

# Small Game Harvest 2017-2018

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## **Abstract**

The number of licensed small game hunters decreased 4.3% in 2017-18 small game hunting season from 2016-17 levels. The estimated harvest decreased from last season for cottontail, coyote, crow, gray partridge, mourning dove, pheasant, raccoon, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare, squirrel, and woodcock while increased for bobwhite quail, gray fox, and red fox (Table 2). The number of days afield pursuing small game was 1.76 million, down slightly from the 1.82 million observed during the 2016-17 season.

## **Methods**

A sample of survey names was drawn from 2017-18 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 3,443 of the hunters surveyed. The corrected response rate was 34%. Most hunters purchased a small game license to hunt during the season. Approximately 48% of the licensed small game hunters used a dog during the season. They own an average of 1.4 dogs. Most dogs were used to hunt game birds (59%). The most commonly used dog was the Labrador Retriever (37%). On average hunter's spent 44 days afield either training or hunting with their dog. Hunters spend an average of \$831.02 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 235,754 in 2016-17 to 225,561 in 2017-18 (Figure 1). Hunters spent approximately 1.76 million days in the field during the 2017-18 small game season. The total number of days spent in the field pursuing small game was down 3.3% from the 2016-17 season level. The estimated harvest decreased from last season for cottontail, coyote, crow, gray partridge, mourning dove, pheasant, raccoon, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare, squirrel, and woodcock while increased for bobwhite quail, gray fox, and red fox (Table 2).

Small game hunters who pursued pheasants did so mostly on public land (52%). Seventy-six 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 influence the results of the counties of highest harvest. Because of this, counties of highest harvest should be viewed with caution. The thirty-year trend in small game harvest for all species is shown in Figure 2.

**Table 1. Responses to the 2017-18 Wisconsin Small Game Hunting Questionnaire.**

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

Response	Count	Percent
Yes	1,807	53.0%
No	1,604	47.0%

No Response = 32

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

Response	Count	Percent
Yes	869	48.5%
No	924	51.5%

No Response = 1,650

Question 3. Which of the following did you hunt with the aid of dogs?

Response	Count	Percent
Game Birds	510	58.8
Migratory Game Birds (excluding waterfowl)	191	22.0
Small Game Mammals	92	10.6
Furbearing Animals	59	6.8
Unprotected	15	1.7
Other	1	0.1

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

Breed	Count	Percent	Breed	Count	Percent
American Water Spaniel	3	0.29%	Irish Setter	4	0.39%
Beagle	56	5.41%	Lab	383	37.00%
Black & Tan	2	0.19%	Lab Mix	10	0.97%
Blue Heeler	1	0.10%	Llewellyn Setter	2	0.19%
Blue Lacy	1	0.10%	Mix	20	1.93%
Blue Tick	8	0.77%	Mountain Cur	1	0.10%
Boykin Spaniel	2	0.19%	Munsterlander	3	0.29%
Brittany	54	5.22%	Plott Coonhound	13	1.26%
Cavachon	1	0.10%	Pointer	1	0.10%
Chesapeake Bay Retriever	9	0.87%	Poodle	2	0.19%
Cocker Spaniel	2	0.19%	Portuguese Pointer	1	0.10%
English Cocker	6	0.58%	Pudelpointer	1	0.10%
English Coonhound	1	0.10%	Redbone Coonhound	3	0.29%
English Pointer	14	1.35%	Redtick	2	0.19%
English Setter	54	5.22%	Rhodesian Ridgeback	1	0.10%
English Springer Spaniel	26	2.51%	Rottweiler	1	0.10%
German Shepard	1	0.10%	Springer Spaniel	33	3.19%
German Shorthaired Pointer	123	11.88%	Terrier	5	0.48%
German Wirehaired Pointer	31	3.00%	Terrier Mix	1	0.10%
Golden Retriever	49	4.73%	Vizsla	22	2.13%
Gordon Setter	8	0.77%	Walker	31	3.00%
Griffon	14	1.35%	Weimaraner	10	0.97%
Hound	19	1.84%			

**Mean Number of dogs owned = 1.4 Dogs per owner**

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

**Mean = 142 Hours**

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

**Mean = 44.2 Days**

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

**Mean = \$831.02**

Question 8a. Which statement best represents the type of land you did MOST of your pheasant hunting on?

