

PHEASANT FARMING

BY GENE M. SIMPSON
SUPERINTENDENT STATE GAME FARM
CORVALLIS, OREGON



Simpson, Eugene Milton

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BY

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Superintendent State Game Farm

With illustrations from

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and

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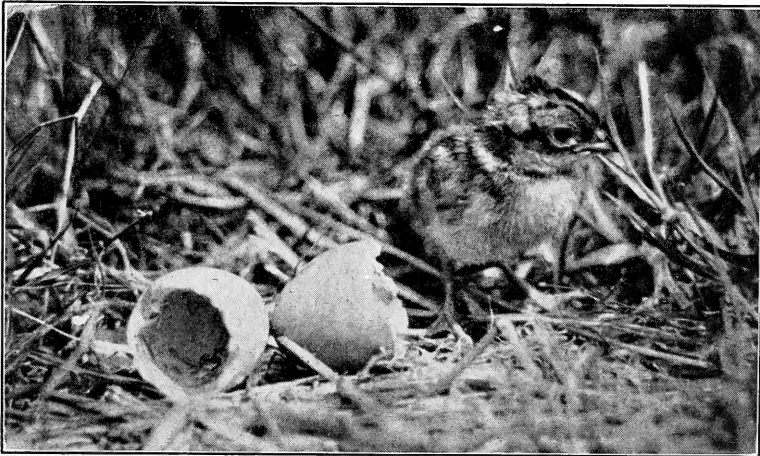
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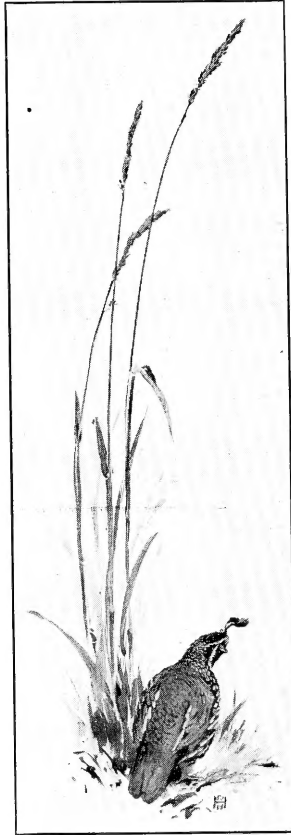
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"We must produce, if we would destroy."



PHEASANT FARMING



*California or Valley
Quail*



Male and Female Chinese or Denny Pheasants



INTRODUCTION



ABOUT eight years ago Mr. Simpson published a booklet entitled "Pheasant Farming." The second edition of this was issued in 1908 and has for some time been out of print.

As Mr. Simpson stated at the time, "We have an abundance of authorities on game bird protection, but few on propagation. These authorities tell us when, where, how many and in what

manner game birds may be killed, but little or nothing as to how they may be successfully propagated."

Inasmuch as there is a decided interest in the raising of pheasants for market, and since we receive many inquiries from people who ask for information concerning various problems of pheasant raising, Mr. Simpson has revised and added to the original booklet and new illustrations have been provided, so as to give readers as much help as possible.

As Mr. Simpson says, "There are many ways of raising pheasants, just as there are many ways of raising chickens. The methods described are not the only ways, but they are methods which I have followed with success and therefore I can recommend. Until experience has been gained, I strongly advise the amateur to follow the system I have outlined."

For many years Mr. Gene M. Simpson has been well known as a successful breeder of pheasants and other game birds. He began by propagating a few pheasants in his back yard. He increased by buying the adjoining property and finally the whole block across the street. This was not sufficient, so he purchased 30 acres further out in the country. By adding improvements and equipment, Mr. Simpson enlarged his business and built up a very profitable industry.

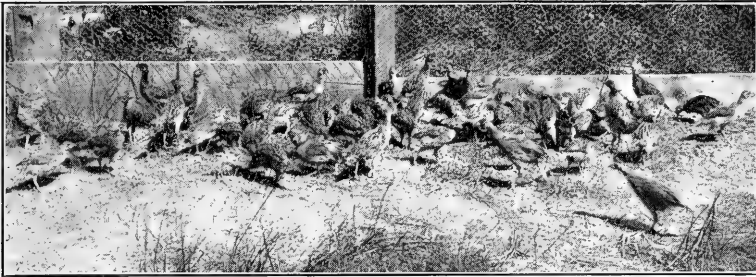
When the Fish and Game Commission was established in this State in 1911, Mr. Simpson was employed to propagate game birds and stock various parts of the State.



Several months ago, there was an editorial in "The American Field" to the effect that a large amount of sportsmen's money had been squandered in establishing game farms which proved to be total failures,—“not that game birds cannot be raised in a semi-domestic manner, but because our form of government brings about such radical administrative changes every few years that no one knows the tenure of his office, and appointments are made, not with regard to experience and ability to raise game birds, but to pay off political debts, and of all the departments in a state, the game and fish departments seem to be favored places to unload political obligations.”

The reason the State Game Farm in Oregon has been a success is because of Mr. Simpson. There are very few men in the United States today who are really successful in raising game birds. It takes long and patient study. It takes a man who loves the work. Many a person may succeed in raising two or three broods of pheasants, but it is rare to find one who can successfully raise several thousand birds each season, as Mr. Simpson is doing. He knows the business. He lives with his birds. His heart is in the work.

WILLIAM L. FINLEY.



Half Grown Pheasants

CHAPTER I

Propagation of Game Birds



IN AMERICA we have been very wasteful of our natural resources. This is especially the case in the destruction of our game birds. The experience of the continental countries has gone unheeded. In earlier years our virgin pastures furnished game in such numbers that it seemed impossible for it ever to disappear, but the rapidly increasing population and westward movement of civilization has brought our people to a realization that the game can disappear, and unless its slaughter is checked it will soon be but a memory. Though the spirit of protecting the game has come late, it is not too late.

The true sportsman does not object to being limited in the amount of game he may kill in a season, or to being taxed for the privilege. Laws for game protection are necessary, but the time has come in America when game propagation is also necessary. The proper expenditure of the funds derived from hunters' licenses will provide means to secure both.

Game bird propagation, while a well established business in Europe, is in its infancy in this country. That we must produce, if we would destroy, has dawned upon us. Propagation is the only solution of the future game supply problem. That we must sooner



or later accept the idea of private or public game propagation is brought out very forcibly by Henry Richmond Coyle, in "Outdoor World and Recreation" for October, 1913, in the following words:



"Without doubt or question we citizens of the United States are on the border line between two widely different eras of our growth. This is true in all phases of our social and business life, and not less of our life in the outdoor world. Little by little we have become used to smaller bags of game, little by little we have traveled farther and paid more for sport. In many futile ways, founded on hope and desire rather than on common sense, we have tried to arrest the hand which writes upon the wall. None the less, and we must admit it, all attempts to keep the old America have failed. We must pass not only from old days to new, but from old ways to new."

Smaller Game Bags Each Year

The breeding of pheasants and other game birds in captivity for sale, under certain well defined regulations, either for eating or for breeding purposes, is just as legitimate as the breeding of any of our domestic birds or animals. Every game bird raised and sold in captivity helps to protect the state's supply of wild game.

