

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
Game Division

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The 1966 Rural Mail Carrier Pheasant Brood Survey

By
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Mail carriers saw 10 per cent fewer pheasant broods in the 1966 survey of pheasant broods than they saw in 1965 and 24 per cent fewer than the five-year average. A total of 2,528 broods were seen by 623 mail carriers in the two-week period, July 25 through August 6, while driving over 400,000 miles through southern Michigan's pheasant range (Table 1).

Practically all of the decrease in number of brood sightings this year was in the Thumb counties (Table 2). Carriers saw 37 per cent fewer broods there than in 1965 and 60 per cent fewer than the five-year average. This year broods in the Thumb area were seen at the rate of 3.6 per 10 carrier days compared to 5.7 in 1965. Brood observations have dropped steadily in these counties in each of the last four years. Habitat destruction has been most noticeable in this area and the steady drop in pheasant numbers appears closely related to this loss of pheasant cover.

The only area to show a sizable increase in pheasants this year was in the southwestern counties which show a 40 per cent increase over 1965. Most of these counties, however, maintain relatively low pheasant populations, and the rate of brood sightings (2.1 per 10 carrier days) is still the lowest in the main pheasant range.

Observations in other areas showed populations about the same as a year ago with the exception of the counties to the north of the primary range. These marginal pheasant counties were down a little from 1965.

Only 23 per cent of the broods were in the 1/4 grown class. All the others were half-grown or more, indicating a good early hatch. Another indication of a successful hatch was that broods were down only 10 per cent in the total pheasant range while the breeding population this spring was down an estimated 25 to 30 per cent.

Carriers saw 5.1 chicks per brood during the survey this year, slightly above the 4.9 seen last year. Information from entire broods (recorded by biologists) show an average of 6.9 chicks in a brood during July, which is the same as tallied a year ago.

Table 1
Pheasant Brood Survey
1966 County Summaries

County	Carriers	Number of carrier days	Broods per 10 carrier days	Miles	Total		Lone hens	Cocks
					Broods	Chicks		
Allegan	23	273	1.9	16,946	52	250	25	9
Barry	12	144	1.5	8,148	21	94	8	7
Bay	8	94	2.0	5,693	19	83	7	8
Berrien -2	23	266	3.5	12,036	92	503	48	37
Branch -1	15	178	3.5	11,340	63	324	45	35
Calhoun -1	17	200	1.3	12,052	25	105	19	17
Cass -1	10	114	0.5	6,768	6	37	5	6
Clinton -1	11	116	2.4	7,977	28	119	18	6
Eaton -2	20	239	2.5	14,339	59	291	25	25
Genesee -10	14	163	4.2	8,862	68	336	47	6
Gratiot -1	16	191	1.2	11,339	22	115	5	13
Hillsdale -1	16	191	4.1	12,415	79	427	64	35
Huron	17	200	0.8	12,116	15	102	5	9
Ingham -3	17	198	6.7	10,654	132	884	35	54
Ionia -1	19	223	1.9	13,194	43	212	16	17
Jackson -1	16	188	4.1	12,031	77	338	40	20
Kalamazoo -2	13	154	1.9	8,558	29	168	11	5
Kent -4	22	255	1.7	14,317	44	200	35	14
Lapeer -1	14	165	4.4	10,608	72	373	22	22
Lenawee	20	235	6.0	14,413	141	588	85	59
Livingston -1	13	155	4.8	9,888	75	440	56	25
Macomb -1	9	96	15.8	6,406	152	965	67	71
Monroe -2	16	187	6.6	11,475	123	490	97	43
Montcalm -2	16	191	1.9	12,882	37	190	7	15
Muskegon -2	8	95	0.9	5,826	9	61	14	18
Oakland	17	195	2.7	9,412	53	264	28	19
Ottawa -3	19	217	9.7	13,521	211	1,147	72	32
Saginaw -3	19	216	2.0	13,557	44	188	16	17
Sanilac	24	274	5.6	17,890	153	787	47	18
Shiawassee	14	165	5.4	10,524	89	511	47	23
St. Clair	18	203	8.1	11,663	164	890	68	23
St. Joseph	11	131	1.0	7,998	13	92	8	7
Tuscola	16	191	1.6	13,344	30	124	21	7
Van Buren -1	20	232	1.9	14,305	45	220	20	27
Washtenaw -1	18	204	5.6	12,269	115	466	93	26
Wayne -1	10	117	4.0	5,103	47	202	24	7
Totals (primary pheasant range)	571	6,656	3.68	399,869	2,447	12,586	1,250	782
Gladwin -1	8	89	2.7	6,962	24	135	7	5
Isabella	5	59	2.0	4,228	12	40	7	10
Lake	2	24	0.0	1,740				1
Mecosta	10	120	2.7	7,882	32	156	20	10
Midland	6	65	0.5	4,258	3	12		
Newaygo	9	106	0.2	7,500	2	5		2
Oceana	4	48	0.4	2,844	2	7	4	5
Osceola -1	8	94	0.6	5,984	6	21	1	
Totals (northern fringe)	52	605	1.3	41,398	81	376	39	33

