

Pheasant News and Notes

July 2020



Trivia Question

Judge Owen Denny is credited with the first successful release of ring-necked pheasants in North America in 1881. Were those Chinese birds he released in Oregon wild-caught or captive-bred?

Farm Bill and USDA News

A seemingly innocuous change in FSA's 2-CRP rules handbook has put the conduct of CRP research by state agencies and universities on shaky ground. When the handbook was recently revised, language (Part 18, Section 636 of the June 2016 version) was removed that prescribed how states should interact with FSA about CRP research they wished to conduct. Most believed the change simply removed an unnecessary mandate, but some in the national FSA office have questioned the allowance of CRP research altogether given the removal of an approval process. Those who have recently dealt with this issue advise that whenever possible, CRP research partners should communicate about project needs and requests at the state level and avoid involving the national office until a favorable interpretation is more certain.

As expected, there has been no movement in the Senate on the House's HEROES Act (H.R. 6800), the economic relief bill passed in June that contains a 100-fold expansion of the Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP). However, the SHIPP expansion idea was recently endorsed by Senator Thune (R-SD), which increases the prospects of its inclusion if and when another relief bill is considered in the Senate. (Thune's comments were made to Agri-Pulse, whose content is generally behind a paywall, so no link.) Agri-Pulse also published comments by Ag Committee member Rep. Austin Scott (R-GA) calling for a wholesale rewriting of the 2018 Farm Bill and an increase in CRP acreage. Meanwhile, the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis published their expansive [report](#) on suggested policy changes, including more coordinated efforts between USDA and USDOJ to create and protect grasslands, and one or more related bills is on the way. The Senate also had a [hearing](#) on the Growing Climate Solutions Act of 2020 (S. 3894), which calls for USDA to oversee a carbon credit certification process to help provide sequestration incentives for producers, which in theory should lead to more habitat created. No telling where all this ends up, but there seems to be a better-than-usual chance of seeing positive changes to our newly-revised Farm Bill conservation programs. Thanks to Jim Inglis (Management Board, Pheasants Forever) for the heads-up on much of this information.

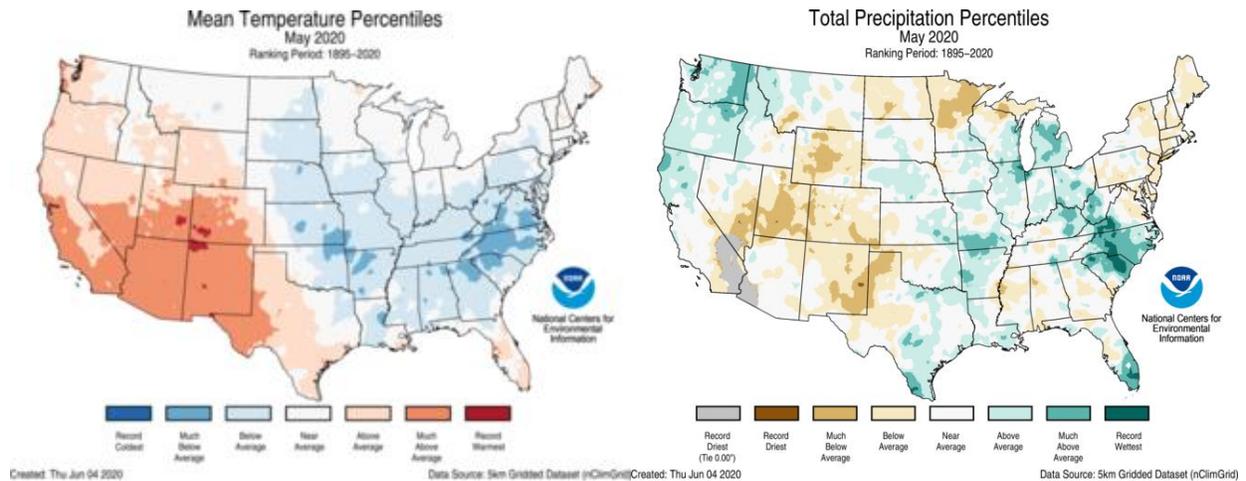
In other federal legislative news, the Great American Outdoors Act (S. 3422) passed the Senate 73-25 on June 17th. The bill would provide permanent \$900 million per year funding to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, plus fund a multi-billion-dollar backlog of deferred maintenance projects on federal lands. The bill is expected to be passed by the House and signed by the President; the only question is when. On the House side, leadership decided to include the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) in the \$1.5 trillion infrastructure package they passed July 1st. Senate leadership has said they have no interest in taking up the bill.

