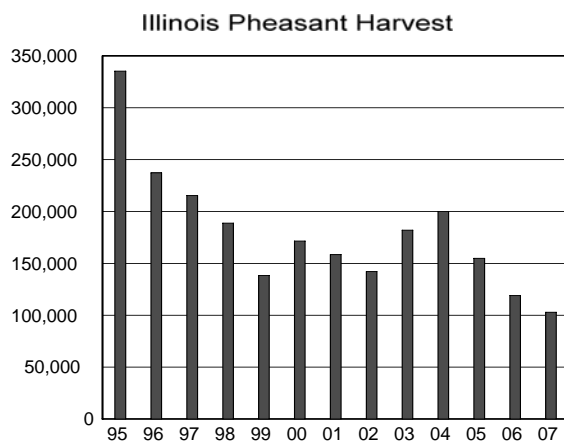


Pheasant Hunting Prospects, 2008

Upland Wildlife Program Management Notes 08-5

2007-2008 Hunting Season

Last year, 35,961 hunters harvested 102,822 pheasants, a 13 percent decrease from the 2006-07 season. This was 35 percent below the average of the last five years. Hunters went afield 177,887 days in 2007, an increase of 8 percent from 2006 and daily harvest decreased 19 percent from 2006.



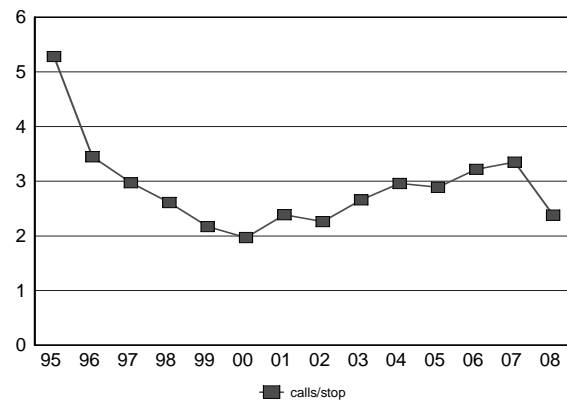
Winter Weather 2007-08

Winter weather was colder than normal throughout the Illinois pheasant range. Temperatures were 2° below normal and the duration and depth of snow cover was 82 to 124 percent of normal in central and northern Illinois.

Pheasant Breeding Population Index

Pheasant call counts, conducted in May 2008 were 29 percent below those conducted in 2007. This was 20 percent below the average of the previous five years and 35 percent below the 1975 to 2007 average. Counts were down 36 percent in northern Illinois and down 26 percent in central Illinois. Biologists conducting the North American Breeding Bird Survey reported a 36 percent decrease in pheasant observations from 2007.

Pheasant Call counts



Pheasant Production Index

Pheasant brood counts, conducted in August, provide an index to annual pheasant production. The number of broods observed in 2008 was 29 percent below last year. A decrease was recorded in northern Illinois (23%) and a decrease occurred in central Illinois (19%). The proportion of hens with broods decreased 8 percent and the number of chicks per brood decreased 6 percent from 2007. Weather conditions were cool and wet during the nesting season in 2008 with below average temperatures and above average rainfall in north and central Illinois.

2008 Season Outlook

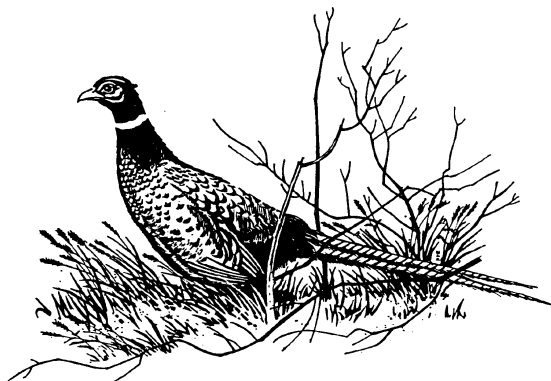
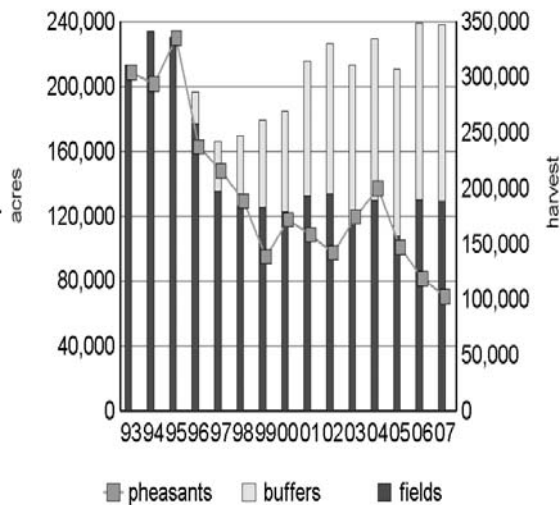
It appears that pheasant numbers will be lower than 2007. The winter of 2007-08 reduced the breeding population and the cool wet early summer reduced production. Changes in Federal farm programs have reduced the acres of nest cover and brood habitat available through the Acreage Conservation Reserve and Conservation Reserve Programs. Since 1996, the number of acres of CRP filter strips and field borders has increased but the number of CRP fields has declined.

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

Best Areas

Look for farms with unharvested grassland in fields, field borders, ditch banks, terraces or filter strips. The most productive areas for pheasant hunting continue to be in east central and northern Illinois. Based on the annual average harvest from 1997 through 2002, some of the top counties are: Ford, Iroquois, Livingston, McLean, Carroll and Whiteside.

CRP Grassland and Pheasant Harvest



Season Dates

November 1 - January 8 (North)

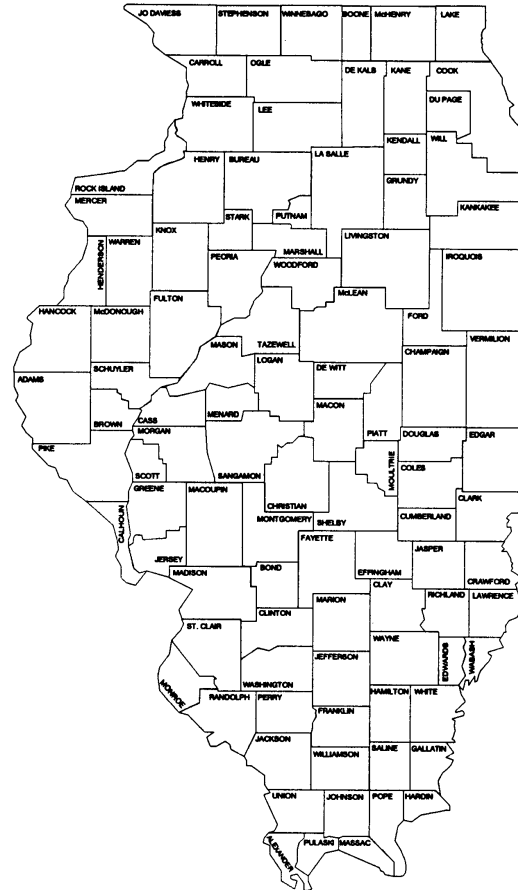
November 1 - January 15 (South)

Hours

Sunrise to Sunset

Bag Limits

2 per day with 6 in possession after third day



Prepared by John Cole 9/08

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Division of Wildlife Program Development

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