

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
WILDLIFE DIVISION
LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909

Report No. 2801
January 4, 1978

THE 1977 PHEASANT HUNTING SEASON

The 1977 pheasant harvest was down substantially from 1976 according to results of the opening day hunter survey and subsequent field observations. The 2,583 hunters contacted on opening day this year took 697 pheasants, or 0.27 pheasants each -- down 23 percent from the 0.35 birds per hunter on opening day in 1976 (Table 1). It also required more effort to bag a pheasant on opening day this year as hunters averaged 8.7 pheasants per 100 hours of hunting compared to 11.7 pheasants per 100 hours a year ago -- down 26 percent.

Most biologists felt hunting pressure was down from 1976, probably a result of the forecast predicting fewer pheasants and also the new written permission law, which went into effect this year. Many landowners, according to hunters, refused to give written permission because of their concern regarding liability.

Berrien County pheasant hunting continued to be good this year, perhaps best in the State (Table 1). Northern Lenawee County and the Fish Point Wildlife Area at Saginaw Bay both provided good numbers of birds but most other areas reported fewer birds than a year ago. Pheasants in most counties bordering Lake Michigan were down sharply. These counties included Ottawa, Allegan, and Van Buren, all good pheasant producers in recent years. The pheasant kill on the Farm Unit of the Allegan State Game Area in Allegan County was only 178 pheasants this year compared to 311 in 1976. We believe the past severe winter (worst on record) weakened hen pheasants to the point that many were unsuccessful to bringing off a brood.

Pheasants in the Fish Point Wildlife Area in Tuscola County continued to provide good hunting with 340 birds taken this year compared to 321 in 1976.

The pheasant harvest on the special pheasant management (mini) areas totaled 24 pheasants, bagged by 158 hunters. Although this was below a year ago, general feeling in the Thumb mini-areas was that pheasant numbers had actually increased but that the vast acreages of unharvested corn made birds more difficult to hunt effectively.

Hunting season weather was generally good, including opening day. Crop harvest, however, was far behind schedule with almost 90 percent of the corn and soybeans still standing on opening day. This compares with 25 percent of

the corn picked on last year's opener and 46 percent of the soybeans harvested. This cover provided a virtual refuge for pheasants during much of the hunting season, probably further restricting the total harvest. By season's end on November 10, corn was still only 60 percent picked (90 percent in 1976) and soybeans 75 percent combined (97 percent last year).

TABLE 1

1977 Pheasant Season
Opening Day Hunter Success

Area	Hunters	Hours	Pheasants	Pheasants/ Hunter	
				1976	1977
Allegan, N	214	631	64	.54	.30
Allegan Farm Unit	486	1,458	144	.39	.30
Barry, NE	14	16	1	.10	.07
Bay, E	59	226	18	.29	.31
Berrien	201	550	91	.43	.45
Clinton, E	51	124	4	.53	.08
Clinton, SW	55	157	18	.52	.33
Eaton, W	27	109	6	.35	.22
Fish Point	438	1,922	180	.39	.41
Hillsdale, E	42	77	4	.22	.10
Ingham	50	135	13	.40	.26
Isabella, E	43	134	9	.39	.21
Kalamazoo, SE	39	50	3	.16	.08
Lapeer, S	87	225	19	.19	.22
Lenawee, N	63	207	24	.28	.38
Macomb, N	62	93	5	.21	.08
Monroe, N	80	225	5	.14	.08
Newaygo	15	68	2	.36	.13
Ottawa, E; Kent, W	88	196	22	.24	.25
Ottawa, S	185	576	20	.41	.11
Saginaw, NW	8	15	3	.30	.38
Sanilac, SW	53	142	10	--	.19
St. Clair (Capac)	63	218	13	.32	.21
Shiawassee-Livingston	55	122	7	.30	.13
Wayne, W	105	334	12	.15	.11
TOTALS	2,583	8,010	697	.35	.27