

# Small Game Harvest 2015-16

By Jes Rees Lohr and Brian Dhuey

## **Abstract**

The number of licensed small game hunters decreased 0.6% in the 2015-16 small game hunting season from the 2014-15 levels. The estimated harvest increased from last season for bobwhite quail, coyote, crow, gray fox, pheasant, raccoon, red fox, and snowshoe hare and decreased for cottontail, gray partridge, mourning dove, ruffed grouse, squirrel and woodcock (Table 2). The number of days afield pursuing small game was 1.87 million, down from the 2.08 million observed during the 2014-15 season.

## **Methods**

A sample of survey names was drawn from 2015-16 sports, small game, senior citizen small game, junior small game, and conservation patron license holders in proportion to the license sales for each county. Ten thousand surveys were mailed in early February. Surveys asked recipients for information on whether they hunted, type of licenses purchased, county of residence, species harvested, number of days hunting each species, and county of harvest for each species. These data were entered into the DNR production server and analyzed using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

## **Results**

Responses were received from 3,216 of the hunters surveyed. The corrected response rate was 32%. Approximately 49.5% of the licensed small game hunters used a dog during the season; they own an average of 1.5 dogs. Most dogs were used to hunt game birds (56.4%). The most commonly used dog was the Labrador Retriever (33.8%). On average hunter's spent 43 days afield either training or hunting with their dog. Hunters spend an average of \$696.72 on dog maintenance per dog owned (Table 1).

The number of people who bought small game, sportsman, senior citizen small game, non-resident small game, 5-day non-resident small game, or conservation patron licenses decreased from 244,034 in 2014-15 to 242,684 in 2015-16 (Figure 1). Hunters spent approximately 1.87 million days in the field during the 2015-16 small game season. The total number of days spent in the field pursuing small game was down 10.1% from the 2014-15 season level. The estimated harvest increased from last season for bobwhite quail, coyote, crow, gray fox, pheasant, raccoon, red fox, and snowshoe hare and decreased for cottontail, gray partridge, mourning dove, ruffed grouse, squirrel and woodcock (Table 2).

Small game hunters who pursued pheasants did so mostly on public land (44.7%). Seventy-nine percent of land used to pursue pheasants was stocked with pen-reared pheasants (either by the DNR or privately) (Table 1).

No corrections are made for response or prestige bias. Therefore the harvest estimates for some of the less hunted species (bobwhite quail, gray partridge, and gray fox) are probably less accurate. Small sample size can also have an effect on the results of the counties of highest harvest. Because of this, counties of highest harvest should be viewed with caution. The thirty-three year trend in small game harvest for all species is shown in Figure 2.

**Table 1.** Responses to the 2015-16 Wisconsin Small Game Hunting Questionnaire.

Question 1. Did you hunt small game (excluding waterfowl) in Wisconsin during this season?

Response	Count	Percent
Yes	1,744	54.8
No	1,437	45.2

Question 2. Did you use dogs while hunting small game?

Response	Count	Percent
Yes	854	49.5
No	871	50.5

Question 3. Which of the following did you hunt with the aid of dogs? (Please check all that apply).

Response	Count	Percent
Game Birds	483	56.4
Migratory Game Birds (excluding waterfowl)	144	16.8
Small Game Mammals	122	14.3
Furbearing Animals	83	9.7
Unprotected	23	2.7
Other	1	0.1

Question 4. What breed(s) and number of dogs did you use?

Breed	Count	Percent	Breed	Count	Percent
Akita	1	0.1	Hound	24	2.3
Beagle	62	6.1	Irish Setter	5	0.5
Black & Tan	8	0.8	Jack Russell Terrier	1	0.1
Blue Tick	23	2.2	Lab	346	33.8
Boykin Spaniel	2	0.2	Lab Mix	14	1.4
Brittany	9	4.8	Llewellyn Setter	1	0.1
Chesapeake Bay Retriever	7	0.7	Mix	30	2.9
Cocker Spaniel	2	0.2	Mountain Cur	3	0.3
English Cocker	10	1.0	Munsterlander	4	0.4
English Pointer	11	1.1	Nova Scotia Tolling Retriever	1	0.1
English Setter	50	4.9	Plott Coonhound	19	1.9
English Springer Spaniel	20	2.0	Poodle	2	0.2
German Shepard	1	0.1	Redbone Coonhound	5	0.5
German Shorthaired Pointer	104	10.2	Redtick	1	0.1
German Wirehaired Pointer	25	2.4	Springer Spaniel	52	5.1
Golden Retriever	52	5.1	Vizsla	21	2.1
Gordon Setter	2	0.2	Walker	49	4.8
Griffon	9	0.9	Weimaraner	7	0.7

