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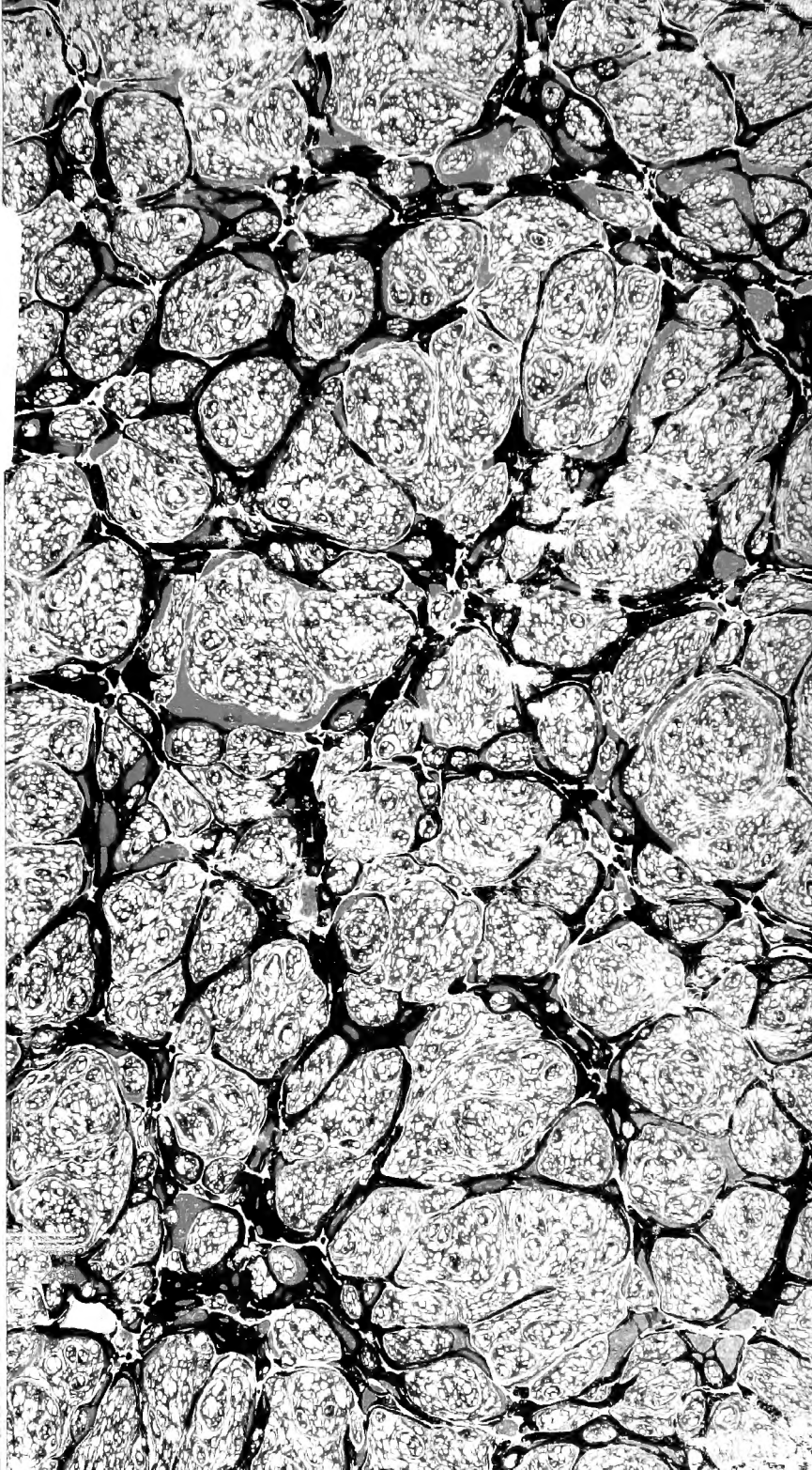

