

The Southern Caucasus Pheasant



This is the nominal form.

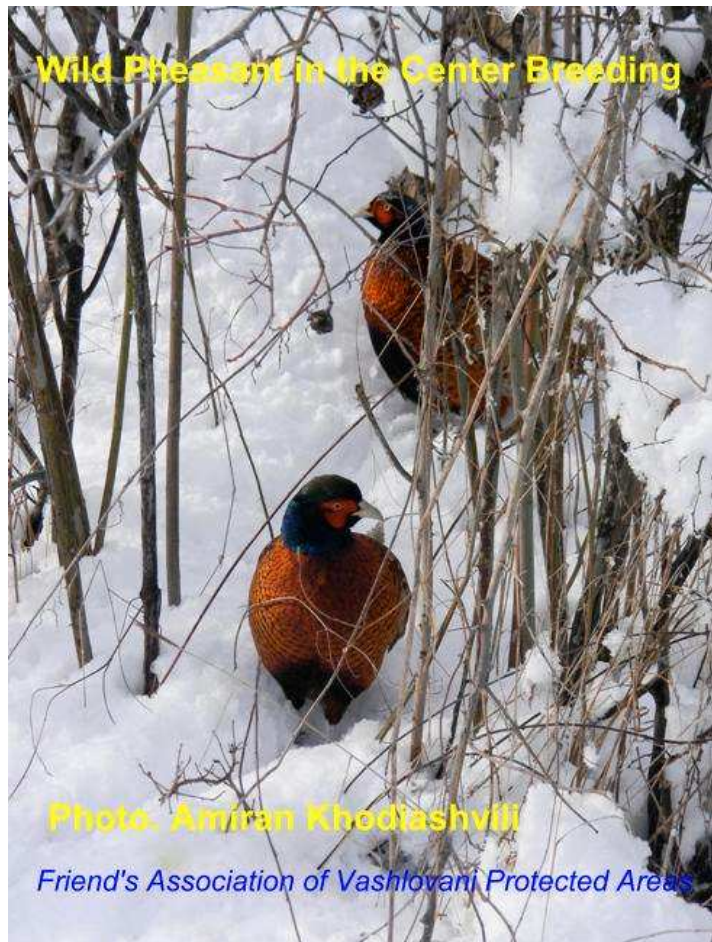
These pheasants *Phasianus colchicus colchicus* derive their name from colchicus legend of Jason and the Argonauts, which would have seen beautiful birds on the banks of the River Phase (Greek word) in the country of Colchis (Rioni in Kolkheti) west of the Republic of Georgia today.

Their range covers the wide area of rivers Kura and Araks in Transcaucasia, and northern Iran, southern Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, but also the edge of the Black Sea in Turkey and Thrace in Europe, east of Greece and south-eastern Bulgaria.

- Bulgaria: Professor Zlatozar Boev [1] tells us that these pheasants no longer exist in the country and has been since 1990. Large inflows of pheasants (*Mongolicus* and *Torquatus*) from farms in Czechoslovakia caused the hybridization of the native strain, including its last refuges, Yambol Region (including the Dolna Topchiya Nature Reserve)
- Greece: The European form of the wild subspecies is still present in the Nestos Delta, east of Greece. Unfortunately we did not know the size of the population, or its status.
- Turkey: an effort is made by the authorities to raise pheasants indigenous reinforced by imports of wild pheasants of neighboring Georgia, then release into the wild. These actions are carried out for six to seven years, and mainly the regions of Trabzon, Samsun and Istanbul. The general concept is the desire to restore the Natural Heritage of their Ancestors.

- Azerbaijan: in the heart of the Transcaucasia, the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Republic of Azerbaijan has created a large number of Nature Reserves which aim for some of them an effort Conservation and Restoration of wild pheasants. Michael Patrikeev [2] indicating that the decline of populations of pheasants back in the 1980s and early 1990s. However, their survival prospects remain high as long as their habitat impassable thickets of shrubs (*Tugai*) remains preserved in the valleys of the Kura River in particular. In the 90s, the strong tourism development has led to increased activities of hunting with pheasant releases of hybrids. Pheasants undrawn would not have survived. Professor Elchin Sultanov [3] also believes healthy small population of wild pheasants in Azerbaijan, but no research has been conducted for a long time, the country suffering from a lack of Ornithologists!
- Armenia: wild pheasants are protected in the border area with Iran in the south, militarized and banned from the population. Ring-necked pheasant and black francolin were introduced in the National Park Averik, created from 2005 by Professor Karen Manvelyan [4], for the Conservation of these species. The habitat is similar to that of the south.

- Georgia: Conservation actions unfold the more determined now in the Republic of Georgia. They are based on three recent studies [conducted by: John P. Carroll, Zurab Javakhishvili and Amiran Kodiashvili [5] which revealed the lack of pheasants in most sites formerly known for its abundance of wild populations. This sharp decline has been boosted by an increase in poaching in recent years. It must be said that the Georgian *chakokhbili* traditional dish is made with pheasant! Amiran Khodiashvili, one of constituent and Board member of « Friend's Association of Vashlovani Protected Areas » is the author and the project Director « Establishing pheasants breeding Center". Their NGO « Friends Association of Vashlovani Protected Areas » implemented this project. It implemented under Eco-Awards



2011, funded by BP, its oil and gas co-venturers BTC Co. and SCP Co., and HSBC Bank and administered by Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF). At the initiative of Amiran Kodiashvili, wild pheasants captured in Vashlovani Protected Areas, east of the country, are bred in captivity in order to reintroduce areas of original habitats. Restocking has already begun in the Reserve and must continue in the river valleys Alazani and Lori.

We must welcome this initiative and support it.

[1] Professor DSc Zlatozar Boev, Ornithologist, head of Vertebrates Department. Sofia University Bulgaria

[2] «The Birds of Azerbaijan» Patrikeev Michael. Editions Pensoft, 2005

[3] Professor Elchin Sultanov PhD ; member of Galliform IUCN SSGroup .
Director of Azerbaijan Ornithological Society.

[4] Professor Karen Manvelyan PhD-Director WWF-Armenia Team.

[5] a-«Observations on the Common Pheasant, *Phasianus colchicus* in the Alazani River Valley, Republic of Georgia» John P.Carroll, Brant C.Faircloth [Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, University of Georgia, Athens GA 30602 USA] & Revaz Machaidze.[Georgian Faunal Protection Society , Tbilissi 380060 , Republic of Georgia]

b-«Status of *Phasianus colchicus* populations in Kolkheti National Park» Zurab Javakishvili
Researcher, PhD Student, Institute of Ecology, Iliia State University. Tbilisi 0162, Georgia.

c-«Status of *Phasianus colchicus* populations in Vashlovani Protected Areas». Amiran Kodiashvili.