**Raising
Game for
the Market**

The growing need of special provisions governing the sale of game birds and animals raised in captivity is receiving recognition



by the Biological Survey of the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C., whose attitude on the subject is stated as follows:

“The raising of game for profit not only need not jeopardize the safety and abundance of our wild game, but, under proper state license laws and a system of tagging game for shipment or sale, is likely to increase the quantity of wild game.”

The growth of the industry of raising game for the market, as cattle and poultry are raised, is manifested in legislation in many states during the last few years. A dozen states now have such provisions 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

**Attitude
of the
State**

why this industry should not be encouraged in every possible way. One of the great reasons for 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.

A few states yet hold it a crime for any one to increase the supply of game by breeding the same in captivity. Dillon Wallace, in *Outing Magazine*, says:

“As a result of this method of protection our game is surely and rapidly diminishing in numbers, and the complete extinction of some species seems not far distant, unless some new tack is taken, and it would seem that the most reasonable solution of the problem would be to turn the animals to profit through domestication, and at the same time by this method insure perpetuation of rapidly disappearing species.

“We are suffering from conservatism gone to seed. Because our native mammals and birds were originally discovered in a wild state we have, unconsciously perhaps, conceived the notion that they must of necessity continue in the wild state. Wild they are and wild they must remain. To domesticate them would be to change the existing order of things, and that would be a sacrilege on Nature. We forget that our domestic cattle, our sheep, our horses, and our fowls were once



wild. We do not consider that our prehistoric ancestors, who were in this respect, at least, more progressive than ourselves, captured, tamed and domesticated the progenitors of our domestic live stock, and by so doing added greatly to the wealth, comfort and happiness of themselves and those who followed them."

In my opinion, the State of Oregon has the most progressive game laws of any state in the Union. While providing ample closed seasons and a license that insures enforcement, encouragement is given to the breeding of game in captivity, and its sale under sufficient restrictions.

Henry Chase, in "Game Protection and Propagation in America," says:

Demand for Game Raised in Captivity "But necessity absolutely demands that the occupation of the market hunter, who supplies city snobs and hostelrys from the public game domains, be destroyed by law forthwith. In the place of the market hunter, cold-storage produce dealers should look to the private game farms and breeders' camps for their future supply of game. There is no question but that there exists a legitimate demand for game for food, but that demand has no right to expect that it will be supplied at the expense of the public welfare."

Under date of November 28, 1913, Mr. William R. Oates, the State Game, Fish and Forestry Warden of Michigan, writes:

"We are writing to advise you that this department is doing all it can to encourage the propagation of game animals and believes that they ought to be sold and transported under such regulations as will protect the wild game of the state. We believe that all animals and birds of this kind that are reared in captivity will have a tendency to save the wild game of the state. There are people who are determined to secure wild game even though they have to take chances on being prosecuted under our criminal laws for obtaining it in an illegal manner. Where there is a legal way provided by which wild game can be secured, we believe it will be one of the best means of conserving our wild game."

From the twenty-first biennial report of the State Fish and Game Commissioner of the state of Vermont is quoted the following:

"Under the present restrictive laws it is impossible for a person who does not hunt to obtain wild game birds for his table unless he happens to have a



friend who is kind enough and fortunate enough to secure a few for him. There is no reason why pheasants and wild ducks may not be successfully raised in Vermont for the table, and in such manner as to produce birds having the flavor of the strictly wild fowl. The raising of game birds for the market is coming to be an industry in some parts of the country and it should be encouraged in Vermont, whether for the market or for use on the home table. The more wild birds which can be raised in domesticity, the less demand there will be for the native wild fowl."

Again, in the California Fish and Game Commission's report of 1912, is the following:

"As it becomes more and more necessary to remove all the wild game from the markets, the public demands something to take its place. This can well be supplied from that raised in captivity. A law allowing the sale of deer would not make it any more difficult to protect the wild animals; on the other hand it would supply the demand for venison and would remove the reason for violating the law that sometimes exists under our present system. . . . We recommend that pheasants raised in captivity be sold in the markets. This has a two-fold advantage. First, it would mean a source of revenue to people of small holding, it would provide a delicious game bird for the table of hotels and restaurants, and proportionally reduce the drain on wild game in the fields."

In a letter dated November 27, 1913, A. Bryan Williams, provincial game warden, Vancouver, B. C., says:

"With regard to the sale of game birds we are gradually doing away with the sale of game in this province; in fact, it is cut down to a minimum now. By encouraging private game farms I am of the opinion that more wild birds would be sold than those raised in captivity."

In Mr. Williams' report of 1912, in the paragraph pertaining to the illegal sale of game, is the following:

"There are, however, a few wealthy people, who should set a good example, who regularly buy game at any time they can get it. Not only do these people break the law themselves, but they encourage others to do it also."

This emphasizes my contention. Had there been a provincial law permitting the sale of game reared in captivity to be sold in the market, I know of several pheasant breeders on Vancouver

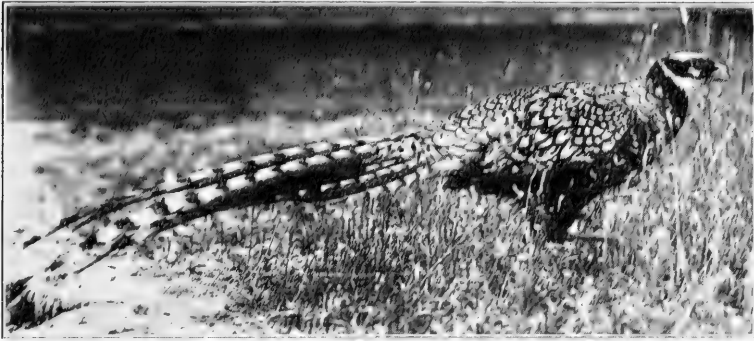


Island who could and would have supplied this demand. The wild game would have been protected, the temptation to violate the game laws removed, and a profitable and legitimate enterprise have been encouraged.

No one will buy a wild game bird sold and bought in violation of the law when he can lawfully buy the same bird reared in captivity, and in the case of pheasants I believe the bird so reared is superior in quality of flesh to the wild bird. This for the reason that the wild bird is constantly on the go and his muscles become toughened, while the bird in captivity is tender and of equally as fine flavor.



Chinese Pheasant Mother



Male Reeves Pheasant

CHAPTER II

Varieties of Pheasants



HERE are many varieties of pheasants, but for practical purposes they may be divided into two general classes, (1) those used as game, and (2) those used exclusively for show and ornamentation. In the first class there are three principal varieties: The Chinese (*Phasianus torquatus*), common or English Black-neck (*Phasianus colchicus*) and the English Ring-neck (*Phasianus colchicus-torquatus*). Other varieties closely allied to these are the Japanese (*Phasianus versicolor*), Mongolian (*Phasianus mongolicus*), Reeves (*Phasianus reevesii*), Hagenbeck (*Phasianus hagenbecki*), Prince of Wales (*Phasianus principalis*) and Soemmerring's (*Phasianus soemmerringii*); 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 very few true Mongolian pheasants in America. All of the above named birds are true pheasants of which the generic scientific name is *Phasianus*. The Golden (*Chrysolophus pictus*), the Amherst (*Chrysolophus amherstii*) and



the Silver (*Gennaesus nycthemerus*) pheasants are all of a different genus, but they are almost identical in nature and require the same treatment in rearing. These three are favorite birds of the aviary.