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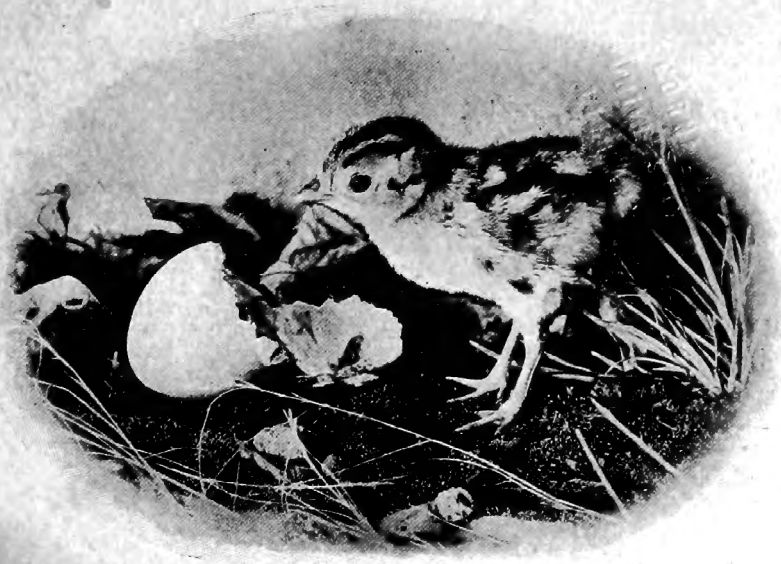
# Pheasant Farming

By 'GENE M. SIMPSON



Simpson's Pheasant Farm

CORVALLIS, OREGON, U. S. A.

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By 'GENE M. SIMPSON
Corvallis, Oregon

NORTHWEST POULTRY JOURNAL
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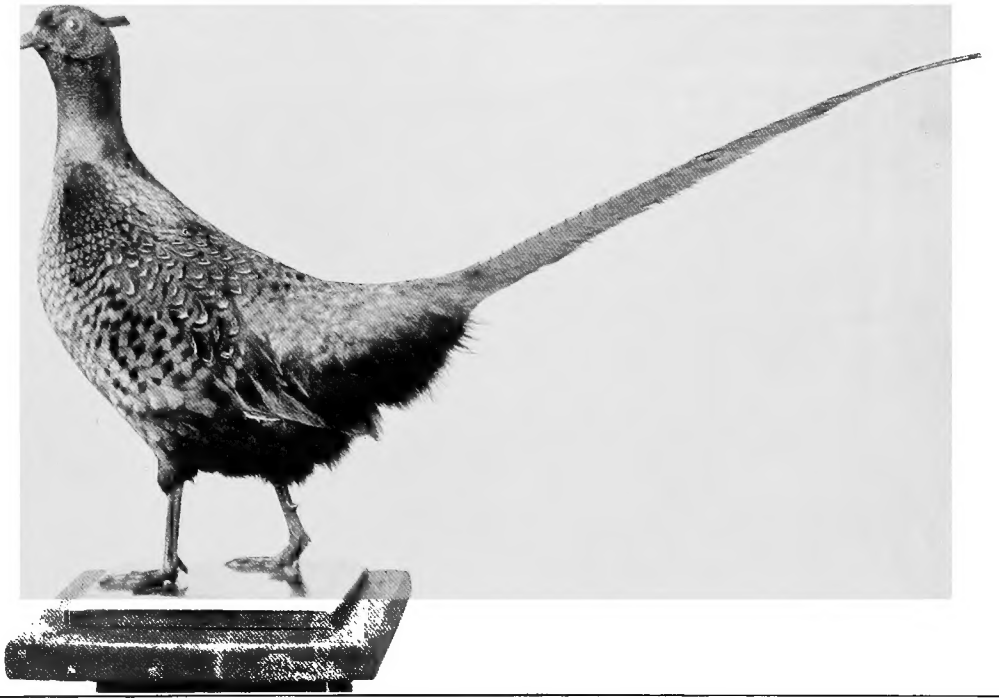
# Foreword

ALMOST every one to whom I have sold pheasants, or eggs, has written me for information, either as to the nature of the birds or how to raise them. It has been my desire to answer these inquiries in full that my patrons might have the benefit of whatever knowledge I might have obtained on the subject, and profit by my experience in raising pheasants. These inquiries have been so varied that it has been impracticable to answer them by letter, hence I have ventured to prepare this booklet. There are many ways of raising pheasants, just as there are many ways of raising chickens. The methods described in the pages to follow are not contended to be the only ways, but they are methods the writer has followed with success, and, therefore, recommends as a "good way."

This booklet is offered with the hope that after reading it, some one may be encouraged to take up the breeding of pheasants either for pleasure or profit, or that those already so engaged may be assisted in their work.

