

**DATES TO
REMEMBER:**

Pheasant Opener
October 13, 2012

DNR/PF Youth Hunt
October 20, 2012

Next SCPF Meeting
November 28, 2012

2013 Pheasant Fest
February 15 - 17, 2013

2013 Stearns PF Banquet
March 2, 2013

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2012 Pheasant Forecast

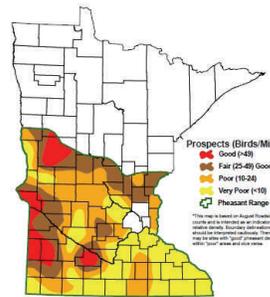
[Click here for full survey](#)

A mild winter followed by a warm spring contributed to a significant increase in Minnesota's pheasant count, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The pheasant population index increased 68 percent from 2011. Pheasant hunters are expected to harvest about 290,000 roosters this fall. That's up from last year's estimated harvest of 204,000, but roughly half the number taken during the 2005-2008 seasons when hunting was exceptionally good. "While the 2012 increase reflects movement in a positive direction, the

counts still remain 51% below the 10-year

2012 Pheasant Hunting Prospects



average," said Kurt Haroldson, the DNR biologist who compiled the survey. While favorable weather worked in the birds' favor this year, their long-term success is more closely linked to habitat

than annual variations in snowfall, rainfall and temperature. "The state's pheasant population is linked more closely to quantity and quality of habitat than annual differences in weather," Haroldson said.

The pheasant population estimate is part of the DNR's annual roadside wildlife survey. The survey summarizes roadside counts of pheasants, gray (Hungarian) partridge, cottontail rabbits, white-tailed jackrabbits and other wildlife observed in the early morning hours during the first half of August throughout the farmland region of Minnesota.

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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.



2013 Banquet is set!



The annual SCPF Banquet is set for March 2, 2013 at the Freeport Community Center in Freeport, MN.

Check out upcoming issues of the Rooster Review or check out www.stearnsfpf.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 grammas, 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.



Check Us Out On the Web
www.stearnsfpf.org

2012 Pheasant Forecast Continued from page 1

The highest pheasant counts were in the west central region, where observers reported 58 birds per 100 miles of survey driven. Hunters will find good harvest opportunities in portions of west central, east central and southwest Minnesota.

The most important habitat for pheasants is grassland that remains undisturbed during the nesting season. Protected grasslands account for

about 6% of the state's pheasant range. Farmland retirement programs such as Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CRP), Reinvest in Minnesota and Wetlands Reserve Program make up the largest portion of protected grasslands in the state.

High land rental rates and competing uses for farmland diminish the economic attractiveness of farmland conservation programs. During the

next three years, contracts for 620,000 acres of CRP lands are scheduled to expire. If not re-enrolled, this would reduce CRP acres in Minnesota by 42%.

Minnesota's pheasant population largely has mirrored what's happened on the land. "Pheasant numbers were higher during the small, diversified farming days from roughly
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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 "transplants" are different. These refer to the release of birds into areas where birds are not generally present, using management that has been studied very

thoroughly. The following is the most commonly asked question 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.



Partnership Helps Improve Wildlife Habitat

Since 2003, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) has partnered with the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR), Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) and Pheasants Forever Inc. to administer a Farm Bill Assistance grant program to help implement the USDA Farm Bill. In 2012, that partnership expanded to include USDA and the Minnesota Environmental Trust Fund. The purpose of the partnership is to promote and implement conservation programs that result in more grassland and wetland acres for water quality and wildlife habitat. Several grants have been awarded to Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) to hire staff for the promotion and implementation of the USDA Farm Bill conservation programs. "Pheasants Forever applauds this effort to establish and manage conservation practices on the ground within the

pheasant range." said Eran Sandquist, Pheasants Forever, Regional Biologist. "USDA farm programs help shape the landscape for pheasants, ducks, deer, and other wildlife found in agricultural areas. By restoring wetlands and grasslands and providing buffer strips, we can improve water quality, reduce erosion, and increase the abundance of fish and wildlife," added Sandquist.

In 2004, the Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) initiated CRP promotion partnerships with several local groups. The Stearns County Chapter of Pheasants Forever was one of these local groups that donate funds to help hire a Farm Bill Biologist to promote Farm Bill Programs.

"This partnership allows Stearns County SWCD to identify high priority areas," said Steve Sellnow – Stearns County Chapter President. "Working with local groups is a great benefit because we

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Hunting Conservation Acres

Fall is upon us bringing with it cooler days and longer nights. We are starting to see the harvest machines dot the landscape and hunters stalking game through the fields and woodlands.

