Find land near you with FFLIGHT – The Fields & Forest Lands Interactive Gamebird Hunting Tool (FFLIGHT): This interactive mapping tool allows hunters to locate properties stocked with pheasants along with managed dove fields and suitable habitat for ruffed grouse and woodcock. FFLIGHT also allows hunters to use aerial maps, topography and measuring tools to easily navigate and identify areas of interest to make their trips more productive and enjoyable.

**50,831**

During the 2018-19 season, 50,831 hunters pursued pheasants, spending an estimated 485,815 days afield and harvesting 403,766 pheasants. Waukesha, Kenosha and Jefferson counties harvested the most pheasants. Hunter turnout, harvest and days afield all increased from the 2017-18 season.

**69,090**

During the 2018-19 season, 69,090 grouse hunters reported spending 552,293 days in the field, harvesting approximately 173,347 birds. The highest harvests were reported in Price, Sawyer and Iron counties. The hunter total was up last season, though days spent afield and harvest totals decreased.

**73,915**

During the 2018 fall turkey season, 73,915 harvest authorizations were issued, 7,099 more than in 2017. During the fall season, 3,782 turkeys were harvested, 189 fewer than in 2017.

**GET READY FOR THE SEASON**

Buy your license in the DNR’s Go Wild Licensing System at gowild.wi.gov or at a license dealer near you.
Each year, the Department of Natural Resources stocks approximately 75,000 pheasants on 90 DNR-managed properties. The pheasant stocking program is in place to supplement hunting opportunities in areas of the state where wild pheasants are not abundant. The state game farm also provides additional hunting opportunities through the Day-Old Chick (DOC) program. In the DOC program, conservation clubs raise about 35,000 pheasant chicks annually to be released on approved DNR-managed or private property open to public hunting. To find properties stocked with pheasants near you, visit dnr.wi.gov and search FFLIGHT or use the DNR’s Hunt Wild App on the App Store or Google Play.

During the 2018-19 season, an estimated 50,831 hunters pursued pheasants, spending 485,815 days afield and harvesting 403,766 pheasants. Kenosha, Jefferson and Waukesha counties harvested the most pheasants. The number of hunters, days afield and harvest totals are all up from 2017-18.

Survey results indicated .64 pheasants per stop in 2019, a 7.82% increase from 2018. The counties with the highest numbers of pheasants seen per 100 miles driven were highest in the northwestern counties compared to counties in east-central and southern Wisconsin.

A long-term reduction in the availability of stable grassland cover continues to contribute to an overall decline in ring-necked pheasant populations. Enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program, a U.S. Department of Agriculture program, which pays landowners to retire their cropland for 10- to 15-year periods and plant permanent cover like grass or trees, has declined significantly in Wisconsin. CRP enrollment in the state peaked in the mid-1990s at more than 700,000 acres, but in recent years, CRP acres have declined due to a number of economic and policy-related issues. The loss of CRP and other grassland habitat in recent years is likely the primary factor affecting pheasant populations statewide.
RUFFED GROUSE

*Zone A: Sept. 14 - Jan. 31, 2020
*Zones B: Oct. 19 - Dec. 8

During the 2018-19 season, 69,090 hunters reported spending 552,293 days in the field hunting grouse, with approximately 173,347 grouse harvested. Highest harvests were reported by hunters in Price, Douglas and Marinette counties. Hunters may need to scout different sites in order to find pockets of birds.

Harvest

173,347

During the 2018-19 season, 69,090 hunters reported spending 552,293 days in the field hunting grouse, with approximately 173,347 grouse harvested. Highest harvests were reported by hunters in Price, Douglas and Marinette counties. Hunters may need to scout different sites in order to find pockets of birds.

Survey Results

41%

Between 2018 and 2019, statewide ruffed grouse drumming activity increased 41% based on the roadside survey used to monitor breeding grouse activity. Changes in indices to breeding grouse populations varied by region.

The increase follows a year where the survey results showed a 34 percent drop. Ruffed grouse populations are known to rise and fall over a nine to 11-year cycle.

Counts of grouse drumming activity heard along roadsides were conducted on 73 transects throughout the state. The roadside survey has been conducted annually since 1964 by DNR wildlife managers, foresters, tribal biologists, law enforcement, U.S. Forest Service staff and Ruffed Grouse Society volunteers.

Habitat

Ruffed grouse rely on dense, young forest cover resulting from disturbances such as fire and logging.

Beyond managing state-owned lands, the DNR is working to provide young forest cover through an extensive collaborative effort known as the Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership. This partnership provides technical assistance to private landowners interested in managing for young forest. The program is helping to create habitat for ruffed grouse and other wildlife species and helping maintain healthy and diverse forest communities.

Management Plan

The DNR initiated a public review process to collect comments and input regarding the draft ruffed grouse management plan, which was developed by the DNR Ruffed Grouse Advisory Committee for 2020 to 2030.

Public comment on the document was accepted through Aug. 26. The DNR is compiling public comments and drafting a final version of the document.

The Wisconsin Natural Resources Board is considering an early closure to the ruffed grouse season. Check online regulations for updates.
During the 2018 fall turkey hunting season, permitted hunters harvested 3,782 turkeys. While the fall season isn’t as popular as the spring season, when 38,886 birds were harvested, 73,915 total permits were issued in the first year with no drawing for the fall turkey harvest. The fall turkey harvest has declined over the past decade, largely due to a decline in hunter effort rather than a reduction in turkey numbers.

The 2018 harvest success rate, uncorrected for non-participation, was 5.12 percent, less than the 5.9 percent recorded during the 2017 fall season. During the 2018 fall turkey hunting questionnaire, 52% of all fall turkey hunters receiving a harvest permit hunted turkeys during the 2017 season. Statewide, the average number of days spent hunting for fall turkeys was 6.5 days. Hunting pressure was highest on weekends. Many fall turkey hunters (35.5%) are hunting fall turkeys incidental to archery hunting. Statewide success rate for the 2018 spring season was 18.3%.

As recently as the 1970s, turkeys were extinct in the state of Wisconsin. Turkeys have made a surging comeback today, with over 350,000 now living in the state.

Each year, the DNR conducts summer brood surveys looking at the number of broods and brood size of various upland game birds, including wild turkeys. Turkey brood production can affect the number of birds available for harvest in the fall. Summer brood surveys are conducted June through August and results are available in September each year. The 2018 brood production varied across the state in 2018, with a statewide decrease of 11% in the number of broods seen per observer-hour over 2017’s level. The northeast (2%) and south-central regions (83%) saw increases, while the other three zones dropped by between 15 and 34%.