'GENE M. SIMPSON.

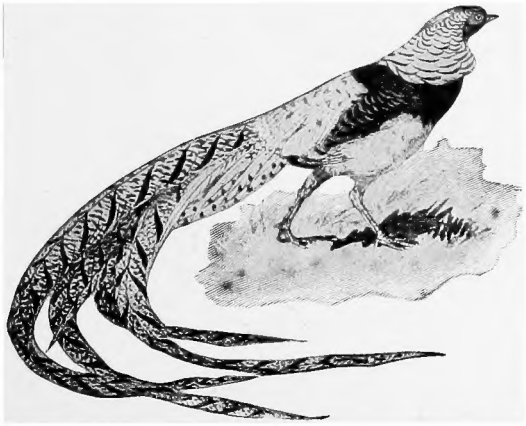


OLD ENGLISH BLACK-NECK PHEASANT (*Ph. Colchicus*)

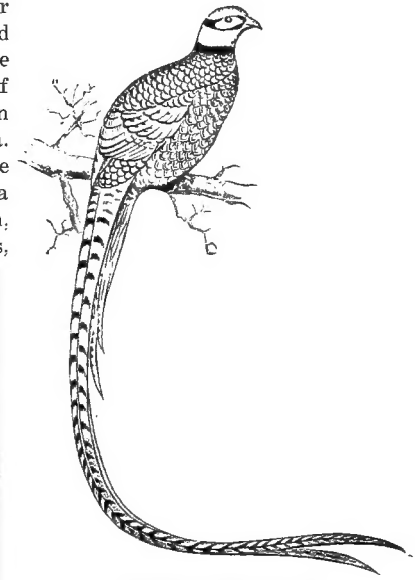
# Pheasant Farming

THE waste of natural resources has been the great American specialty, but the problem of providing a normal supply of game, and to keep pace with a million or two additional inhabitants each year, is being solved by the proper expenditure of large funds derived from the hunters' license system now in force in many states throughout the country. China and English Ring-neck pheasants are now on the game list of all but nine states of the Union, and all the Canadian provinces, excepting Quebec, Prince Edward Island, and those in the extreme North. There were imported for breeding purposes from England in 1907 nearly 5,000 pheasants, or, to be exact, 4,966. This means that all the pheasants raised in captivity in this country found a ready sale.

There are many varieties of pheasants, but for practical purposes they may be divided into two general classes, (1) those used as a game, and (2) those used exclusively for show and ornamentation. In the first class there are three principal varieties: the Chinese, English Ring-neck, and Common or English Black-neck. Other varieties closely allied to these are the Japanese, Mongolian, Reeves, Hagenbeck, Prince of Wales, Sœmmerring's; but the three kinds first named are by far the most prominent game varieties. The latter named pheasants are reared for their beautiful plumage, the Japanese and Reeves being the most common. The Mongolian comes from the interior of China, and there are perhaps not a dozen true Mongolian pheasants in America. All of the pheasants above named are true pheasants, of which the generica scientific name is *Phasianus*. The Golden, Amherst and Silver are called pheasants,



AMHERST PHEASANT



REEVES PHEASANT

and, while almost identical in nature and requiring the same treatment, yet are not true pheasants.

The Chinese pheasant (*Phasianus torquatus*) and the Common or English Black-neck pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) are each separate and distinct varieties of pheasants, while the English Ring-neck is a hybrid of the two. This latter bird, English Ring-neck, is the common pheasant of England today, and by far the most common variety met with in the United States. It is frequently confounded with the Chinese. The English Black-neck pheasant is in general nature and form the same as the Chinese, differing in this, that the English Black-neck is of a general mahogany red cast and has no ring around the neck, while the Chinese is lighter and brighter in color and has a silky white ring or band around the neck. The English Ring-neck retains the mahogany red cast, though not so pronounced as the English Black-neck, and has the white collar of the Chinese, hence the name, English Ring-neck, indicating the combination of these two differences.

The old English Black-neck was probably introduced into England before the Norman Conquest. There is a record of the birds being served as early as A. D. 1059, but now they have so interbred with the Chinese that it is difficult to find a pure specimen.

