

# Pheasant News and Notes

March 2021



## Trivia Question

General George S. Patton said, among other memorable items, “(a) good plan, violently executed now, is better than a perfect plan executed at some indefinite time in the future,” a relevant thought as we try to finalize the second edition of our National Plan. How were pheasants involved in Patton’s fate?

## Farm Bill and USDA News

On a 92-7 vote, the Senate confirmed Tom Vilsack as the Biden administration’s Secretary of Agriculture, a post he held throughout President Obama’s two terms. Vilsack has [reportedly](#) spoken in favor of using his authority to expand CRP enrollments without additional changes to the 2018 Farm Bill, mostly under the banner of climate change mitigation. Whatever the pretense, we wish him well.

Agri-Pulse ran an extensive article (behind a paywall) on the subject of CRP, and quoted outgoing USDA undersecretary Bill Northey as saying, “The return should be there so that people can do good conservation practices ... and still get an economic return, but it shouldn’t be at a place where it’s taking land out of production, and landlords are retiring and taking it away from existing tenants.” Well, if the agency believed that CRP shouldn’t take rented land out of production, it’s no wonder enrollments are where they are. Jim Inglis (Management Board, Pheasants Forever) was quoted in the same article, noting that the previous administration’s cuts to incentives went beyond the intent of the Farm Bill. And it doesn’t look like it will get any easier for us to compete given the [upswing in farm profitability](#).

President Biden’s “30 by 30” goal is also [getting attention](#), with the idea being to conserve 30% of the nation’s land and coastal waters by 2030. The departments of Agriculture, Interior, and Commerce are tasked with leading the effort. It appears our conservation partners are generally on board with the premise (PF’s Bethany Erb is quoted in the linked *Outdoor Life* article), but details on the “how” are scant at this point.

## Notes from Around the Pheasant Range

I have been invited to contribute a monthly article on the National Plan and related topics to Pheasants Forever’s public blog site. The first two entries are [here](#) and [here](#). If there are any topics related to our partnership you think would be good candidates, or if there are some you’d rather I not discuss, feel free to drop me a note.

As most of you know, Pheasants Forever just announced their ambitious “[Call of the Uplands](#)” campaign aimed at raising \$500 million for upland conservation. If that number doesn’t get your attention, I don’t know what will. The closer they get to reaching their goal, the more the pheasant conservation community will benefit.

Last month in this space I mentioned that the latest of two studies on pheasant use of cover crops failed to document a successful nesting attempt in this potential new habitat. What I didn’t provide was

context – as in, beyond these two early studies, there is still a lot we don't know about how cover crops might affect pheasant ecology and numbers. Cover cropping and other practices being developed under the “regenerative agriculture” objective are rapidly evolving and could end up turning out well for pheasants and other wildlife. Then again, they might not. More than likely, as with every other land use change under the sun, some species will benefit and others will suffer, and it is simply too soon to tell which side of the ledger pheasants will end up on (in my opinion). Hopefully the research community will keep chipping away at it and help us find some firmer ground.

Last month I also mentioned some new research on pesticides in Minnesota. Thanks to Todd Bogenschutz (Technical Committee, Iowa) for reminding me to include a link to [more details about that work](#).

You might recall that South Dakota began a large marketing and advertising push last summer to promote their pheasant hunting opportunities. The results of this effort were shared at a recent Commission meeting. They spent \$662,000 on the campaign, split 50/50 between the Department of Game, Fish and Parks and the Department of Tourism. Based on trackable paid media like digital banners, social and paid search, they generated an estimated \$643,000 in license sales in 2020. After accounting for the estimated economic activity generated, the state's return-on-investment for the campaign was estimated at 3.15:1. The campaign will continue for the next two years. Thanks to Travis Runia (Technical Committee, South Dakota) for the heads-up.

### **Pheasant-relevant Media**

[Upland birds are disappearing, but a \\$500 million campaign aims to change that](#)  
[Hunting with Kristi Noem: South Dakota governor says sport 'keeps me grounded'](#)  
[Dodge City CVB announces Rooster Roundup, Bounty Bird winners](#)  
[A-maze-ing pheasants have two ways of navigating](#)  
[Most U.K. pheasants sold for food 'contain lead shot'](#)  
[Science can save the future of upland game](#)  
[\\$1 billion in P-R funds sent to state wildlife agencies](#)  
[New evidence shows fertile soil gone from midwestern farms](#)  
[How carbon may become another crop for farmers](#)  
[2021 is an economic game-changer for farmers](#)  
[Optimally promoting biodiversity in agricultural landscapes](#)

Also, Travis Runia also found a [National Geographic article](#) on neonic pesticides that mentions some South Dakota pheasant work on the topic. It is behind a registry wall, but if you'd rather see the article without registering, I could probably help you out. Thanks, Travis!

### **Recent Literature**

[Hernandez, F. 2021. The colors of quail science. Wildlife Society Bulletin \(early online version\).](#)

[Beardsworth, C. E., M. A. Whiteside, P. R. Laker, R. Nathan, Y. Orchan, S. Toledo, J. L. van Horik, and J. R. Madden. 2020. Is habitat selection in the wild shaped by individual-level cognitive biases in orientation strategy? Ecology Letters \(early online version\).](#)

[Green, R. E., M. A. Taggart, D. J. Pain, N. A. Clark, L. Clewley, R. Cromie, B. Elliot, R. M. W. Green, B. Huntley, J. Huntley, R. Leslie, R. Porter, J. A. Robinson, K. W. Smith, L. Smith, J. Spencer, and D. Stroud. 2021. Effect of a joint policy statement by nine UK shooting and rural organisations on the use of lead shotgun ammunition for hunting common pheasants \*Phasianus colchicus\* in Britain. Conservation Evidence Journal 18:1-9.](#)

[Sauvala, M., E. Woivalin, R. Kivisto, R. Laukkanen-Ninios, S. Laaksonen, R. Stephan, and M. Fredriksson-Ahomaa. 2021. Hunted game birds – carriers of foodborne pathogens. Food Microbiology \(early online version\).](#)

[Deak, G., K. Katona, and Z. Biro. 2021. Exploring the use of a carcass detection dog to assess mowing mortality in Hungary. Journal of Vertebrate Biology.](#)

### **Trivia Answer**

Patton was on his way to a pheasant hunt in post-war Germany when his car collided with a U.S. Army truck. Though the accident happened at low speed and the other passengers were barely hurt, he sustained a neck injury and died twelve days later on December 21, 1945.

*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>.*