MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES – www.michigan.gov/dnr
Wildlife Division

Featured Species Habitat Management Guidance for

Ring-necked Pheasant

Latin Name: *Phasianus colchicus* **Scope:** Statewide

Rationale - *why we value the species and the problem for the species:*

Ring-necked pheasants are a valued game species. In 2010, 27,000 hunters spent 107,000 days afield seeking pheasants (Frawley 2012). In the past, pheasant hunters composed a significant portion of the hunting public. Michigan once harvested over 1,000,000 roosters annually (Belyea 1998), but harvests declined to a low of 27,000 in 2010 (Frawley 2012). Populations began to decline in the late 1960's; the BBS for Michigan documents an average decline of 4.52% per year over the past 46 years (Sauer et al. 2014). Pheasants Forever and other enthusiasts are active partners in pheasant restoration. Nationally, pheasant decline has been linked to a decrease in suitable grasslands (Matthews 2009).

Habitat Need - *the cause & effect relationship between habitat and species and its primary limiting habitat need:*

The primary limiting factor for pheasants is undisturbed grasslands (for nests and brood-rearing) adjacent to winter food and cover. Pheasant densities increase as the proportion of undisturbed grass in the landscape increases, up to a maximum of 50% grass (MN DNR 2005). Reproduction may be limited when nesting is restricted to small or disturbed grassland such as harvested hayfields and mowed roadsides (Clark and Bogenschutz 1999). Optimum nesting and brood-rearing cover contains a diverse mix of grasses, forbs, legumes, and annual weeds with a bare ground understory. The quality of grasslands for pheasants tends to be inversely related to age or time since disturbance. Lacking disturbance or management grasslands can become dominated by a monotype and develop a thick ground litter in as little as 6 years, (Millenbah et al. 1996; McCoy et al. 2001; Matthews, 2009). Good winter cover (cattails or switch grass) is needed within a quarter mile of winter food.

Habitat Objectives - *the treatment or management to address the primary limiting habitat need:*

1) Provide quality nesting and brood rearing habitat: (a) maintain large blocks of undisturbed grasslands; (b) increase the percentage of grasslands across the landscape; and (c) enhance aging grasslands by disking, burning, or inter-seeding on a rotational basis (Matthews, 2009).
2) Provide cattails and dense standing grasses associated with breeding cover for winter cover.
3) Provide winter food such as un-harvested grains, harvested grain fields without fall plowing and fruit-bearing shrubs.
4) Promote enrollment in Farm Bill programs with grassland practices (CRP, WHIP, EQUIP, WRP).

Priority Geographic Areas – *the specific geographic areas where we should focus management for the species:*

The 43 Wild Pheasant Restoration Area (WPRA) counties in the SLP and UP; the 9 WPRA Pilot Focus counties (Tuscola, Huron, Sanilac, Gratiot, Clinton, Saginaw, Hillsdale, Lenawee, and Monroe); the public and private lands adjacent to the 15 State Game/Wildlife Areas (Almer Twp., Brookfield Twp. No.1, Brookfield Twp. No.2, Cass City, Clark Lake, Columbia Twp., Denmark Twp., Elmwood Twp., Flynn, Fraser Twp. No.1 and No.2, Gagetown, Maple River, Pinconning Twp., and Verona); 1 State Park (Lake Hudson); and the 41 WLD Project Areas (1 NLP, 27 SELP, and 13 SWLP), which identify pheasant as a featured species.

Priority Landscapes – *the landscape, setting, or cover-type where we should focus management within the areas above:*

Promote grasslands in association with corn, soybeans, wheat, cattails, and brush lands.

Population Goal - *the goal for the species, its habitat, or a stakeholder's actions:*

Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative goal is a mean of 1.5 broods observed per 10-carrier days.

Evaluation Method - *the monitoring method to measure progress towards the goal above:*

Annual US Postal Service mail-carrier brood surveys.

Incidental Species – *other species which may benefit from management for this species:*

American bittern; bobolink; eastern meadowlark; mallard; massasauga; and upland sandpiper.

References - *citation for documents referenced in this guidance:*

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McCoy, T. D., E. W. Kurzejeski, L. W. Burger, Jr., and M. R. Ryan. 2001. Effects of conservation practice, mowing, and temporal changes on vegetation structure on CRP fields on northern Missouri. Wildlife Society Bulletin 29:979-987.

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Sauer, J. R., J. E. Hines, J. E. Fallon, K. L. Pardieck, D. J. Ziolkowski, Jr., and W. A. Link. 2014. The North American Breeding Bird Survey, Results and Analysis 1966 to 2012. Version 02.19.2014. USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, MD