CHINA RING-NECK PHEASANT HEN

# The China Ring-Neck Pheasant

The pure Chinese pheasant is the game bird par excellence. Taken all in all, it is a serious question whether or not he has any superior as an all-around game bird. It is utter folly to hunt them without a dog. Their ability to conceal themselves, even in the scantiest cover, is wonderful. Without a dog it is not uncommon to pass within ten feet of one hidden in the grass, without his rising. When running in cover they move very swiftly with the body close to the ground, and possess the ability to pass through grass, short or tall, without disturbing the surface. When overtaken by the dog, they will lie well, and this fact, combined with the further fact that they are always found in the open, makes pheasant shooting the cleanest bird shooting in the world.

Possessed of remarkable vitality, they do not succumb to slight gunshot wounds. Being clean-limbed, with powerful thighs, they are exceptionally fleet on foot, and if winged only, the pheasant falls running, and here the dog is put to his severest test. Very few dogs can track a crippled Chinaman their first season, but an experienced setter or pointer learns to recognize the wounded birds and endeavors to be as near him as possible when he touches the ground.

Besides his gameiness and delicate flesh, he is unquestionably one of the most ornamental of the game birds. He is a native of the northern part of China, being found as far north as the Amour and as far south as Shanghai. The question is often asked if the Chinese pheasant can stand the heat and cold. A reference to the map of China will answer the question. The pheasant has succeeded over the larger part of Europe, even as far north as Sweden. On this continent it does well in Canada and Nova Scotia, but nowhere has its introduction been attended with such prolific results as in the Willamette Valley in the State of Oregon. I do not know which is to be congratulated most, the Willamette Valley for having the beautiful and gamey pheasants, or the pheasants for having been so fortunate as to find so delightful a valley.

It was stated by an eminent authority on pheasants that in 1893 there were more Chinese pheasants in Oregon than in the whole Chinese Empire. Credence is lent this statement when it is remembered that it is reliably estimated that in one year 30,000 were killed in one county in this state alone, and the same year 1,200 dozen were shipped to the San Francisco market. There could be no better testimonial of the adaptability of the Chinese pheasant as a bird for restocking a state with game than this last statement, which comes from no less an authority than Judge Denney, the man who introduced the pheasant into Oregon. For some time Judge Denny had been

United States Consul General at Shanghai and it was from there that he sent the birds to Oregon. The rapidity with which the birds increased in this state is made more marvelous when it is remembered that they were not introduced until 1882, and then only fifty birds were liberated. They were protected absolutely for seven years, and thereafter an open season of six weeks was provided, which was later enlarged to two months, but reduced again in 1909 to thirty days on males only. If the laws were observed the number of pheasants in Oregon would continue to increase with each year. The rapidity of their increase is doubtless due to the large egg production. It is held by those most familiar with the birds that under ordinary conditions the hen will raise two broods, and in favorable seasons she will care for three broods, in which duties she is assisted by the cock.

Prof. W. T. Shaw, in his superb book, "The China, or Denny Pheasant in Oregon," says: "To know the pheasant well, one must live with him throughout the year. He is a bird of moods, influenced by shifting conditions and passing seasons, of which there are for him, in reality, but two—the open and closed. Within a few days after the law says no more shooting, he becomes bold and fearless, even to the extent of sharing the food of the barnyard fowls in winter, though always reserved and suspicious. In the brush of the lowlands or from the open meadow, comes his two-syllabled call in the stillness of the evening twilight. From his roost among the grass or sedge tussocks, or the great moss-covered branches of an oak, he springs away into the gloom with a startled cry. Throughout the long dry summer the young are reared by the female, until the days of autumn come, the male meanwhile frequently greeting you by the roadside with a glance of curiosity mingled with reserve, standing a moment, erect, in all his brightness of coloration, ducking an instant later to steal silently away among the grass."

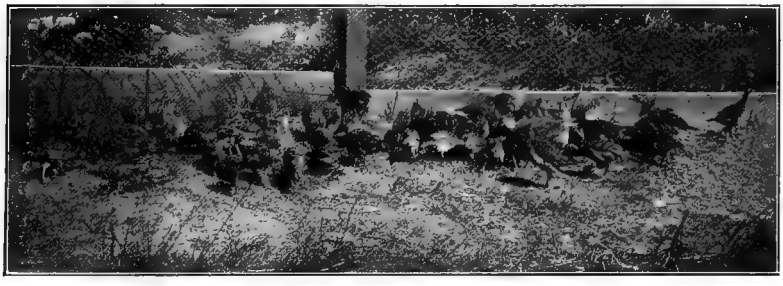
What is said of the China pheasant will apply equally to the English Ring-neck and English pheasant, excepting that the China pheasant is more wild than the other pheasants named, more beautiful and gamey, therefore best adapted to restocking depleted game fields. Thousands have been liberated throughout the United States during the past five or six years, and in every instance they have become so successfully acclimatized as to stand the most vigorous annual onslaughts, retarded only by the pot-hunter who "bags every last thing that comes in his way, from English sparrows to game wardens."

