

# Pheasant News and Notes

July 2022



## Trivia Question

Who wrote the following –

*“Some fear we are getting too much research and not enough management into our journals and (by implication) into our programs. I do not share this view; in fact, I think the shoe is on the other foot. We know how to manage only a few easy species like deer and pheasants. In other species we know a few fragmentary treatments which are probably beneficial, but this is not enough. Until we know more it is proper that a high proportion of our professional effort should go into research.”*

## Farm Bill and USDA News

The U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry held a field hearing last month in Jonesboro, Arkansas, on the 2023 Farm Bill. Ranking member Boozman of Arkansas hosted the event and presented Chair Stabenow of Michigan with a hand-made Rich-N-Tone duck call as a welcome gift, which served as a reminder of the critical waterfowl-agriculture relationship in his state. Waterfowl hunting produces over \$230 million in retail sales, supports over 4,700 jobs, and provides over \$29 million and nearly \$24 million in state/local and federal tax revenue, respectively, in Arkansas each year.

You can watch the hearing and find written testimony [here](#). The only invited guest speaker representing wildlife interests was Anne Marie Doramus, a commissioner with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission; her testimony starts at 53:15 of the video.

The Senate Ag subcommittee on Conservation, Climate, Forestry, and Natural Resources held a hearing last month on the water crisis in the western U.S. Dr. Ellen Herbert of Ducks Unlimited represented conservation interests at the hearing, specifically mentioning Kansas’ Migratory Birds, Butterflies, and Pollinators CRP SAFE practice as a win-win for wildlife and aquifer recharge. You can find the video and written testimony [here](#).

In non-USDA federal news, hopefully most of you are aware that the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act (RAWA) was passed by the House on June 14<sup>th</sup>. Although it got a few “yes” votes from the minority party, the main Republican criticism was the bill’s “permanent” funding; they argued for a seven-year sunset clause to provide an opportunity for reevaluation. It appears that bipartisan support in the Senate will be contingent on getting the pay-for methods ironed out.

## Notes from Around the Pheasant Range

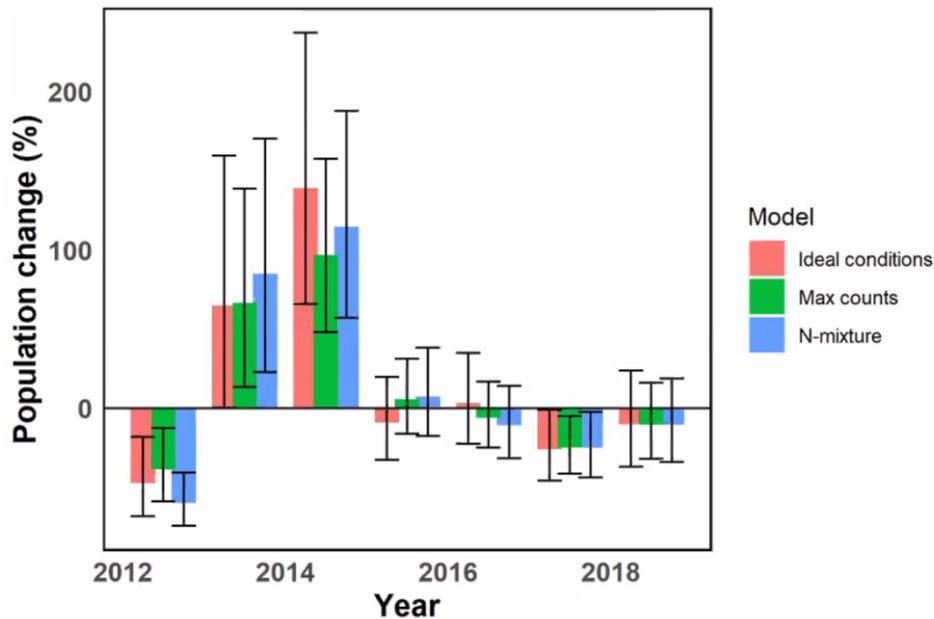
The Wildlife Society announced their [2022 slate of award winners](#) recently, and there were some familiar names on the list. The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks won the Wildlife Restoration Award – Wildlife Research and Surveys category, for their “Spatially explicit habitat-based occupancy models for prairie grouse in South Dakota.” I’m going to take a wild guess and say our own Travis Runia (Technical Committee, South Dakota) had a large influence on this project.

