

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING, MICHIGAN

Wildlife Division
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Review of the 1983 Grouse and Woodcock Season with Prospects for 1984

by
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The 1983 Season in Review

STATEWIDE

The 1983 statewide ruffed grouse harvest data has not been completed (computer program problems). Minnesota and Wisconsin harvest surveys for 1983 show a decrease from 1982. Based on hunter cooperator comments and wildlife biologists' field reports, Michigan harvest results are expected to show a decrease in 1983. Cooperators were in general agreement that this was a poor hunting year. Many expressed the view that ruffed grouse were at the bottom of their population swing.

Most cooperators commented that they never really encountered any woodcock flights as in past years. The special ruffed grouse hunter survey in 1983 shows these results.

	<u>1983</u>	<u>1982</u>
Hunter Days/Hunter	7.1	8.0
Harvest/Hunter	2.4	2.7
Harvest/Hunter Day	0.34	0.34

<u>Month (1983)</u>	<u>Hunter Days(%)</u>	<u>Harvest (%)</u>
September (16 days)	26.7	27.2
October (31 days)	46.8	45.3
November (14 days)	15.3	17.0
December (31 days)	10.5	10.5
January (1 day)	.7	0
Total 93 days	100.0%	100.0%

It is interesting to note that last December was one of the coldest in history. The previous December, 1982, was one of the mildest. It is too bad that this survey started one year too late. I can only speculate on the amount of hunter effort and its effect in that year.

Most of the cooperators (89%) hunt ruffed grouse and woodcock with dogs.

REGIONALLY

Region I (Upper Peninsula) - Ruffed grouse flush rates dropped from 1.30 per hour in 1982 to 1.11 in 1983, equalling 1973 and 1974 rates, which is well below the 25-year average of 1.37. Woodcock flush rates were down slightly in 1982 to 1.42 flushes per hour. This is above the 23-year average of 1.21 flushes per hour.

Region II (Northern Lower Peninsula) - Hunters flushed 1.68 grouse per hour down from 1.97 in 1982--the lowest since 1970 and below the 25-year average of 2.17. Woodcock flush rates were down from 2.22 to 1.62 for 1983, but still above the 23-year average of 1.27.

Region III (Southern Lower Peninsula) - Ruffed grouse flush rates dropped from 2.21 to 1.59 below the 25-year average of 2.19. Woodcock flush rates were also down from .85 to .54. this is below the 23-year average of .64 per hour.

GENERAL

As in 1981 and 1982, we asked hunter-cooperators to indicate their observations on three items-- 1) Overall Season Impression; 2) Grouse Food Abundance; and 3) Woodcock Abundance by Weekly Period. Most hunters cooperated and the combined results of their responses proved to be interesting and informative.

1) Season Impressions

Cooperating hunters were asked to rate the overall grouse and woodcock season. The request was to categorize impressions of the season on its own merits, i.e. not necessarily with the previous year. A summary of impressions is presented below by Region.

Hunter-Cooperator Impressions

	Good			Fair			Poor		
	1981	1982	1983	1981	1982	1983	1981	1982	1983
Region I	35%	14%	13%	38%	37%	28%	27%	49%	59%
Region II	42%	29%	11%	39%	40%	50%	19%	31%	39%
Region III	30%	27%	10%	43%	34%	29%	27%	39%	61%
STATEWIDE	37%	25%	11%	40%	38%	40%	23%	37%	49%

2) Ruffed Grouse Cooperator's Report on Grouse Food Abundance

<u>Grouse Food</u>	<u>Percent of Cooperators Indicating</u>		
	<u>Good Crop</u>	<u>Average Crop</u>	<u>Poor Crop</u>
Acorns	37%	37%	26%
Apples	50%	29%	21%
Beechnut	13%	75%	12%
Blackberries	50%	21%	29%
Cherry	67%	29%	4%
Gray Dogwood	38%	44%	18%
Grape	33%	45%	21%
Hawthorne	64%	27%	9%
Thornapple	44%	35%	21%
Wintergreen	38%	41%	21%

3) Woodcock Abundance

Cooperators were asked to record their observations on woodcock abundance by weekly periods in the counties they hunted. Most cooperators reported very poor and erratic flights during 1983

Prospects for 1984

Michigan should have a slightly better season this year than last. Drumming counts in Minnesota, Wisconsin and North Dakota suggest a slight improvement in the number of breeders. Field biologists, foresters, and other DNR employees generally report more brood sightings. Hatching weather ranged from good to excellent. A dramatic improvement is not expected, hunting will still be in the poor category.

Summer rain in parts of the north has stimulated the production of bumper crops of juneberry, cherries, hazelnuts, beechnuts, wild raisin, and other fruits. Black and pin oaks are showing less production than last. Red oak looks good in some areas, particularly in the more southern areas. Expect the birds to be spread out.

Resident woodcock are expected to be at about the same level as last year. Spring census routes showed a 7.1 percent increase in breeders but this is not considered to be significant. Central region trends of breeding woodcock show an increase of 1.3 percent. In areas of sparse rainfall, woodcock are concentrated in low areas and along stream borders. Hunters are reminded to report banded woodcock giving the location shot in detail.

With low grouse numbers again this year, hunters might do well to capitalize on hunting opportunities available on private land. Because hunting pressure is generally greater on public lands, the lower pressure on private lands may result in big dividends for hunters making the effort to acquire permission.

