

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

2021-2022 Pheasant Program Summary



Acknowledgements

Prepared by the Rhode Island
Department of Environmental Management

Division of Fish & Wildlife
277 Great Neck Road
West Kingston, RI 02892
Phone: (401) 789-0281
Fax: (401)783-7490

Alexander Fish, Upland Game Bird Biologist
June 2022



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

Federal Aid Project funded by your purchase of hunting equipment.

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

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Table of Contents.....	3
Introduction.....	3
2021-2022 Season Dates, Bag Limits and Additional Requirements.....	3
2022-2023 Regulation Changes.....	4
2022-2023 Pheasant Stocking Locations.....	4
Special Hunt Opportunities 2022-2023.....	5
Pheasant Hunter Survey Results 2021-2022.....	5
Conclusion.....	9

Introduction

The ringneck pheasant is native to Asia and was first brought over to the United States in 1881. Since then, pheasant releases occurred throughout the United States and wild populations became established in suitable habitats. In Rhode Island, pheasants became well established in the early 1900's from historic releases. At this time Rhode Island's landscape was dominated by open farmland, pastureland, and grassland. Pheasants could be found statewide, but the largest populations were in southern Rhode Island (e.g., Washington, Bristol, and Newport counties).

State sponsored pheasant stocking began in the 1950's to supplement declining wild population and to provide additional opportunity for upland bird hunters on state land. At present, the only pheasants occurring on mainland Rhode Island are stocked by the RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife or private hunting clubs. The loss of mainland wild pheasant populations in Rhode Island primarily occurred due to landscape changes, with most farmland, pastureland, and grasslands being converted to housing developments and mature forests. This loss of early successional habitat and pheasant nesting cover has similarly caused declines for other species that rely on early-successional habitats, including New England Cottontail, Northern Bobwhite, American Woodcock, Bobolink, Prairie Warbler, and Savannah sparrow. The only remaining wild pheasant population is on Block Island (New Shoreham).

This document provides a summary of the 2021-2022 pheasant hunting season and pheasant hunter survey results, with additional stocking updates for the 2022-2023 season.

2021-2022 Season Dates, Bag Limits and Additional Requirements

The 2021-2022 pheasant season started on October 16, 2021 and ran through February 28, 2022. Pheasant stocking occurred from October 15, 2021 through December 23, 2021. A gamebird permit was required to hunt pheasant (outside of RI shooting preserves) and the daily bag limit is 2 birds. Legal hunting hours are sunrise to sunset. This was the first year that small game check stations were closed and pheasant hunters were not required to register before hunting at Arcadia, Carolina, Durfee Hill, and Great Swamp Wildlife Management Areas.

A youth season occurred the weekend prior to the opener (October 9-10, 2021) in which pheasant were stocked at the Durfee Hill, Eight Rod Farm, and Great Swamp Wildlife Management Areas.

2022-2023 Regulation Changes

There are no regulation changes for the 2022-2023 Pheasant hunting season.

2022-2023 Pheasant Stocking Locations

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

New for 2022-2023: Each [\(MAP\)](#) is linked to an updated georeferenced map detailing pheasant stocking locations on each wildlife management area (example on last page).

Providence County

Black Hut Management Area, Burrillville ([MAP](#)), 340 birds/season, stocked 2x/week

Buck Hill Management Area, Burrillville ([MAP](#)), 490 birds/season, stocked 2x/week

Durfee Hill Management Area, Glocester ([MAP 1](#)) ([MAP 2](#)), 440 birds/season, stocked 2x/week*

Kent County

Big River Management Area, West Greenwich ([MAP](#)), 370 birds/season, stocked 2x/week

Nicholas Farm Management Area, Coventry ([MAP 1](#)) ([MAP 2](#)), 470 birds/season, stocked 2x/week

Washington County

Arcadia Management Area, Richmond/Exeter ([MAP 1](#)) ([MAP 2](#)) ([MAP 3](#)) ([MAP 4](#)) ([MAP 5](#)), 1590 birds/season, stocked 2x/week

Carolina Management Area, Carolina ([MAP 1](#)) ([MAP 2](#)) ([MAP 3](#)), 840 birds/season, stocked 2x/week

Great Swamp Management Area, West Kingstown ([MAP](#)), 840 birds/season, stocked 2x/week *

Newport County

Eight Rod Farm Management Area, Tiverton ([MAP](#)), 340 birds/season, stocked 1x/week*

