

Rural Mail Carrier Pheasant Survey 2015

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Abstract

Rural mail carrier sightings of pheasant decreased during the spring of 2015 from 2014 levels, and are still below the long term mean. In 2015 the total number of pheasants observed decreased 1.1% from the previous year, while the number of pheasants seen per 100 miles driven was 0.33 in 2015, the same as 2014.

Methods

Survey forms were mailed in early April to postmasters in 32 counties across Wisconsin's pheasant range. Postmasters were asked to distribute the forms to their rural mail carriers. Carriers were instructed to record their route number, distance driven, and the number and sex of pheasants seen along their route on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday in the third full week of April. Data from the returned surveys were entered into the DNR production server and analyzed using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

In an effort to expand coverage of the Rural Mail Carrier Survey, Grant county was added in 1995 to the list of counties surveyed. None of the totals for Grant county will be used in the statewide totals so a long term trend can be observed.

Results

Rural mail carrier participation decreased by 1.8% in 2015. Six hundred and fifty-three respondents saw 346 pheasants during the April 21st – 23rd, survey period. This is a 1.1% decrease from the total number of pheasants seen in 2014. The counties with the highest number of pheasants seen per 100 miles driven were Jefferson (1.27), Polk (1.05) and Lafayette (0.80) (Table 1, Fig. 2).

Rural mail carrier sightings of pheasant decreased during the spring of 2015, despite brood production being up in 2014. Pheasant populations may still be recovering from reduced brood production in 2013, in combination with two successive winters (2013-14 and 2014-15) with winter conditions below average for temperature and snowfall across much of the state's pheasant range. The number of pheasants seen per 100 miles driven was 0.33 in 2015, which is still lower than the long-term average of 0.57 (Figure 1). Losses in habitat due to the reduction of Conservation Reserve Program acres, and more intense farming practices have left wild pheasant numbers much below the levels seen during the 1990's and early 2000's.

Table 1. Rural Mail Carrier Pheasant Sightings 2013-2015.

County	Pheasants Sighted			Sightings/100 miles Driven		
	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Barron	20	12	7	1.19	.86	0.35
Brown	8	7	6	0.17	0.17	0.19
Calumet	6	1	10	0.26	0.04	0.44
Columbia	3	2	11	0.06	0.04	0.24
Dane	18	6	11	0.26	0.04	0.16
Dodge	14	14	8	0.31	0.08	0.17
Door	7	4	5	0.36	1.47	0.26
Dunn	17	8	14	0.62	0.22	0.57
Fond du Lac	36	1	6	0.79	0.05	0.18
Grant ¹	15	11	18	0.20	0.32	0.24
Green	30	8	8	0.74	0.33	0.29
Green Lake	7	5	5	0.21	0.17	0.18
Iowa	4	44	4	0.20	1.23	0.18
Jefferson	31	29	47	0.83	0.96	1.27
Kenosha	22	6	6	0.84	0.27	0.30
Kewaunee	9	4	5	0.33	0.16	0.18
Lafayette	1	4	15	0.08	0.34	0.80
Manitowoc	1	21	16	0.03	0.52	0.49
Oconto	5	19	9	0.14	0.51	0.26
Outagamie	2	3	2	0.05	0.06	0.04
Ozaukee	2	0	9	0.08	0.0	0.39
Pierce	11	12	8	0.31	0.36	0.29
Polk	31	26	35	0.84	0.64	1.05
Racine	5	1	10	0.14	0.04	0.31
Rock	5	22	15	0.10	0.47	0.33
St. Croix	28	28	34	0.43	0.41	0.61
Shawano	1	1	2	0.05	0.04	0.08
Sheboygan	21	8	7	0.70	0.39	0.21
Walworth	5	2	3	0.10	0.04	0.07
Washington	10	36	8	0.25	0.94	0.24
Waukesha	42	8	18	0.61	0.15	0.29
Winnebago	9	8	2	0.33	0.38	0.09
Total	411	350	346	0.36	0.33	0.33

¹Not included in totals

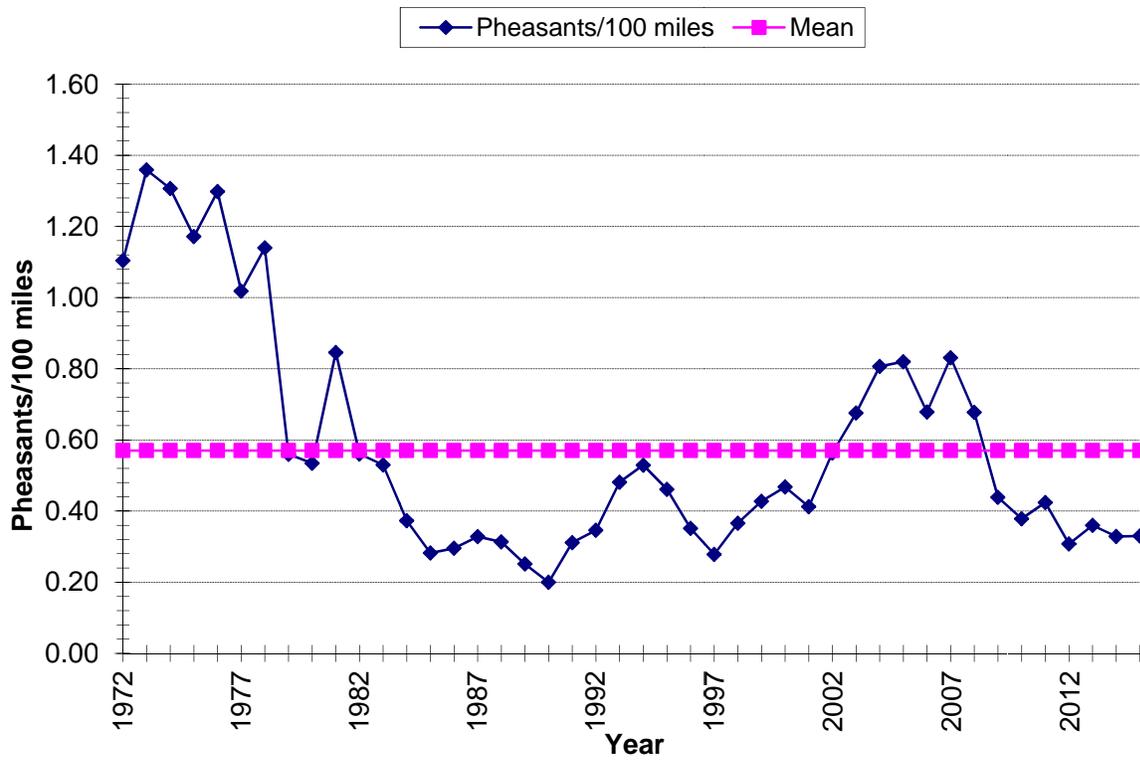


Figure 1. Pheasants seen per 100 miles driven, 1972-2015.



Figure 2. Counties encompassing all or some of Wisconsin's primary pheasant range.