The Chinese or Ring-neck pheasant and the common or English Black-neck pheasant are each separate and distinct varieties of pheasants, while the English Ring-neck is a hybrid of the two. This latter bird, the English Ring-neck is the common pheasant of England today. 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, or it may have been native to all the northern countries from China to England. 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.

Of all attempts to raise game birds in captivity, greater success has been achieved with pheasants than with any other. In England pheasants have been raised in captivity from the time of the Norman

Pheasant Breeding Conquest. With all this private breeding, the pheasant has never lost his wild nature, but methods of feeding and care have been improved until the breeding of pheasants in captivity is well understood and certain in results. At this time there are practically no pheasantries in America where the birds are raised for the table, and yet there is no reason why pheasants may not be raised profitably as an article of diet. I do not wish to be understood as saying that they can be raised in competition with chickens, but there is a constant demand among the wealthy persons of all cities for the luxuries, and the breeder of pheasants should cater to this demand. There is nothing that so recommends itself to the suburban resident who has an acre or two of ground as pheasant breeding, not only as a source of pleasure, but of profit as well.



The Chinese, Ring-neck or Denny 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 him without a dog. His ability to conceal himself even in the scantiest cover, is wonderful. Without a dog, it is not uncommon to pass within a few feet of one hidden in the grass, without his rising. When running in cover he moves very swiftly with the body close to the ground, and possesses the ability to pass through grass, short or tall, without disturbing the surface. When overtaken by the dog, he will lie well, and this fact, combined with the further fact that he is always found in the open, makes pheasant shooting the cleanest bird shooting in the world.

Possessed of remarkable vitality, he does not succumb to slight gunshot wounds. Being clean-limbed, with powerful thighs, he is 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 bird and endeavors to be as near him as possible when he touches the ground.

Besides his gameness 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 River 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 more, 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.



CHAPTER III

The Chinese Pheasant in Oregon



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 Denny, the man who introduced the pheasant into Oregon, and after whom the bird is often called. 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 1880 and 1882, and then less than fifty birds were liberated. They were protected absolutely for ten years, and thereafter an open season of six weeks was provided, which was later lengthened to two months, but shortened again in 1909 to thirty days on males only. 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.



How little the efforts of Judge Denny to introduce the Chinese pheasant were appreciated, and how California missed the opportunity of being stocked with this grandest of all game birds is told by Mr. Fred Lockley in a recent newspaper interview with Mrs. Denny, who is at this time a resident of Portland, Oregon.

"When we returned from China," said Mrs. Denny, "we brought with us ninety more pheasants, embracing several additional varieties, including the Golden, Silver and Copper pheasants, as well as the Chefoo quail. These cost us from five to nine dollars a pair. Judge Denny planned to distribute them throughout the western part of the State under his own supervision. Unfortunately, he went to Mexico on business and turned the birds over to the Portland Rod and Gun Club, believing that they would have the greatest interest in their care, preservation and distribution throughout the State. The Rod and Gun Club sent them to Protection Island, hiring the owner of the island to care for the birds and agreeing to pay him \$25 a month to see that they were properly fed and protected from pot-hunters. Shortly after this, one of the officials of the Rod and Gun Club embezzled the funds of the club, amounting to about \$1,500, and this resulted in the disbandment of the club. The club failed to make any payment to the owner of the island, who, in consequence, claimed the birds. A few of the birds were sold to individuals, but none of them were liberated. And so my husband's public-spirited, patriotic efforts toward the introduction of these additional varieties of game birds to Oregon came to naught.

"Before returning to the United States, my husband communicated with Mr. Redding of San Francisco, asking him if he would like to have a shipment of game birds sent to California. Mr. Redding was very enthusiastic and made all arrangements to take care of them on their arrival. He arranged with the Spring Valley Water Company of California, who were also in sympathy with the movement, and who arranged to have the birds turned out upon their grounds. They sowed buckwheat seed in different places and promised that every facility for the feeding and comfort of the birds would be attended to. Between eighty and ninety birds were shipped, extreme care being taken so that they would reach San Francisco in good condition. The ship arrived at the wharf as the funeral procession of Mr. Redding was taking place. He had died suddenly and no arrangements had been made to receive the birds. In fact, no one knew anything about

it. The birds, of course, had to be taken from the boat, and, no one seeming to know anything about them, the sailors finally gave them away along the waterfront and some of them were sold to the city markets. California never knew of my husband's splendid gift, and the state received no benefit from it."

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, in 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

Habits

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 Chinese pheasant will apply equally to the English Ring-neck and English pheasant, excepting that the Chinese 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."



Male
Pheasant
in Breeding
Season
Wattles
Distended



A correspondent in a recent sporting magazine 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. He 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 Chinese 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.

The charge is occasionally made in opposition to stocking with Chinese pheasants that the pheasant kills off and drives away the native game birds. I have made many inquiries extending over a considerable period of time, of men who would be in a position to know, and the facts as I find them disprove this charge, except to a very limited extent.

I recently received a letter from a lawyer friend who has made a study of Chinese pheasants and who, I feel, has the situation sized up correctly. In speaking of the indictment against the pheasant as being responsible for the death of the quail, the native pheasant



*Ruffed Grouse Strutting and Showing Ruff of Glossy Black Feathers
and Fan-Shaped Tail*

and grouse, he says that in his opinion the Chinese pheasant is being made the scapegoat and that the real culprit is civilization. In his letter he says:

“In the Willamette Valley quail and grouse were plentiful before the arrival of the Chinese pheasant, and I enjoyed in full measure the pleasure of hunting them then and after the advent of the Chinese pheasant, so that I feel I may testify from personal experience. It is true that in later years these native birds have become very scarce, and the foreigner plentiful. Deep down in my heart there has always been a tender spot for the native game birds. The sport of hunting these birds, though now rarely enjoyed, is the keenest I ever had. I am not so sure, after all, but that much of this pleasure is due to the boyhood memory it recalls, and yet some of the grandest hunting I have ever had was the Chinese pheasant.

