

**DATES TO
REMEMBER:**

Pheasant Opener
October 10, 2009

DNR/PF Youth Hunt
October 24, 2009

Next SCPF Meeting
November 2, 2009

2010 Pheasant Fest
February 26 - 28, 2010

2010 Stearns Banquet
February 27, 2010

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The Rooster

Review

VOLUME 2 — ISSUE 3



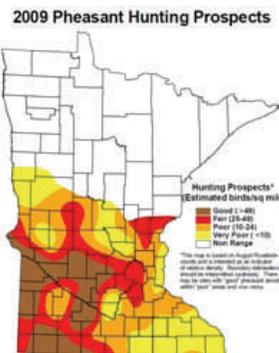
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2009 Pheasant Forecast

[Click here for full survey](#)

Minnesota pheasant hunters, who in recent years have experienced some of the best hunting since the mid-1950s and early 1960s, are expected to harvest fewer birds this autumn. That according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' (DNR), whose wildlife staff report the state's pheasant index is down 27 percent from last year and 27 percent below the 10-year average. The index had been above average for the past four years. Dennis Simon, DNR Wildlife section chief, said three factors influenced this year's bird numbers. First, last winter's weather

was moderately severe throughout much of the



pheasant range for the first time since 2001. This resulted in hen counts 22 percent below the 10-year average. Second, 72,000 acres of private land was removed from the Conservation Reserve

Program, thereby reducing nesting opportunities. And third, a period of cool and wet weather at the normal peak of pheasant hatch appeared to reduce early brood survival. "As a result, a decrease in the range-wide pheasant index is not surprising. South Dakota experienced a similar decline," said Simon. Pheasant hunters should find birds in about the same abundance as 2004, when 420,000 roosters were harvested. This compares with harvests that have exceeded 500,000 roosters five of the past six years. The half-million bird harvests correspond with a string of mild winters and

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Hunting Success, Harvest and Pressure

In most cases, hunting pressure, success and harvest are greatest during the early part of the season. For example, Iowa's greatest hunting pressure occurs in the first half of the 70+ day season, with 71% of the trips taking place during the first 30-34 days. It is common for 30-50% of the season's harvest to take place during opening weekend in many states.

The effect of hunting pressure on harvest may be dictated by season length or available cover. Short seasons may have heavy pressure throughout. When cover is sparse, birds are concentrated, allowing the harvest of a larger portion of roosters. In contrast, an abundance of escape cover, such as provided by delays in crop harvest, can make pheasants nearly impossible to

bag. These conditions can cause variations in hunting pressure throughout the season.



2010 Banquet is set!

The annual SCPF Banquet is set for February 27th, 2010 at Gerard's Banquet Center in Sauk Center, MN.

Check out upcoming issues of the Rooster Review or check out www.stearnspl.org for ticket information.

SCPF will again be pre-selling raffle tickets. More information will be available in the coming months.

Habitat Highlight**Sideoats Grama**

A medium-size perennial bunchgrass, 15 to 30 inches tall or occasionally taller. This is the largest and most coarse of the grama grasses. It has a bluish-green color, sometimes with a purplish cast (especially in the spring), and cures to a reddish-brown or straw color. Leaves are coarser than other species of gramas, straight, comparatively stiff, and mostly basal. Ten to thirty small, non-comb-like spikes are borne mostly along one side of each central seed stalk. These spikes drop when mature, leaving a long zigzag stalk. This species is used a variety of CRP seed mixes.



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www.stearnspl.org

2009 Pheasant Forecast Continued from page 1

high CRP enrollment. "Habitat is what drives populations and harvest rates," said Simon, noting that in 1958 - the height of the Soil Bank conservation days - the pheasant harvest peaked at 1.6 million. During 1965-86, the years between Soil Bank and CRP, harvest averaged only 270,000 birds. Kurt Haroldson, DNR wildlife biologist and chief author of this year's pheasant survey

report, said best opportunities for harvesting pheasants will likely be in the southwest, where observers reported 116 birds per 100 miles of survey driven. Good harvest opportunities might also be found in the west-central, central and south-central regions, where observers reported 65, 59, and 53 birds per 100 miles driven, respectively. This year's statewide pheasant index

was 59 birds per 100 miles driven. Simon said the most important habitat for pheasants is grassland that remains undisturbed during the nesting season. Protected grasslands account for about 6 percent of the state's pheasant range. Farmland retirement programs make up the largest portion of protected grasslands in the state. The effectiveness of Continued on page 4

What's the Deal with Stocking?

In the past 50 years, conflicting views have fueled debate over the effectiveness of stocking pen-reared pheasants to increase wild ring-necked pheasant populations. Most often, sportsmen have been on one side of this debate, wildlife biologists the other. This frustrates professional wildlife managers

because stocking of pen-raised birds is not an efficient means to increase wild bird populations. Developing and enhancing habitat, on the other hand, has proven to help increase ring-neck numbers. By definition, "stocking" is the

release of pen-reared pheasants into habitat where wild birds already are present. "Introductions" or

about stocking. This information is the product of research conducted by many states and countries. It also represents conclusions of thousands of landowners who have tried stocking without success.

