

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
GAME DIVISION
LANSING, MICHIGAN 48926

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The 1970 Pheasant Hunting Season
by
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Michigan's pheasant hunters enjoyed their most successful hunting season since 1966, according to hunter interviews and observations from biologists and officers during the 22-day season. Rangewide, opening day success was well above that of 1969. A total of 2,595 hunters contacted hunted 6,534 hours and bagged 1,004 pheasants or .39 pheasants per hunter (15.4 pheasants per 100 gun hours). Success was up 18 to 28 per cent over 1969 when hunters took .33 pheasants each (12.0 pheasants per 100 gun hours).

Hunters were also interviewed on the first Saturday (October 24). As usual, success was down sharply from that of opening day and was even a little below success on the first Saturday a year ago. A total of 1,812 hunters checked had hunted 4,753 hours and killed 201 pheasants. Hunter success was .11 pheasants per hunter (4.2 pheasants per 100 gun hours) compared to .14 pheasants each (5.4 pheasants per 100 gun hours) on the first Saturday in 1969. We feel much of the poorer showing on Saturday this year was due to the fact that of hunters contacted in the survey a much larger proportion were hunting in poor pheasant areas.

Hunter satisfaction was much improved over a year ago as those afield reported more pheasants in 19 of 32 areas and reported only 4 areas as having fewer birds. Based on opinions expressed, even on the first Saturday when success dropped sharply, hunters felt that 18 areas had more pheasants than a year ago, 11 areas had the same number, and only 3 areas had fewer birds.

Most areas in the pheasant range showed an increase in hunter success on opening day (Table 1). Success, determined by pheasants per hunter and by pheasants taken per 100 gun hours, was up 17 to 40 per cent in the western area (Ottawa and Allegan counties); 27 to 55 per cent in the southwestern counties; 42 to 55 per cent in the central counties; and 25 to 36 per cent in the southeastern counties.

Thumb area hunters had about the same overall success as in 1969. Success was up a little in southwestern Sanilac County, in a few localities in Tuscola County, and along Saginaw Bay. The estimated kill at Fish Point was 200 birds, perhaps 15 per cent higher than in 1969. About half of these pheasants were taken on opening day. The Murphy Lake, Vassar, and Mayville areas had more pheasants this year than in the past three years. Residents in these areas were pleasantly surprised

at the number of ringnecks seen. Huron County and much of Bay, Tuscola, Saginaw, and Sanilac counties were again poor pheasant producers.

Success in the marginal pheasant range (Gladwin, Mecosta, and Newaygo counties) was well below that of a year ago.

Best area in the state (based on pheasants taken per hunter) was southern Ottawa County where hunters averaged .71 birds each on opening day. An excellent success-ratio average of over .5 pheasants per hunter was also recorded for Berrien, Macomb, and northern Allegan counties. Reports from Law Enforcement personnel showed hunters were still finding enough pheasants in mid-season to make hunting interesting in many parts of southern Michigan.

A total of 167 pheasants were killed at the Farm Unit of the Allegan State Game Area. This total is well above the 110 birds bagged here in 1969 (only 57 taken in 1968), and the best since 1964 when an equal number of birds were bagged. We must go way back to 1962 to find a higher pheasant kill, 175, on this area.

Bill Bartels, District Game Biologist in the southwestern area, reflected general feeling about the season in reporting pheasants were definitely up in the district, particularly in Berrien, Allegan, Kalamazoo, and Van Buren counties.

The pheasant kill at the Rose Lake Experiment Station near Lansing continued its downward trend. Only 67 birds were taken this year despite heavier hunting pressure than in 1969 when 77 birds were bagged. A total of 2,219 hunts and 5,324 hunter hours this year compares with 1,755 hunts and 4,075 hours in 1969. The past five-year average take at Rose Lake was 177 ringnecks. There was a definite late hatch at the station this year with 20 per cent occurring in July.

Table 1

Opening Day Hunter Success by Areas

Area*	1970		1969	
	Hunters checked	Pheasants per hunter	Hunters checked	Pheasants per hunter
Thumb	389	.27	274	.26
Southeast	468	.31	214	.24
Central	167	.31	83	.20
Southwest	143	.48	139	.31
Ottawa-Allegan	928	.61	714	.52
Northern fringe	48	.10	44	.27
Entire Range	2,595	.39	2,353	.33

*Counties included:

Thumb - Bay, Genesee, Huron, Lapeer, Saginaw, Sanilac, St. Clair, and Tuscola counties.

Southeast - Hillsdale, Jackson, Lenawee, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties.

