

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

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OPENING DAY OF THE 1975 PHEASANT SEASON

by

Victor S. Janson

The pheasant season opener, Monday, October 20, provided few surprises, producing a little better hunting than last year's opening day -- as predicted. A total of 3,288 hunters contacted hunted 10,587 hours and bagged 1,160 pheasants. These hunters averaged .35 pheasants each, up 20 percent from the .29 average the first hunting day of 1974. Expressed another way, hunters took 11.0 birds per 100 hours of hunting effort this year on opening day compared to 10.4 birds per 100 hours last year (up 6 percent). In 24 areas comparable with 1974, success was up in 14, the same in 4, and down in 6.

The success rate in the central area, including Clinton, Eaton, Ingham, Shiawassee and northwest Livingston, jumped almost 60 percent with hunters averaging .43 pheasants each compared to .27 last year. Hunter success increased 24 percent in the southwestern counties (Berrien, VanBuren, and Barry) over 1974 with .56 pheasants bagged per hunter compared to .45 in 1974.

The prime pheasant range of southern Ottawa County had more pheasants this year while its counterpart in northwest Allegan had about the same success rate as a year ago. A total of 176 pheasants were taken at the farm unit of the Allegan State Game Area, close to the 179 of last year.

Thumb areas provided generally low success -- with the important exceptions of Fish Point and several of the mini-areas recently acquired for pheasant management. We checked a few of the pheasant areas in Huron and Tuscola counties and were particularly impressed with one area (Peters-Kretchmer) where 34 hunters checked had bagged 18 birds.

Of 25 areas checked in the pheasant range, biologists felt 10 had more pheasants than last year, 13 had about the same number, and only two areas had fewer birds. Best success of these 25 areas was in Ingham, Berrien, Clinton, and VanBuren counties, in that order.

The fringe pheasant range in the northern Lower Peninsula was also better than last year. Isabella County birds provided good hunting as did birds in southern Newaygo County.

Wet ground conditions during the morning hours provided near ideal hunting over most of southern Michigan but moderate winds in the afternoon made dog work somewhat more difficult later in the day. Only 20 to 30 percent of the corn was harvested and about half of the soybeans. Many of the birds were in the grain fields by the 10 a.m. opening hour making them relatively unavailable. (Last year only 10 percent of the corn was down.)

Hunters generally expressed satisfaction over results of their hunts, stating more birds were being seen than last year in many of the areas checked.

A somewhat more complete report, including opening day results on specific areas will be prepared at the conclusion of the hunting season.

VSJ:sbm