

Pheasant News and Notes

December 2023



Trivia Question

Todd Bogenschutz (Technical Committee, Iowa) recently got this question from a hunter:

"I was pheasant hunting this past weekend (10/28) and harvested a rooster. When cleaning the bird there was some type of winged insect (beetle?) which seemed to come out of the feathers. I'd describe it as greyish-white, roughly the size of a box elder bug, with "papery" wings (like the texture of moth wings) - no distinct markings or patterns that I can recall and I think it may have been consuming the blood of the bird. Any idea what kind of "critter" this was?"

What's your guess?

USDA and Legislative News

As most know by now, as part of Congress's November continuing resolution the 2018 Farm Bill was extended through September 30th, 2024. Funding for USDA itself, however, was only authorized until January 19th, meaning they will likely hold off on decisions like CRP signup dates until agency funding has been resolved. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) [announced](#) it will begin reauthorizing CRP contract and cost share agreement modifications for contracts approved prior to October 1, 2023, but will not yet begin accepting or approving new CRP offers under any signup type (including continuous).

The November continuing resolution also provided \$10M for VPA-HIP in FY2024, with the catch that the funds must be spent by the end of the year. It is unclear how USDA plans on dispersing these funds within that timeframe. Some observers believe that these were placeholder funds to make sure the importance of VPA-HIP was recognized, but with the expectation that the funds would be rolled into a longer-term provision in a new Farm Bill.

Even though the extended bill doesn't expire until the end of September, there seems to be a strong sentiment to get a new version passed earlier in the year well ahead of the election. Andrew Schmidt (Government Affairs Director, Pheasants Forever) noted that if final text and funding negotiations are not well underway by late winter, the 2023 baseline funding figures that are currently being used may be usurped by newer, perhaps less favorable figures expected from the Congressional Budget Office around that time. Because a lower baseline would only make negotiations that much harder, this shadow deadline provides an extra incentive for both chambers to get things wrapped up quickly.

Finally, USDA appears to be fast-tracking awards through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. The RCPP received \$4.95 billion in additional funding over the next 5 years through the Inflation Reduction Act, and USDA recently [announced](#) about \$1 billion in initial awards to 81 projects. That same announcement detailed new program delivery processes to streamline implementation. It appears to some that the administration is trying to get as much of the IRA funding out the door as possible before the election next fall.

Notes from Around the Pheasant Range

We have a new Technical Committee member representing Illinois. Don Kahl is the IDNR's new Agricultural and Grasslands Program Manager, having previously served as their Wildlife Field Operations Section Manager. Don has previous experience as a Farm Bill Biologist in Colorado and as a biologist for Texas Parks and Wildlife out of Lubbock, and will have statewide responsibilities for pheasants, quail, and rabbits in his new position. We welcome Don to the group and thank Wade Louis for filling in on the Technical Committee while he covered two jobs – I'm sure no one is happier than Wade that Don is on board.

In other National Pheasant Plan partnership news, the Management Board met this week to discuss funding the Plan Coordinator position for another three years (2024-2026). A motion to continue funding at status quo amounts passed unanimously, so we are now soliciting pledges from individual partners in accordance with the recommendation. Assuming all goes well there, and the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) and Pheasants Forever agree to continue their banking/billing arrangement to carry the position (which MAFWA is currently considering within a new strategic planning process), we should continue to have a Plan Coordinator through 2026. Thanks to MAFWA, PF, the Management Board, and all the individual state partners for their support!

Our partnership is working towards developing tools to help guide large-scale habitat investments. An example of this kind of tool within the upland game world is the Sage Grouse Initiative's Sagebrush Conservation Design developed under NRCS's Working Lands for Wildlife Program. The University of Montana's Dr. David Naugle gave [a recent webinar](#) on the development of the tool and its uses, primarily to focus conservation action in the most effective areas – in this case, within the most intact cores of sagebrush. Among my webinar notes: 1) remote sensing analyses revealed core sagebrush areas have declined by 20.4M acres since 2001, with 56% of the loss due to annual grass invasion (mostly cheatgrass), 21% to tree encroachment, and 3% to human modifications; and 2) interestingly and contrary to the usual story, cheat does not seem to need a preceding fire to spread – most invaded acres had not been burned within 10 years.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' (AFWA's) Private Lands Working Group continues to make progress on professional development opportunities for current and future private lands biologists. The group held a web meeting with Dr. Roel Lopez and Jenny Sanders of Texas A&M last month. Dr. Lopez has been working to develop a "Private Land Stewardship Academy" to increase private lands literacy among three audiences: students, beginning professionals, and new landowners. He and his colleagues have written a book entitled "The Art and Science of Private Lands Stewardship," which is in the final stages of review. He hopes that this can serve as a textbook for private lands-oriented undergraduate and graduate courses across the country. The group also talked about the possibility of creating some kind of certification or apprenticeship program for private lands practitioners in the future, particularly in association with federal agencies. The working group will continue to reach out to and collaborate with others who are working in this space.