**Mean number of dogs owned = 1.5 Dogs per owner**

Question 5. Approximately how many hours did you (or others), spend training each dog used?

**Mean = 102.3 Hours**

Question 6. Approximately how many days per year do you use your dog(s) in the field (training and hunting)?

**Mean = 42.5 Days**

Question 7. Approximately how much money do you spend annually on maintenance per dog?

**Mean = \$696.72**

Question 8a. On what type of land did you hunt pheasants?

Response	Count	Percent
Private land	165	27.0
Public land	273	44.7
Both private and public land	173	28.3

Question 8b. Was the land you hunted on stocked with pen-reared pheasants (either by the DNR or privately)?

Response	Count	Percent
Yes	463	78.7
No	74	12.6
Don't Know	51	8.7

### Small Game License Sales

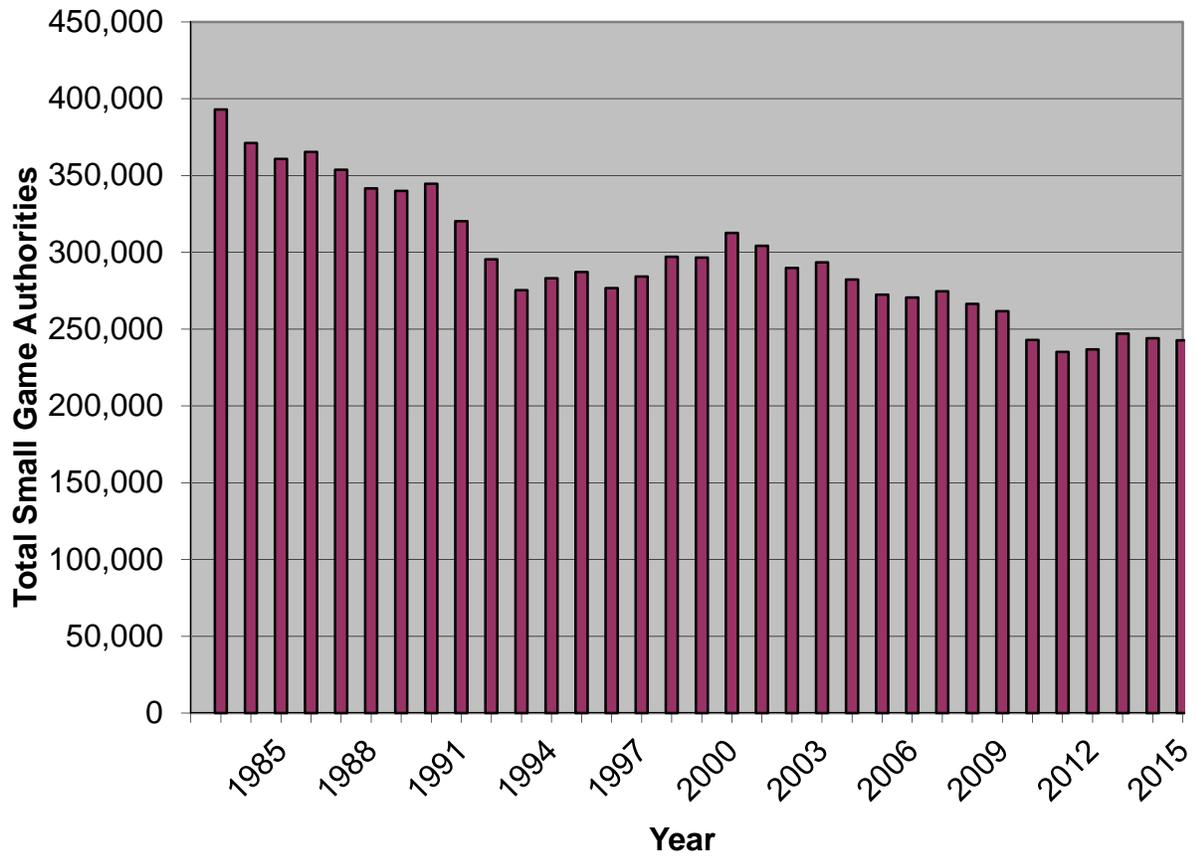


Figure 1. Small Game License sales 1983-2015.

**Table 2.** *The number of small game hunters, percent of total hunters, days hunted, harvest, harvest/day, and top three counties of harvest for all small game species during the 2015-16 season.*

Species	Number of Hunters	Percent Hunting	Days Hunted*	Harvest*	Harvest/Day	Top Three Counties