It is important for hunters to review state regulations and property laws. All hunters need to be knowledgeable of the laws governing the land they intend to hunt, specifically land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), or the Reinvest In Minnesota program (RIM).

Landowners enrolled in these programs retain the right to control all access to their property. If they choose, the land can be posted and all hunting prohibited. If a landowner requests that you leave the property, you must do so or you are in violation of trespass laws. Always ask permission before entering private land. **You need permission to hunt on CRP, CREP and RIM land.**

Some of these lands may be enrolled in the Minnesota [Walk In Access \(WIA\)](#) program, which allows public hunting, however, WIA lands will be posted as such. Trespassing is a misdemeanor, and if convicted you could lose your license to hunt and be subject to additional fines and punishments. All conservation and peace officers enforce trespass laws. Remember, your actions reflect on all hunters. You can view the Minnesota DNR Trespass Law by going to following website: [Hunting and trapping regulations: Minnesota DNR](#)



Stearns County Farm Bill
Biologist
Jason Selvog

There are over 1.7 million acres of
Continued on page 4

Member Photos



2012 - Nate and Emma Hylla on a hike at Maplewood State Park



2012 Briggs Lake Nursery Sporting Clays Team 2nd Place Class C
(LtoR) Mark Volkmuth, Jason Selvog, Shane Lund, Dave Knafla, Wayne Cymbaluk, Jason Ramert
Not pictured: Ross Reiffenberger & Chad Bloom.

Advertisements

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Pheasants Forever



**Renew Your
Membership
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Gun Raffle Winners

[Click here to see who won](#)

Hunting Conservation Acres

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CRP, CREP and RIM in Minnesota that have been established to grasses and trees to protect the soil, improve water quality, and provide cover for wildlife. The habitat created through grass and tree plantings provides food and cover for wildlife to survive and flourish. However, hunting of the game present is a secondary benefit for those who choose to hunt or allow hunting on their conservation acres.

Lastly, support the conservation efforts of our neighbors and the many private and public organizations that expend an enormous amount of time and money to improve and protect wildlife and their habitat. Encourage a friend or family member to join Pheasants Forever.

2012 Pheasant Forecast

Continued from page 2

1931 to 1964 when habitat was more abundant," Haroldson said. "Pheasant numbers declined during the intensive farming boom from 1965-1986 as field sizes grew and habitat shrank. Then, pheasant numbers rebounded when CRP began in 1987. However, enrollment in that program peaked several years ago, and further declines will not bode well for future pheasant populations."

To help offset continued habitat losses caused by reductions in conservation set-aside acreage, DNR has accelerated acquisition of wildlife management areas in the farmland region of Minnesota. DNR also supports habitat conservation on private lands by working with a variety of partners in the Farm Bill Assistance Partnership and Working Lands Initiative. More than 15,000 acres of private property have been opened to public hunting through the state's Walk-In Access program.

The August roadside survey, which began in the late 1940s, was standardized in 1955. DNR conservation officers and wildlife managers in the farmland region of Minnesota conduct the survey during the first half of August. This year's survey consisted of 171 routes, each 25 miles long, with 152 routes located in the ring-necked pheasant range. The complete report is **available online**.

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 other select wildlife species.

The gray partridge index also increased from last year and is similar to the 10-year average. The cottontail rabbit index remains below the 10-year and long-term average. The jackrabbit index was 96% below the long-term average. Finally, the mourning dove index was 36% above last year but similar to the 10-year average.

Partnership Improves Wildlife Habitat

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have some knowledge of where these programs are needed within our areas, and in many cases, have names of landowners that have expressed interest", said Sellnow.

Since 2004, the Stearns SWCD partnerships have helped enroll over 22,000 acres of land into the CRP. Dennis Fuchs, administrator of the Stearns County SWCD, can attribute their success to the SWCD's ability to house a Farm Bill Biologist to help market USDA Farm Bill programs. "This opportunity gives us the ability to reach more people and implement more conservation," said Fuchs.

Approximately 38 Soil and Water Conservation Districts are involved in the state's Farm Bill Assistance program and they are seeing an increased enrollment in conservation practices such as filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restorations and living snow fences. These conservation practices help improve water quality and wildlife habitat. To date the Farm Bill Assistance program has helped enroll over 350,000 acres into conservation programs throughout Minnesota.