Sapowet Management Area, Tiverton ([MAP](#)), 240 birds/season, stocked 1x/week

Simmons Mill Management Area, Coventry ([MAP](#)), 40 birds/season, stocked 1x/week**

* Additional stocking for youth weekend not included in total birds/season

**No December stocking at this location

Special Hunt Opportunities 2022-2023

A youth pheasant hunt will be held on October 8-9, 2022 at the Great Swamp, Durfee Hill, and Eight Rod wildlife management areas. Each site will be stocked with 50 pheasant prior to the youth weekend. Youth pheasant hunters must have either a Junior Hunting License or Hunting License, and a Game Bird Permit. Junior hunters must be accompanied by a 21+ adult with a valid Hunting License.

Pheasant Hunter Survey Results 2021-2022

A total of 1,620 game bird permits were sold during the 2021-2022 hunting season. This is an increase from the 1,609 permits sold during the 2020-2021 hunting season. All hunters who purchased a game bird permit and had a valid email address in the online licensing system were sent a pheasant hunter survey. Based on the hunter survey, 80% of respondents who purchased a game bird permit hunted during the 2021-2022 season, while 20% did not hunt. This equates to an estimate of 1,296 pheasant hunters in Rhode Island. Most hunters (76%) who purchased a game bird stamp only hunted pheasants and did not hunt other small game species (Figure 1). A proportion of pheasant hunters also target woodcock (11.52%), squirrel (6.13%), cottontail rabbits (5.64%), and mourning doves (5.64%; Figure 1). Rhode Island pheasant hunters have on average 11 years of pheasant hunting experience with a range of 0-53 years.

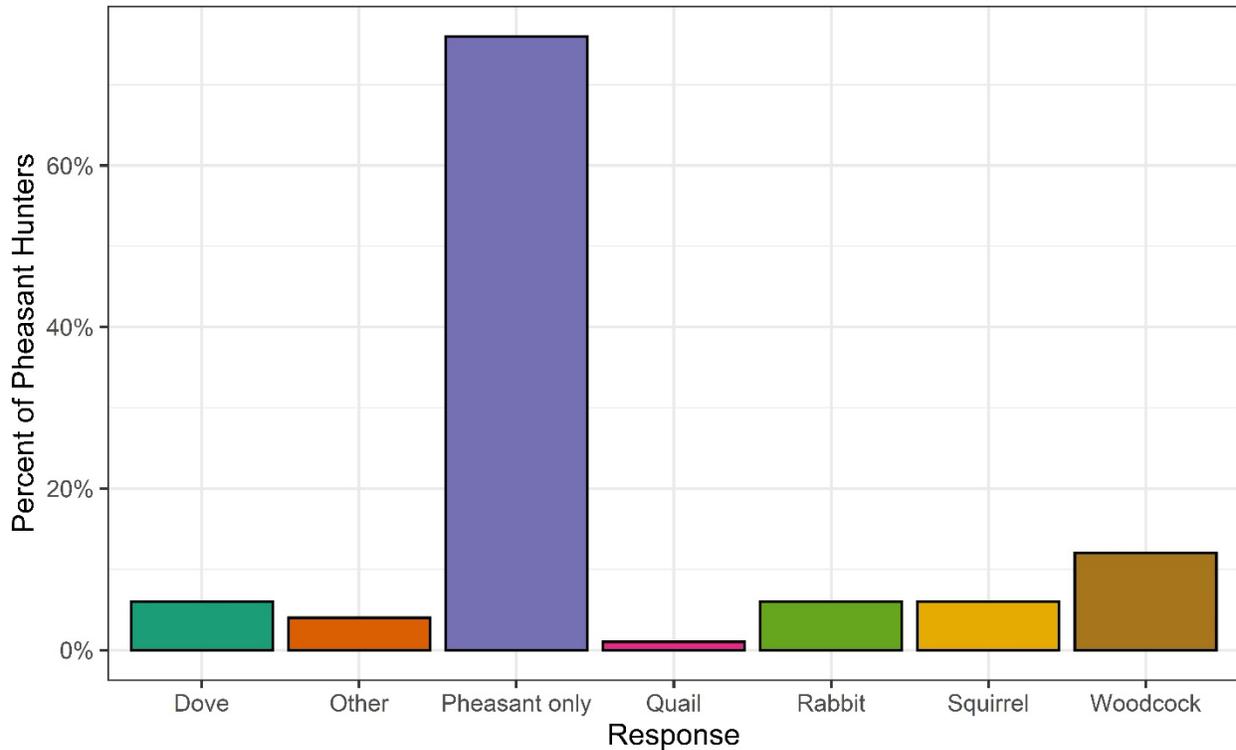


Figure 1. Small game species targeted by hunters who purchased a game bird stamp during the 2021-2022 hunting season in Rhode Island. Figure based on 408 respondents.