Pheasant-relevant Media

[South Dakota pheasants: Longer season, more birds](#)

[Pheasant numbers up 101% in southwestern Minnesota this hunting season](#)

[Spring rains give Oklahoma pheasant numbers slight bump](#)

[Illinois wildlife grants fuel pheasant conservation efforts by local nonprofits](#)

[You could own the world's largest pheasant](#)

[South Dakota predator bounty program to continue despite opposition](#)
[Follow the pheasants](#)
[Cover crops help the climate and environment but most farmers say no](#)
[Conservation cuts sink in as 2023 farm bill looms](#)
[Concern conservation funding will be “repurposed” during farm bill negotiations](#)
[Bankers are going to bat for farmers over the Farm Bill](#)
[Let’s make the farm bill a people bill](#)
[Scientists warn American ‘promotion of hunting’ is ruining the environment](#)

Recent Literature

[Xie, D., et al. 2023. Development and application of potentially universal microsatellite markers for pheasant species. *Animals* 13:3601.](#)

[DeLeon, E. E., M. W. Hook, M. F. Small, and A. K. Tegeler. 2023. Comparing and combining use of autonomous recording units and traditional counts to monitor Northern Bobwhite. *Journal of Field Ornithology* \(early online version\).](#)

[Stenglein, J. L., et al. 2023. Comparison of in-person and remote camera lek surveys for prairie grouse \(*Tympanuchus* spp.\). *Wildlife Society Bulletin* \(early online version\).](#)

[Kirol, C. P., and B. C. Fedy. 2023. Using individual-based habitat selection analyses to understand the nuances of habitat use in an anthropogenic landscape: a case study using greater sage-grouse trying to raise young in an oil and gas field. *Wildlife Biology* \(early online version\).](#)

[Boone, W. W., et al. 2023. Robust assessment of associations between weather and eastern wild turkey nest success. *Journal of Wildlife Management* \(early online version\).](#)

[Adey, E. A., J. E. Baici, and J. Bowman. 2023. Seasonal roost selection of wild turkeys at their northern range edge. *Wildlife Biology* \(early online version\).](#)

[Adcock, K. G., et al. 2023. Lymphoproliferative Disease Virus and Reticuloendotheliosis Virus Detection and Disease in Wild Turkeys \(*Meleagris gallopavo*\). *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* \(early online version\).](#)

[Lazure, L., and R. B. Weladji. 2023. Methods to mitigate human–wildlife conflicts involving common mesopredators: a meta-analysis. *Journal of Wildlife Management* \(early online version\).](#)

[Maresh Nelson, S. B., et al. 2023. Sensitivity of North American grassland birds to weather and climate variability. *Conservation Biology* \(early online version\).](#)

[Slagle, K. M., G. Karnes, and J. T. Bruskotter. 2023. Private lands, public benefits: the potential for wildlife habitat and public recreation on private lands in Ohio. *Human Dimensions of Wildlife* \(early online version\).](#)

[Fahrig, L. 2023. Patch-scale edge effects do not indicate landscape-scale fragmentation effects. *Conservation Letters* \(early online version\).](#)

[Dean, A. J., et al. 2023. Scrutinizing the impact of policy instruments on adoption of agricultural conservation practices using Bayesian expert models. Conservation Letters \(early online version\).](#)

[Penn, M. J., et al. 2023. Sherlock – A flexible, low-resource tool for processing camera-trapping images. Methods in Ecology and Evolution \(early online version\).](#)

[Dovers, E., G. C. Popovic, and D. I. Warton. 2023. A fast method for fitting integrated species distribution models. Methods in Ecology and Evolution \(early online version\).](#)

Trivia Answer

According to Iowa DNR's state wildlife veterinarian, it was likely a louse fly (Family Hippoboscidae). Equal parts [cool and creepy](#), members of this family are also known as "keds" (especially the wingless forms), with various species parasitizing different birds and mammals. Instead of laying eggs, females carry their larvae internally, one at a time, until finally giving birth to an almost fully formed pupa that can weigh more than the mother (ouch!). If you want to kill a ked, they are fairly impervious to mere smacking and must instead be rolled between the fingers. More fun facts can be found [here](#).



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>.