

California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Interagency Wildlife Task Group

RING-NECKED PHEASANT

Phasianus colchicus

Family: PHASIANIDAE

Order: GALLIFORMES

Class: AVES

B133

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Common to uncommon introduced, permanent resident. Occurs in scattered locations throughout the state, but centered in the Central Valley. Dependent upon croplands, especially grain crops, with adjacent herbaceous and woody cover. Also occurs in perennial grasslands with sufficient cover.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Forages mostly on ground, also from plants; gleans, scratches, grazes. Eats waste grain, other seeds, other plant parts. Insects and other arthropods important in spring and summer, especially for chicks.

Cover: Tall, rank herbage, shrubs, and woodland required for cover, near feeding areas. Insufficient cover is a major habitat problem nowadays.

Reproduction: Dense herbage required for nesting, especially at shrub/herbage ecotone.

Water: According to Edminster (1954), most suitable pheasant habitat provides sufficient water from dew, insects, and succulent vegetation. However, the highest densities occur where open water is available (McAtee 1945).

Pattern: Requires a mosaic of croplands with abundant cover.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Not migratory. In winter, may band together in areas where there is adequate food and cover.

Home Range: May forage over an area as large as 3 km² (1.2 mi²).

Territory: Male establishes a crowing territory of 1 to several ha during breeding season.

Reproduction: Breeding begins in March or April. Polygynous; male establishes crowing territory and gathers a harem. Clutch size averages 10-12 eggs, range 6-20. Usually 1 clutch, but will renest if first is lost. Female incubates about 23 days, and broods precocial young.

Niche: Thrives in areas with small, varied, grain farmland with minimum tillage. Large, clean, intensively cultivated acreages have greatly reduced populations. In Illinois, aggressive behavior of male towards greater prairie chicken may disrupt mating system

(Vance and Westemeier 1979). Parasitic egg-laying by female also may cause stress to prairie chicken and other native species.

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