Pheasant hunters harvested an average (mean) of 4 birds during the 2021-2022 season, with most of the harvest falling between 0-5 birds/person (median = 2 birds). When asked about weekday and weekend hunting, 49% of respondents said they hunted on both weekends and weekdays. Weekend only hunters account for 39% of the responses and even fewer hunters (12%) hunt on weekdays only. More than half of the pheasant hunters in Rhode Island hunt over dogs (66%).

Most pheasant hunters participate in other hunting opportunities in Rhode Island. Only 18.3% of pheasant hunters only hunted pheasants in Rhode Island. Some of these hunters are out of state hunters from Connecticut and Massachusetts and travel to Rhode Island for Sunday hunting opportunities. Pheasant hunters participated in waterfowl (47.2%), white-tailed deer [archery] (46.5%), white-tailed deer [muzzleloader] (43.9%), white-tailed deer [shotgun] (43.6%), spring wild turkey (41.2%), small game (30.1%), and wild turkey fall (12.1%) hunting. The Rhode Island pheasant season opens before most other fall seasons and provides an important early-fall hunting opportunity.

Hunter use was highest at the Arcadia, Carolina, Durfee, and Great Swamp management areas during the 2021-2022 season (Figure 2). Simmons Mill management area had the lowest use overall, but only has one wildlife opening for pheasant stocking. Hunter's use was generally correlated to the size of the wildlife area, with more hunters spending more day's hunting at Arcadia wildlife area (Figure 2). Arcadia is the largest wildlife area in Rhode Island and has multiple large wildlife openings in which pheasants are stocked.