What kind of survival rate can be expected from pheasants stocked in the summer or fall at 8-14 weeks of age?

On average, only 60 percent will survive the initial

week of release. After one month, roughly 25 percent will remain. Over-winter survival has been documented as high as 10 percent but seldom exceeds 5 percent of birds released.



Big Brothers Big Sisters and SCPF Partner for Youth

Central Minnesota Big Brothers/Big Sisters and Stearns County Chapter of Pheasants Forever hosted a youth mentor hunt at Fischer’s Kennel and Hunt Club. This opportunity was created to provide an understanding and appreciation for hunting, conservation, and the outdoors where there is a need and desire. “BBBS’s record of helping youth is the main reason for PF support,” said Joe Klein, board member of the Stearns County Pheasants Forever chapter and coordinator for this event. “We saw this as an opportunity to pass along the hunting tradition.” The day’s activities included gun safety, trap shooting, and an actual pheasant hunt followed by a lunch. Each Little and their Big were paired with a Stearns County Pheasants Forever volunteer along with their hunting dog while only the Littles

hunted. The day was a wonderful experience for the kids as well as the volunteers. “We are thrilled to be partnering with Big Brothers/Big Sisters,”



BBBS Hunt Photos

explained Ken Fruth, Youth Director for the Stearns County Chapter of Pheasants Forever. “Pheasants Forever is honored to work with an organization with Big Brothers/Big Sisters’ reputation and tradition to guide our youth in conservation and hunting ethics.”

This is the fourth year Stearns County Pheasants Forever has hosted this type of hunt. This has been made possible with donations from Xcel Energy, Dave Thelen, Roger Linz of Frito-Lay, Inc and Fischer’s Hunt Club.

Member Photos



2009 - SCPF sponsored shooting team at Wild Marsh Sporting Clays



Aaron Meyer with his 2007 MN buck.

Farm Bill Update

I recently took a short break from meeting with private landowners to meet with legislators and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) representatives on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. The meetings focused on the success of the Farm Bill Biologist program and the need for more Farm Bill Biologist positions in additional states to maximize wildlife habitat impact.

Farm Bill Biologists touting the program included Kelsi Niederklein of North Platte, Nebraska; Matt Morlock of Brookings, South Dakota; J.D. Armstrong of Eau Claire, Wisconsin and myself. The four of us represent Pheasant Forever’s improved model of conservation program delivery. Designed to educate farmers and landowners about the benefits of

conservation programs, as well as assist those farmers and landowners after programs have been implemented, Pheasants Forever first began employing Farm Bill Biologists in 2003 and now has 36 Farm Bill Biologists working in six states. In just over six years, Farm Bill Biologists have contacted and consulted 28,065 landowners, resulting in the improvement of nearly 1.3 million acres!



Stearns County Farm Bill Biologist
Jason Selvog

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2009 Pheasant Forecast *Continued from page 2*

farmland conservation programs remains under threat due to continued high land rental rates and competing economic opportunities. This year's 72,000-acre loss of CRP in Minnesota's pheasant range followed a 38,000-acre loss last year. Another 63,000 acres of CRP contracts are scheduled to expire in Minnesota on Sept. 30.

Simon said if Minnesota is to avoid a drastic decline in pheasant and other farmland wildlife populations, hunters, landowners, wildlife watchers and conservationists must make the case for farm conservation programs. Although CRP was reauthorized in the current farm bill, its success will depend on the rules for implementation. Conservation organizations such as Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited and many others can help hunters and wildlife enthusiasts stay informed of the latest developments.

The DNR is a major partner in the Farm Bill Assistance Partnership to expand the habitat base through marketing of farm bill conservation programs in partnership with Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, Pheasants Forever, and county Soil and Water Conservation Districts. In addition, the DNR is continuing a focused habitat effort to develop large grassland wetland complexes through a "Working Lands Initiative" with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other partners. New funding from the constitutionally dedicated Outdoor Heritage Fund is expected to accelerate acquisition of Wildlife Management Areas and Waterfowl Production Areas beginning in 2010.

The August roadside survey, which began in the late 1940s, was standardized in 1955. DNR conservation officers and wildlife managers in Minnesota's farmland region conduct the survey during the first two weeks in August. This year's survey consisted of 170 routes, each 25 miles long, with 152 routes located in the ring-necked pheasant range. Observers drive each route in early morning and record the number and species of wildlife they see. The data provide an index of relative abundance and are used to monitor annual changes and long-term trends in populations of ring-necked pheasants, gray partridge, eastern cottontail rabbits, white tailed jackrabbits and selected other wildlife species.