

# Pheasant News and Notes

November 2023



## Trivia Question

The American Ornithological Society [recently decided](#) to change all English-language common names of American birds named after an individual person. Name at least one U.S. galliform that will be receiving a new name due to this decision.

## USDA and Legislative News

What's going on with the Farm Bill, you ask? Andrew Schmidt (Government Affairs Director, Pheasants Forever) reports the following: "Not a lot of specific policy or programmatic updates on the Farm Bill front to share. We are continuing to work with Congressional staff and partners on securing wins for CRP, VPA-HIP, and other conservation programs. We do have a clearer picture of the timing situation for an extension, however... sometime in the next month or two. The Senate is looking at a full year extension (to Sept 30, 2024), but House Chairman GT Thompson has said recently he doesn't think a full year extension will be necessary. [Senate Ag Committee Ranking Member] Boozman doesn't think the full year will be necessary to pass a new farm bill either, BUT there are a multitude of reasons why a short-term extension would likely be infeasible (the prospect of crop insurance and commodity programs expiring in the middle of planting season, for example). There seems to be a decent chance that a Farm Bill extension of some kind will be included in the [continuing resolution] that Congress needs to pass by the 17<sup>th</sup>, which makes sense to put the two "must pass" bills together rather than trying them separately. Note: a one-year extension would likely give FSA the authority to continue implementing CRP as-is for one more year. While we have a very low number of expiring acres relative to recent years (less than 500,000, the vast majority of which are continuous acres), this authority would go a long way in continuing to fill up the program." Good info – thanks, Andrew!

Jim Inglis (Management Board and Government Affairs Director, Pheasants Forever) also adds that NRCS just [announced](#) \$1 billion-worth of Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) awards to 81 projects. Perusing the list of projects and their sponsors it looks like several pheasant states were awarded funding for grasslands-oriented work, which obviously stands to benefit us.

## Notes from Around the Pheasant Range

We held our National Wild Pheasant Technical Committee meeting at Maumee Bay State Park in Ohio last month. Among my notes:

- I summarized the presentations and discussions that occurred at the September Management Board meeting. We talked about the implications of FSA and Pheasants Forever's funding partnership to turbocharge our pheasant habitat tool (see [October's PN&N](#) for more details), including the possibility of using some extra state funds for other high priority work items (the Management Board had asked the Tech Committee to provide some recommendations on this). We noted that recommendations probably won't be possible until we figure out 1) if FSA and PF will allow some shifting of funds between budget categories within the pheasant tool grant, 2) who responds to the grant request for proposals (RFP) and how much the vendors bid to do the

work, and 3) cost estimates for the other work items requiring additional funds. In the meantime, the TC passed the following statement: *“The Technical Committee recommends the funding partners continue to contribute to the Plan Coordinator position at 2023 levels for an additional three-year term (2024-2026). Such funding will maximize the flexibility in using FSA grant funding to expand and improve state-level sampling of pheasant and other bird populations associated with local habitat conditions, and to develop reliable models and tools based on those samples.”*

- Ian Dwight (Technical Committee, California) presented some of his preliminary work on surveying pheasants with autonomous recording units (ARUs). Ian used [AudioMoth](#) units, which are about the size of a deck of cards and cost less than \$100 each, enclosed in a plastic bag for field recordings. The units run on 3 AA batteries, which should last about 45 days while recording about 2.5 hours per day. Ian used Cornell University’s [BirdNET analyzer](#) (which underlies their popular Merlin bird ID app) to identify pheasant crows within his sound files, which seemed to have an accuracy higher than 80% in his trials. BirdNET was able to process more than 100 hours of sound data in about an hour.
- Riggs Wilson, a Master’s student under Dr. Adam Janke at Iowa State, is using ARUs to survey bobwhites and then model habitat effects on estimated abundance. He compared fall covey count surveys conducted with AudioMoth units (see above), Song Meter Minis (with 2 microphones; \$575 per unit) and Song Meter 4s (\$900 per unit; both Song Meter models are made by [Wildlife Acoustics](#)), and the results did not seem to vary much among models. Riggs initially analyzed his sound data with the models developed by [Nolan et al. \(2022\)](#) in the southeast U.S., but found that the models needed to be retrained using Iowa-specific recordings (background non-target bird songs and ambient noises differed among regions, which reduced accuracy). They mounted their units on metal fence posts in road rights-of-way (which are public property in Iowa), placed stickers on them with a blurb about the research, Adam’s contact information, and a QR code, and ended up not losing any of them to theft or vandalism.
- Matt Gottlob (South Dakota State Coordinator, Pheasants Forever) talked about the new Public Access to Habitat (PATH) program. The initial goal is to enroll 10,000 acres of new public access into 10-year contracts. PATH offers sign-up incentives of up to \$25/acre, paid up front, for undisturbed habitat enrolled in South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks’ walk-in hunting program. The \$250,000 for incentive payments was provided by [onX](#) and the South Dakota Department of Tourism.
- John McLaughlin (Technical Committee, Texas) reported that Texas will be starting a pheasant research project looking at bird movements among habitat patches in the Playa Lakes region. An RFP will be advertised for potential bidders in November.
- Grant Ravary, a Natural Resource Specialist with the Ohio DNR and a graduate student at OSU under Dr. Bill Peterman, reported on his research concerning functional connectivity of pheasant habitat in Ohio. “Functional” habitat is defined as being both suitable and connected. Grant used [ConScape](#), an open-source software library, to assess functional connectivity. The mapped results depicted areas of high and low connectivity, which in turn can be used to prioritize conservation interventions. One drawback was that the analyses required a supercomputer to map results for the entire state.
- Ian Dwight also gave an update on his work attempting to detect variation in herbaceous vegetation structure via satellite imagery. He’s using [Google Earth Engine](#) to track and map its Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) metric in near-real time. Additional work will be needed to see if this index is a good predictor of vegetation structure relevant to pheasant habitat preferences.

