

Yard Chickens

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Image: Ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) in our front yard.

Our yard has been taken over by ruffed grouse, or “yard chickens”, as Ken calls them. They are very tame and not terribly bright, but otherwise add some excitement to the yard. I can pretty much walk up to them, and they will gradually drift away from my feet making little chuckling noises to themselves. We nearly had to rescue one which had become very determined to walk through the netting I had set up for my peas to climb on. That piece of netting was neither very long nor very high, but the grouse just couldn't conceive of the notion that it could fly over or walk around the obstacle. Eventually, it managed to force the net up and push its way underneath. It's amazing

that these critters survive the predators outside our electric fence. In fact, it's probably a good guess that they are hanging out in our yard because the electric fence provides them some degree of protection, at least from the larger four-footed predators.



Image: *Ruffed grouse dozing in the Saskatoon tree.*



Image: *As Christmas approaches, some people might be thinking about a “partridge in a pear tree”, but for us, it might be more like a “grouse in a plum tree”. Interesting enough, the ruffed grouse is the “partridge” of most Canadian hunters. So maybe we are closer than we think.*

Unfortunately, the downside of having a flock of grouse in our yard is that they have developed the

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belief that our winter garden was planted specifically to provide them with choice nibbles. So, we have taken to shooing them out of the garden, although they are welcome to roam elsewhere around (and under) the house.