An article in the May, 1909, *Recreation* says: "A mistake was made with the first attempts to raise pheasants in captivity, in supposing them polygamous, but the failure which resulted of grouping seven hens to a cock soon taught a lesson. Even on the trial of two hens to a cock the eggs lacked vitality, and of the chicks hatched many died. A breeder in Oregon uses but one hen to a cock, and this is said to be the habit of their wild state."

Nothing could be more misleading than this. Captivity seems to

change the habits of the bird entirely. The hen rarely ever makes a pretense at laying in a nest, much less set and hatch a brood of young pheasants. The cock becomes decidedly polygamous, and will instantly kill a young bird, if placed in the same enclosure. The percentage of fertility of all pheasant eggs is remarkably great. It is not at all uncommon for every egg to hatch, and the writer has for many years mated from four to six hens with one cock, the latter number invariably when the yard is sufficiently large.

In captivity a single China pheasant hen has been known to lay 104 eggs in one season, extending from April 1st to September 1st, but sixty eggs is perhaps a fair average. In the wild state, the pheasant seldom roosts in a tree, and then only in one that is open, so it is in confinement. While they may stay in the shedded part of their pen in the daytime, just at dusk they select a place with an open sky above them in which to pass the night, and this, too, regardless of the inclemency of the weather. They seem to be indifferent to snow and rain and after a night out in the rain, appear none the worse for the drenching. They commonly roost on the ground with feathers drawn down tight to the body.



CHINA PHEASANTS—FOUR WEEKS OLD.

The young pheasants all have the same plumage until about two months old, that of a grayish brown. When a month old it will be noted that the feathers on the back of the neck near the body on some of the young birds will show slightly lighter in color with a salmon colored cast. These are the hens, the corresponding feathers on the cocks remaining darker and near the color of the remainder of the plumage. When two months old, splotches of chestnut red will begin to appear on the breasts of the cocks. The hens undergo small changes in plumage, and while of a general fawn color, some of the tints shown on her neck are very beautiful, and possessed with remarkable protective coloration.

The cocks continue to change color rapidly until at five months they will be in full plumage. Their wealth of color, surpassing the rainbow in variety, gorgeous but delicately blended, beggars description. The artist's brush has never reproduced it, much less can the

pen portray an idea of its beauty. Graceful in form, with his splendid robes, the cock Chinese pheasant is one of the most beautiful birds in existence. The eye never tires of admiring his plumage. He is a source of continuous delight to the breeder.

If you can raise turkeys you can raise pheasants. Like turkeys, when matured they are very hardy. In fact, the similarity between the young pheasant and young turkey is very marked. Some of their calls, particularly one given at nightfall, are almost identical, and in general, treatment adapted to turkeys may safely be applied to pheasants. When young the birds are tame and soon learn to know their keeper. They will become sufficiently familiar to fly upon the keeper's shoulder, or eat out of his hand, but the appearance of a stranger calls for a note of warning to the whole flock. This note is low but quick, and its effect is instantaneous. During the laying season it is not advisable to allow strangers to visit the pens where the pheasants can see them, and better success will be obtained if only one or two persons visit the pheasants, and these should be the ones to feed them. The birds will be better controlled if the same garments are worn each time, as they instantly detect a change in dress. They will avoid for a day or more anything new placed in their pens. Some breeders place fir boughs or branches of other trees in the pens to offer a hiding place for the pheasants, but it is not at all necessary. The pens described further on provide for a portion being shedded. This applies only to localities where there is considerable rainfall. In drier sections of the country, this shed might be supplanted by a small evergreen tree or two in the pen.