Also, the award for the best contributed article in *The Wildlife Professional* went to John Morgan (National Bobwhite and Grassland Initiative Director) and his co-authors for their “A Changing Landscape: Reimagining Conservation on Private Lands.” Big congratulations to both Travis and SDGFP, and John and NBGI!

Zach Deines defended his M.S. thesis entitled “Multi-state analysis of August roadside surveys for monitoring ring-necked pheasant and northern bobwhite populations” this week. Zach is advised by Adam Janke at Iowa State University and used data and funding provided by several of our member states in his research.

Zach found the environmental factors that had the most impact on pheasant brood counts were soil moisture (positive effect), dewpoint depression (i.e., the difference between the dewpoint and air temperature), wind speed, and cloud cover (negative effects). This suggests states that use these variables to define their acceptable survey conditions are on the right track.

Zach also used Kansas’s historic data to look at various ways of calculating the year-over-year percentage change in statewide counts, which is the number upon which many states base their hunting forecasts. Kansas runs each route multiple time per year, so he compared traditional analyses that use either a route’s highest count or the one run under the most “ideal” conditions to a more complex analysis (N-mixture models) that use data from all the route runs. He found that all three approaches yielded mostly similar results.



This is welcomed news for those using the “traditional” approaches. However, it doesn’t mean that the surveys – however you want to analyze them – yield reliable results every year in terms of predicting hunting conditions. Perhaps we can use Zach and Adam’s work as a springboard to address that problem next.

Finally, Zach made the following recommendations regarding ideal survey conditions and design based on data from the >1,000 route runs the states submitted:

| Weather  | Good       | Best   |
|--|------------|--------|
| Volumetric soil moisture (cm <sup>3</sup> /cm <sup>3</sup> ) | 0.1 – 0.29 | > 0.3  |
| Cloud cover (%)  | 16 – 30    | 0 – 15 |
| Windspeed (km/h)   | 3 – 12     | < 3    |
| Dewpoint depression (°F)                                     | 6 – 10     | < 5    |
| <b>Survey design guidelines</b>                              |            |        |
| Number of routes   | 50         | 75     |
| Number of surveys per route                                  | 1          | 3-4    |
| Route length (km)  | 32         | 64     |
| Traffic per survey   | 1          | 0      |
| Brood observations per survey                                | 1 – 3      | >3     |

A big “thank you” to both Zach and Adam for agreeing to take on this project and keeping the states updated on its progress along the way. Well done, guys!

The California Department of Wildlife recently hired Ian Dwight to provide analytical support to their new Nesting Habitat Incentive Program aimed at mallards and pheasant habitat, as well as the proverbial “other duties as assigned.” Ian is one of the few folks to earn a [graduate degree studying pheasants in California](#) and comes to the Department from USGS. Welcome Ian!

I attended the MAFWA Director’s meeting the last week of June and made a brief presentation on our partnership. Some pheasant-relevant content from among my meeting notes:

- Lots of hopeful discussion about the potential passage of RAWA by the Senate. Linking the bill with the closure of a tax loophole with donated conservation easements may be the path forward on funding. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is already making some administrative preparations just in case passage occurs. Passage this fiscal year would mean that funds might be available to states as soon as early 2023, but that is the most optimistic timeline. Several states plan on assigning sub-awards to universities, conservation districts, and NGOs to take advantage of offered match, particularly forgone indirect costs.
- Retiring Pheasants Forever CEO Howard Vincent received a well-deserved MAFWA Special Recognition Award. Congrats, Howard!
- The USFWS expects to issue its decision on listing the monarch in 2024.
- The Directors also had extensive discussions about employee recruitment and retention challenges, new technologies to engage customers, and progress of the Midwest Landscape Initiative.
- Next year’s meeting will be in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is considering a modest extension of their hunting and trapping seasons for several furbearer species. Part of the [conversation about why the change is being sought](#) revolves around the public’s perception that raccoons in particular are overabundant and having

a negative effect on game bird populations, although the department has been fairly careful not to endorse that perception.

The Wildlife Management Institute worked with Chase and Chase Consulting to examine the efficacy of state R3 programs. The study compared the later participation of program participants with that of demographically similar controls. Results suggested participants behaved differently than controls both before and because of the R3 events. You can peruse their other conclusions and recommendations [here](#).

