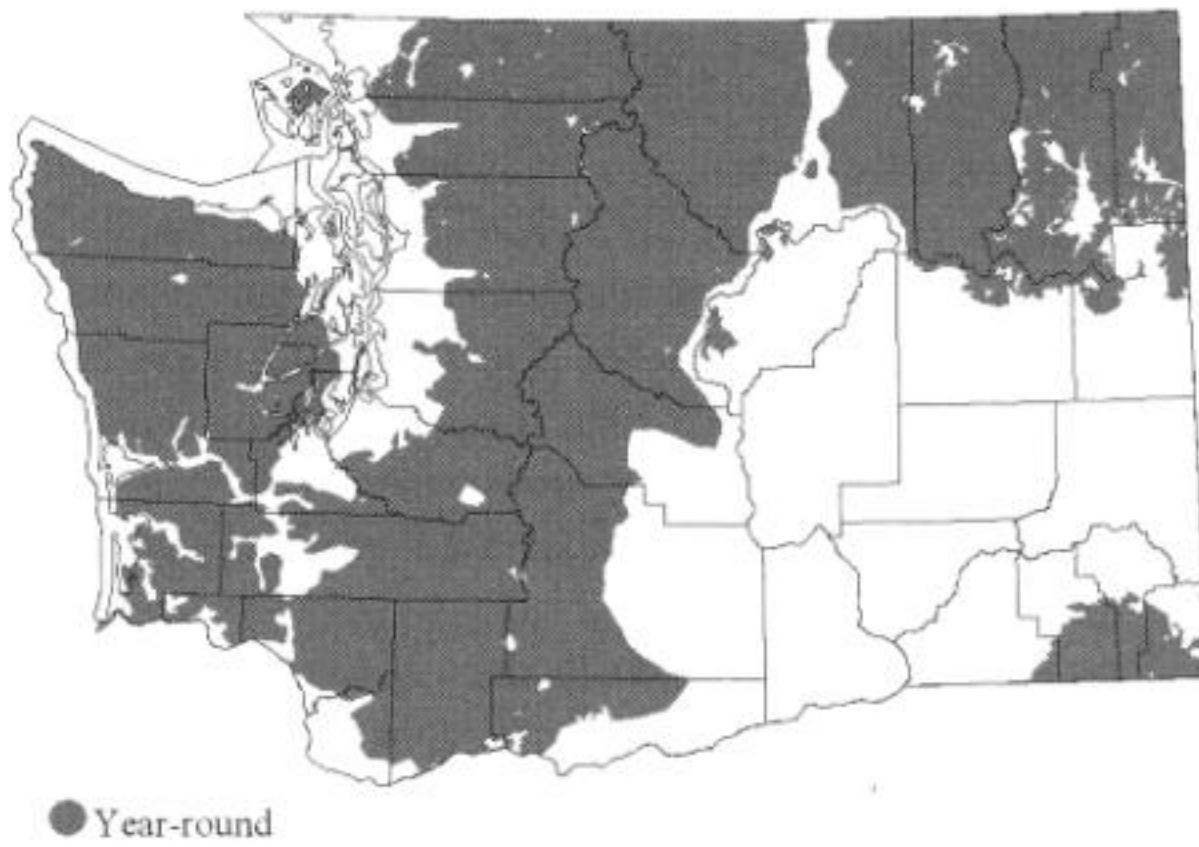


Blue Grouse*Dendragapus obscuru*

Widespread, fairly common resident in shrub and forest habitats of Washington.