The larger the pens in which your pheasants are kept the better. They are polygamous and four hens and a cock may be kept in a pen sixteen feet square. This is a very convenient size, but in any event the birds should each have fifty square feet of ground. It is of advantage to have the pens so arranged that the pheasants may be changed from one pen to the other occasionally. This permits the ground to freshen and it is a good plan to spade up the ground occasionally. A very satisfactory pen for a trio (two hens and a cock) would be sixteen feet by thirty-two feet, divided lengthwise with a partition and shedded for eight feet along one end, the shedded end being so arranged to ward off as much of the storm as possible. Convenient entrances may be arranged and provision should be made that the birds may pass from one pen to another at the keeper's pleasure.

## Not Subject to Disease

The first edition of "Pheasant Farming" was criticised by a lady in Kentucky as follows: "The subjects treated are admirably handled and leave no doubt in the mind of the amateur how to proceed, but you

mention nothing of the ailments of pheasants and necessary treatment." Under natural conditions pheasants are not subject to disease. We know they have no diseases in their wild state. Ninety per cent of the so-called diseases of common poultry is the result of unsanitary quarters and lice with adult birds, and improper feeding and more lice with young chicks.

Pheasants may be hatched in incubators and reared in brooders but unless the breeder has had practical experience in raising chickens by artificial means much better results will be obtained by setting pheasant eggs under common hens, Cochin bantams preferred. Nests should be made about fourteen inches square (bottom), in the manner

Bantam Hens on Nests.

shown in the accompanying cut, setting flat upon the ground without a bottom. A slight depression should be made in the ground, into which arrange a small quantity of soft straw or grass hay, as for chickens. Place the nests around the sides (inside) of a house, or enclosed pen, provided with a watering cup. Each day at a regular hour, place feed in the house or pen, open the doors to the nests, and see that the hens all come off to eat, drink and dust themselves, a dust bath having of course been provided. After about twenty minutes see that all hens return to their nests. As a further precaution against

lice the hens should be dusted thoroughly once a week with buhach powders, using a little more than seems necessary, for, aside from improper food, about the only source of mortality among young pheasants will be lice.

Pheasants will hatch about the twenty-third day, and their natural disposition is to leave the nest immediately, hence the added advantage of having the hens locked up. When the young pheasants are about twenty-four hours old remove, with the mother hen, to a

Brood Coop

coop, as shown in the cut, where they should be kept until three days old. The trap door at the bottom may then be raised, giving the little birds their freedom, retaining the hen. Unless the yard is covered overhead with wire netting the young birds should now be pinioned, to prevent their flying over the fence and straying away.

Water Fountain

A drinking fountain as shown in illustration should be provided for all young birds, and in warm weather the water should be changed daily. Cleanliness is essential.

# Feed for Young Pheasants

After forty-eight hours old the young pheasant may be fed sparingly on hard-boiled eggs, chopped fine with a little onion tops, fresh ground, lean meat, crumbled with shorts or corn meal, and later dry chick food, boiled rice and curd. A custard, made of eggs and milk, and cooked in the usual manner, is also an excellent food for young pheasants.

It has been the writer's experience that the so-called high-priced prepared pheasant foods are a snare and a delusion, in some instances not worth the freight charges. Six dollars' worth of imported ant eggs scarcely made one feed for a couple of hundred young pheasants last season. A few hundred pounds of "crissel" proved to be common beef scrap, and a very poor quality at that, not fit to feed to adult chickens, in fact they refused to eat it when fed to them. A highly advertised brand of "pheasant meal" proved very expensive and not eaten by the little pheasants with any relish. A good quality of commercial dry chick food is all right after the birds are several days old.

Another successful method of feeding young pheasants is with the larvæ of the common blue flay (maggots). When this food is used nothing else need be fed, except greens occasionally, until the birds are a month old, however, the chick food or cracked wheat should be kept before them that they may learn to eat it and be prepared to adapt themselves to the whole wheat diet when the larvæ food has been discontinued, which should be done gradually.

The objection to the larvæ food is the offensive odor ordinarily associated with it. This may be overcome by raising the larvæ scientifically. Contrary to this commonly accepted idea, the larvæ of the fly prefers fresh to decaying meat. Professor McGillivary, of Queen's University, Toronto, who has successfully raised English Ringneck pheasants, says: "Our investigation and study of entomology prove to us that maggots separated from their usual surroundings, are just as clean and odorless as young chickens. Flies do not lay their eggs on tainted meat when fresh meat can be found, and maggots are clean feeders from choice and thrive best on fresh meat."