Central - Clinton, Eaton, Gratiot, Ingham, Ionia, Livingston and Shiawassee counties.

Southwest - Barry, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, and Van Buren counties.

Northern - Gladwin, Mecosta, and Newaygo counties.

Rainy weather occurred several days during the 22-day season, including the afternoon of the opening day. However, there were several days of good hunting weather in early season and again later on and temperatures were generally above normal. No snow fell during the season.

According to Crop Reporting Service, about 45 per cent of the corn was harvested by the October 20 pheasant season opener, compared to only 18 per cent a year ago. About half the soybeans were threshed, similar to 1969. By the end of October, 60 per cent of the corn was down but little additional bean acreage was harvested because of wet weather.

Apparently, pheasants nested rather successfully in 1970. Cold, wet weather occurred in the first half of April, but unusually warm weather prevailed the last of April and the first part of May. Although there were a few days of below normal temperatures in mid-May, above normal temperatures occurred from the latter part of May through the middle of June.

Table 2
 1970 Pheasant Season
 October 20 (Opening Day) and October 24 (Saturday)*

Area	Hunters checked	Hours hunted	Pheasants killed	Pheasants per hunter	
				1969	1970
Allegan (north)	181	386	101	.66	.56
	48	87	10	.29	.21
Allegan (south)	6	6	1	.00	.17
	0	0	0	.00	.00
Barry	4	30	0	.25	.00
	19	39	2	.10	.11
Bay	47	133	24	.18	.51
	13	24	1	.09	.08
Berrien	95	271	58	.34	.61
	76	147	15	.22	.20
Branch (northeast) & Calhoun (south)	18	40	3	.46	.17
	4	14	0	.00	.00
Branch (south, west)	12	23	7	.22	.58
Clinton (south) & Eaton (east)	15	35	7	.26	.47
	25	44	0	---**	.00
Fennville	185	370	76	.36	.41
Fish Point	94	242	33	.20	.35
	57	154	3	.12	.05
Genesee (east)	80	190	16	.66	.20
	35	118	1	.19	.03
Genesee (west)	47	130	13	.18	.28
	7	29	0	.00	.00
Gladwin	35	87	5	.34	.14
	10	12	0	.14	.00
Harsens Island	32	80	9	.15	.28
	29	61	4	.19	.14
Hillsdale (north) & Jackson (south)	66	140	24	.40	.36
	25	64	3	.45	.12
Huron	5	13	0	.00	.00
	17	60	1	.00	.06
Ingham (south-central)	75	209	28	.30	.37
	29	89	2	.17	.07
Ionia	14	22	1	.18	.07
	6	4	0	.20	.00
Jackson (northeast)	26	89	8	.20	.31
	20	46	2	.03	.10
Lapeer	76	164	11	.11	.14
	33	75	3	.16	.09
Macomb (north)	120	270	70	.32	.58
	256	921	39	.18	.15
Mecosta	3	6	0	.10	.00
Monroe (northwest)	108	237	18	.20	.17
	73	206	31	.10	.42

Area	Hunters checked	Hours hunted	Pheasants killed	Pheasants per hunter	
				1969	1970
Montcalm	16	37	1	.00	.07
	5	5	1	.00	.20
Muskegon	38	80	4	---	.11
	30	71	3	---	.10
Newaygo	10	35	0	.00	.00
	25	75	5	.25	.20
Oakland	54	151	1	.05	.02
	80	219	1	.33	.01
Ottawa (east) & Kent (southwest)	107	292	64	.44	.60
	78	178	15	.24	.14
Ottawa (south)	455	1,240	324	.56	.71
	139	385	25	.27	.18
Rose Lake	257	618	26	.13	.10
	273	684	3	.02	.01
Saginaw (north)	27	76	9	.00	.33
	13	30	1	---	.08
Sanilac (north)	9	30	0	---	.00
	16	35	0	---	.00
Sanilac (south)	93	251	22	.23	.24
	37	80	5	.10	.14
Shiawassee (north)	12	18	1	.04	.08
	17	31	0	---	.00
Shiawassee (south) & Livingston (west)	51	186	14	.27	.27
	35	118	5	.19	.14
Tuscola	14	28	1	.00	.07
	8	22	1	.00	.13
Van Buren	14	36	0	---	.00
	20	58	3	---	.15
Washtenaw (west)	94	302	22	.32	.23
	50	152	8	.19	.16

TOTALS	2,595	6,553	1,002	.33	.39
	1,608	4,337	193	.15	.11

*Top figures are for opening day; bottom figures for Saturday.

**A dash indicates no survey was conducted in that area in 1969.