

# Pheasant News and Notes

March 2023



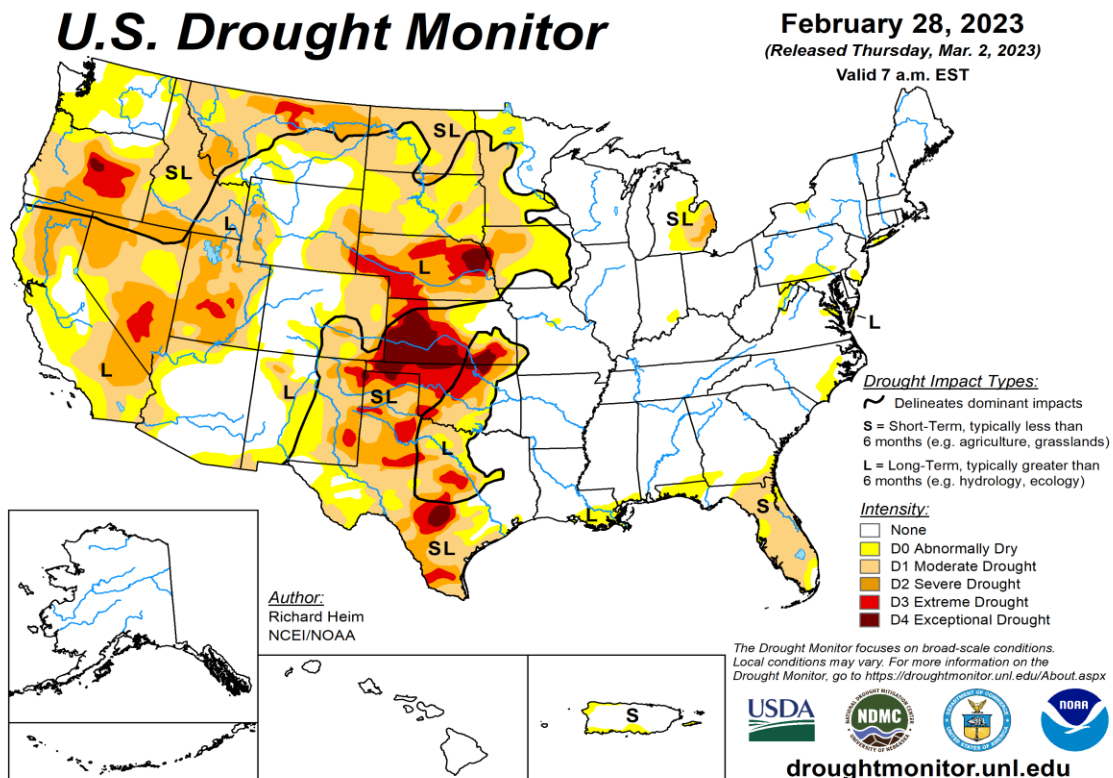
## Trivia Question

What is the heaviest living bird capable of flight?

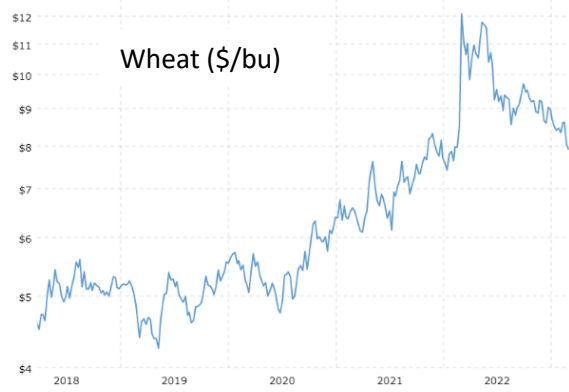
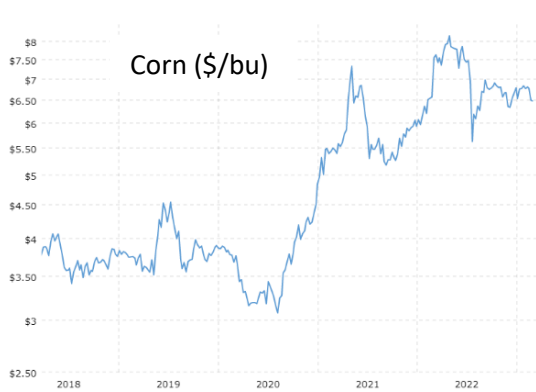
## USDA and Legislative News

The [2023 general CRP signup](#) (signup 60) got underway on February 27<sup>th</sup> and will run through April 7<sup>th</sup>. County soil rental rates of course vary, but the national cap on payments is \$240 per acre, which includes the Climate-Smart incentive, productivity factor, and 10 percent inflationary factor used to calculate potential payments for qualifying bids. The Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) used to rank applications will employ new models for soil erosion benefits, and landowners will be encouraged to choose program options that increase their EBI score. Specifically, producers with existing cover will be informed that cost share may be available for upgrading stand quality.

There is usually an inverse relationship between interest in CRP and how landowners perceive future farm profitability in the near- to mid-term. To that end, drought remains entrenched over much of the wheat and western corn belts. Current corn and wheat prices are below their recent highs but still well



above pre-pandemic levels. Inputs like fertilizer also remain expensive but at the moment [prices appear to be dropping](#). Regardless of how landowners process all of this, interest in the general signup will probably continue to slide as continuous CRP options have become more attractive in most situations. Hopefully we will hear more about how the continuous signup is going when wildlifers meet with USDA staff at the upcoming [North American conference](#) in St. Louis later this month.