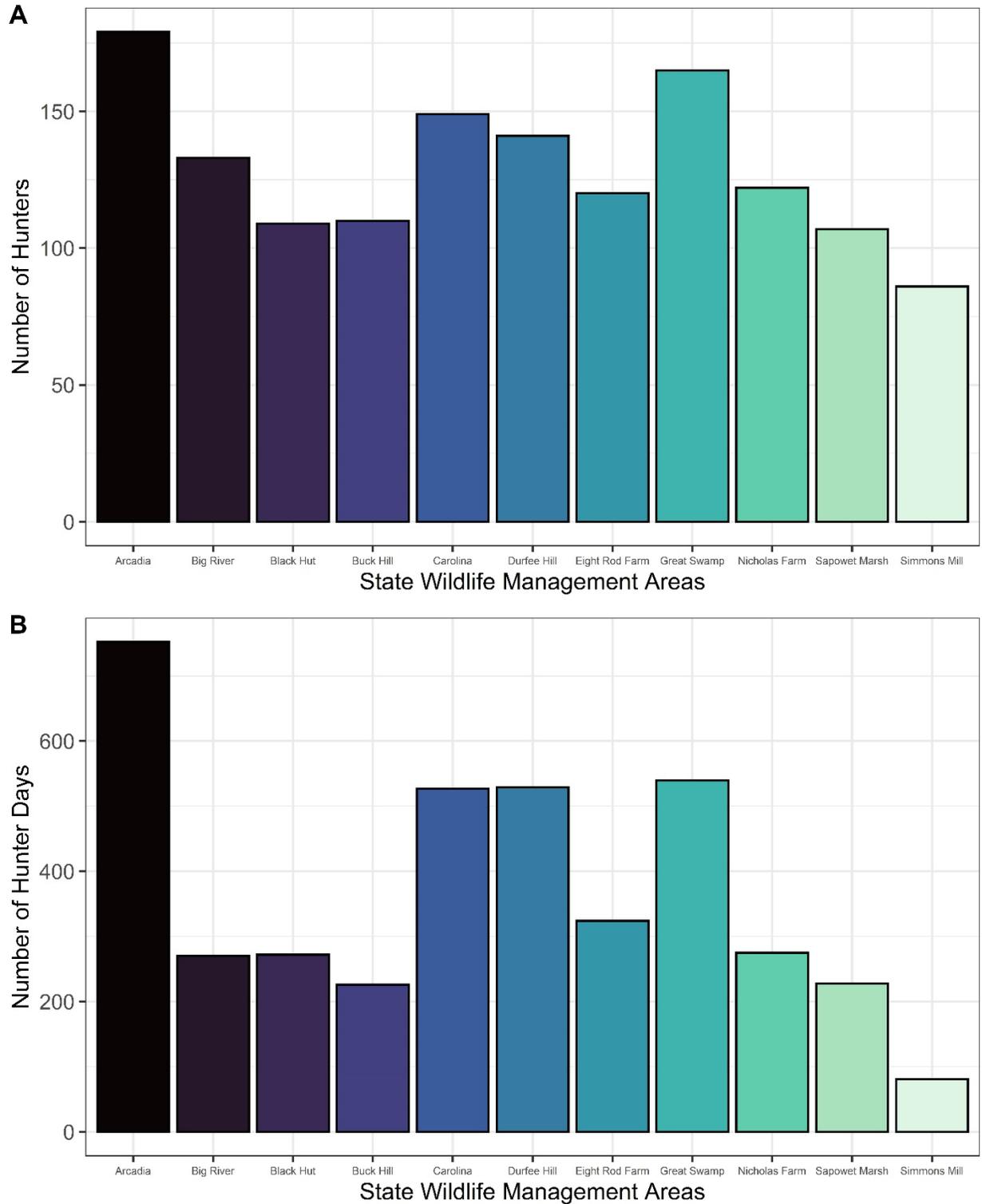


Figure 2. The number of pheasant hunters that used state wildlife areas ranged between 86 to 179 (A), but the number of days hunters spend at each wildlife area varied widely (B), with Arcadia being the most heavily hunted area. Figure based on 413 respondents.

For the second year in a row, 6,000 pheasants were stocked on state wildlife management areas during the 2021-2022 season. The addition of 2,000 stocked pheasants has increased pheasant hunter participation by 16% with 1,620 hunters purchasing a Game Bird permit in 2021, up from 1,365 permits in 2019 (when 4,000 pheasants were stocked).

Rhode Island has one of the lowest rates of hunting participation with 0.7% of residents purchasing hunting licenses and is tied with California and Hawaii. Only 4.8% of pheasant hunters in Rhode Island identify as female and nationally between 9-10% of hunters identify as female. Female hunting participation in Rhode Island is half of the national average, and female hunting participation is one of the fastest growing demographic groups in North America. Similarly, only 2.3% of pheasant hunters were between the ages of 12 to 18 years old and 15.4% were 19 to 30 years old. While there may be some survey bias, with fewer younger hunters participating in the online survey, this general trend indicates that there is little youth participation in the pheasant hunting program. For comparison, 34.0% of pheasant hunters are between the ages of 31 to 45 years old, 32.3% of hunters are 46 to 60 years old, and 14.2% of hunters are 61 years or older.