Table 2
Pheasant Brood Survey
Area Summaries

County	Broods per 10 carrier days		Percent change from 1965	Chicks per brood		Percent of hens without broods	
	1965	1966		1965	1966	1965	1966
Bay	2.9	2.0					
Huron	1.5	0.8					
St. Clair	9.3	8.1					
Saginaw	2.5	2.0					
Sanilac	11.0	5.6					
Tuscola	4.4	1.6					
Thumb	5.7	3.6	-37	4.7	5.1	29	28
Lenawee	4.9	6.0					
Macomb	15.9	15.8					
Monroe	6.7	6.6					
Washtenaw	5.4	5.6					
Wayne	5.6	4.0					
Southeast	7.0	6.9	Same	4.5	4.7	33	39
Clinton	3.3	2.4					
Eaton	3.8	2.5					
Gratiot	1.0	1.2					
Ingham	5.5	6.7					
Ionia	1.6	1.9					
Shiawassee	5.8	5.4					
Central	3.4	3.3	Same	5.7	5.7	33	28
Barry	1.5	1.5					
Berrien	2.6	3.5					
Branch	2.7	3.5					
Calhoun	0.8	1.3					
Cass	0.4	0.5					
Kalamazoo	1.5	1.9					
St. Joseph	0.5	1.0					
Van Buren	1.3	1.9					
Southwest	1.5	2.1	+40	5.1	5.2	40	36
Allegan	1.6	1.9					
Muskegon	1.2	0.9					
Ottawa	9.7	9.7					
West	4.8	4.9	Same	5.1	5.3	33	29
Total (primary pheasant range)	4.09	3.68	-10	4.9	5.1	33	34

Table 3
Rural Mail Carrier Survey
Summary of Results from 1946 to 1966 in Primary Pheasant Range

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of carriers</u>	<u>Total broods</u>	<u>Broods seen per 10 carrier days</u>	<u>Average brood size</u>	<u>Percent of hens with broods</u>
1946	282	2,208	5.04	6.4	59
1947	293	758	2.17	6.3	53
1948	507	1,719	2.85	6.2	63
1949	447	1,926	3.63	5.9	65
1950	515	2,206	3.60	6.3	63
1951	509	3,480	5.74	6.2	69
1952	471	3,075	5.49	5.9	68
1953	586	4,969	7.27	6.1	68
1954	589	5,274	7.68	6.1	70
1955	572	5,152	7.86	5.9	70
1956	587	4,365	6.74	5.8	63
1957	552	4,505	7.56	5.9	65
1958	537	4,200	7.09	5.9	66
1959	547	3,093	5.19	5.9	66
1960	573	3,812	5.95	6.0	68
1961	587	3,647	5.32	5.3	64
1962	573	3,866	5.73	5.7	70
1963	574	3,199	4.79	5.6	67
1964	584	2,974	4.39	5.4	71
1965	588	2,789	4.09	4.9	67
1966	571	2,447	3.68	5.1	66