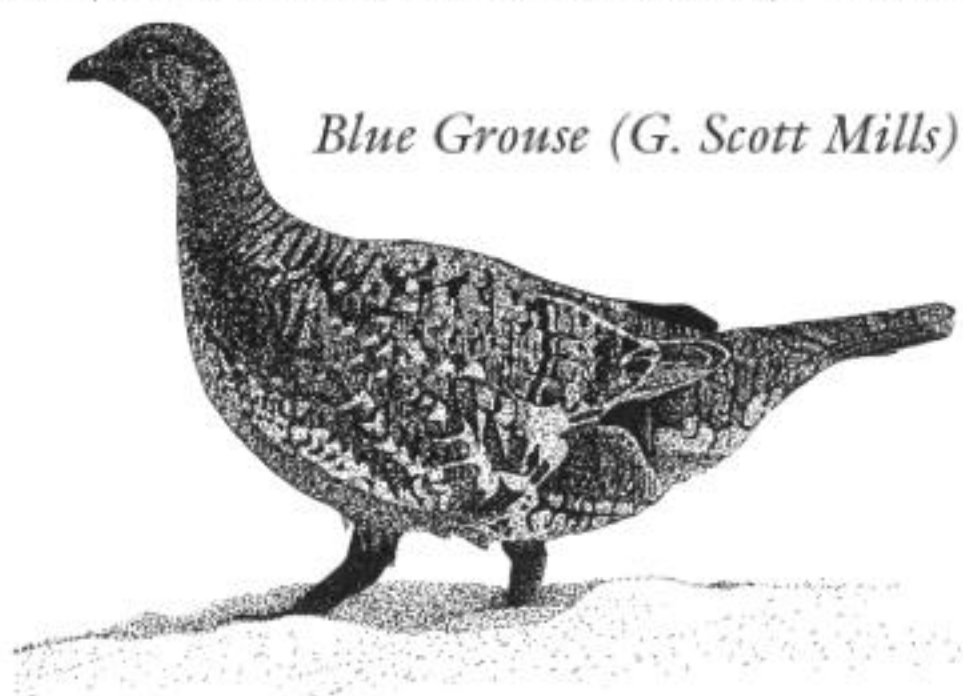


Subspecies: Sooty Blue Grouse, *D. o. fuliginosus*, in higher portions of Cascades in n. Washington and areas w. of Cascades, Sierra Blue Grouse, *sierrae*, in s. Cascades, and Oregon Blue Grouse, *pallidus*, in e. Washington including e. slopes of n. Cascades.

Habitat: *D. o. pallidus* found in shrub-steppe, meadow steppe, Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, aspen, western larch, and pine-spruce forests; not in steppe habitats in winter. *D. o. fuliginosus* resident in forest communities from sea level to alpine; *sierrae* in alpine/subalpine forest communities. Sooty and Sierra Blue grouse tend to be more arboreal than Oregon Blue Grouse.

Occurrence: Breeds over much of montane region throughout w. N. America, generally between Ruffed Grouse at low elevations and Spruce Grouse in higher forests, though overlap and outright exceptions occur in certain habitats (Jewett et al. 1953, Smith et al. 1997). Fairly common in many regions of Washington except large expanses of relatively flat shrub-steppe habitat.

Mostly solitary but loose flocks of broods may form in late summer, and small flocks may form during winter. Birds mainly terrestrial in breeding season, more arboreal in winter. Varied diet in summer (leaves, flowers, invertebrates), winter diet



Blue Grouse (G. Scott Mills)

primarily consists of conifer needles such as Douglas-fir. Although some are resident at upper elevations, most migrate between relatively low-elevation breeding ranges and high-elevation winter sites. Seasonal shift in habitat use particularly dramatic for Oregon Blue Grouse. Birds depart winter range late Mar to mid-Apr, depart breeding range mid-Jun to late Oct. Fifty percent of movements are greater than 8 km in n. c. Washington; longest known movement 50 km.

East of the Cascades, field surveys showed core areas of occurrence at Pinegrass and Jumpoff ridges in Yakima Co.; Manastash, Taneum, and Naneum ridges, Manastash, Robinson, and Reecer creeks, and Colockum Pass in Kittitas Co.; Chumstick Mt. and Chelan Butte in Chelan Co.; Methow and Chewack Rs., Harts, Freezeout, and Lone Frank Pass, Salmon Meadows, and Indian Dan Canyon, Chesaw, and Scotch Cr. Wildlife Areas in Okanogan Co.; Central Ferry Canyon Wildlife Area and Badger Mt. in Douglas Co. (MAS). BBA surveys found birds in forested w. lowlands, the Olympics, the Cascades, and e. to Pend Oreille and Spokane Cos., and Blue Mts. (Smith et al. 1997). In the San Juans they are found on Orcas and Stuart Is. (Lewis and Sharpe 1987) and nearby Lummi I. (Wahl 1995). Historical occurrence to nr. sea level suggested by current presence there on the Olympic Pen. (Smith et al. 1997) and records within recent decades nr. forested shorelines in Pacific and Whatcom Cos. (Wahl 1995).

Birds are occasionally observed in former portions of their range such as urban and agricultural habitats. Locally, birds may repopulate areas where logged-off forests are regenerating. Winter records include a few birds on CBCs at Leadbetter Pt. (18 in 1973), Grays Harbor, Sequim-Dungeness, Bellingham, N. Cascades, Chewelah, Spokane, Yakima Valley, and Kitsap Co.

Although populations in Washington have not been adequately monitored, available information indicates that overall trends are downward. Populations have been permanently eliminated in large areas of w. Washington due to residential development. Overgrazing by livestock may have a negative impact on Blue Grouse in e. Washington. BBS data showed a significant population decline in Washington ($P < 0.01$) from 1966 to 2000 (Sauer et al. 2001).

Remarks: Numbers taken by hunters are included in Forest Grouse in hunting harvest surveys, along with Ruffed and Spruce grouse (see WDFW 2000b, 2001). Classed PHS, GL.

Noteworthy Records: Birds hooting nr. mouth of Columbia R. in Pacific Co., 4 Jul 1973.

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