USDA also [encouraged](#) landowners to take advantage of the \$19.5 billion in increased funding (over 5 years) for climate smart practices within the agency’s current conservation programs. Many are curious if it is logistically possible to spend or award this amount of money, let alone do it effectively – we’ll see. This will also be a big topic of conversation for the private lands folks at the North American.

### Notes from Around the Pheasant Range

A [well-attended Pheasant Fest 2023](#) wrapped up this month in Minneapolis. Both NRCS Chief Terry Cosby and FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux participated in the festivities and were joined by PF/QF’s governmental affairs staff in fielding questions during Q&A sessions. Thanks to everyone involved in these and other Pheasant Fest events, which are a huge organizational undertaking.

Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever also just released their [Farm Bill priorities](#) for the upcoming bill renewal process this year. Priorities include maintaining CRP acres enrolled and passing provisions of the CRP Improvement Act, increasing funding for the Voluntary Public Access – Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) to \$150 million, and expanding the availability of the Grasslands of Special Significance component of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). PF/QF will be working closely with AFWA and our other conservation partners to get these provisions into the final bill.



The [National R3 Symposium](#) will be held May 22-25 in Albuquerque, NM. Organizers expect several hundred attendees from agencies, NGOs, and the outdoor industry. Cheaper early registration is available until March 31<sup>st</sup>.

Todd Bogenschutz (Technical Committee, Iowa) sent me a [2020 article on grasshopper declines](#), which is of obvious concern if you are a grassland game bird chick. It seems that climate change is increasing the biomass of grasshopper food plants but diluting their nutrient concentrations, which in turn were predictive of the declines. One more thing to worry about if you are an upland game person.

The Midwest Landscape Initiative (a partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies) released their draft [Midwest Conservation Blueprint](#) map for public review this month. The map attempts to depict spatial priorities for conservation work throughout the region based on a variety of possible conservation targets. Although the targets (“indicators”) are [listed](#), the process by which priorities were defined on the map is a bit opaque, so providing insightful comments on the draft is a bit challenging, as well. Regardless, those who want to take a shot at it are welcome to do so. I thought the comment period was supposed to close on February 28<sup>th</sup>, but it looks like the webpage is still open as of this writing. Release of the final draft is expected sometime this summer.



Thank you @USDA @usdafsa Administrator Zach Ducheneaux for joining us at National Pheasant Fest & Quail Classic to discuss Farm Bill programs that deliver voluntary conservation programs to farmers, ranchers, and landowners across America!



6:49 PM · Feb 21, 2023 · 4,052 Views

## Pheasant-relevant Media

[Harsh winter conditions could impact local pheasant populations](#)

[National Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic returning to Sioux Falls](#)

[Bounty program for pheasant nest predators considered](#)

[Michigan pheasant hunter accidentally shot by her dog](#)

[Five ways lawmakers can write a better Farm Bill for conservation](#)

[The future of CRP](#)

[A view of the 2023 Farm Bill at the starting line in the Senate](#)

[The 2023 farm bill should empower farmers to feed America](#)

[Voluntary UK initiatives to phase out toxic lead shot for pheasant hunting have had little impact](#)

## Recent Literature

[Emmet, R. L., T. J. Benson, M. L. Allen, and K. W. Stodola. 2023. Integrating multiple data sources improves prediction and inference for upland game bird occupancy models. \*Ornithological Applications\* \(early online version\).](#)

[Palarski, J. B. W. Kubecka, D. Rollins, R. Ruzicka, and H. A. Mathewson. 2023. Northern bobwhite subspecies exhibit reduced survival and reproduction when translocated outside their native range. \*Journal of Wildlife Management\* \(early online version\).](#)

[Londe, D. W., et al. 2023. Review of range-wide vital rates quantifies eastern wild turkey population trajectory. Ecology and Evolution 13:e9830.](#)

[Tyl, R. M., C. T. Rota, and C. P. Lehman. 2023. Factors influencing survival of female eastern wild turkeys in northeastern South Dakota. Wildlife Society Bulletin \(early online version\).](#)

[Frye, G. G., M. S. Lindberg, and R. A. Merizon. 2023. Reduced breeding densities associated with spatially concentrated harvest of willow ptarmigan in Alaska. Journal of Wildlife Management \(early online version\).](#)

[Cardou, F., and M. Vellend. 2023. Stealth advocacy in ecology and conservation biology. Biological Conservation 280:109968.](#)

[Stedman, R. C., N. A. Connelly, and T. B. Lauber. 2023. Understanding hunter support for early successional habitat management \(early online version\).](#)

[Karlín, J., M. Salvo, J. McRoberts, J. Millspaugh, C. Evans, and S. Leath. 2023. Analysis of hunting regulation complexity: 50-state analysis. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program report for project F21AP00800.](#)

### Trivia Answer

A male great bustard collected in Manchuria had a verified weight of 46 pounds, making it the heaviest known bird capable of flight. Several other birds (Andean condor, tundra and mute swans, etc.) may have equal or greater average species weights, but no verified individual has topped the Manchurian specimen. Males of this Eurasian species are much larger than females and engage in so-called [“foam bath” displays](#) on leks.

Sorry, this month’s question has nothing to do with pheasants but these birds are pretty cool.



Marco Valentini

*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 <https://nationalpheasantplan.org>.*