

**DATES TO
REMEMBER:**

Pheasant Opener
October 11, 2008

PF/DNR Youth Hunt
October 25, 2008

Next SCPF Meeting
December 2, 2008

2009 Pheasant Fest
February 6,7,& 8, 2009

2009 Stearns Banquet
March 7th, 2009

INSIDE

THIS ISSUE:

2008 Pheasant Forecast 1

Pheasant Ecology 1

NEW CRP Available 2

Working Agricultural Lands 3

From the President 3

Member Photos 3

Advertisements 3

The Rooster

Review

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1



10/1/2008

2008 Pheasant Forecast

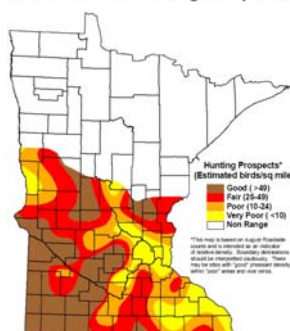
Despite a cool, wet spring that caused a 24-percent drop in Minnesota's pheasant index, the estimated number of pheasants in Minnesota remains at its 10-year average.

"The southwest likely will provide the best opportunities for pheasant hunters," said Kurt Haroldson, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wildlife research biologist. "Minnesota's west central, south central and east central regions also are likely to provide good pheasant harvest opportunities."

The annual August roadside count of wildlife

showed a pheasant index of 81 birds per 100 miles

2008 Pheasant Hunting Prospects



driven. The index exceeded 100 birds in 2005, 2006 and 2007. The 2007 index of 106 birds resulted in a harvest of 655,000 roosters, the highest pheasant harvest since 1964.

"Moderate winter weather throughout much of Minnesota's pheasant range increased hen counts above the 10-year average," Haroldson said. "But cool, wet weather from April to June resulted in only an average number of broods and fewer chicks per brood." This fall's pheasant population could be higher than the 10-year average if nesting efforts were delayed and hens remained on nests - or were caring for young broods - during the first two weeks of August. That's when DNR wildlife managers and conservation officers drove designated routes and counted animals for the survey.

Continued on page 2

Pheasants - Things you may not know

On average pheasants move $\frac{2}{3}$ of a mile between winter cover and nesting habitat, but some may move as much as $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Each rooster will typically breed 3-7 hens. Fierce battles between roosters are not common, as most disputes are settled with bluffing, but the sharp spurs and pointed beaks can be used as sometimes deadly weapons. Pheasants will have only one

brood per year, but if their nest or eggs are destroyed, they will try, try and try again to be successful. Nesting takes a lot of energy and with each re-nest the clutch size is decreased. Eventually, a hen's energy reserves are exhausted or not enough time remains during the nesting season for a hen to successfully hatch a nest and she will give up. Hen success

averages around 50% in areas without much nesting cover and more than 70% in areas where there is a good amount of nesting cover. Chick survival is the most sensitive parameter influencing proportional pheasant population increases. What this means is that improving brood habitat can have a very significant effect on pheasant populations.



Pheasants Forever strongly endorses voting YES for Minnesota's Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment on the November 4th ballot. Voting YES will ensure \$302 million for Minnesota's wildlife and conservation. Choosing not to vote on this amendment when you go to the polls will result in a vote of NO. The result of the November 4th voting will drastically impact Minnesota and Minnesotans far into the future.

Habitat Highlight

Big bluestem is a native warm season perennial grass which grows between 4 and 6 feet tall. The plants begin producing seed heads (inflorescence) in late summer. This grass reproduces by seed and also rhizomes. Big Bluestem is considered



one of the major forage producing grasses of the Tall Grass Prairie. This grass provides excellent escape cover and nest-

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2008 Pheasant Forecast Continued from page 1

"If that's the case, this year's survey may have undercounted pheasants," Haroldson said. "If not, hunters can expect an average-sized pheasant population but with relatively more adults and fewer juveniles."

The gray partridge index was similar to last year, but 55 percent below the 10-year average. Mourning dove indices also declined from 2007, the 10-year average, and

the long-term average. Cottontail rabbit and jackrabbit indices were similar to last year, but jackrabbit indices are well below 10-year and long-term averages.

The most important habitat for pheasants is grassland that remains undisturbed during the nesting season. Protected grasslands account for about 6 percent of the state's pheasant range. Farmland retirement programs make up the

largest portion of protected grasslands in the state.

"Hunters, landowners, wildlife watchers and others interested in maintaining and enhancing habitat need to support federal and state programs that provide economic incentives for habitat," Haroldson said. "Without those programs

Continued on page 4

New CRP Practice Available

A new Continuous Conservation Reserve Program practice is now available to landowners in Minnesota. The new

practice, titled State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE), also known as CP38, has 23,100 acres

available to Minnesota landowners. The program seeks to build upon existing wildlife habitats to enhance ringnecked pheasant, waterfowl, greater prairie chicken and other grassland bird populations. The conservation effort is expected to benefit bird species such as Henslow's sparrow, lark sparrow, loggerhead shrike, eastern meadowlark, bobolink, dickcissel, vesper sparrow, savannah sparrow and grasshopper sparrow.

