



RING-NECKED PHEASANT

BIRD ID

SEASON INFORMATION

HUNTING TIPS

Originally an Asian species, the ring-necked pheasant was successfully introduced into Iowa about 1900. Pheasants are found on rich farmlands throughout the state, but they are most numerous where good mixtures of crop, CRP, hay, and wetlands exist. The DNR uses an August Roadside Survey to monitor pheasant populations. The survey is conducted in early August with more than 6,000 miles of gravel roads driven annually to estimate population trends. Iowa's interspersed grasslands and croplands make her one of the top pheasant harvest states in the nation.

IDENTIFICATION

Pheasants are long-tailed, seed-eating, chicken-like gamebirds. Male pheasants, "roosters" or "cocks," are brilliantly colored with a

combination of russet, copper, brown, gray and black on the body, iridescent dark green on the neck, and bright red wattles on the head. A white neck ring is present on most males. In contrast, females or "hens" are light brown with black flecking on each feather.

Juveniles of both sexes, up to 10 weeks old, resemble females in color, and by 16 weeks of age, they are almost indistinguishable from adults.

Adult males weigh about 2 3/4 pounds and females about 2 pounds. Cock pheasants have spurs on their legs that increase in length, as they grow older. The spurs on juvenile males are generally less than 3/8 of an inch in length; spurs on old males may be almost an inch long.



Rooster Pheasant



Hen Pheasant

IOWA PHEASANT HUNTING INFORMATION

Pheasant hunting regulations and the special youth season appear in the *Iowa Hunting & Trapping* regulations.



SHOOTING HOURS:	8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
BAG LIMITS:	Daily bag limit: 3 roosters, possession limit: 12 roosters
LOCATIONS:	Entire state is open to hunting
LICENSE AND FEES:	Small game license & habitat fee

PLACES TO HUNT:

- **HUNTING ATLAS** shows all areas in the state open to public hunting, type of wildlife likely found in the area, open seasons and any restrictions. www.iowadnr.gov/hunting
- Iowa Habitat Access Program (**IHAP**) allows hunter access to private land in exchange for habitat improvement on the site. www.iowadnr.gov/ihap

HUNTING TIPS

GUN & AMMO CHOICE:

There is a lot of personal preference involved with selecting a pheasant gun. Many hunters use 12-gauge, full choke shotguns and number #4 or #5 shot. Such hardware may be essential for long shots late in the season, but other hunters prefer an open-bore, 20-gauge with #6 to #7-1/2 loads for early-season roosters.

WHEN TO HUNT:

The first few weekends of the season are busy, but participation drops off during mid to late November. Hunting during the week versus weekends will also reduce competition from other hunters. Birds hold best on days with light winds and dewy or wet vegetation.

BRINGING PHEASANTS HOME:

Once the bird has been bagged, it is essential to take good care of the meat, particularly if the weather is warm. Perhaps the best way is to dress and cool the meat immediately after the hunt. Hunters must leave a foot, wing or fully feathered head attached to any pheasant being transported.



HOW TO HUNT PHEASANTS IN IOWA:



A variety of techniques can be used when hunting pheasants which is probably one reason pheasant hunting appeals to so many people. A lone hunter can usually hunt field edges, fencerows and small weed patches. Many enjoy the solitude and easy pace of this type of hunting.

Larger blocks of cover such as standing cornfields, cattail marshes, shelter belts and large waterways may be difficult for one hunter to cover. Several hunters working together not only find more birds, but sharing the outdoor experience with good friends can be a very important part of the hunt. Larger hunting parties have found that they can bag more birds if they post "blockers" at the far end of the field, particularly if the birds seem prone to running or flushing wild.

DOGS

For many hunters, it just isn't a pheasant hunt unless you have a good bird dog along. A well-trained dog is a tremendous help in locating and retrieving crafty ring-necks. Selecting a good bird dog is a matter of personal preference. English setters, Brittany spaniels, German shorthair/wirehair pointers and Labrador retrievers are the more popular breeds among Iowa pheasant hunters.

SAFETY AND ETIQUETTE:

- Hunters must wear one external article 50% solid blaze orange: hat, cap, vest, coat, jacket, sweatshirt, shirt or coveralls. More blaze orange is better especially when hunting tall cover
- Be sure to walk in a straight line and know where hunters are at all times
- Discuss zone of fire with others and talk about target fixation.
- Always be aware of what is beyond a bird before you shoot.
- Avoid low shots to prevent injuries to dogs.
- Unload guns when crossing creek or fence
- Always ask permission to hunt on private lands.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
on where to hunt in your local area,
contact your regional DNR wildlife biologist.