TABLE 1

Estimates from Postcard Poll

A. KILL

<u>Ruffed Grouse</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983*</u>
Region I	210,190	226,740	279,480	235,990	177,230	
Region II	372,700	353,610	328,330	336,710	215,260	
Region III	121,250	143,560	148,850	150,920	129,650	
TOTAL	704,140	723,910	756,660	723,620	522,140	
<u>Woodcock</u>						
Region I	67,500	42,570	51,440	58,820	54,460	
Region II	175,240	193,120	156,730	126,320	135,630	
Region III	66,260	86,140	91,420	66,300	68,660	
TOTAL	309,080	321,830	299,590	251,440	258,750	

B. NUMBER OF HUNTERS

<u>Ruffed Grouse</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983*</u>
Region I	46,270	44,000	45,120	44,760	41,190	
Region II	117,370	121,600	105,490	102,890	85,690	
Region III	60,240	65,600	70,030	67,750	65,660	
TOTAL	223,880	231,200	220,640	215,400	192,540	
<u>Woodcock</u>						
Region I	16,800	14,200	14,990	13,750	13,710	
Region II	50,320	52,200	43,870	38,370	37,360	
Region III	35,460	37,700	40,900	30,660	31,190	
TOTAL	102,580	104,100	99,760	82,780	82,260	

C. HUNTER DAYS

<u>Ruffed Grouse</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983*</u>
Region I	494,070	452,290	475,550	485,920	474,820	
Region II	899,730	881,500	754,909	758,050	619,010	
Region III	385,660	435,920	494,070	497,500	455,460	
TOTAL	1,779,460	1,769,710	1,723,710	1,741,470	1,549,290	
<u>Woodcock</u>						
Region I	168,190	121,700	131,680	134,100	144,040	
Region II	379,940	405,070	319,710	296,420	264,630	
Region III	200,830	222,100	268,770	203,730	199,030	
TOTAL	748,960	748,870	720,160	634,250	607,700	

*1983 Information not available at this time.

TABLE 2

Cooperators' Hunting Records - 1977-1983

	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
Number of cooperators reporting	13	239	216	236	219	193	203
Total hunting hours	4,039	8,680	9,052	10,497	10,275	7,535	7,875
Average hours each cooperator hunted	31	36	42	44	47	39	39
RUFFED GROUSE FLUSHED PER GUN HOUR							
Region I (Upper Peninsula)	1.76	1.32	1.84	2.21	1.81	1.30	1.11
Region II (Northern L. P.)	2.20	2.00	2.03	2.21	2.46	1.97	1.69
Region III (Southern L. P.)	2.61	2.40	2.68	2.56	2.33	2.21	1.59
WOODCOCK FLUSHED PER GUN HOUR (September 15 - November 14)							
Region I (Upper Peninsula)	1.73	1.65	1.19	1.52	1.23	1.75	1.42
Region II (Northern L. P.)	1.85	1.45	1.45	1.82	1.72	2.22	1.62
Region III (Southern L. P.)	.72	.64	.52	.72	.93	.85	.54

TABLE 3

Ruffed Grouse Flushed Per Gun Hour by Cooperators - by Half-Month Periods

	Region I					Region II				
	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
Sept. 15-30	1.73	2.20	1.35	1.10	.75	1.96	2.29	2.52	1.89	1.77
Oct. 1-15	1.53	1.79	1.71	1.24	1.14	2.17	2.25	2.51	2.05	1.58
Oct. 16-31	2.15	2.36	2.17	1.54	1.29	2.05	2.04	2.48	2.04	1.69
Nov. 1-14	2.58	2.86	2.48	1.63	1.47	2.03	2.18	2.38	1.85	1.95
Dec. 1-15	*	*	*	*	*	1.72	2.10	2.35	1.67	1.41
Dec. 16-Jan. 1		*	*	*	*	2.09	2.39	1.92	2.17	.76
SEASON AVERAGE	1.11					1.69				

Region III

	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
September 15-30	*	2.56	2.28	2.29	1.28
October 1-15	*	2.36	2.44	2.14	1.66
October 16-31	2.64	2.63	2.44	2.27	1.49
November 1-14	2.83	2.50	2.47	2.56	1.83
December 1-15	2.67	2.61	1.68	2.19	1.90
December 16-January 1	2.57	2.66	1.90	1.95	1.23

SEASON AVERAGE 1.59

TABLE 4

Woodcock Flushed Per Gun Hour by Cooperators - by Half-Month Periods

	<u>Region I</u>				
	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
September 15-30	1.18	1.74	1.53	2.23	1.24
October 1-15	1.27	1.98	1.61	1.84	2.15
October 16-31	1.80	1.43	1.01	1.30	1.30
November 1-14	.26	.05	.09	.22	.24

SEASON AVERAGE 1.42

	<u>Region II</u>				
	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
September 15-30	1.79	2.02	2.24	2.49	2.09
October 1-15	2.02	2.49	2.04	2.24	1.91
October 16-31	1.42	1.96	1.42	2.23	1.53
November 1-14	.45	.42	.26	.91	.55

SEASON AVERAGE 1.62

	<u>Region III</u>				
	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
September 15-30	*	1.74	1.09	.97	.76
October 1-15	*	1.66	1.10	.77	1.09
October 16-31	1.24	1.01	1.31	1.00	.87
November 1-14	.46	.69	.31	.52	.27

SEASON AVERAGE .54

Season Closed