Pheasants are an upland nesting bird preferring small blocks of undisturbed grassland nesting habitat. The pheasant is important

both socially and economically. In 2006, nearly 130,000 Minnesotans purchased pheasant



stamps, a license required to hunt pheasants in Minnesota. Pheasants are barometers of the environmental health of participation in conservation. In addition to being the primary limiting factor for pheasants, grasslands have been identified as among the nation's most threatened ecosystems. This threat is evident in Minnesota where less than one percent of native prairie remains.

Through the new CP38

practice, landowners enter into a 10 to 15 year contract and agree to establish grassland cover on the enrolled acres. In return, the landowner receives cost share for establishment, annual rental payments and a one time signing bonus. CP38 can be designed to square up odd shaped fields, hard to farm small fields or irrigation corners.

CP 38 Requirements

Size Requirements: 10-40 acre blocks of eligible cropland.

Stearns County Payment Rate: \$73 - \$106 per acre.

Contract Length: 10 -15 years.

Signing Bonus: One time payment of \$100 per acre.

Cost Share: up to 50% cost share plus 40% incentive payment to establishing the cover.

If you are interested in learning more about the CP38 program on your property please contact the USDA Service Center, (320) 251-7800 ext. 3 or go to www.stearnsfpf.org and go to the Habitat/Conservation tab to see a fact sheet on the program.

Working Agricultural Lands Provide Wildlife Habitat

The Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) sponsored a "Wildlife Habitat Management on Working Agricultural Lands" field day on Wednesday, June 25, 2008 from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. The field day was hosted by Chuck and Deb Uphoff, whose dairy farm is located near New Munich, MN. Chuck and Deb have implemented numerous best management practices on their farm. Currently, they are participating in the Conservation Security Program that rewards excellent farmers for their stewardship of natural resources. Working lands include cropland and grazing land in production. Chuck said, "We all know the wildlife benefits of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program, and other easement-type programs. The goal of this field day is to increase the public's awareness of wildlife habitat enhancements in working lands programs, such as the Conservation

Security Program." With the recent passage of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act



Chuck and Deb Uphoff

of 2008 otherwise known as the "farm bill", the Conservation Security Program is now called the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Over \$1 billion has been authorized for the CSP allowing the addition of millions of more acres. Dennis Fuchs, Stearns SWCD administrator, says "The benefits to wildlife habitat could be dramatic with the appropriate polices and incentives for farmers." Chuck added, "These working lands wildlife habitat provisions will become increasingly important with added pressure to bring additional acres into production."

Member Photos



Chad Bloom and his German Wirehair "Maggie"



Allison Thelen and dog Maddie with Allison's first pheasant

From the President: 26th Annual SCPF Spring Banquet

Save the Date! Plans are well underway for the 26th Annual Stearns County Pheasants Forever Spring Banquet which we are excited about hosting in a new location; the recently constructed and highly acclaimed College of Saint Benedict's **Gorecki Events Center** in St Joseph, MN. The banquet will be held on Saturday, March 7, 2009 with the traditional crowing hour beginning at 5:30 p.m. followed by a host of new and classic games, live and silent auctions, raffles and a delicious sit-down dinner served at 7:30 p.m. This year's banquet chairpersons, Joe Klein and Chad Bloom, who took over the role from last year's chairs of Ralph Feld and Joel Maleska, are confident that The College of Saint Benedict will provide a welcome atmosphere for all of our guests with an exceptional dining experience, media services, parking facilities and accessibility.

Stearns County Pheasants Forever has been very active throughout the past year with events including land acquisition, sponsor hunts, and youth events including the Big Brothers & Big Sisters hunt and a new youth pheasant hunt sponsored by the Minnesota DNR which will take place on October 25th 2008. We are looking forward to another successful spring banquet where we have the opportunity to share our past achievements and future goals with our members, sponsors and guests. Watch for details and ticket



Stearns Chapter President
Ralph Feld

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2008 Pheasant Forecast *Continued from page 2*

Minnesota would see a drastic decline in pheasant and other farmland wildlife populations. Another practice that would be a great help to farmland wildlife would be to delay mowing of roadsides until after Aug. 1.”

The August roadside survey began in the late 1940s and was standardized in 1955. DNR conservation officers and wildlife managers in the farmland regions of Minnesota conduct the survey annually during the first two weeks in August. This year’s survey consisted of 171 routes, each 25 miles long, with 152 routes located in the ring-necked pheasant range.

Observers drive each route in early morning and record the number and species of wildlife they see. The data provide an index of relative abundance and are used to monitor annual changes and long term trends in populations of ring necked pheasants, gray partridge, eastern cottontail rabbits, white tailed jackrabbits and selected other wildlife species.

The 2008 August Roadside Report and pheasant hunting prospects map can be viewed and downloaded from <http://mndnr.gov/roadsidesurvey>.

Minnesota’s pheasant season begins Oct. 11 and runs through Jan. 4, 2009. The daily bag limit is two roosters, with three roosters allowed from Dec. 1 to Jan. 4. The possession limit is six, with nine allowed from Dec. 1 to Jan. 4. Shooting hours are 9 a.m. to sunset.



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