson](#)

A truly tragic story, but the headline certainly was an eye-catcher:

[Pheasant convicted of first-degree murder](#)

And a then happier, if dated, one:

[Pheasant release in Paradise](#)

Also, the untimely death of chef, author, and media personality Anthony Bourdain was in the news this past month. Bourdain's television shows examined the varied cultural contexts of food, and not surprisingly, several included stories about hunting cultures both here and abroad. Most relevantly to us, he featured upland bird hunters, hunting, and cooking to a mainstream national audience on [an episode of CNN's *Parts Unknown*](#) in 2016. Set in Montana, it's interesting to see him approach pheasant hunting as a novice, as well as to interact in that context with both Joe Rogan and Jim Harrison, citizens of two widely separated outposts on the media landscape. Both are allowed to share their thoughts and enthusiasms without Bourdain's judgement, and both come across as thoughtful hunters in their own way. Pheasants Forever also gets a little recognition. Given the largely non-hunting fan bases of those personalities, how much in paid R3 advertising spots do you figure that episode's worth?

In appreciation of that favor, here's a pheasant recipe from Bourdain. It's what you might call "aspirational," in that it calls for skills, time, and ingredients most of us will have a hard time mustering. Then again, between Google and YouTube, you can buy and learn how to do just about anything. The truffles and foie gras may be beyond a humble pheasant biologist's grocery budget, but with a little imagination we can probably come up with some tasty and affordable substitutes. For the record, all the following instructions and encouragements are as they appear in Bourdain's book (you'll see what I mean about halfway through the recipe).

Roulade of Wild Pheasant (from *Anthony Bourdain's Les Halles Cookbook*)

Okay, this is a little more luxurious than standard bistro fare – and more complicated. But you can do it. Just make sure you're organized, and that you've got everything you need on hand before you begin. Do things in stages. And stay relaxed. If it doesn't come out perfect the first time, you'll get it right the next. Have fun. Look at it like building a model airplane. Be fussy, precise, and attentive to details.

You'll definitely want to get your trusted butcher to bone out your pheasant. Keep the bones! You'll need them.

Ingredients

1 wild pheasant, completely boned out, with skin intact, in one piece, with bones reserved
4 leeks, thinly sliced
1 cup, plus 1 ½ T, plus ¼ c port
4 oz. lean veal
¼ c heavy cream
Salt and pepper
6 oz foie gras, cut into equal finger or log shapes
1 T olive oil
3 T butter
2 shallots, thinly sliced
1 T flour
1 c dark chicken stock
1 bouquet garni
½ c truffle juice
2 T chopped truffles

Equipment

Nonreactive bowl or casserole
Food processor
Kitchen string
Cheesecloth (coffee filters work in a pinch)
Plastic wrap
Medium saucepan
Wooden spoon
Strainer
Small saucepan
Large pot (sizeable enough to hold pheasant without folding it)
Large saute pan
Carving knife
Serving platter
Whisk

Serves 4

Prep the Bird:

In the nonreactive bowl or casserole, combine the pheasant, 2 of the sliced leeks, and 1 cup of the port. Marinate for 24 hours, covered, in the refrigerator.

Place the veal in the food processor and puree the living hell out of it, while slowly adding the cream, ½ tablespoon of the port, and salt and pepper. Eventually, you want to attain a mousse-like consistency, meaning smooth, baby, smooth. Now, remove the pheasant from the marinade, pat it dry with paper toweling, and lay it out, skin side down, on a clean, dry work surface. Reserve marinade. Season the flesh with salt and pepper. Now spread the veal mixture in an even layer on the inside of the pheasant,

as if you were slathering peanut butter on a piece of white bread, only a little thicker. Lay the logs of foie gras end to end right down the middle – the long way – on top of the veal mix. You see what’s happening here? We’re making a nori roll. You’re going to want the foie gras to be a center garnish, surrounded by a layer of veal mixture, itself surrounded, or wrapped, by the pheasant meat and skin. Can you picture it? Good. ‘Cause now it’s time to do it. Here’s how:

Roll the pheasant carefully around the foie gras the long way, not squeezing too hard. The skin and meat should overlap slightly when rolled. If you can roll a decent joint, this part should be way easy. And just like with a joint, you don’t want it fat in the middle and skinny on the ends. You want a nice even shape. Be gentle.