- Allie Barg, a Ph.D. student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln under Dr. Andy Little, reported on her research in progress with modeling pheasant habitat needs in the Cornhusker State. Allie used Song Meter Minis to record spring male crowing data, recording five hours per day from March to June. Another Ph.D. student on the project is testing methods of measuring changes in herbaceous cover (disturbances) within the growing season using remote sensing data.
- Dave Kohler (Program Administrator, Ohio DNR) briefed the group on the Ohio Landowner/Hunter Access Partnership (OLHAP) program. The DNR's goal is to enroll 20,000 acres in the program, paying up to \$30/acre for permanent habitat. Hunters must sign in through an online reservation system, and reservations per property are limited to about one hunter per 50 acres of permanent cover. Deer and small game hunters make up about 68% and 8%, respectively, of the clientele using the properties. About 91% of hunters are satisfied with the program, and cited the check-in process, lack of crowding, and having somewhere close to home to hunt as the primary reasons for their satisfaction. About 94% of participating landowners were at least somewhat satisfied with the program, and 82% would recommend the program to other landowners.
- Joseph Lautenbach (Technical Committee, Ohio) talked about the H2Ohio program. This is a state-led program to address some serious water quality problems in the state. The action most relevant to wildlife interests is the restoration of wetlands, with qualifying landowners offered \$2,000 per acre in state funds in addition to the usual federal funds they receive for enrolling the land in a long-term USDA wetland easement.
- We wrapped up by identifying a few action items on which to continue work:
  - The Technical Committee created a Predation and Predator Control Working Group to construct a draft white paper reviewing the science on this subject. Initial volunteers included Bryan O'Connor (Nebraska) and Todd Bogenschutz (Iowa). The Plan Coordinator will work with this group to begin assembling relevant literature and unpublished state documents.
  - The Plan Coordinator will work with the Technical Committee to start defining the particulars of state agency participation in the pheasant habitat modeling project funded by FSA and PF. This will include querying the states to determine their interest in participating, finding out if PF staff are able to assist in data collection, assembling historic state crow count data sets for use in initial models, and scheduling follow-up meetings as needed.
  - The Technical Committee will continue developing recommendations to the Management Board regarding potential uses of state funding balances within the partnership. The Plan Coordinator will develop cost estimates for other high priority work items to help inform these choices.

Thanks to Joseph Lautenbach for organizing a great meeting, and to the other DNR staff who showed us around on the field trip (below). The 2024 meeting will be in Oklahoma – thanks to Tell Judkins for volunteering to host.



Jeff Prendergast (Technical Committee, Kansas) and coauthors have [a new paper](#) out on use of cover crops by pheasant broods in landscapes featuring both row crops and winter wheat. Hens with broods selected spring cover crops (planted in March-April and terminated via herbicides in June-July prior to winter wheat planting) and CRP fields over other cover types, but brood survival was generally low. They suggest that both cover crops and CRP have positive effects on pheasants in this landscape type.

Tell Judkins (Technical Committee, Oklahoma) and coauthors also just published [a paper](#) on the association of parasites with body condition in bobwhites. Congrats to both Jeff and Tell!

Finally, Dr. Jess McGuire and Morgan Meador of Quail Forever have started a “*Quail Quarterly*” newsletter as a companion piece to “*Pheasant News and Notes*.” The first edition has lots of good stuff in it – you should check it out. To get on the mailing list, you can contact the authors at [jmcguire@quailforever.org](mailto:jmcguire@quailforever.org) or [mmeador@quailforever.org](mailto:mmeador@quailforever.org).

