## Game Commission Seeks Help Counting Pheasants

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The Pennsylvania Game Commission is seeking help from volunteers to assist in locating winter concentrations of pheasants within the state's six pheasant restoration areas, and in a Mercer County hybrid study area.

In an attempt to restore a naturally reproducing and huntable wild pheasant population — which were to date officially inexplicably decimated during the late 1970s and early 1980s — the commission in recent years began a restoration project which included stocking a different variety of pheasant, called the sichuan, which reportedly does not rely as much on open and fallow farm fields, but more on upland conditions. Ringnecks were also stocked, as well as hybrid pheasants.

Hunting for pheasants has been banned in the areas receiving the experimental stockings.

According to a commission news release made last week, "In order to conduct flushing surveys on these areas, assistance is needed to locate areas where pheasants have congregated during the winter. Specific locations and the names and telephone numbers of property owners are necessary in order to obtain permission to conduct flushing surveys throughout most of March.

"Volunteers, with or without dogs, are encouraged to participate."

The commission didn't have the opportunity to gather data from flushing surveys last year because of heavy snows.

The news release stated that, "Those taking part in the surveys will join Game Commission biologists in walking identified pheasant wintering habitat and record the number and sex of birds flushed.'

There isn't much time to become involved and information provided is sketchy, as meeting times and places have not been determined.

While the Game Commission did provide a listing of dates and counties to be surveyed and the variety of pheasant sought, those interested in reporting wintering populations in the areas, and those wishing to participate in surveys should contact Tom Hardisky, wildlife biologist at (717) 725-2287.

A primary list of dates for counties, and the bird variety sought includes: March 4, Dauphin County, ringnecks; March 5, Northumberland County, sichuans; March 11, Centre County, ringnecks; March 12, Juniata County, sichuans; March 18, Erie County, ringnecks; March 19, Crawford County, sichuans; March 25, Mercer County, hybrids.

For those with concerns about the spread of poultry diseases through the stockings, the state Department of Agriculture last year confirmed that, while the Game Commission's birds are not purposefully tested for avian influenza, blood samples taken for other tests are screened for the disease and in effect, the birds have been cleared from having the disease before stocking.



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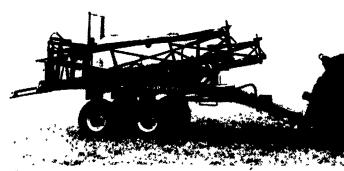
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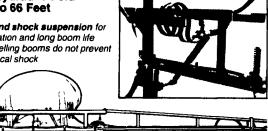
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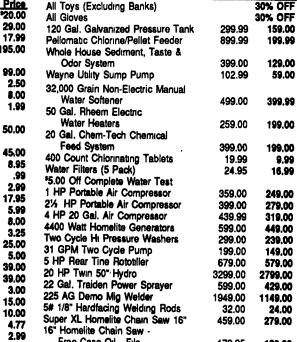
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