If the following method is employed, there will be little or no ordor. Secure a quantity of green bone and meat trimmings coarsely ground together. Take a tin pan with straight sides at least three inches deep and cover bottom with shorts or fine dirt. On this place the bone and meat mixture and leave where the flies may have access to same. In warm weather the fly eggs will hatch in about two days' time and the bone mixture will be partially dried up. The larvæ are adverse to strong light and will be found to have gone to the dirt or shorts. They must now have something to feed upon. Remove

the bone mixture and place thin slices of fresh liver on the shorts or dirt. Turn the bone mixture back on top of the slices of liver. In a few hours the larvæ will all leave the bone mixture and be under and feeding upon the liver. After this the bone mixture should be thrown away.

In a day's time the liver will be eaten to shreds and must be replaced with a fresh supply of thinly sliced liver or fresh meat, and so on each day until the larvae are practically full grown. This will take practically a week's time and they may then be fed to the young pheasants. The larvae must be fed on liver or meat as long as they are on hand. As soon as they are matured they will descend into the shorts or dirt and change into the pupa state, in which condition they are equally as good for feed as when alive. In feeding the liver or meat, feed only enough that they will consume it in twenty-four hours' time. "The assimilating power of the larvae is so great that it can change every particle of meat or liver (except fibre) to larvae, consequently there can be no smell." The object in cutting the liver or meat thin is that it may all be consumed before having time to become tainted. Keep extra supply of liver in cool place and a little charcoal such as is used to feed chickens, sprinkled over and under it will tend to keep it fresh.

In order to keep a supply of larvae, it will be necessary to put out new pans of bone every few days, depending on quantity, the number of pheasants you have and the state of the weather. The warmer the weather the more rapid the development of the larvae. If you contemplate using larvae, you should start with the bone mixture a week prior to date of first hatching.

The advantage of this food is that you need not hesitate to feed young birds all they will eat. They are wild for it and will frequently crowd their crops and throats to overflowing with no apparent bad results. They thrive better on this food than on anything else. Other methods may be employed to produce the larvae but it should be remembered that but fifteen days' time elapses from the laying of the fly egg until it has successfully become larvae, entered the pupa state and turned into a fly again, that the larvae are clean feeders and that they must have a medium (shorts, or clean fine dirt preferably) in which to bury themselves. When about ten days old they pass into the pupa state, in which form they may be kept if stored at a low temperature (40 degrees F.) The low temperature stops the development.

Every one is familiar with the history of the butterfly, how an ugly worm dries up in the fall of the year and in springtime breaks open to release a beautiful butterfly. This dried worm is the pupa, and just as the butterfly's egg dries up and later produces a perfect insect, so the larvae of the common fly when grown dries up and later produces a fly again, only the change to the fly is accomplished in a few days instead of months.

Should the pan of shorts or dirt become heated it means that the larvae are too crowded and will leave if possible. A part should be removed to another pan or given a larger proportion of shorts or dirt. With facts above, your own ingenuity and some experience will suggest convenient methods for producing larvae.

From reliable ornithological authority we have the statement that were all bird life destroyed, in ten years the face of the earth would be uninhabitable.

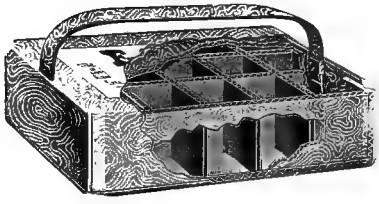
Speaking of the China pheasant, Judge Denny says: "The Chinese farmers never shoot the birds nor do anything which tends to freighten them from their fields, holding them friends rather than enemies, doing far more good to their crops than harm, by the destruction of insects."

The true pheasants (*Phasianus*) will breed the following spring after hatching, while the male birds of the Golden, Amherst, Silver, and Swinhoe are not in full plumage until the second year. The first two will breed at a year old, but the latter two not until two years old. Silver and Swinhoe should be mated in pairs. For stocking purposes, pheasants should be liberated in pairs.