### **Pheasant-relevant Media**

[Pheasant hunting season begins in Iowa with near-perfect conditions](#)

[Iowa pheasant hunters welcome cold start to 2023 season](#)

[Nebraska's pheasant hunting outlook on the upswing with season opening on Saturday](#)

[Minnesota pheasant population on the rebound as hunting season in full swing](#)  
[South Dakota officials report a strong opening weekend for pheasant season](#)  
[Pheasant opener brings hunters to South Dakota from across the globe](#)  
[23 communities awarded funds to promote pheasant hunting in South Dakota](#)  
[What pheasant season holds for South Dakota's economy](#)  
[How pheasants became the king of Michigan's small game](#)  
[Protecting pheasant habitat in South Dakota is a team effort](#)  
[Follow the pheasants](#)  
[Knowing pheasant biology can increase your hunting success](#)  
[What hunters should know about the 2023 Utah pheasant and quail hunts](#)  
[New Pheasants Forever hunting access program sees early interest in South Dakota](#)  
[Minn. Lt. Gov. Flanagan leads women's pheasant hunt](#)  
[Birds in the Americas will no longer be named after people](#)  
[Britain's pheasant shooting season has begun. And a year-round massacre makes it possible](#)

## **Recent Literature**

[Godar, A., A. Piernicky, D. Haukos, and J. Prendergast. 2023. Ring-necked pheasant brood habitat selection and movements in an intensive agricultural landscape. \*Prairie Naturalist\* 55:107-123.](#)

[Wyckoff, S. T., T. Judkins, N. M. Niemuth, M. G. Ruder, J. A. Martin, and M. J. Yabsley. 2023. Health impacts of gastrointestinal and ocular parasites in northern bobwhite \(\*Colinus virginianus\*\) in western Oklahoma, USA.](#)

[Nolan, V., et al. 2023. Distance sampling and spatial capture-recapture for estimating density of Northern Bobwhite. \*Ecological Informatics\* 78:102330.](#)

[Lappin, O. A., et al. 2023. Northern Bobwhite \(\*Colinus virginianus\*\) breeding season roost site selection in a working agricultural landscape in Clay County, Mississippi. \*Journal of Field Ornithology\* 94:4.](#)

[Johnson, L. A., M. J. Butler, and S. E. Sesnie. 2023. Optimizing detection of the bobwhite reproduction call using passive acoustic monitoring. \*Journal of Wildlife Management\* \(early online version\).](#)

[Wolske, J. M., A. C. Behney, and L. A. Powell. 2023. Nonbreeding season survival of northern bobwhite in northeastern Colorado. \*Wildlife Biology\* \(early online version\).](#)

[Teige, E. C., et al. 2023. Assessment of lesser prairie-chicken translocation through survival and lek surveys. \*Wildlife Society Bulletin\* \(early online version\).](#)

[Carl, A. R., et al. 2023. Habitat selection by female Rio Grande wild turkey influenced by vegetation and anthropogenic structures. \*Rangeland Ecology and Management\* 91:44-54.](#)

[Thapa-Magar, K. B., et al. 2023. Effects of sage-grouse habitat restoration efforts on pollination networks in an arid ecosystem. \*Rangeland Ecology and Management\* 91:95-104.](#)

[Anteau, M. J., et al. 2023. Climate-induced shifts in grassland bird nesting phenology have implications for grassland management. \*Global Ecology and Conservation\* 48:e02700.](#)

[Weber, D., et al. 2023. Grassland-use intensity maps for Switzerland based on satellite time series: Challenges and opportunities for ecological applications. Remote Sensing in Ecology and Conservation \(early online version\).](#)

[Wolfe, B., M. D. Proctor, V. Nolan, and S. L. Webb. 2023. An efficient acoustic classifier for high-priority avian species in the southern Great Plains using convolutional neural networks. Wildlife Society Bulletin \(early online version\).](#)

[Dove, S., M. Bohm, R. Freeman, S. Jellesmark, and D. J. Murrell. 2023. A user-friendly guide to using distance measures to compare time series in ecology. Ecology and Evolution 13:e10520.](#)

[York, N. D. L., et al. 2023. Justice and ethics in conservation remote sensing: Current discourses and research needs. Biological Conservation 287:110319.](#)

### **Trivia Answer**

Species in line for a name change include Gambel's Quail for sure, and probably Montezuma Quail. Assuming Gunnison Sage-grouse is primarily named for a place (Gunnison, Colorado), its name is considered a "secondary eponym" (like Baltimore Oriole and Carolina Chickadee) and [apparently will not need to be changed](#).

Don't worry, Gambel's lovers; they're going to run on you no matter what you call them.



All About Birds

*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>.*