

this lot of fowls as from the other lot of three year old hens that had not been forced for egg production during the winter.

It is a matter then of prime importance to have the hens mature and unexhausted by previous heavy laying, if the very best results are to be secured, during the breeding season, in respect to the number, size and vigor of the chickens.

### THE PROPAGATION OF GAME BIRDS IN CAPTIVITY.

BY WALLACE EVANS, *Oak Park, Ill.*

The breeding of game birds in captivity in the United States is still in its infancy, although great progress has been made along these lines in the last few years, especially in the breeding of Pheasants and some of the varieties of Wild Ducks and Wild Geese. Considerable effort has also been made trying to breed Quail and some of the Grouse family, but with very little success, and, as far as I now see, the breeding of the last two named cannot be carried on successfully in captivity, neither can the artificial propagation of several of the varieties of Wild Ducks. These will have to be left to breed in their natural wild state, aided, of course, by wise, protective game laws, and also aided by the destruction of their natural enemies (vermin), such as Minks, Weasels, Hawks, Crows, Cats. etc.

What promises to be the most successful game bird that can be raised in captivity is the "Ring Neck Pheasant," and the number than can be propagated and turned loose on a preserve is limited only by "extent" of the sportsman's purse. To give you some idea of the possibilities of raising pheasants by hand, I will state that during the past spring and summer I raised over five thousand of these birds, and after raising them to maturity, nearly half of this flock was sold to the State of Kansas and liberated in the suitable localities in the different counties. Great credit is due the Game Commissioner of that State for his far-sightedness in purchasing the birds early in the fall of the year and then liberating them so as to give them plenty of time to become accustomed to their new surroundings before the winter sets in.

Under the guiding hand of one of the greatest institutions this country has ever seen (The Argicultural Department at Washington) nearly all our fertile plains and valleys have become dotted with the dwellings of the farmer, and this grand march of civilization has changed the conditions under which our native game birds used to thrive in years gone by, so there is no alternative left, but to adapt ourselves to this new

condition of things, and the sooner we knuckle down and get busy and begin breeding artificially the suitable game birds the better, for it is in my opinion the only safe course left open for us to pursue, if we are to have game birds.

No one needs to have any doubts as to the practicability of such a course, for we have ample proof that the breeding of game birds in captivity and then liberating them to restock the depleted covers, has been successfully carried out in all the up-to-date European countries for more than half a century.

It is also very gratifying for me to report that nearly every one who has gone into the breeding of pheasants right and intelligently in the United States has been very successful indeed.

It gives me great pleasure now to have the opportunity, on behalf of the successful ones, to extend our hearty thanks to the Agricultural Department at Washington for the good advice and encouragement gives us from time to time in our new and very interesting undertaking. Especially are we indebted to Dr. Palmer and Mr. Oldys for the assistance given us along these lines.

The breeding of Wild Waterfowl in captivity is also very interesting and with some varieties is carried on very successfully, the beautiful American Wood Ducks, furnishing one of the most conspicuous examples. Owing to the danger of this variety becoming extinct, I made special efforts for the last few years to breed them in large numbers, and it gives me great pleasure now to report that I have succeeded far beyond my expectations. It is now an absolute certainty that this, the most elegant of our native American Waterfowl, can be bred in captivity almost as easily as our common tame ducks.

During the past Christmas weeks, I exhibited a car-load of game birds at the Sportsmen's Show, held in Boston, by the New England Forest held in Boston, by the New England Forest, Fish and Game Association, and among the collection I exhibited were about two hundred wood ducks, they were admired, probably, more than any other variety shown.

What the American Breeders Association can do to help the breeders of game birds:

1. Use their influence with the Game Departments of the different states to allow bonafide breeders to dispose of their stock, during a reasonably long open season in any way they see fit, either dead or alive, and allow breeders to shoot, during a reasonably long open season, pheasants or any other game birds not native of the United States on their own preserves. If such laws were in force in the different states,

it would create an incentive and game preserves would spring up on every hand, and these same preserves would serve the purpose of a state game preserve, from which sufficient game would escape each year thoroughly to stock the state. In other words, the state would be stocked by the individual effort of thousands of sportsmen instead of the puny effort of a single State Game Farm, which at best could not amount to more than a single one of the individual efforts, or in the proportion as one to one thousand. Far more progress would be made in the different states if there was an open season on pheasants, say, from the first of November to the first of January each year. Placing a bag limit only on those who do not breed the birds themselves, and in addition to this, the state would receive a much larger sum for licenses under these conditions than they do now under the present unsatisfactory laws. I do not want to be understood as recommending an open and unrestricted season on our native game birds, which I am willing to admit cannot be raised successfully by hand, or in partial captivity. I am perfectly willing that the state shall have a right to close the season on prairie chickens, or even quail, if necessary, so that it can find out by actual experience whether a closed season will save them or not, but with pheasants, it is different. They can be raised in any quantity by anyone who is willing to spend the money to feed and care for them and there are thousands of real sportsmen and farmers who are ready and willing to do this, but not under the present laws. In fact, right here in Illinois, there are thousands of sport loving citizens who will not take out a license for the reason that there is no game to shoot without going a long distance and even then it is uncertain.

As an illustration of what can be done by private effort, I take great pleasure in calling attention to the private preserve of Mr. Bayard Thayer, at Lancaster, Mass., where thousands of pheasants are raised and liberated annually and I am pleased to say that the State of Massachusetts has come to the front with a law allowing breeders to kill the pheasants raised on their own preserves. To give some idea of the usefulness of the private preserve as a means of stocking the State with pheasants, I will say that from reliable information furnished me, I am convinced that at least forty per cent of the pheasants raised by this far-sighted, enthusiastic sportsman, were left for stocking purposes, after the shooting season was over, or in other words, forty per cent were left on this one preserve to help stock the State of Massachusetts. The State derived greater results from Mr. Thayer's pheasants in four years than they did in ten years from the State stock. Let other states see the wisdom of passing similar laws is my earnest wish.