Bobwhite Quail	728	0.3%	3,341 ±3,026	1,746 ±1,911	0.52	Kenosha, Door, Oconto
Cottontail	24,754	10.2%	126,050 ±25,757	91,348 ±17,995	0.72	Manitowoc, Dane, Sheboygan
Coyote	24,268	10.0%	217,018 ±42,923	60,291 ±16,564	0.28	Racine, Chippewa, Clark
Crow	6,310	2.6%	28,703 ±10,860	38,119 ±20,229	1.33	Langlade, Oconto, Marathon
Gray Fox	5,096	2.1%	27,488 ±10,650	11,846 ±5,470	0.43	Rock, Richland, Sauk
Gray Partridge	485	0.2%	1,822 ±1,822	152 ±298	0.08	Oconto, Brown, Kewaunee
Mourning Dove	9,222	3.8%	41,080 ±10,603	58,697 ±20,953	1.43	Oconto, Kewaunee, Winnebago
Pheasant	47,081	19.4%	460,690 ±68,116	298,495 ±40,113	0.65	Fond du Lac, Waukesha,
Raccoon	6,795	2.8%	69,403 ±33,183	80,110 ±31,733	1.15	Marathon, Racine, Fond du Lac
Red Fox	5,582	2.3%	32,803 ±11,230	6,986 ±3,012	0.21	Marathon, Richland, Burnett
Ruffed Grouse	60,671	25.0%	504,503 ±53,024	210,412 ±30,383	0.42	Price, Oneida, Sawyer
Snowshoe Hare	4,126	1.7%	24,451 ±13,228	8,353 ±6,492	0.34	Douglas, Forest, Oconto
Squirrel	38,829	16.0%	219,220 ±29,817	224,080 ±34,420	1.02	Oconto, Grant, Sauk
Woodcock	13,590	5.6%	108,965 ±25,683	58,621 ±18,224	0.54	Douglas, Price, Taylor

\*Confidence interval is 95%.