“I have heard before the suggestion that the Chinese pheasant had driven out the native pheasant, grouse and the quail, but I have never taken any stock in this indictment. As every hunter knows, the three native birds are modest and retiring. The Chinese



pheasant is bold and audacious. The former spend their time in the deepest thickets, only venturing forth in search of food; the latter chooses the open fields and pastures; the native birds depend for escape on flight and hiding in deepest woods; the Chinese pheasant is strong of wing and expert in hiding in the scantiest cover, his chief reliance for escape being his long, swift legs. A first shot at one of the native birds



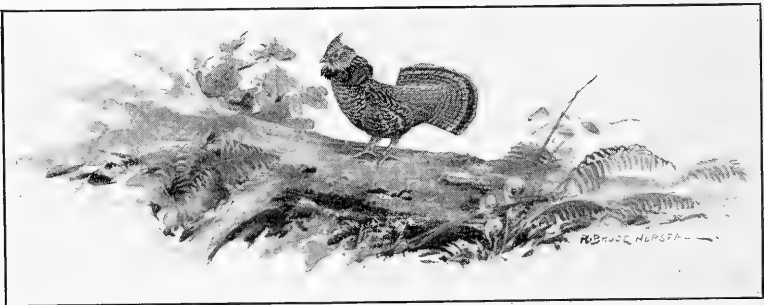
Ruffed Grouse or "Native Pheasant," generally found in damp thickets in mid-day or at the edge of a field in the early morning or late afternoon.

and he is helpless, but you are never really sure of the Chinese pheasant until you have broken both legs and both wings. These qualities of the native birds have made them an easy prey to the dog and the modern shotgun. This, combined with their timidity, to my mind, solves the mystery and accounts for their gradual disappearance. I do not deny that possibly a few native birds have been killed by the Chinese pheasants, but I most seriously question if this has been a controlling factor. I have never heard of any actual cases.

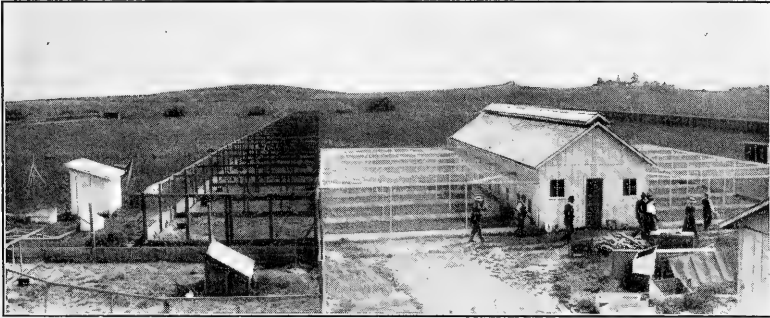
"I am satisfied that even had the Chinese pheasant never been introduced, the native grouse and quail would have been just as scarce in the Willamette Val-

ley as they are today. In fact, I am very positive they would have been more scarce because the hunter would have confined his attention to them and their extermination, for they cannot withstand the trained dog and pump and automatic gun, as the Chinese pheasant can. No one more sincerely deplors the passing of the native game birds than I, but I regard it as a most fortunate thing that the Chinese pheasant should come to take their place. Without him, there would not have been any game birds worth mentioning. No one has ever followed a setter or a pointer after Chinese pheasants without being enthusiastic in their favor. Though I feel unpatriotic in saying it, yet for clean, unadulterated sport, the Chinese pheasant has everything in his favor. Then the fact that the pheasant produces two and sometimes three broods a year, is the strongest argument for their desirability as a permanent game bird over the native birds with their one brood. An unfavorable season may materially reduce the broods of the native birds, but the pheasant has two or three chances in the season.

"A few years ago, as a source of pleasure, I raised a few pheasants, and, encouraged by the success of the first season, the next year reared one hundred pairs. I have studied the birds both in the field and in captivity. As to their hardiness, there is no question. People seem to have the idea, because of their gorgeous color, that they are tropical birds, but it should be remembered that they are natives of a cold part of China, and the fact that they are ready to eat practically anything, assists them in securing sustenance at all times."



Ruffed Grouse Drumming on Log



General View of Pheasant Yards at the State Game Farm. The long line of pens running across the field are where the breeding birds are kept one cock to six hens in each yard. Partitions are removable.

CHAPTER IV

Equipment for a Pheasant Farm



IF ONE can raise turkeys, he 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 at least 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 frequently. A very satisfactory permanent 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 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. For the beginner with a few birds, I should recommend this pen, and the changing from one division to the other every month or so.

Where it is desirable to raise full-winged birds under covered pens, twine netting, similar to fish netting, possesses advantages over wire netting for overhead covering. Aside from being much cheaper, the twine netting requires fewer posts and braces and can be put up in much less time and taken down and stored away when not in use. Wire covered pens, especially if the wire be of one inch mesh, in a locality subject to snow storms, is always a source of annoyance and frequently much damage may be done. Its advantage is its durability. But perhaps the greatest advantage in using twine netting will be found in the fact that birds cannot injure themselves by flying against the netting, as is frequently the case with wire covered pens.



Reeves Pheasant Chick

If you cover your pens with wire netting, stretch it loosely. It may not look so well, but it will save the birds. It is much easier to raise pinioned birds for market purposes than to raise



full-winged birds for stocking the fields. The pinioning is done when the pheasant chick is about three days old by clipping the last joint of one wing with sharp scissors. At this age there is practically no blood in the tip of the wing and it heals over immediately. This prevents the pheasant from ever flying and it can always be kept in an open pen where a fence is six or seven feet high.



Partitions in Breeding Pens Set Aside so as to Plow and Cultivate the Yards

The breeding yards with removable partitions, for pinioned birds, are a great improvement over the old-style stationary pens.

Breeding Yards These yards are twenty-four feet square, have no covering and accommodate six hens and one cock during the laying season, immediately after which the birds are turned out into a large open field adjoining. At this season the cocks will not fight, and but little time is consumed each day in caring for several hundred birds. The partitions are then set aside and the entire strip cultivated and sown with grass seed, and the work may be done with a plow, whereas, if the partitions were stationary, it would take considerable time to spade and rake each individual yard. About the first of March these partitions should be put back into place and the birds mated up for the laying season.



I have tried large breeding yards but with very poor success. The method is quite common in England and consists of an open field of about one acre enclosed with a six-foot woven wire fence, into which is placed about five dozen pinioned pheasant hens and one dozen cocks. One cock usually "bosses" all the rest; eggs are hard to find, and, worst of all, the eggs that are laid the crows often get.

Breeding yards for all full-winged birds are the same size as the open yards above described, but partitions are stationary, and are covered overhead with netting stretched loosely. One side is boarded up tight, which together with a three-foot roof on the side from which the storms come, forms sufficient shelter. Under this shelter ample perches are provided, but must be removed just before the laying season to prevent the birds from dropping their eggs while upon the perch, in which case the eggs would be broken and soon eaten.

The habit of egg eating is always a source of great annoyance to the pheasant raiser, and no sure method of prevention or cure is known. The best method to combat the evil, so far discovered, is to place several cast iron nest eggs, painted as near the color of pheasant eggs as possible, around in the breeding pen. They seldom take the second peck at these iron eggs and hence avoid the true eggs lying about. The iron eggs are far superior to the wooden or porcelain, but after all, it is best to remove the temptation by gathering the eggs several times a day.

