

**Alberta Conservation Association
2024/25 Project Summary Report**

Project Name: Upland Game Bird 4-H Initiative

Wildlife Program Manager: Doug Manzer

Project Leader: Amanda Rezansoff

Primary ACA Staff on Project: Easton Fritz, Jalen Hult, Kris Kendell, Amanda Rezansoff, and Mike Uchikura

Partnerships

4-H Alberta

Government of Alberta

MacFarlane Pheasants, Inc.

Vysniauskas Family Foundation

Key Findings

- In all, 21 4-H members participated in 2024 and raised approximately 1,590 pheasants (mostly hens). They either released them into suitable upland habitat or marketed them for sale.

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 21 4-H participants successfully raise approximately 1,590 pheasants (mostly hens), and they either released them into suitable upland habitat or marketed them for sale. We provided approximately 3,975 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 there are also some participants from central Alberta. Several participants from previous years return the next year, suggesting satisfaction with the project.

Photos



Photo 1. Day-old pheasant chicks. Photo: Amanda Rezansoff