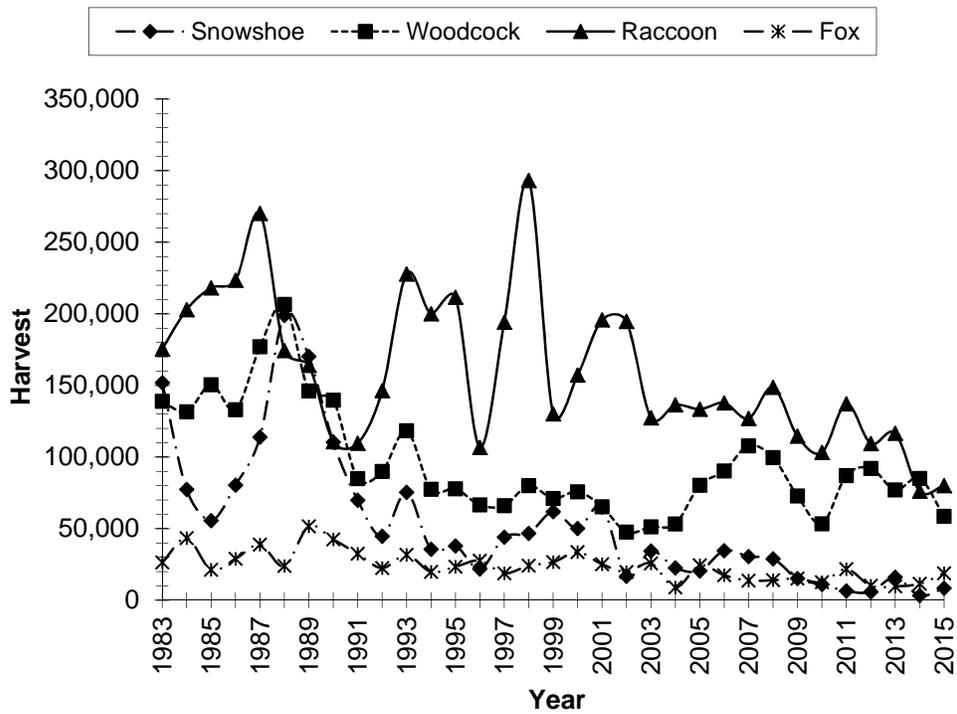
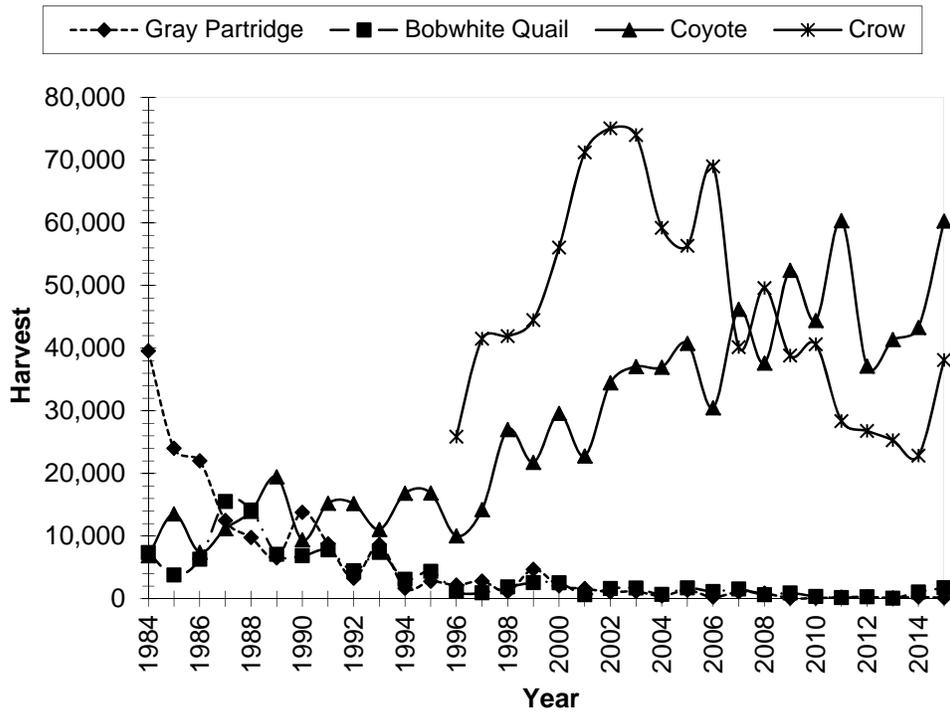


Figure 2. Small game harvest trends for all species 1983-2015.