It is well to clip the wings of the birds when about two or three weeks old. To do this, use care, extend the wing fully and cut each pionion feather from middle of wing outward, cutting between shaft and quill. Do not cut the remaining feathers or you will leave the lungs unprotected. The pinion or flight feathers are the coarse feathers near the tip of the wing. I also advise pinioning pheasants where they are kept in aviaries. This does not injure their looks, as the absence of the flight feathers is unnoticed, and the birds cannot injure themselves by striking against wire, and also has the added advantage of permitting birds to be kept in yards enclosed by a six or eight foot fence only, eliminating the cost of wire covering overhead. The operation requires no skill and consists in clipping off the wing at the first joint with a sharp pair of scissors, immediately applying soot or ashes, to arrest the flow of blood, and can best be done when the birds are about three days old.

To catch pheasants, use a net similar to a fisherman's landing net but made of heavier material, such as denim or burlap, and provided with a five-foot handle. In handling the birds don't hold by a leg or wing. The wing bone, particularly, is very fragile, and a broken wing or leg will surely result if you are careless in this regard.

# Shipping Pheasant and Eggs



PATENT EGG BOX

Pheasant eggs may be safely shipped by express to any part of the country packed in special crate as shown in illustration. Fair hatches have been reported after eggs having been shipped to Canada, Mexico, and the Hawaiian Islands. As an experiment fifteen eggs were sent *by mail* to Petersburg, Virginia, five of which hatched, from which four birds were reared to maturity.


CRATE FOR SHIPPING PHEASANTS

Birds are shipped by express in slatted crates covered with burlap (see illustration), and take single merchandise rate. On an average pheasants will weigh, crate and all, about six pounds to the bird. By applying to your local express agent you can ascertain the cost approximately, of transportation on any quantity of birds.

# Raising Pheasants for Market

The growing need of special provisions governing the sale of game birds and animals raised in captivity is receiving recognition by the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. The growth of the industry of raising game for market, like cattle and poultry, is manifested in legislation in many states during the last few years. A dozen states now have such provision in their laws, and the production and marketing of domesticated game seems destined to become an industry that will demand more and more recognition in future legislation. With proper means of identification provided, so as to prevent evasion of the laws prohibiting traffic in wild game, there would seem to be no reason why this industry should not be encouraged in every possible way.

The officials of the Biological Survey claim that by allowing domestic raised game birds to be sold in the market indirectly protects the wild game. One of the great reasons for the non-observance of game laws is the ever-present desire of the general public to eat game. Make it possible for the general public to purchase game food during a legal season, and the incentive to evade the laws would be minimized. In all game legislation the general, or non-sportsman public must be reckoned with. To ignore this factor invites violation of game and fish laws. The game law of Oregon now permits the sale for eating purposes, except during the open season on wild pheasants, of domestic raised pheasants, that have been pinioned when young, if shipped alive and sold direct to the consumer under permit from the State Game Warden.

# Wild Turkeys

Wild Turkeys, the great American game bird, have at last been domesticated, and raised successfully in captivity, so that they may be permitted to range with the same freedom now afforded the domestic stock. It has been demonstrated that they are absolutely free from the various diseases that are so fatal to the common breeds, and that the business of Wild Turkey raising may be made a profitable, as well as an intensely interesting occupation, solving some of the serious problems now confronting those engaged in raising turkeys on a commercial scale. Experiments in breeding Wild Turkeys in Southern State Experiment Stations has proven that they are not susceptible to blackhead, or any of the other common diseases of the domestic turkey, the most delicate of all domestic fowls when young. Dr. Curtice of the United States Bureau of Animal Industry advises the

infusion of Wild Turkey blood into the domestic strain. In common with many other authorities, he believes that the turkey has been "coddled" into weakness.

When found by the Spaniards, domesticated among the Indians of Mexico, the importance of the turkey was at once perceived, and the bird was soon carried all over the world. Our common tame turkey is a descendant of birds taken to Europe from Mexico by the Spaniards early in the sixteenth century, but it was the infusion of the American Wild Turkey blood that brought about the Mammoth Bronze Turkey of today.

From the earliest settlement of the country the Wild Turkeys have been of great economic consequence, and their value as food was early recognized by the pioneers, but almost, if not entirely too late, has their economic value as insect destroyers been recognized, for they have practically been exterminated, excepting in some parts of Virginia and Maryland.

The Virginia Wild Turkey differs from the common Bronze Turkey in several ways, the most noticeable difference being in the color of the ends of the tail feathers and those of the back, which are cinnamon and chestnut, instead of white.

OREGON MOUNTAIN QUAIL