

# It's Pheasants Forever

## Group works to preserve environment, educate people about land's treasures

■ An Oakland County chapter of Pheasants Forever, a group dedicated to preserving natural habitats for game, will hold a fund-raiser in Clarkston March 21.

As is true with that of so many animals, pheasant populations are suffering at the hands of an upwardly mobile and ever-aggressive society. Once seen frequently in the fields and farmlands that dot Michigan, taking to the skies with raucous flapping to offset any predators, pheasants have begun to dwindle in the state as development progresses, according to Lois Helzer, president of Oakland County chapter No. 183 of Pheasants Forever.

The chapter will hold its ninth annual fund-raising banquet on March 21 at Deer Lake Racquet Club in Clarkston and proceeds will be used to enhance pheasant habitats with seed plantings.

"They promote habitat. They promote education. They promote youth hunting," said Helzer of the conservation organization, which has 33 chapters in Michigan.

Neither pro- nor anti-hunting, Pheasants Forever is an organization devoted to maintaining natural environments for pheasants and other animals and to educate children about the land and its many treasures.

They accomplish the latter feat by sending local educators to the Leopold Training Workshop, a seminar that outfits educators with ways to incorporate conservation values in classrooms; and by sending children to a camp near Alpena

sponsored by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, where children are introduced to canoeing, archery, swimming and bird watching.

And they accomplish the former feat by providing thousands of dollars worth of seeds and planting them at various recreation facilities for food and shelter.

The beneficiaries of the Oakland chapter's seedings include Heather Highlands Golf Course, Pontiac Recreation Area and Highland Recreation Area.

"All the stuff we raise are not only good for pheasants, they're good for deer and any type of bird. It's places for rabbits. It does a lot for all animals," Helzer said.

"Every time a subdivision goes in, there are not enough places for the animals to go. We're there to put the pheasants back, but we also like to hunt them."

Helzer said she and her husband, Jack, raise and release pheasants on their 13-acre homestead in White Lake Township.

"I just think they're the greatest birds. We raise them and turn them loose. We've been trying to reintroduce them in our area," she said.

Despite the fact that they love to raise pheasants, the couple also appreciate hunting, as do many members of Pheasants Forever.

And they see no contradiction between the two activities. Balance is the key, Helzer believes.

"There has to be some kind of land management," Helzer said. "And one method of land man-

agement is hunting." She estimated that 80-90 percent of the Pheasants Forever's membership are hunters. "We would like to see our children and grandchildren be able to hunt if they want to."

Helzer, who enjoys the outdoors with her husband, but who is not a hunter like he is, said she became interested in Pheasants Forever after being invited to one of the organization's banquets about 10 years ago.

"I like what they stood for," she said of the club that was founded in the 1980s. "I really think it's a wonderful organization. I think it does a lot to help a lot of people and animals. It brings together a lot of people of different beliefs: gun people, dog people, people who don't hunt. And they work together well."

A part-time bus driver for the Holly school system and a part-time travel agent, Helzer, 60, is also a member of Michigan United Conservation Clubs, Oakland County Sportsmen's Club, Friends of Pontiac Lake and Big Bucka. She welcomes calls about Pheasants Forever and may be called for information about fund-raiser tickets. Her number is (248) 889-1217.

Members of the public are welcome to attend the banquet, which will feature a silent auction, live auction, raffles and door prizes. Tickets are \$80 per couple and that price includes a \$20 membership in the National Pheasants Forever organization.

All the money that is raised at the fund-raiser will stay in the Oakland County chapter and will be used to augment pheasant habitats, Helzer said. Deer Lake Racquet Club is located on White Lake Road near Dixie Highway.

Lois Helzer  
Pheasants Forever



Pheasant lady: Lois Helzer is president of Oakland County chapter No. 183 of Pheasants Forever. The group plans a fund-raiser March 21.

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