State of Rhode Island
Department of Environmental Management
Division of Fish & Wildlife

2020-2021 Pheasant Program Summary
Acknowledgements

Prepared by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Division of Fish & Wildlife
277 Great Neck Road
West Kingston, RI 02892
Phone: (401) 789-0281
Fax: (401)783-7490

Jennifer Kilburn, Principal Wildlife Biologist
July 2021

THIS PROJECT WAS SUPPORTED by Wildlife Restoration Grants administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program: Partnering to fund conservation and connect people with nature.

Federal Aid Project funded by your purchase of hunting equipment.

It is the policy of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to offer its services and accommodations to all orderly persons, and as required, to all properly licensed persons, without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, or handicap. If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, facility, or if you desire further information, please write to the Office for Equal Opportunity, US Department of the Interior, Office of the Secretary, Washington, DC 20240.
Introduction

The ringneck pheasant is native to Asia and was first brought over to the United States in 1881. Since then, pheasant releases occurred throughout the United States and wild populations have become established in suitable habitats. In Rhode Island, pheasants became well established in the early 1900’s from releases. At this time the landscape was made up of open grassland and farmland. Birds were found statewide with the largest populations in Washington, Bristol, and Newport counties.

Stocking of pheasants began in the 1950’s to supplement the wild population and provide opportunity for hunters on state land. Today most pheasant in Rhode Island are stocked with the only wild population remaining on Block Island. Loss of habitat and increases in predator numbers resulted in the loss of wild populations of pheasant on the mainland.

This document provides a summary of the 2020-2021 pheasant hunting season and pheasant hunter survey results, in addition to regulation changes and stocking updates for the 2021-2022 season.

2020-2021 Season Dates, Bag Limits and Additional Requirements

The 2020-2021 pheasant season started on October 17, 2020 and ran through February 28, 2021. Pheasant stocking occurred from October 17, 2020 through December 19, 2020. A gamebird permit is required to hunt pheasant and the daily bag limit is 2 birds. Legal hunting hours are sunrise to sunset. Pheasant hunters were required to check into management area check stations if hunting in the Great Swamp, Arcadia, Carolina and/or Durfee management areas during the first three weekends of the small game hunting season.

A youth season occurred the weekend prior to the opener (October 10-11, 2020) in which pheasant were stocked at the Great Swamp, Carolina, and Arcadia management areas.
2021-2022 Regulation Changes

1. Pheasant hunters hunting in the Great Swamp, Arcadia, Carolina and Durfee Hill wildlife management areas will not be required to check in to small game check stations for the 2021-2022 season.

2. Youth pheasant stocking will take place at the Great Swamp, Durfee Hill and Eight Rod wildlife management areas for the 2021-2022 season.

2021-2022 Pheasant Stocking Locations

Note: The number of birds and locations stocked are subject to change

Providence County

_Buck Hill Management Area_, Burrillville (MAP), 530 birds/season, stocked 2x/week

_Black Hut Management Area_, Burrillville (MAP), 480 birds/season, stocked 2x/week

_Durfee Hill Management Area_, Glocester (MAP), 585 birds/season, stocked 2x/week

Kent County

_Big River Management Area_, West Greenwich (MAP), 530 birds/season, stocked 2x/week

_Nicholas Farm Management Area_, Coventry (MAP), 475 birds/season, stocked 2x/week

Washington County

_Arcadia Management Area_, Richmond/Exeter (MAP), 1150 birds/season, stocked 2x/week

_Carolina Management Area_, Carolina (MAP), 770 birds/season, stocked 2x/week *

_Great Swamp Management Area_, West Kingstown (MAP), 845 birds/season, stocked 2x/week *

Newport County

_Sapowet Management Area_, Tiverton (MAP), 105 birds/season, stocked 1x/week**

_Eight Rod Management Area_, Tiverton (MAP), 310 birds/season, stocked 1x/week

_Simmons Mill Management Area_, Coventry (MAP), 70 birds/season, stocked 1x/week**
* Additional stocking for youth weekend not included in total birds/season
**No December stocking at these locations

**Special Hunt Opportunities 2021-2022**

A youth pheasant hunt will be held on October 9-10, 2021 at the Great Swamp, Durfee Hill, and Eight Rod wildlife management areas. Each site will be stocked with 50 pheasant prior to the youth weekend.

**Pheasant Hunter Survey Results 2020-2021**

A total of 1,609 game bird permits were sold during the 2020-2021 hunting season. This is an increase from the 1,365 permits sold during the 2019-2020 hunting season. All hunters who purchased a game bird permit and had a valid email address in the online licensing system were sent a hunter survey. Based on the hunter survey, 80% of respondents who purchased a game bird permit hunted during the 2020-2021 season, while 20% did not hunt. This equates to a total of 1,285 pheasant hunters in Rhode Island. Most hunters (75%) who purchase a game bird stamp do so to hunt pheasant only (Figure 1). Rhode Island pheasant hunters have on average 12 years of pheasant hunting experience with a range of 0-60 years.

Pheasant hunters harvested an average of 5 birds during the 2020-2021 season, with most of the seasons harvest falling between 0-16 birds/person. When asked about weekday and weekend hunting, 49% of respondents said they hunted on both weekends and weekdays. Weekend only hunters account for 41% of the responses and even fewer hunters (9%) hunt on weekdays only. More than half of the pheasant hunters in Rhode Island hunt over dogs (64%).

Hunter use was highest at the Arcadia, Great Swamp and Carolina management areas during the 2020-2021 season (Figure 2). Simmons Mill and Sapowet management areas experienced the lowest use overall. Small game check stations were operated out of the Arcadia, Great Swamp, Carolina and Durfee Hill check stations. Hunter using these areas were required to check in and out of the stations during the first three weekend of the small game hunting season. When asked about the value of the small game check stations 47% either felt that they were not valuable or had no opinion. Almost a quarter of respondents felt that they were somewhat valuable (24%) while 28% felt that they were either very valuable or extremely valuable. For the 2021 – 22 season, these check stations will not be in operation; questions can be directed to the Great Swamp office at (401) 789-0281.

An additional 2,000 pheasant were stocked during the 2020-2021 season bringing the total up to 6,000 birds. 58% of respondents felt like there are still too few birds stocked during the pheasant hunting season, while 27% felt that the total number of birds stocked was just right. 15% of hunters had no opinion.
Figure 1. Species targeted by hunters who purchased a game bird stamp during the 2020-2021 hunting season in Rhode Island.
Figure 2. Pheasant hunter use of stocked state management areas during the 2020-2021 season in Rhode Island.

Conclusion

The 2020-2021 pheasant hunting season in Rhode Island was a safe and successful season. Information gathered from the hunter survey was used to guide stocking efforts for the upcoming 2021-2022 season. Most Rhode Island pheasant hunters are taking advantage of both weekday and weekend hunting opportunities and are spending the majority of time hunting in the Arcadia, Great Swamp, Carolina and Durfee Hill management areas. Our goal is to ensure that we are providing hunters with the best opportunities possible while stocking birds in areas of suitable habitat.

Hunters will once again have the opportunity to weigh in on changes made to the 2021-2022 hunting season via an emailed survey. We hope to continue to make improvements to the Rhode Island Pheasant Stocking Program.

I encourage you to provide feedback about this report by emailing Jennifer.kilburn@dem.ri.gov