

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
Game Division

Report No. 2150
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Rural Mail Carrier Pheasant Brood Count

The 1957 hunting season will probably be on a par with last year.

Results of the mail carrier survey indicate a 12 percent increase in pheasant broods this year. Broods seen averaged 7.6 per 10 carrier days compared to 6.7 last year, 7.8 in 1955, and 7.7 in 1954. At first appearance it would seem that production was up near the same high level of 1954 and 1955. However, this year it looks as though the hatching peak was about two weeks earlier than last year and this fact coupled with the mail carrier survey being run at the same calendar time as in 1956 accounts for part of the apparent rather high increase in brood production. Also, the number of hens with broods was about the same as a year ago, 65 percent this year and 63 percent last year. From 1951 to 1955 the average has been close to 70 percent.

The earlier hatching peak was determined by Game Division personnel in their brood aging counts and further confirmed by the large percentage of $3/4$ grown broods seen by mail carriers this year--43 percent compared to 32 percent in 1956.

Brood size remained about the same as it has for the past several years, with 5.9 chicks per brood seen this year, 5.8 in 1956, and 5.9 in 1955.

Considered by areas it appears that some gain in pheasant production was made in the southwestern, central, and Ottawa-Allegan areas. The Thumb and southeastern areas are down slightly from a year ago. Highest counts continue to be made in the Thumb (12.7) followed by the Ottawa-Allegan area (9.2), central counties (8.8), southeastern area (7.7), and the southwestern area (2.7). Reports from four Region II counties had an over-all average the same as last year.

The Farmer Cooperator survey agrees with mail carrier findings. Reports from 400 cooperators showed about the same number of nests, but 32 percent more broods while mowing. Again, the earlier hatching peak this year probably accounts for a sizable percentage of this apparent increase in broods seen per 100 acres mowed.

The spring crowing cock census this year indicated a 16 percent decrease from the spring of 1956. I believe this somewhat reduced breeding population has been largely offset by a slightly more successful nesting season and that our kill for the 1957 season will be just about the same as it was in 1956 when 1,126,000 pheasants were harvested.

The attached sheet gives summaries of the mail carrier data compared to previous years.

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VSJ/mm

RURAL MAIL CARRIER PHEASANT BROOD SURVEY

Table 1

Summary of Results 1946-1957

<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>% of Hens With Broods</u>	<u>Juv. per Ad. Hens</u>
1946	282	2,208	5.04	6.4	59 %	3.8
1947	293	758	2.17	6.3	53 %	3.3
1948	507	1,719	2.85	6.2	63 %	3.9
1949	447	1,926	3.63	5.9	65 %	3.8
1950	515	2,206	3.60	6.3	63 %	3.8
1951	509	3,480	5.74	6.2	69 %	4.2
1952	471	3,075	5.49	5.9	68 %	4.0
1953	586	4,969	7.27	6.1	68 %	4.1
1954	589	5,274	7.68	6.0	70 %	4.2
1955	572	5,152	7.86	5.9	70 %	4.1
1956	566	4,365	6.74	5.8	63 %	3.7
1957	523	4,505	7.56	5.9	65 %	3.8

Table 2

Distribution of Age Groups 1946-1957

<u>Year</u>	<u>1/4 Grown</u>	<u>1/2 Grown</u>	<u>3/4 Grown</u>
1946	24 %	44 %	32 %
1947	40 %	45 %	15 %
1948	32 %	46 %	22 %
1949	28 %	47 %	25 %
1950	35 %	47 %	18 "
1951	23 %	48 %	29 %
1952	26 %	46 %	28 %
1953	21 %	42 %	37 %
1954	23 %	42 %	35 %
1955	19 %	42 %	38 %
1956	23 %	44 %	32 %
1957	19 %	38 %	43 %

Table 3

Broods Seen by Area 1951-1957

<u>Representative Pheasant Areas</u>	<u>1951</u>	<u>1952</u>	<u>1953</u>	<u>1954</u>	<u>1955</u>	<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>
1. Thumb	9.95	9.44	12.87	12.77	14.11	13.29	12.72
2. Southeastern	6.68	8.14	8.52	9.32	9.08	7.73	7.70
3. Central	6.87	6.42	8.30	10.44	9.52	7.56	8.77
4. Southwestern	1.57	1.24	2.13	1.81	2.23	2.04	2.65
5. Western	7.67	7.48	8.72	9.27	10.28	8.06	9.15