



Comparison of Two Nest Searching Techniques Used in Ring-Necked Pheasant Nesting Studies

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Searching for upland bird nests in grasslands can be challenging and time consuming, often relying on monitoring tools established by researchers that may be cumbersome or costly. However, monitoring active nests over large tracts of land is an important aspect of measuring bird use of a particular habitat. Ring-necked pheasant are upland nesting birds which have been studied extensively. As part of an ongoing ring-necked pheasant study, we evaluated two nest searching techniques used throughout the literature. We compared the traditional intensive ground searching technique often used in ring-necked pheasant studies with a chain-drag technique common in waterfowl nest studies. The objective of our study was to determine if the number of ring-necked pheasant nests located with each technique were similar. The study was conducted on privately owned, grazed and un-grazed post-Conservation Reserve Program lands near Hettinger, North Dakota. Each grazed and un-grazed plot was searched in its entirety with the chain-drag technique and located nests marked on a GPS unit. Points were then randomly selected within each plot. At each random point (n=40) 100 x 50 meter transects were searched utilizing the intensive ground searching method. Results from a two sample t-test indicated no difference ($P > 0.05$) in the number of nests located between search methods. Results suggest that in this region the chain-drag technique is at least as affective at locating pheasant nests as intensive ground searching. The chain-drag technique allows researchers to more efficiently search larger expanses of land when compared to the ground searching technique.

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