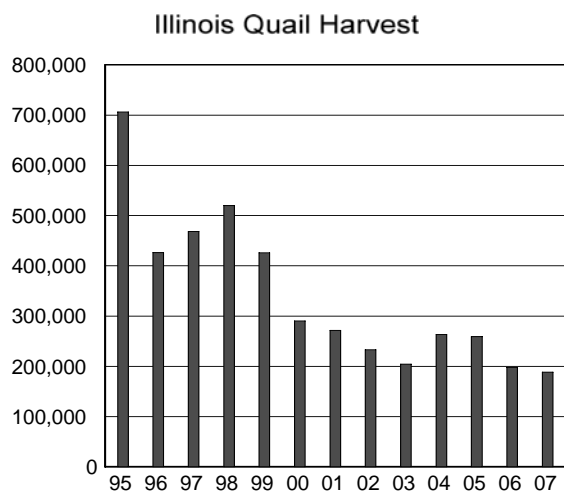


## Bobwhite Quail Hunting Prospects, 2008

### *Upland Wildlife Program Management Note 08-6*

#### **2007-2008 Hunting Season**

Last year, 24,614 hunters harvested 188,710 quail, a 5 percent decrease from the 2006-2007 season. This was 17 percent below the average of the last five years and 40 percent below the average of the last 10 years. Hunters went afield 141,227 days in 2007, an increase of 5 percent from 2006 and daily harvest increased 19 percent in 2007. Reduced hunter effort is an important factor in the decline in harvest.



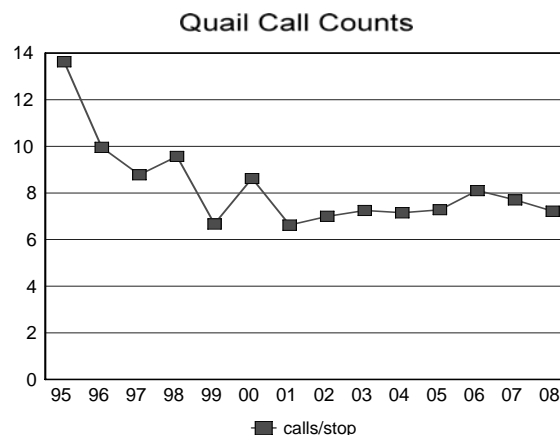
#### **Winter Weather 2007-2008**

Winter weather was normal in the west-central portion of the quail range and mild in southern Illinois. Temperatures were 1° below normal. The duration and depth of the snow cover was 36 percent below normal in west-central Illinois, 51 percent below normal in south-central Illinois and 94 percent below normal in southern Illinois.

#### **Quail Breeding Population Indices**

Quail call counts, conducted in June 2008, were 8 percent lower than those conducted in 2007. This was 4 percent above the average of the previous five years and 4 percent below the 1975 to 2007 average. Calls were 14 percent lower in west-central Illinois and down 4 percent in south-central Illinois. In far southern Illinois, an 11 percent decrease was recorded. Biologists

conducting the North American Breeding Bird Survey reported a 12 percent decrease in quail observations from 2007.



Additional information about quail hunting in 2007-08 was provided by the hunter survey conducted by the Cooperative Wildlife Research Laboratory at Southern Illinois University. Hunter success (harvest per trip) in Illinois' primary quail range was unchanged from 06-07.

In addition to reporting success, hunters also submit one wing from each quail harvested for aging. The ratio of juveniles to adults provides an index to annual reproductive success. In 2007, the age ratio was 3.51, below the 29 year average (4.5). The long term average is 5. Hens probably came in to the 2007 nesting season in average physiological condition after the normal winter of 2006-07; however, dry weather in summer of 2007 probably reduced production.

#### **2008 Season Outlook**

It appears that quail numbers will be about the same as 2007 in Illinois. Breeding populations were unchanged in the primary quail range. Temperatures during the nesting season were normal but rainfall was above normal. Quail production should have been good except for extremely wet areas.

The total acres of nest cover and brood habitat available through the Conservation Reserve Program have been stable for 6 years. The overall quality has slowly improved on new and re-enrolled acres through the planting of native grasses and forbs, more wildlife friendly grass/legume mixes and an increased emphasis on proper management after planting, including strip disking, burning, herbicide spraying and legume interseeding. However, upgrading cover is a slow process.

Hunter success is also affected by weather and cover conditions during the hunting season. If large acreages of crops are still in the field during the hunting season, hunting will be negatively affected.

**Best Areas**

Look for farms with a good mix of row crops, small grains, legumes and grassland (excluding fescue and reed canary grass) well connected by wooded fencerows and forest edges. Though quail occur throughout the state, the most productive regions continue to be south-central and west-central Illinois. Based on average annual harvest from 1997 through 2002, some of the top counties are: Franklin, Perry, Wayne, Adams, Brown and Jersey.



**Season Dates**

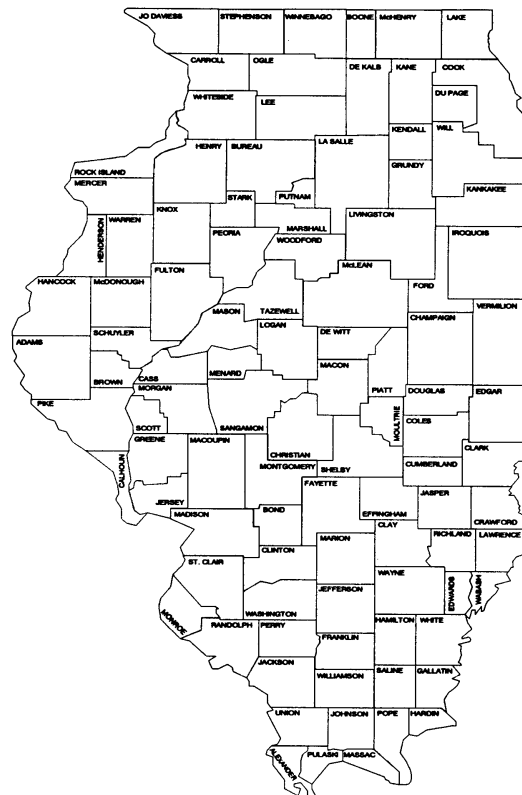
November 1 - January 8 (North)  
November 1 - January 15 (South)

**Hours**

Sunrise - Sunset

**Bag Limits**

8 per day with 20 in possession after the third day



*Prepared by John Cole 9/08  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Wildlife Program Development*

Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and those funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other non-merit factors. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the funding source's civil rights office and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, IDNR, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271; 217/785-0067; TTY 217/782-9175.