Nests as shown in the illustration are placed in yards twelve by sixteen, two sections of six nests each, or twelve nests to the yard, and numbered consecutively from one to twelve. These yards are constructed in a double row with an alley between, from which a gate opens into each yard. The nests should be made about
Nests fourteen inches square and placed flat upon the ground without a bottom. A slight depression should be made in the



Settings of Pheasant Eggs



ground, in which arrange a small quantity of soft straw or grass hay, as you would for chickens. Food, fresh water and a place for dusting are first provided in each yard, then, at a regular hour each morning, beginning at yard number one, all hens in that yard are let out to eat, drink, take a dust bath, by simply dropping the hinged door in front of each nest. Regularity is very essential, since the hens soon learn just when to expect their liberty and if not let out on time will often become so restless as to foul their nests or break an egg or two. While the hens are eating the yards should be inspected carefully and a note made of any nest found in bad order or containing a broken or dirty egg. After the hens have all returned to their nests and the doors in front fastened securely, a clean rag and a bucket of lukewarm water is used in cleaning the eggs in any nest a note of which has been made. When possible, all the hens in one yard are set at the same time. When each yard has hatched, the unhatched eggs are buried, the egg shells and straw taken out and burned, and new nests made before setting again. During excessively hot weather, the ground around the nests should be thoroughly sprinkled with water to provide the necessary amount of moisture for the eggs.

A record of each nest and its contents should be kept in a book specially ruled for the purpose. The author uses the form shown in cut. This record shows the date the eggs were set, when they are due to hatch, the number of the yard and nest in which they were set, number of eggs and variety, and the number of young birds hatched. In the columns marked "Dusted" are the dates upon which every hen must be dusted with insect powder. This operation takes place just before

SETTING HEN—NEST RECORD

YEAR

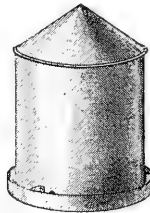
Date Set	Date Due to Hatch	Yard No.	Nest No.	Dusted				Chinese Pheasants		Reeves Pheasants	
				Date	Date	Date	Date	Set	Hatch'd	Set	Hatch'd



the hen is set upon the pheasant eggs, and every six days thereafter. Do not dust the hen during the three days before the eggs are due to hatch. A glance at this record shows the date of the next hatch, the exact number of eggs set, birds hatched, of what variety, number of eggs still unhatched, and just where to find the nests; also how many and what hens must be dusted with insect powder that day. As the hens are dusted, a check mark is drawn through the date.

While cleanliness is essential to healthy pheasants, vigilance must be exercised to prevent lice. Prevention is far better than cure, and this is the object of the dusting process. The powder used is common pyrethrum. Buy it at a reliable drug store and insist on having the pure stuff, and be sure that it is fresh.

A drinking fountain, as shown in illustration, should be provided for all young birds, and in warm weather the water should be changed daily and the fountain washed clean. Neglect of this means disease.



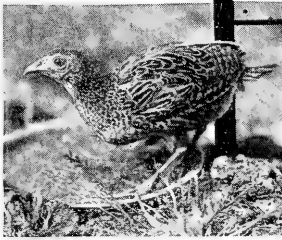
Water Can



Mother With Young Pheasants

CHAPTER V

The Ideal Mother for Pheasants

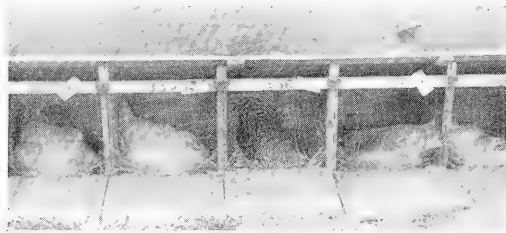


PERHAPS no better hen can be found for rearing pheasants than the Cochin bantam. However, Japanese silkies are very much in favor for this purpose among pheasant breeders in England. Silkies are in a class by themselves, possessing peculiarities found in no other variety of chickens, such as black skin, purple combs and webless feathers of a silky texture, rendering them unable to fly. They are pure white in plumage, most excellent layers and easily confined. While the pure silky makes a good mother for young pheasants, when crossed with Cochin bantam, the result is very unsatisfactory. Such crosses are wild and nervous, of indiscriminate color, and showing tendencies of reverting back to their evident ancestor, the jungle fowl.

For the purpose of perfecting an ideal hen for hatching pheasants, buff and white Cochin bantams were first crossed, producing a slightly larger chicken, about evenly divided in color between buff, white and black, with striped hackles. The largest of these females were selected and mated with a short, chunky Rhode Island red male, producing a hen considerably larger than the Cochin bantam, one that could cover more eggs but retain the excellent broody qualities of the bantam. By further selection, the objectionable



feature, in a wet climate at least, of heavily feathered legs, was eliminated, and the size and quantity of their eggs increased, together with added hardiness to the young chicks. Thus I produced the "near bantam," which I have used for many seasons, but when the supply is exhausted, a wagon is sent out into the surrounding country for setting hens. This is usually at a time of the year when it is considered too late to set chicken eggs—May, June and July—but broody hens are more numerous at this time than at any other season. By paying for "setters" a price slightly in advance of the market price, many farmers are induced to hold their setting hens until regular trips can be made for them. In fact, the business of supplying the State Game Farm with setting hens has grown to such proportions as to become a well established side issue in this locality. These hens are brought in sacks, not coops, and placed on nest eggs in a darkened coop, and not given liberty until the following day. No hen is given pheasant eggs until thoroughly "broken in" to the nest eggs. So anxious are some farmers to sell their chickens at this slightly advanced price that frequently there are offered whole coops of chickens that have no notion of setting. This has necessitated establishing a rule that "a setting hen is not a setting hen until you pick her up off the nest."



Hens on Pheasant Eggs

Incubators are found most valuable when used in connection with setting hens. When a number of large hens are set at one time, all of the pheasant eggs may be removed when just beginning to pip and placed in an incubator that has previously been heated to about 103 degrees. The hens from which the eggs have been removed may be re-set immediately. The smaller and more motherly hens should be left on their nests and not disturbed. The removal of all of the eggs but one or two from a hen is a mistake, since,

**Artificial
Incubating**

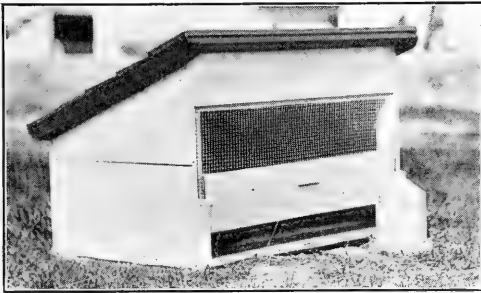


in the absence of the usual number of eggs in the nest, the hen is most likely to set so heavily on the remaining one or two as to mash them at hatching time. After these hens have been removed to the brood coop with their individual hatch and given food and water, and allowed ample time in which to hover their chicks, other young pheasants may be added from the incubator, providing they are of the same age and variety as those that she has hatched. A hen will invariably kill instantly any young pheasant given her of a variety other than that which she has hatched. For instance, a hen that has hatched silver pheasants will not claim goldens, or Chinese, and vice versa. A hen can properly hover and care for more young pheasants than she can hatch out without entailing considerable loss before they leave the nest, hence the use of the incubator.

Pheasant eggs will, beyond a doubt, hatch as well in an incubator as will chicken eggs, but I will have to admit that so far I have been unable to successfully brood young pheasants artificially, though the incubator has proven a great help when used as described above.

