

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE BIRD

The **Ruffed Grouse** is the state game bird, as enacted by the General Assembly on June 22, 1931.



The Pennsylvania ruffed grouse, sometimes called the partridge, is distinguished by its plump body, feathered legs, and mottled reddish-brown color. This protective coloring makes it possible for the ruffed grouse to conceal itself in the wilds.

From *The Pennsylvania Manual*.

The State Bird of Pennsylvania, by John James Audubon, R.R. SS. L. & E.

VOLUME V. The Ruffed Grouse **TETRAO UMBELLUS**, Linn. [*Bonasa umbellus*.]

PLATE CCXCIII.--MALES AND FEMALE.

You are now presented, kind reader, with a species of Grouse, which, in my humble opinion, far surpasses as an article of food every other land-bird which we have in the United States, except the Wild Turkey, when in good condition. You must not be surprised that I thus express an opinion contradictory to that of our Eastern epicures, who greatly prefer the flesh of the Pinnated Grouse to that of the present species, for I have had abundant opportunity of knowing both. Perhaps, after all, the preference may depend upon a peculiarity in my own taste; or I may give the superiority to the Ruffed Grouse, because it is as rarely met with in the Southern States, where I have chiefly resided, as the Pinnated Grouse is in the Middle Districts; and were the bon-vivants of our eastern cities to be occasionally satiated with the latter birds, as I have been, they might possibly think their flesh as dry and flavourless as I do.

The names of Pheasant and Partridge have been given to the present species by our forefathers, in the different districts where it is found. To the west of the Alleghanies, and on those mountains, the first name is generally used. The same appellation is employed in the Middle Districts, to the east of the mountains, and until you enter the State of Connecticut; after which that of Partridge prevails.

The Ruffed Grouse, although a constant resident in the districts which it frequents, performs partial sorties at the approach of autumn. These are not equal in extent to the peregrinations of the Wild Turkey, our little Partridge, or the Pinnated Grouse, but are sufficiently so to become observable during the seasons when certain portions of the mountainous districts which they inhabit becomes less abundantly supplied with food than others. These partial movings might not be noticed, were not the birds obliged to fly across rivers of great breadth, as whilst in the mountain lands their groups are as numerous as those which attempt these migrations; but on the north-west banks of the Ohio and Susquehanna rivers, no one who pays the least attention to the manners and habits of our birds, can fail to observe them. The Grouse approach the banks of the Ohio in parties of eight or ten, now and then of twelve or fifteen, and, on arriving there, linger in the woods close by for a week or a fortnight, as if fearful of encountering the danger to be incurred in crossing the stream. This usually happens in the beginning of October, when these birds are in the very best order for the table, and at this period great numbers of them are killed. If started from the ground, with or without the assistance of a dog, they immediately alight on the nearest trees, and are easily shot. At length, however, they resolve upon crossing the river; and this they accomplish with so much ease, that I never saw any of them drop into the water. Not more than two or three days elapse after they have reached the opposite shore, when they at once proceed to the interior of the forests, in search of places congenial to the general character of their habits. They now resume their ordinary manner of living, which they continue until the approach of spring, when the males, as if leading the way, proceed singly towards the country from which they had retreated. The females follow in small parties of three or four. In the month of October 1820, I observed a larger number of Ruffed Grouse migrating thus from the States of Ohio, Illinois and Indiana into Kentucky, than I had ever before remarked. During the short period of their lingering along the north-west shore of the Ohio that season, a great number of them were killed, and they were sold in the Cincinnati market for so small a sum as 12 1/2 cents each.

Read more at: <http://www.50states.com/bird/grouse.htm> (source)