

To: Pheasants Forever and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife

From: U.S. Geological Survey, WERC Research Team

Subject: April 2015 Pheasant Project Update

April 2015 Summary Bullets

- Monitored 43 pheasants (39 VHF, 4 GPS)
- Obtained 190 ground telemetry locations
- Obtained 774 GPS telemetry locations
- Located 21 nests (19 active, 2 failed)
- Conducted 6 predator surveys (raven/raptor)
- Conducted 6 microhabitat surveys
- Recovered 3 mortalities

This document is an update specifically related to monitoring and research objectives for the Central Valley ring-necked pheasant research project during the 2015 season as of 30 April. This document does not represent a completed data analysis and findings. Instead, the purpose of this update is to provide you with a summary of our efforts, as well as observations regarding movements, reproduction, habitat, and predators from the field perspective. This information is preliminary and is subject to revision. It is being provided to meet the need for timely best science. The information is provided on the condition that neither the U.S. Geological Survey nor the U.S. Government may be held liable for any damages resulting from the authorized or unauthorized use of the information.

Telemetry Monitoring

During April 2015, we obtained 190 ground telemetry locations on 39 active VHF units (Gray Lodge WA, $n = 13$; Roosevelt Ranch, $n = 15$; Yolo Bypass WA, $n = 11$) and 2 GPS units equipped with VHF transmitters. Most females have remained within one kilometer of their capture locations. We also collected 774 GPS telemetry locations from the four pheasants outfitted with GPS transmitters at Roosevelt Ranch ($n = 2$) and Yolo Bypass WA ($n = 2$).

Reproduction

Females began incubating nests during the first week of April, and the first nest was located on 3 April. We have located 21 nests (19 active, 2 failed) across the three sites as of 30 April. Four nests were found at Gray Lodge WA, seven nests were found at Roosevelt Ranch, and 11 nests were found at Yolo Bypass WA. Both failed nests were found at Yolo Bypass WA. One female was killed on her nest and the nest was depredated with one remaining damaged egg. The other nest was abandoned with 10 eggs, and the female re-nested in an adjacent field shortly thereafter. Body feathers and some flight feathers were found next to the nest, which suggests that she was flushed off her nest by a potential predator.



Female on her nest at Roosevelt Ranch

Microhabitat and Avian Predator Surveys

We conduct microhabitat surveys at all nest locations and at the first three brood locations. In addition, we conduct 10 minute point count surveys for ravens and raptors at each nest location and at the first three brood locations. During these surveys we also document the presence of livestock, horses, and anthropogenic subsidies such as roads, buildings, fences and farms. As of 30 April, we have conducted 6 raven/raptor and 6 microhabitat surveys, all of which have been conducted at Yolo Bypass WA.

Mortalities

We have recovered 3 mortalities across all field sites during April. Two mortalities were recovered at Yolo Bypass WA and one at Roosevelt Ranch. Body feathers and bone fragments were recovered at the kill sites, which suggests a mammal caused these predations. However, given the lapse of time in locating the mortalities, it is possible that a mammal scavenged an avian-caused predation. Since January 2015, we have recovered 5 mortalities at Gray Lodge WA, 8 at Roosevelt Ranch, and 4 at Yolo Bypass WA.

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Preliminary