For some time I experienced difficulty in getting the hen to hover the pheasants when they were first taken from the nest; the pheasants, being foster children of the hen, do not understand her call or her manner. They do not seem to understand that she will hover them. They do not recognize that she is "home and mother." The hen is perfectly willing to receive the pheasants, but her call to them is not the natural call of the pheasant, hence it means nothing to them. Some plan must be devised to bring the pheasants under the hen. Recently I have adopted this plan with good success: A basket is prepared with a hot water bag filled with tepid water and

placed in the bottom of the basket, over which is placed a cloth. When the pheasants are first taken off from the nest, they are placed in this basket and a cloth thrown over the top. Enough air will pass through the sides of the basket so they will



Brood Coop for Young Pheasants



not smother. The brood coop is then prepared by covering the bottom with sand. Food and water are placed in the coop and then the hen is left in the brood coop for about twenty minutes. During this twenty minutes the hen has had an opportunity to feed and get acquainted with her new quarters and is ready to settle down and receive the young pheasants. The pheasants are then placed in the coop with her, and, having nothing else to attract her attention, the hen will see to it that the pheasants are hovered. It is advisable to take the hen off in the forenoon so that you may give the chicks more or less attention to see that they are properly hovered. If the day is warm, the plan of using the hot water bag need not be followed, and if the day is cloudy or cold, of course one will necessarily have to give the pheasants more attention than on a bright, warm day.

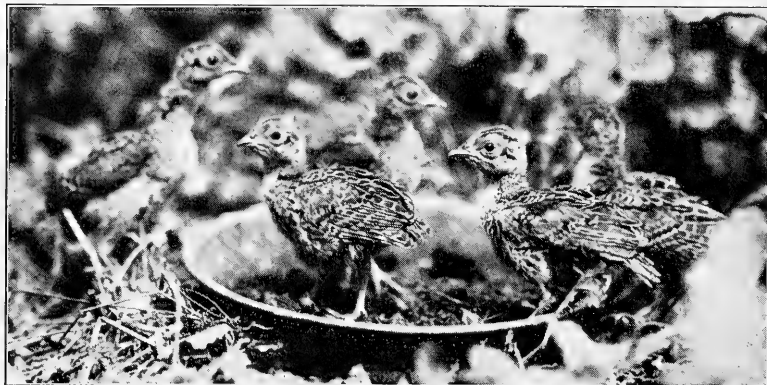
The number of young pheasants that may safely be given to one hen varies from about twelve to sixteen, according to the weather and the size of the hen. A common mistake is to set **Size of the Brood** too many eggs under one hen, or to give one hen too many young pheasants. Late one summer I gave a large Plymouth Rock hen twenty-five little pheasants, of which she raised to maturity twenty-four. This, however, was an exceptional case.

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 coop, 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, but restraining the hen. Before liberating the young brood of pheasants, have the grass cut short, allowing it to grow up with the young birds. Unless the yard is covered overhead with wire netting, the young birds should be pinioned to prevent their flying over the fence and straying away.

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



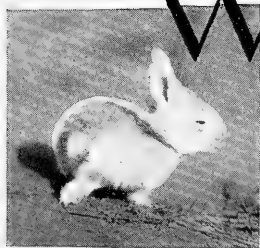
chestnut red will begin to appear on the breasts of the cocks. The hens undergo small changes in plumage, and while of a general fawn color, some of the tints shown on their necks are very beautiful and possessed of remarkable protective coloration. The cocks continue to change color rapidly until at 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 the idea of its beauty. Graceful in form, with his splendid robes, the cock Chinese pheasant is one of the most beautiful birds in existence. It has truthfully been said that the Chinese pheasant cock does not possess a homely feather. The eye never tires of admiring his plumage. He is a source of continuous delight to the breeder.



Young Chinese or Ring-Neck Pheasants at State Game Farm

CHAPTER VI

Food for Young Pheasants



WHEN 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.

Another successful method of feeding young pheasants is with the larvae of the common blue fly (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 larvae food has been discontinued, which should be done gradually.

The objection to the larvae food is the offensive odor ordinarily associated with it. This may be overcome by raising the larvae scientifically. Contrary to the commonly accepted idea, the larvae



of the fly prefer fresh to decaying meat. Professor McGillivray, of Queen's University, Toronto, who has successfully raised English Ring-neck 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 odor. 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, bran or fine dirt, preferably bran, as the shorts have a tendency to pack. On this place the bone and meat mixture and leave where the flies may have access to it. In warm weather the fly eggs will hatch in about two days' time and the bone mixture will be partially dried up. The larvae are adverse to strong light and will be found to have gone to the bran. They must now have something to feed upon. Remove the bone mixture and place thin slices of fresh liver on the bran. Turn the bone mixture back on top of the slices of liver. In a few hours the larvae 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 nearly 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 bran or dirt and change into the pupa state. In feeding the liver or meat, feed only enough to be consumed 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 an extra supply of liver in a 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 the 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. The larvae are clean feeders and they must have a medium (shorts, bran 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 a worm apparently 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 develops a worm 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, bran 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, bran or dirt.

With the facts above, your own ingenuity and some experience will suggest convenient methods for producing larvae, but remember that the pheasant is primarily an insect eating bird, and the larvae is a natural food. As stated, custards, eggs, etc., may be used successfully, but they are substitutes. When the birds are two weeks old, chopped meat may be gradually substituted for the larvae until, when a month old, the larvae may be discontinued altogether. A good way to prepare the meat is to chop it fine with a sharp chopper and then mix shorts with it, rolling it between the hands until it crumbles. After the birds are a month old, they may be fed cracked wheat (soft wheat is best) with a little charcoal or grit al-



ternating with the meat diet. The meat may be discontinued after two months, except that it is not a bad plan to give them a little of it once or twice a week for another month. From this time on, they may be fed the same as chickens, except that their nature demands more insects, and if these are not supplied naturally, they will do better if given a feed of the chopped meat and shorts every week or ten days until they are grown.

For the purpose of furnishing a cheap supply of fresh meat to be fed to the young birds direct, and for material for the propagation of fly larvae, New Zealand hares may be used. They are somewhat larger than the common Belgian hare, not so quarrelsome when many are yarded together, and are easier to breed to a uniform color. They are very prolific and can be propagated during the fall and winter months, at which time good use may be made of the same brood coops in which pheasants were reared during the summer.

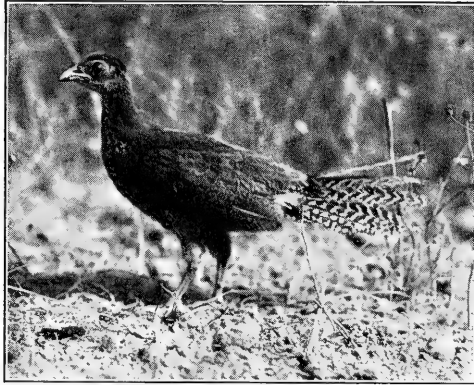
Several pounds of fresh meat may be obtained from one animal, run through a small meat grinder and fed direct to the young pheasants, taking the place of other chopped meat. The remainder of the carcass, excepting the skin, which has a commercial value, is consigned to the "bug house" for the flies to work upon. By propagating hares for this purpose, one not only has a supply of fresh meat when he wants it, and in just the quantity desired, but he is *sure* of its being fresh.