Secure the “joint” with kitchen string, at three or four points, not tying it too tightly. You’re looking at this point to shape it and hold it together. Season the pheasant with salt and pepper and wrap it tightly in a layer of cheesecloth. Then wrap the whole thing again in plastic wrap, very tightly. If you’ve done it right to this point, you can be a little rougher, as everything has been secured with string and cheesecloth. Make sure the ends are twisted and secured by either knotting the plastic wrap or securing with more string.

Now have a cocktail. You deserve it. The hard part is over.

Make the Sauce:

In the medium saucepan, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add one tablespoon of butter and let it foam and subside. Add the pheasant bones and brown them well. Add the shallots and remaining 2 leeks and cook over medium-high heat until they are caramelized and brown. You may need to add more butter if the veggies stick or look like they’re thinking about scorching. Stir in the flour and cook for 2 minutes, then stir in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the port and the reserved marinade. Reduce by half over high heat. Then add the chicken stock and the bouquet garni. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, and cook for 1 hour. (If you have some good demi-glace in your freezer, feel free to sneak in a teaspoon.) Remove from heat and strain into the small saucepan. Stir in the truffle juice and the truffles and cook for 2 minutes. Hold in a warm place.

Cook the Bird:

Bring water to a boil in the large pot. Add the wrapped pheasant (still in the plastic wrap), cover the pot, and shut off the heat. Let the pheasant sit undisturbed in the water with the lid on the pot for 2 hours. Remove the pheasant from the water and let it rest for an hour. Unwrap it from the plastic and the cheesecloth but keep the string on.

Now heat 1 tablespoon of the butter in the large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Brown the roulade of pheasant for about 4 minutes on all sides, until golden brown. Remove the string and slice the roulade into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch slices. Arrange the slices artfully on the serving platter, crank up the heat on the sauce, and whisk in the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter to finish. Drizzle the sauce *around* the slices of roulade and serve.

Recent Literature

[Dupuie, J. N. 2018. Ring-necked pheasant responses to wind energy in Iowa. Thesis. Iowa State University, Ames, USA.](#)

[Nowaczewski, S., B. Grzegorzolka, K. Kukulski, and B. Kolanos. 2018. The effect of eggshell colour on early embryo development in the ring-necked pheasant \(*Phasianus colchicus*\). *Animal Science Papers & Reports* 36:75-85.](#)

[Momeni Dehaghi, I., A. Salmanmahiny, S. Karimi, and A. A. Shabani. 2018. Multi-criteria evaluation and simulated annealing for delimiting high priority habitats of *Alectoris chukar* and *Phasianus colchicus* in Iran. *Animal Biodiversity and Conservation* 41:185–193.](#)

Dahlgren, D. K., M. A. Schroeder, and B. Dukes. 2018. State management of upland and small game. Pages 96-115 in T. J. Ryder, editor. *State wildlife management and conservation*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, USA.

And a couple not about pheasants, but the concepts may have relevance to us...

[McGrath, D. J., T. M. Terhune II, and J. A. Martin. 2018. Northern bobwhite foraging response to hunting. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 82:966-976.](#)

[McGrath, D. J., T. M. Terhune II, and J. A. Martin. 2018. Vegetation and predator interactions affect northern bobwhite behavior. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 82:1026-1038.](#)

Trivia Answer

The symposium that produced [Pheasants: Symptoms of Wildlife Problems on Agricultural Lands](#) was held in conjunction with the 49th Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in 1987. If you know of a later one, please let me know.

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>.