### **Pheasant-relevant Media**

[2021 Iowa pheasant hunting season was best in over a decade](#)

[Last year's Iowa pheasant hunting season was good, this year's looks good, too](#)

[South Dakota GFP asks landowners to wait on ditch mowing until July 10](#)

[North Dakota spring pheasant counts lower](#)

[Can prison-farmed pheasants save hunting in Montana?](#)

[New Hampshire Fish and Game Commission debates future of pheasant hunting](#)

[USGS scientists quantify benefits of grassland conservation to birds and bees](#)

[Sun is setting on dusky grouse in the Southwest](#)

[Here's why Kansas may expand hunting and trapping season for raccoons, badgers and more](#)

[Ask the expert: saving America's grasslands Q&A with Dr. Dirac Twidwell](#)

[This bill would repeal excise taxes on guns and ammo. Both the NSSF and NRA oppose it](#)

[Do we need a new theory of evolution?](#)

### **Recent Literature**

[Lloyd, J. D., et al. 2022. Prairie grouse and wind energy: The state of the science and implications for risk assessment. \*Wildlife Society Bulletin\* \(early online version\).](#)

[Proett, M. S. B. Roberts, and T. A. Messmer. 2022. Columbian sharp-tailed grouse brood success and chick survival in a wind-energy landscape. \*Journal of Wildlife Management\* \(early online version\).](#)

[Martin, J. A., M. Jones, M. D. McConnell, and M. Puckett. 2022. Bobwhites are not waterfowl. Federal collaboration welcomed: a comment on Williams et al. \*Journal of Wildlife Management\* \(early online version\).](#)

[Williams, C. K., and R. D. Applegate. 2022. Bobwhites are not waterfowl. Federal collaboration welcomed: a reply to Martin et al. \(2022\). \*Journal of Wildlife Management\* \(early online version\).](#)

[Reeves, J. T., S. D. Fuhlendorf, C. A. Davis, and S. M. Wilder. 2022. Temporal variation and habitat management influence arthropod prey for northern bobwhites \(\*Colinus virginianus\*\). \*Rangeland Ecology and Management\* 83:69-80.](#)

[Montalvo, A., L. A. Brennan, M. L. Morrison, E. D. Grahmann, and A. N. Tri. 2022. Distance sampling survey effort to improve density estimates of northern bobwhite. \*Wildlife Society Bulletin\* \(early online version\).](#)

[Youtz, J., R. Goljani Amirkhiz, and J. K. Frey. 2022. Modeling the impact of climate change and wildfire on the Dusky Grouse \(\*Dendragapus obscurus\*\) in the American Southwest: implications for conservation. \*Avian Conservation and Ecology\* 17\(1\):35.](#)

[Powell, L. A., N. J. Aebischer, S. C. Ludwig, and D. Baines. 2022. Retrospective comparisons of competing demographic models give clarity from ‘messy’ management on a Scottish grouse moor. \*Ecological Applications\* \(early online version\).](#)

[Wightman, P. H., et al. 2022. Influence of weather on gobbling activity of male wild turkeys. \*Ecology and Evolution\* \(early online version\).](#)

[Bakner, N. W., et al. 2022. Roosting ecology of Gould’s wild turkeys in southeastern Arizona. \*Journal of Wildlife Management\* \(early online version\).](#)

[Staggenborg, J., and N. Anthes. 2022. Long-term fallows rate best among agri-environment scheme effects on farmland birds—A meta-analysis. \*Conservation Letters\* \(early online version\).](#)

[Otto, C. R. V., H. Zheng, T. Hovick, M. P. van der Berg, and B. Geaumont. 2022. Grassland conservation supports migratory birds and produces economic benefits for the commercial beekeeping industry in the U.S. Great Plains. \*Ecological Economics\* 197:107450.](#)

### **Trivia Answer:**

Aldo Leopold, in a 1940 address to the Wildlife Society titled “The State of the Profession.” He ends with a passage that reminds us why even “easy to manage” species like pheasants face a fundamental challenge –

*“Our profession began with the job of producing something to shoot. However important this may seem to us, it is not very important to the emancipated moderns who no longer feel the soil between their toes. We find that we cannot produce much to shoot until the landowner changes his way of using land, and he in turn cannot change his ways until his teachers, bankers, customers, editors, governors, and trespassers change their ideas about what land is for. To change ideas about what land is for is to change ideas about what anything is for. Thus we started to move a straw, and end up with the job of moving a mountain.”*

*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>.*