

Pheasant Hunting Prospects, 2009

Agriculture and Grassland Program Management Note 09-4

2008-2009 Hunting Season

Our harvest estimates are based upon results from the 2008-09 Illinois Hunter Harvest Survey. An estimated 29,016 hunters harvested 103,399 pheasants. The number of hunters afield was 19.3% lower than last year. Harvest was about the same as last year (up 0.6%). Daily harvest per hunter was up 25.9%. That means that even though fewer people hunted pheasants last season, those that did were much more successful.

Table 1. Pheasant hunter participation and success 2003- 2009.

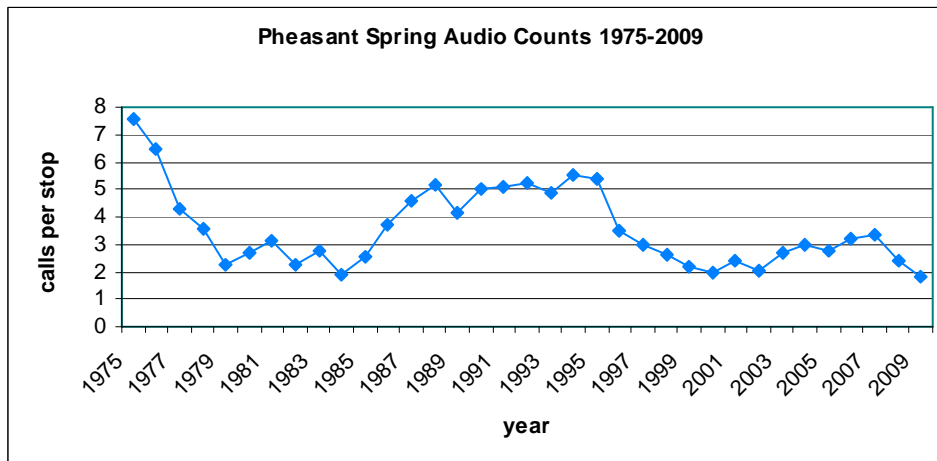
Season	Harvest	Hunters	Average Pheasants/Trip	Average Pheasants/Season	Average Days/Season	Total Days Hunting
2003-04	181,976	50,592	0.66	3.6	5.42	274,287
2004-05	200,059	55,075	0.67	3.63	5.44	299,696
2005-06	146,961	44,430	0.67	3.31	4.93	218,888
2006-07	118,763	38,509	.72	3.08	4.26	164,067
2007-08	102,822	35,961	.58	2.86	4.95	177,887
2008-09	103,399	29,016	.73	3.56	4.86	140,911
Percent change 2008-2009	+0.6%	-19.3%	+25.9%	+25.5%	-1.8%	-20.8%

Pheasant Population Indices

IDNR staff conducted 54 spring pheasant audio counts in May. Observers heard 16.4% fewer calls in 2009 (37% below the five year average). The largest declines were recorded in the southern part of the pheasant range.

Conversely, observers conducting the North American Breeding Bird Survey in June heard 27% more pheasants than in 2008. The change was not statistically significant.

Figure 1. Spring pheasant audio counts 1975 - 2009.



Weather

Overall, winter weather was colder than average (2.4 degrees). On average, there were 14 (8.3%) more days of snow cover and 3.7 inches (3.6%) less snowfall than the previous winter.

It was much wetter this nesting season. Rainfall was 4.1 inches above average. Spring temperatures were only slightly cooler than average.

2009 Season Outlook

It appears that pheasant numbers will be below or about the same as last year. Hunters that have access to good habitat could still enjoy a successful season. Due to the wet spring, it is likely that some crops may still be in the field during part of the season. This may make hunting more difficult until the crops are harvested.

Best Areas

Look for farms with unharvested grassland in fields, field borders, ditch banks, terraces or filter strips. The most productive areas for pheasant hunting continue to be in east central and northern Illinois. Based on the annual average harvest from 1997 through 2002, some of the top counties are: Ford, Iroquois, Livingston, McLean, Carroll and Whiteside.

Season Dates

November 7, 2009 - January 8, 2010 (North)

November 7, 2009 - January 15, 2010 (South)

Hours

Sunrise to Sunset

Bag Limits

2 per day with 6 in possession after third day



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