

## RING-NECKED PHEASANT

## *Phasianus colchicus*

Other: Common, Green, or Japanese Blue pheasant; *Kolohala*

*P.c. mongolius*

*P.c. torquatus*

*P.c. versicolor*

*P.c. . europeas?*

### non-native, long established

The Ring-necked Pheasant was originally native to Asia, from Russia and Iran to Korea and Japan (Dement'ev and Gladkov 1952, Cramp and Simmons 1980, AOU 1998), but it has been widely introduced and is now nearly cosmopolitan (Banks 1981, Long 1981, Lever 1987, Marchant and Higgins 1993). At the urging of King Kamehameha V, a variety of pheasants were introduced to the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* for hunting and aesthetic purposes, beginning with a shipment including "Mongolian Pheasants" (*P.c. mongolius*) brought to Honolulu by the botanist W. Hillebrand in Jun-Jul 1866 (Caum 1933, Meier 2005:37). This was followed by 12 pheasants brought in from New Zealand in 1868 and numerous additional birds released on O'ahu throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Caum 1933, Locey 1937; *PoP* 14[7]:16-17). Ring-necked Pheasants rapidly became established throughout the Southeastern Islands (e.g., Henshaw 1900b, Rothschild 1900, Bryan 1905, Shaunisland 1906, Caum 1933, Perkins *in* Evenhuis 2007:167) through deliberate introduction, e.g., by Kamehameha and private hunters to Moloka'i and Kaua'i (*PoP* 14[7]:16-17), by private individuals to Lana'i in the 1910s (100 pairs; Munro 2007), and during the "Buy-a-bird Campaign" in the 1930s (cf. *E* 36:40-44) when 1000s were reportedly released on Hawai'i I. The HBAF oversaw the further importation, propagation, and release of 10s of 1000s of pheasants during 1921-1930 (reports in *HFA*, 1925-1933; see also Kelly 1928). Phillips (1928) predicted that they would have trouble becoming established given Hawaii's warm climate, and they apparently struggled during the 1940s (HBAF report for year ending 1950; cf. Berger 1981:239); however, they are now found commonly from sea level to >3000 m elevation in open areas, including in scrub, upland pastures, xeric habitats, grassy fields, and cultivated areas (Schwartz and Schwartz 1951a), occasionally penetrating forests, at least on Kaua'i (e.g., Munro *in* Gregory 1929). Farmers in Hawaii were originally concerned with the introduction due to the belief that pheasants pecked into pineapples (Bryan 1937a).

Schwartz and Schwartz (1949, 1951a) summarize the status and distribution of Ring-necked Pheasants in the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* during 1946-1947, providing range maps showing them distributed throughout much of ***Kaua'i, O'ahu, Moloka'i, Lana'i, Maui, and Hawai'i***, with most gaps occurring on windward forested slopes and in urban areas. Munro (*in* Gregory 1935) mentions one making its way down from watershed land to sit on a garage roof in suburban Makiki, O'ahu. The distributions of Ring-necked Pheasants reported by Schwartz and Schwartz (1949, 1951a) appear to have changed little during ensuing decades (Scott et al. 1986), with [Christmas Count data](#) showing no distinct trends. Cole et al. (1995) analyzed the effect of this species on high-elevation shrublands in Hawaii. Ring-necked Pheasants of a "mixture of two or more forms" were also widespread on ***Ni'ihau*** in 1947 (Fisher 1951) and presumably continue to occur there. In Mar 2007 a bird was observed near Hakalau NWR, Hawai'i I, that could have been a hybrid male Ring-necked Pheasant X Erckel's Francolin, a cross not previously reported (McCarthy 2006), but the observation of this bird was brief.

At least four subspecies from three subspecies groups of Ring-necked Pheasant have been imported to Hawaii (Swedberg 1967a, Walker 1967, Lewin 1971, Long 1981, Lever 1987; *PoP* 14[7]:16). The most widespread introductions were of *P. c. mongolius* and *torquatus* of the *torquatus* subspecies group of ec. Asia. Small numbers of *P. c.*

*europaeas*, of the *colchicus* group from wc. Asia (and more recently, Europe), were released on Hawai'i I. in 1959-1964 (Lewin 1971). The first two subspecies have become established and are interbreeding freely in Hawaii (see below) but it is unknown how much influence *colchicus*-group pheasant genes have had on Hawai'i I (Lewin 1971). Also introduced to most islands, beginning in about 1895 (*PoP* 14[7]:16), were the more-distinctive "Japanese Green Pheasants" (*P. c. versicolor*) from the *versicolor* group of s. Japan (Bohl 1964), at times considered a separate species (e.g., by Pyle 1977). In addition, a black mutant form (named "*P. c. tenebrosus*" by Hachisuka 1927 but not a valid subspecies) was introduced to Hawai'i I in Jul 1934 (HBAF unpublished list) and to most Southeastern Islands by HBAF in 1959-1966 (Swedberg 1967a, Walker 1967, Lewin 1971). Small numbers of black mutant pheasants (including intergrades with Green and other subspecies) and other odd plumages were noted through the early 2010s on the Parker Ranch, Hawai'i I ([HRBP](#) 5604-5605, 5840) and on the south slopes of Haleakala (e.g., [HRBP](#) 6031), likely the result of recent importation for hunting. See Delacour (1977) for more information on this and the other subspecies of Ring-necked Pheasant.

Schwartz and Schwartz (see also Phillips 1928, Dunmire 1961, Bohl 1964, Conant 1980b) indicate that pure and intergrade populations of Japanese Green Pheasants (*versicolor*) were found primarily on Hawaii I, along the nw. slope of Mauna Kea (Keanakolu Rd.), the se. slope of Mauna Loa, above Hawaii Volcanoes NP, and SE to slopes above Na'alehu, preferring moister and higher-elevation forests compared to other Ring-necked Pheasants in Hawaii. Populations of this subspecies on Hawai'i I declined from the 1970s to 1990s ([Graph](#)) and have vanished from most historical locations although at least a few apparently pure Green Pheasants persisted through the mid-2010s in the Volcano area ([HRBP](#) 6030) including the Volcano Golf Course subdivision. Pure Japanese Green Pheasants and intergrade populations between *versicolor* and *torquatus* have also been noted on other islands, including in Koke'e NP, Waimea Valley ([HRBP](#) 5839), and near Kilauea NWR on Kaua'i (e.g., Denny 1999); near Hosmer Grove on Maui (including one reported here 7 Sep 2016); and in Halawa Valley, Moloka'i (Bryan 1908, Pekelo 1963). Bryan (1905b) reported that *versicolor* and intergrades were more common than other subspecies in the Waianae Mts, O'ahu, in an area that since has seldom been visited by observers; and Kramer et al. (1973) continued to report them from O'ahu. Caum (1933) also indicated that *versicolor* was historically released on ***Kaho'olawe***, where they were reportedly established from 1936-1967 (Swedberg 1967a) but were extirpated by the early 1990s (Gon *et al.* 1992). It is quite possible that the Green Pheasant, at least in its pure form, has been extirpated from all of these islands and from the state of Hawaii.

There are two reports of Ring-necked Pheasant in the *Northwest Hawaiian Islands*. At Midway, a pair was observed in 1944, which had apparently raised some chicks that did not survive long (Fisher and Baldwin 1946). At French Frigate, a bird was introduced in 1949 but it lost its feathers, became sunburned, and died (Amerson 1971).

## [Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

### [Literature cited](#)

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