

Pheasant News and Notes

April 2019



Trivia Question

Pheasants are deeply ingrained in cultures around the world, so it's no surprise they end up in our artistic fantasies as well. Name the imaginary places pheasants feature in the photos below (and extra credit for the characters' names).



Farm Bill and USDA News

There has been very little information dispensed publicly about USDA's progress on 2018 Farm Bill implementation. Jim Inglis of Pheasants Forever reports direct communications with USDA staff have also been painfully slow and thought that disaster aid-related work was consuming their time. PF, AFWA, and other conservation partners will be meeting with Senator Stabenow's staff later this week to discuss implementation issues, particularly everyone's mutual interest in getting a general CRP signup done before the current fiscal year is over or, failing that, approval for one-year extension offers on expiring contracts. This was a central concern discussed at the recent CRP Working Group meeting at the North American conference, as well. The notes from that meeting are too lengthy to present in full but I would be happy to forward them to anyone who sends me a request.

As you might remember, NRCS is soliciting comments regarding their national [conservation practices](#) through a [federal register notice](#). The deadline for comments is April 25th. In reading the supplemental material and a few key practices, there appears to be quite a bit of latitude for states to tailor how they implement the national practices locally. Given the variety of options different states have adopted for, say, the cover crop practice, I assume that anyone who wants to develop a more pheasant-friendly option for a practice is probably more constrained by state-level USDA decisions than the national practice language. If this is not the case and someone would like to suggest a specific comment to be submitted under this solicitation, please let me know.

Notes from Around the Pheasant Range

The multistate research project looking at ways to improve the reliability of roadside brood counts is tentatively moving forward. So far six states (IA, SD, KS, ND, OK, and NE) have pledged funding for the project but we're still awaiting final approval from some. The funding states have agreed to support a M.S. student at Iowa State University to do the work under the direction of Dr. Adam Janke; once funding appears assured then Dr. Janke will advertise for a student. We'll probably try to collect some pilot survey data this August before the student officially arrives, so everyone is invited to participate in that and future data collection. Standards for pilot data collection will be developed this spring but will probably involve running routes multiple (>3?) times, estimating dew conditions, etc. We'll keep the Technical Committee updated on progress so those willing to help collect data know when and how to participate.

You might recall that Minnesota DNR advertised for an Upland Game Project Leader position back in December. Nicole Davros (Tech Committee, Minnesota) reports they have offered the position to someone and an announcement is pending. Paperwork is still being completed so that person will remain nameless for now, but she expects them to start in June. More details later.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is helping launch a USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) effort this spring to encourage southwest Nebraska producers to plant multispecies cover crops. Cover crops can be planted in the spring for a full growing season or after wheat or other summer-harvested crop, and grazing is allowed. More about the initiative can be found [here](#).

The Intermountain West Joint Venture posted a webinar and written report on some research using rancher-based focus groups to explore flood irrigation issues in the west; both can be found [here](#).

If you want to quantify just how bad your winter really was, Travis Runia (Tech Committee, South Dakota) passed along a Midwest Regional Climate Center [site](#) that shows an "Accumulated Winter Season Severity Index" for a number of places across the country. Click on a dot on the map and then open the chart.

Pheasant-relevant Media

[South Dakota pheasant nest predator bounty program proposed](#)

[South Dakota trap and bounty programs examined](#)

[Pheasant hunt phasing out at Cape Cod National Seashore](#)

[Debate is on about hunting pen-raised pheasants in South Dakota](#)

[South Dakota to use bighorn permit dollars for pheasant habitat?](#)

[Honey bee colonies more successful by foraging on CRP](#)

[The good reasons old hunting culture is dying](#)

[Data becomes cash crop for big agriculture](#)

[Soil health paves road to profit](#)

[Farmland prices reach historic highs in Upper Midwest](#)

Finally, there's this recent [Esquire article](#) about a Wisconsin high school boy's experiences growing up in modern America. The writer is taken on a ruffed grouse hunt by the boy and his taxidermist father, which gets described near the end of the article. The photo at right accompanies the piece; how they went grouse hunting and ended up standing in a marsh with a dead pheasant I have no idea. I cringe when people gleefully attack the media's credibility but they make it awfully easy sometimes.

Recent Literature

[Santilli, F., and M. Bagliacca. 2019. Fear and behavior of young pheasants reared with or without parent figure. Avian Biology Research.](#)

[Palmer, W. E., J. P. Carroll, D. C. Sisson, S. D. Wellendorf, T. M. Terhune II, S. N. Ellis-Felege, and J. A. Martin. 2019. Reduction in meso-mammal nest predators improves northern bobwhite demographics. Journal of Wildlife Management 83: 646-656.](#)

“WHEN I’M OLDER, I PROBABLY WON’T HUNT AS MUCH. THERE ARE FUN MOMENTS, LIKE WHEN WE SHOOT A DEER. BUT YOU’VE GOT TO GUT IT, AND I DON’T LIKE DOING THAT. THEN YOU HAVE TO DRAG IT OUT—ALSO NOT FUN.”

Ryan on a grouse hunt with his father in Mountain, Wisconsin.



Trivia Answer

Hogwarts, from the *Harry Potter* adaptations on the left (that's Professor McGonagall wearing the pheasant feather-adorned hat), and Winterfell, from HBO's *Game of Thrones* on the right (that's Sansa Stark strolling the game-laden walkway in Season 7, Episode 3). As the Starks and all North Dakota pheasants know, even in April, "*winter is coming.*" Hats off (ha!) to Tom Keller for the Harry Potter tip.

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>.