Nothing is more fatal to young pheasants than putrid meat and meat that has been treated with a preservative, such as sodium sulphite. These preservatives appear under various trade names on the market. These trade names also cause the purchaser to think that he is getting something different than he had before. Some of the samples are colored with a coal tar dye. These preservatives are often used in making hamburg steak. This can be readily detected by noticing the color of the meat as the butcher breaks it from the pile on the counter. Meat preserved with it shows a bright red color, but the portion not in contact with the air is much darker as a rule. After it has been in contact with the air for a few minutes, it will also assume the same bright color. Sodium sulphite is sold under such names as "Freezum," "Preservaline" and "Freezine," also sometimes as an "Anti Ferment."



Green grass is essential in every breeding pen. The birds require a certain amount to keep them in good laying condition. The egg-eating habit is not so apt to be contracted as where the pens are absolutely bare. In the absence of grass, green stuff may best be provided by spading up, sod and all, suitable turf from the outside and giving the birds a fresh shovelful every day. They will take delight in picking it apart. Lawn clippings are not very good as they soon wilt and will scarcely be touched.

Until the pheasants are six weeks old, they should be fed three times a day, then twice a day until grown, and after that once a day.



Half-Grown Silver Pheasant



Coops at State Game Farm

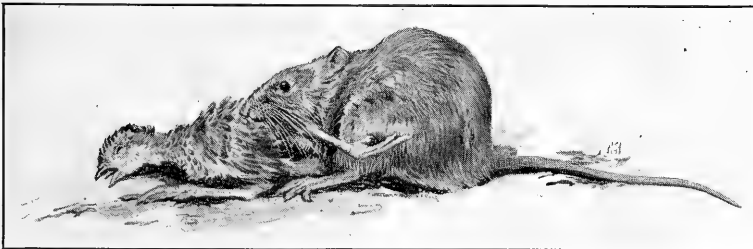
CHAPTER VII

Enemies of the Game Breeder



THE enemies of the chicken yard are likewise the enemies of the pheasantry. A shotgun is a valuable implement in pheasant farming, but keep it where you can get it quickly.

Wage continuous war on rats. Of all the predatory animals the game breeder has to contend with, he will find the rat the hardest to combat, for, like the poor, we have them with us always. Rats are more apt to be found around a pheasant yard than a chicken yard. It is easy to regulate the amount of food given common poultry, consequently none need be left on the ground to attract rats. Some pheasants, however, are so shy they will not eat until the attendant has scattered the food and gone away. Therefore, it is necessary for



Rat Eating Young Pheasant



the pheasant breeder to fight rats continually and by every method possible, and even then he will have some rats. I have tried steel traps, wire cage traps, poison, carbon bisulphide, gopher exterminators and various other remedies, but find nothing so effective as a good "varmint" dog. It is useless to put out poison as long as the rats have access to other food. Gopher exterminators or explosive cartridges placed in rat holes and ignited fill the passage with smoke and gas. By using these we have killed some rats, but this method is uncertain, likewise the carbon bisulphide.

Cats are an abomination. Government statistics tell us that not two per cent of the cats are ratters, and no cat ever lived that would not kill a young pheasant, if given an opportunity. One-inch mesh wire netting sunk two feet into the ground around a pen will keep out rats for two or three seasons, or until the wire begins to corrode. The sides and top of pen must also be of one-inch mesh wire; otherwise the rats will get in over the top.

If all buildings are up from the ground high enough to permit a dog to have full access, and you have the right kind of a dog, he will take care of the rats as fast as they come. Whenever a rat hole



Airedale, the Pheasant Breeder's Dog



is found in any part of the yards, no time should be lost in digging it out. With the help of a good dog, a rat will rarely ever get away.

In my many years of experience in raising pheasants, comparatively few birds have been lost through rats. I attribute this mainly to the presence of one or more Airedale dogs. These dogs take to the hunting and killing of rats naturally and willingly, without

The Pheasant Breeder's Dog

guidance or training. With persistence and undaunted courage, yet quiet and even-tempered, the Airedale is the pheasant breeder's dog. He combines, more than any other breed, everything that is useful for the pheasant farm. R. M. Palmer, in his book "All About Airedales,"

says:

"Airedales were seemingly created to fill a well defined want and need for just such a dog as they are."

Pheasants soon become accustomed to one dog around their yards, but become greatly alarmed upon the approach of a strange one. At the present time I have a pair of Airedales that have the full run of the farm. With many visitors during the day time they are always quiet and agreeable, yet at night they never permit a stranger to enter the place.

Of the various members of the hawk family that prey upon game birds, perhaps the western red-tailed hawk, because of his abundance, is the most difficult to control, notwithstanding the nice things said of him by our leading ornithologists. The

Predatory Birds

Cooper hawk is another offender. When it comes to destroying both game and other birds' nests, the common crow heads the list. The Department of Agriculture has

classed the crow as a desirable citizen. Since the crow himself is a great destroyer of bird life, by his persistent hunting for and destruction of nests, it is hard for those actually familiar with the subject to place him in the beneficial column. The examination of any number of crow stomachs during the year does not prove the crow beneficial to the farmer, the poultry raiser or



Crow Eating Pheasant Egg



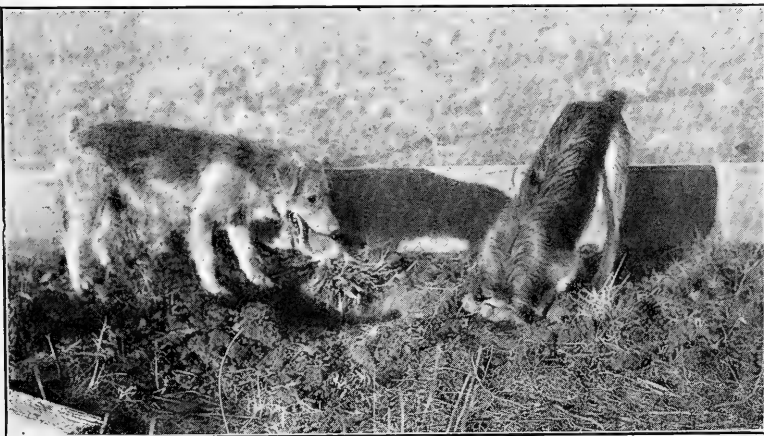
the experienced sportsman. The birds killed may have had very different meals on consecutive days. It is such reports as this that cause the general public—at least that portion that resides in the country—to lose faith in ornithological lore in general. Certain it is that just as sure as a crow finds a breeding pen of pheasants in an open yard, he will get almost every egg if you don't get him. You can usually fool the pheasant hen with a cast iron egg painted as nearly the color of the real egg as possible, but you can't fool Mr. Crow. To get within gunshot of a crow is not an easy task, but he will partake of a pheasant egg that has been carefully dosed with strychnine. When one crow has been poisoned, the balance of the flock will fly high over your premises for some time.