Notes from Around the Pheasant Range

June is of course when most of our pheasant chicks hatch, so biologists across the range will be wringing their hands the rest of the summer waiting to see how things turned out. I received photos of a couple of noteworthy nests early in the month – one of a 17-egg nest on a public area in Iowa from Todd Bogenschutz (left), and another in an Iowa cover crop taken by Mitchell Hora (@Continuum_Ag) and passed along by Ryan Heiniger of PF (right). No word on how either one turned out, but it is always nice to see the birds are out there trying hard. Thanks, guys!



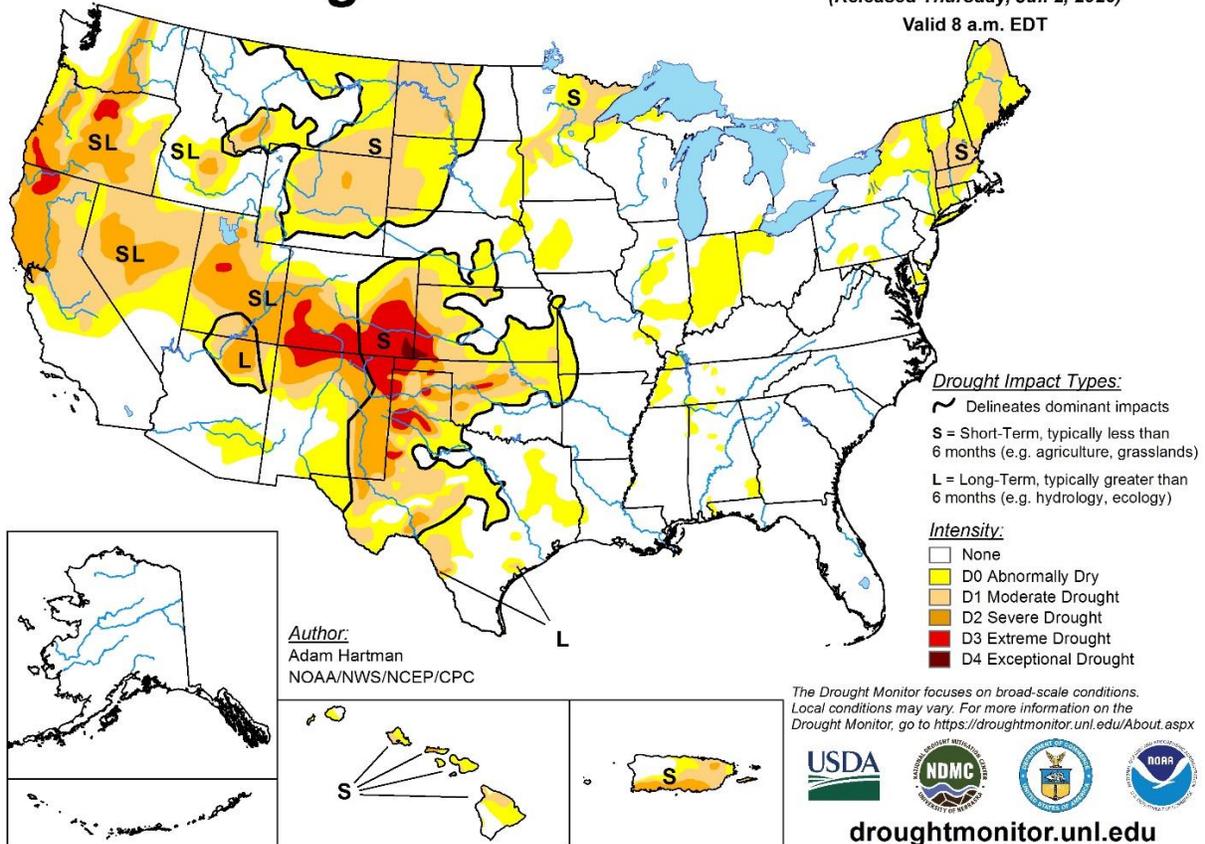
May weather appeared to be unremarkable over most of the pheasant range, so many areas should have had near-normal conditions for laying and early incubation. That's usually good news.



June rainfall totals and average temperatures are not yet available, but drought is starting to intensify in the western and southern portions of the range. While we might smile at drier-than-normal conditions during brood-rearing in the humid east, drought in the west is usually a bad sign for pheasant production. We'll keep our fingers crossed for some timely rains in the states that sorely need them.