Conclusion

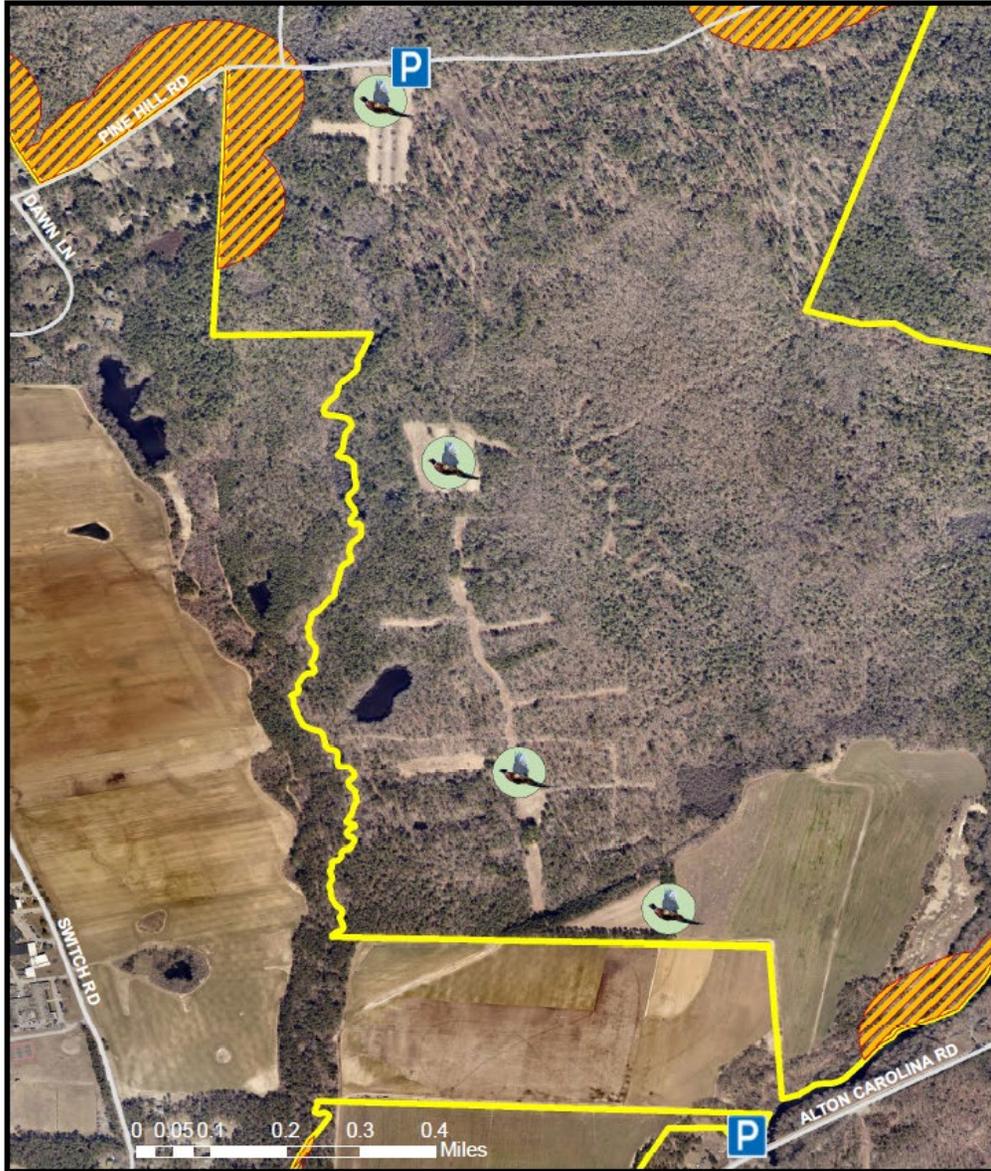
The 2021-2022 pheasant hunting season in Rhode Island was a safe and successful season. Pheasant hunter participating a wide variety of Rhode Island hunting programs throughout the fall and winter. Feedback gathered from the hunter survey combined with hunter use of wildlife management areas will be used to guide stocking efforts for the upcoming 2022-2023 season. Six-thousand pheasants will be stocked during the 2022-2023 season from October through December. Our goal is to ensure that we are providing hunters with the best opportunities possible while stocking birds in areas of suitable habitat.

During the 2021-2022 pheasant hunter survey we collected demographic information from participants, and we found that both youth participation and female participation were relatively low for pheasant hunting. Youth participation and recruitment is important to replace an aging hunter community in Rhode Island and ensure pheasant hunting remains a strong tradition in the Rhode Island. Additionally, female participation in hunting is growing nationwide and currently Rhode Island's female participation rate is half of the national average! Pheasant hunters should take advantage of the youth pheasant season (weekend prior to pheasant opener) to introduce youth to pheasant hunting and should make conscious efforts to create opportunities for more youth and females to participate in pheasant hunting.



© S. Krajewski

Feedback is welcome regarding this report by emailing Alexander.Fish@dem.ri.gov



Imagery Source: Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS)



Carolina Management Area

Pheasant Stocking Program

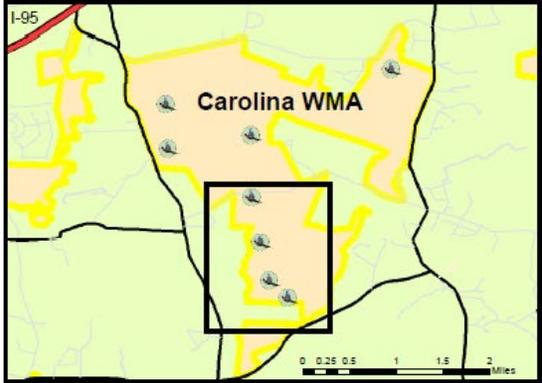
Town: Richmond

Description: 2,325 acres

Access: South end of management area along Pine Hill Rd; parking areas off of Pine Hill Rd near check station and along Alton Carolina Rd.

Legend

-  Stocking Area
-  Parking Area
-  Management Area Boundary
-  500' Firearms Restricted Zone
-  Road



Updated: January 2022