Prowling Cat—The Enemy of Game Birds



The prowling, semi-domesticated cat is the greatest destroyer of game birds among our four-footed animals. In this, perhaps the greatest Chinese pheasant country in the United States, the marauding cat kills more pheasants than all the illegal hunters. He is afield three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. Having been raised in domestication, perhaps on your own premises, he knows your habits and takes advantage of you only under cover of darkness. He takes not only young birds during the breeding season but full-grown Chinese pheasant hens as well. Only in one instance have I known a cat to attack a full-grown pheasant cock. Aside from the loss of a handful of feathers, the cock was unharmed. The next night this same cat caught a full-grown Chinese pheasant hen and carried her over a six-foot wire netting fence before a load of number four shot stopped her. Occasionally a cat will take strychnine when placed on fresh meat, but in doing so may carry the poison where it may do great harm. We have caught several exceedingly wild and vicious tomcats by baiting with a piece of fresh meat a trap similar in construction to an early day grizzly bear trap, but of course on a much smaller scale. The trap is made of a coal-oil case, one end of which is a trap door which drops behind the cat after it has gone in and sprung the trigger, arranged on top, by pulling the bait from the end of a nail in the rear end of the trap. I have found no better means of ridding my premises of cats than the presence of one or more good Airedale dogs, with which a cat has no chance whatever.



Airedales at State Game Farm After Rats



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."

**Not Subject
to Disease**

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, improper feeding and lice both on young and old birds.

Bear in mind that stale and decaying food and unclean drinking water in unclean drinking fountains are just the causes that breed disease germs. Pens in which birds have been kept for long periods of time also invite disease germs. You cannot successfully keep full grown birds in a small pen for a year at a time. Even though they do not succumb to disease, they will not be in vigorous condition and the best results will not follow. This applies with greater force to young birds; and in the matter of feeding greater care is necessary, if you feed custard and similar foods. All such food not consumed should be removed from the pens each day. Whether you have many or few birds, arrange your pens so that the birds may have fresh ground to run on occasionally. The pen sixteen by thirty-two feet, with partition lengthwise through the center, as suggested in the preceding pages, will accomplish this end. Keep the pens, coops, and everything else connected with the pheasants, *clean*. Then, if you use care to keep the food and drinking water clean, you will have no trouble with disease or lice.

All birds in their natural state frequently indulge in a dust bath. Lice and dust cannot exist together. The pyrethrum powder suggested is particularly disastrous to lice. Common road dust works in much the same way, though perhaps less effectively; but the use of pyrethrum is impractical except in the case of the setting hens. It is an excellent plan from time to time to place a quantity of road dust in a dry portion of the pen. The pheasants will avail themselves of its use. Even the very small birds delight to wallow in this dust. It will be a good plan if, in the fall of the year, you will store away in a dry place a few barrels of dust to use the next spring before dust is obtainable from the roads.



Chinese Pheasants Eating Grasshoppers

CHAPTER VIII

Advice to the Beginners



IN THE foregoing pages I have treated the subject of pheasant farming in a manner applicable to the rearing of a few or a large number of pheasants. The average person, however, will probably begin with a small number of birds. Now, for the benefit of the amateur beginning in a small way, I would advise the following procedure: First, build a double pen sixteen by thirty-two feet, with partition in the center, as described in the foregoing pages. Into this pen place four or five pheasant hens with one cock. Pur-



chase your birds in the fall of the year in order that they may become acquainted with their quarters and feel at home before the laying season. Then before the first of March secure two dozen Cochin bantams. While the "near bantam" I have described is better, still you will be unable to procure these, and there is no question but that the Cochin bantams are a success for pheasant rearing. Exercise care in the purchase of your bantams that they are not infected with lice, and use those ordinary precautions known to poultrymen to keep them free from these pests. Give them good, healthy, sanitary quarters to live in, and keep them away from your other chickens so that they may not be contaminated with lice or disease. Lice on your hens means lice on your young pheasants. Prepare a place for your nests as heretofore described and follow the directions as to setting the hens, care of setting hens, etc., until the birds are taken off the nest.

There is no trouble about hatching pheasants. Feeding is probably the most serious problem. *Don't try to experiment with foods.* Follow the directions I have given, and if you will take my advice, for the first year at least, you will feed your birds until they are a month old on the fly larvae. I recognize that this may appear to you as offensive, but following the directions I have given, you will find that this is an imaginary offense. The reason I so strongly advise the use of the fly larvae is because it is the natural food of the pheasant, and with its use you cannot fail, if you exercise other ordinary precautions which I have suggested. From your first year's experience with pheasants you will learn of their nature and disposition and be better qualified to act on your own initiative.

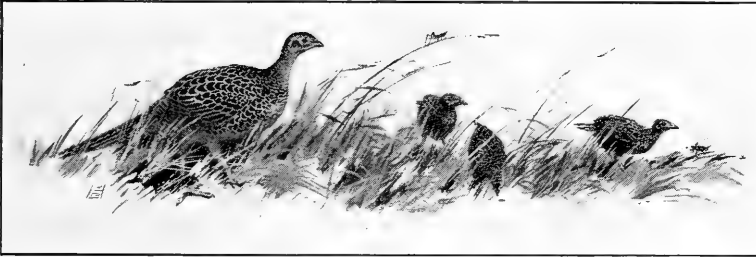
While I have tried various methods of feeding and have been successful in feeding the young birds custard, still, after all my years of experience, I am still feeding fly larvae. The mother hen being kept in the coop enables you to feed her with ordinary food and to supply the fly larvae to the young birds alone. You cannot afford to place the fly larvae where the mother hen can reach them. A good plan in feeding larvae is to have a shallow pie tin with vertical sides in which is placed some fine dirt. Then with a long-handled spoon you can place some of the larvae on this dirt. They will immediately bury themselves in it, but the pheasant chick soon learns how to find them. The young pheasant, after eating a few, will run about, returning occasionally to the pan. With the "bugs" thus constantly before him, the young chick will not overeat, but if



he does it will not hurt him. The sides of the shallow pie tin being perpendicular, the larvae will be unable to crawl out of the pan unless there is too much dirt.

After the pheasants are a month old, feed the chopped meat rolled with shorts, as I have described, and gradually change to a wheat diet. Your pheasants, like chickens, will enjoy a change of diet. A stalk of lettuce hung in the pen so that they can reach it will be relished. A tuft of grass sod will be a pleasing variety. A few fish worms or grasshoppers thrown into the pen will be eagerly devoured. Pheasants, like chickens, require grit. It is also a good plan to give them a little charcoal occasionally. In short, the grown pheasant may be fed the same as a chicken, but, being insectivorous, meat, insects and worms given occasionally are desirable additions to his menu.

After the first year's experience, you will be encouraged to branch out and rear pheasants on a larger scale; and if you have any love for birds, and particularly if there is any blood of the sportsman in your veins, you will surely enjoy raising pheasants. It is a most interesting occupation and the little time you will give to it will amply repay you in the pleasure you receive.



Hen Pheasant and Young



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