

**Alberta Conservation Association
2023/24 Project Summary Report**

Project Name: Upland Game Bird 4-H Initiative

Wildlife Program Manager: Doug Manzer

Project Leader: Amanda Rezansoff

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Partnerships

4-H Alberta

ConocoPhillips Canada

Government of Alberta

MacFarlane Pheasants

Vysniauskas Family Foundation

Key Findings

- In all, 31 4-H members participated in 2023 and raised approximately 1,800 pheasants (mostly hens). They either released them into suitable upland habitat or marketed them for sale.
- In collaboration with 4-H, we held a webinar to provide information on pheasant husbandry.

Details

Ring-necked pheasants were first introduced into Alberta in 1908 by a group of recreational enthusiasts to provide enhanced upland hunting opportunities. Now, more than 100 years later, the tradition continues as we partner with rural stakeholders to encourage this heritage. Changes in agricultural practices and the conversion of native prairie into cropland have dramatically modified the landscape to the point where native game birds are nearly eliminated from areas

dedicated to cropland. Pheasants can adapt to areas predominately used for cropland, provided that certain habitat features are available.

Alberta Conservation Association has partnered with 4-H Alberta since 2014 to reactivate the Upland Game Bird 4-H Initiative Project that was discontinued in the late 1990s. This initiative aims to reconnect 4-H participants with the habitat needs of upland game birds and gives them practical experience raising pheasants from day-old chicks into adult birds. The kids have the option to market the birds for sale, or to release them into suitable habitat. Each year, we provide day-old chicks to 4-H participants and detailed advice on raising pheasants, as well as the habitat needs of pheasants in the wild. 4-H participants are responsible for the daily needs of the birds, including constructing a brood house and a flight pen to raise the birds until they are almost fully grown. Feedback from those involved suggests this program encourages the kids and their entire family to consider habitat needs more fully.

We also provide the opportunity for other private growers to purchase day-old chicks. This allows us to reach a larger audience with the habitat needs for upland birds. This year, we had 31 4-H participants successfully raise approximately 1,800 pheasants (mostly hens), and they either released them into suitable upland habitat or marketed them for sale. We provided approximately 2,600 day-old chicks to private growers.

The Upland Game Bird 4-H Initiative has generated a lot of interest and continues to be popular among those involved. Previously, almost all participants were from southern Alberta, but we have seen an increase in participants from central Alberta in recent years. Several participants from previous years return the next year, suggesting satisfaction with the project.

Photos



Photo 1. 4-H member with pheasant. Photo: Lana Caldwell