U.S. Drought Monitor

June 30, 2020
(Released Thursday, Jul. 2, 2020)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Regarding policy, the big news this month was out of South Dakota. The Department of Game, Fish and Parks partnered with their Department of Tourism in unveiling a new three-year, \$700,000 [marketing program](#) to promote pheasant hunting in the state, with a goal of increasing permit sales by ten percent. While many of the program's recommendations are undeniably laudable, the marketing workgroup also noticed that permit sales went down when pheasant numbers dropped, as measured by the results of SDGFP's annual August brood survey and reported in their hunting forecast. The recommendation, therefore, was to discontinue the brood survey, reasoning that even in relatively poor bird years, South Dakota still offers the best pheasant hunting in the country. The Commission concurred with that recommendation at their June 4th meeting, so the survey was nixed.

That decision has since been met with considerable criticism among stakeholders and in the media (see the links below). It appears that our multi-state evaluation of roadside brood counts will be unaffected, as SDGFP has agreed to continue data collection on some routes under the research protocols. (As a side note, Adam Janke at ISU will be reaching out to participating states soon with some early results and instructions for this year.) There will no doubt be more to come on this issue as hunting season approaches; again, good luck to our friends at SDGFP in negotiating the controversy.

Speaking of which, South Dakota's annual predator bounty program wrapped up on July 1st with a total of 23,420 tails turned in for the \$5-per-tail bounties. This means the Department only spent about half of the amount budgeted for the program this year. You are free to feel however you want about that.

Finally, our own Matthew Broadway (Technical Committee, Indiana) is senior author on a new *Journal of Wildlife Management* paper on factors affecting lead fragmentation in deer hunting ammunition. [Deer hunters, check it out.](#)

Pheasant-relevant Media

[Pheasants Forever podcast on pheasant predators with Dr. Bill Clark](#)

[Dave Nomsen talks the state of conservation after retirement from Pheasants Forever](#)

[Nothing to see here on South Dakota pheasant report](#)

[Pheasant brood route demise in South Dakota](#)

[Canceling pheasant brood survey in South Dakota won't fool hunters for long](#)

[South Dakota now flying blind on pheasant numbers](#)

[North Dakota pheasant and sharptail harvests decline](#)

[Iowa pheasant hatch expected to be good this year](#)

[Wingshooting USA features Kansas WIHA](#)

[Why we can't count on carbon-sucking farms to slow climate change](#)

[What happens to glyphosate, dicamba and PCBs now?](#)

[Tiny weed-killing robots could make pesticides obsolete](#)

[The chicken first crossed the road in Southeast Asia, 'landmark' gene study finds](#)

Recent Literature

[Kauth, H. R. 2020. Understanding how agricultural intensification impacts ring-necked pheasant distribution and survival in eastern South Dakota. Thesis. South Dakota State University, Brookings.](#)

[Liebing, J., I. Völker, N. Curland, P. Wohlsein, W. Baumgärtner, S. Braune, et al. 2020. Health status of free-ranging ring-necked pheasant chicks \(*Phasianus colchicus*\) in northwestern Germany. PLoS ONE 15\(6\): e0234044.](#)

[Milligan, M. C., L. I. Berkeley, and L. B. McNew. 2020. Survival of sharp-tailed grouse under variable livestock grazing management. Journal of Wildlife Management \(early e-version\).](#)

[Overton, C. T., M. L. Casazza, D. Connelly, and S. Gardner. 2020. Gambel's quail survey variability and implications for survey design in the Mojave Desert. Journal of Wildlife Management \(early e-version\).](#)

[Daszkiewicz, T., and P. Janiszewski. 2020. The effect of sex on the quality of meat from farmed pheasants \(*Phasianus colchicus*\). Animal Science Journal \(early e-version\).](#)

[Langley, E. J. G., J. O. van Horik, M. A. Whiteside, C. E. Beardsworth, M. N. Weiss, and J. R. Madden. 2020. Early-life learning ability predicts adult social structure, with potential implications for fitness outcomes in the wild. Journal of Animal Ecology 89:1340-1249.](#)

[Thomas, V. G., D. J. Pain, N. Kanstrup, R. E. Green. 2020. Setting maximum levels for lead in game meat in EC regulations: an adjunct to replacement of lead ammunition. Ambio.](#)

Trivia Answer

Denny's initial release was apparently with wild-trapped birds. He reportedly said the following:

"The Chinese farmers ... take them with nets and market them alive, but the fact that they were often poor and thin induced me to purchase them by the dozen and feed them until they were fat and fit for my table. On one occasion I had in my enclosure a large number of extraordinarily handsome birds, and while admiring them I thought, What would I not give to be able to turn the entire lot adrift in Oregon? Then and there the resolve was made."

This should partially quell the idea that pen-raised birds "worked" as a wild population source once upon a time in this country. An interesting summary of Denny's life and pheasant release can be found [here](#). Thanks to Todd Bogenschutz for digging this up and passing it along. Have a great July 4th, everyone!

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>.