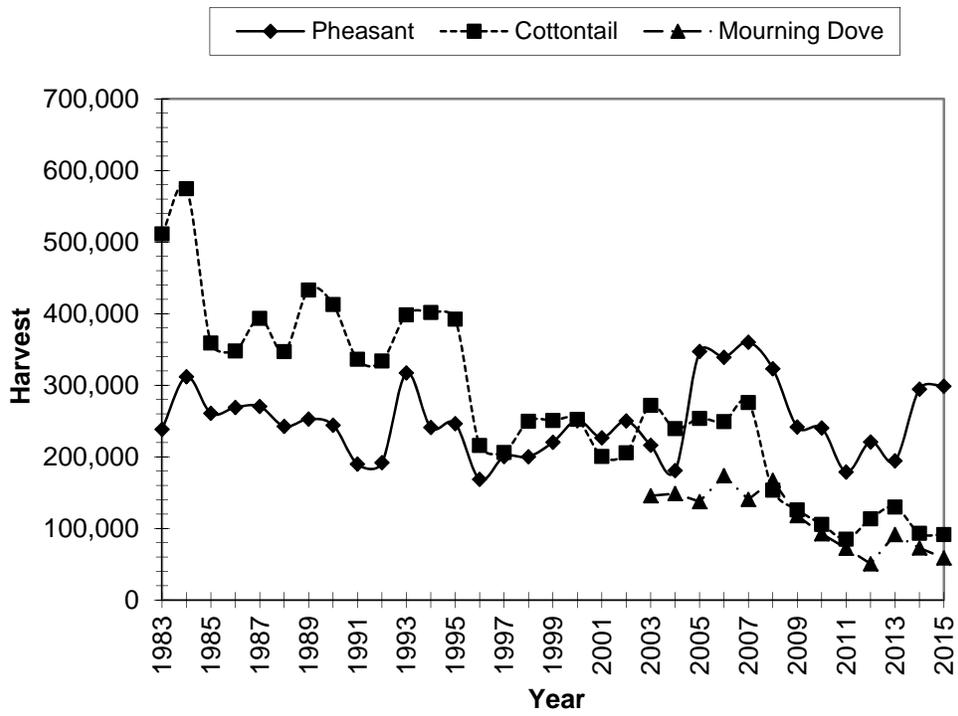
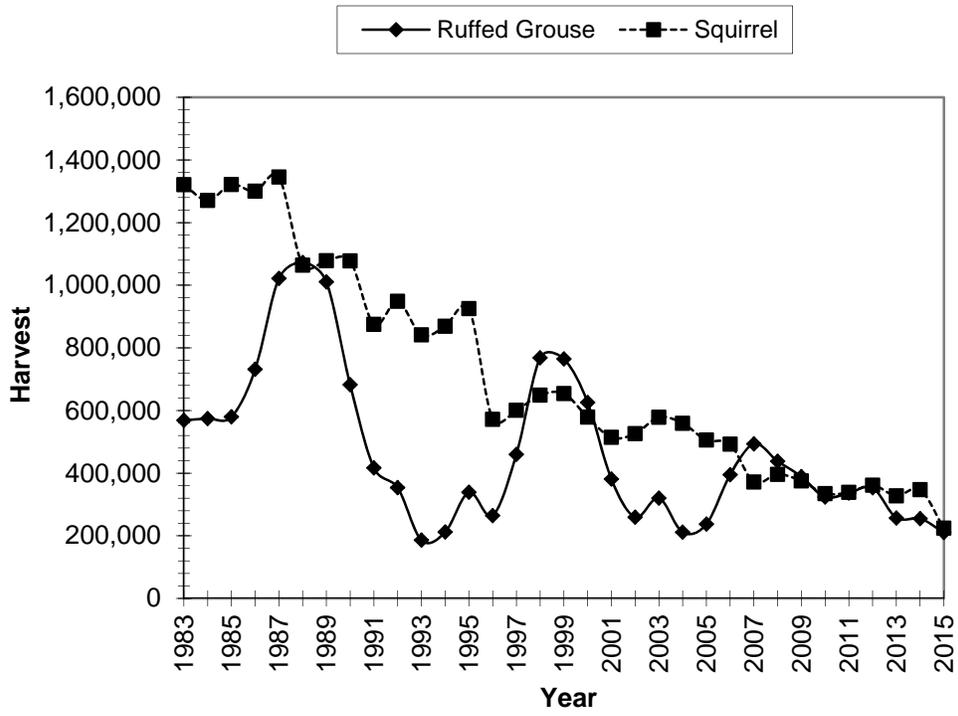


Figure 2. Small game harvest trends for all species 1983-2015 (continued).