Response	Count	Percent
Exclusively Private Land	129	20.9%
Mostly Private Land	41	6.7%
Mix of Private and Public Land	123	20.0%
Mostly Public Land	86	14.0%
Exclusively Public Land	237	38.5%

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

Response	Count	Percent
Yes	432	76.5%
No	71	12.6%
Don't know	62	11.0%

No Response = 83

### Small Game License Sales

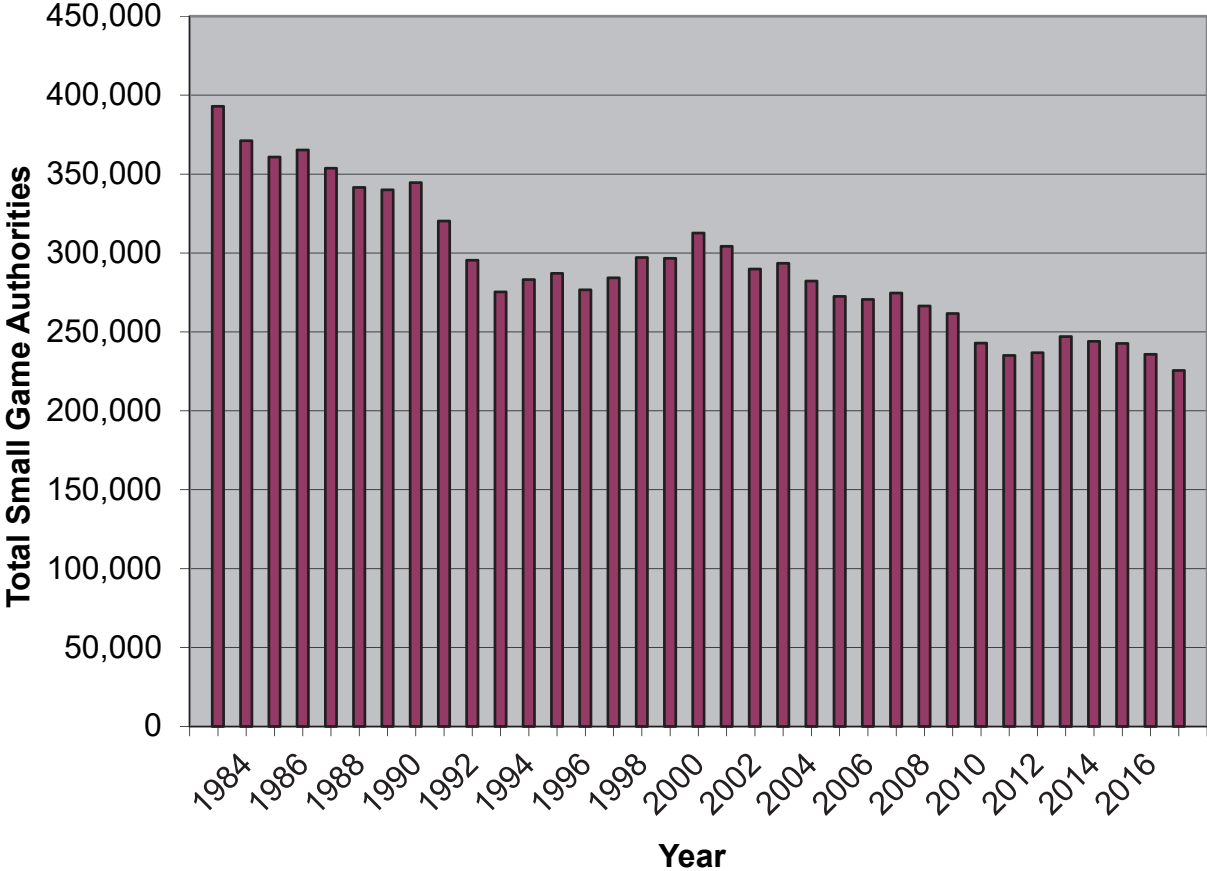


Figure 1. Small Game License sales 1983-2017.

**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 2017-18 season.*

Species	Number of Hunters	Percent Hunting	Days Hunted*	Harvest	Harvest/Day	Top Three Counties
Bobwhite Quail	271	0.1%	3,145	±5,171	±791 0.17	Racine, Columbia, Washington
Cottontail	21,090	9.4%	105,869	±19,647	83,988 ±16,683 0.79	Lafayette, Grant, Manitowoc
Coyote	18,541	8.2%	143,932	±28,827	34,263 ±11,151 0.24	Grant, Portage, Chippewa
Crow	3,789	1.7%	16,902	±8,308	21,292 ±10,228 1.26	Dodge, Manitowoc, Trempealeau
Gray Fox	2,414	1.1%	15,723	±7,586	4,062 ±3,179 0.26	Bayfield, Brown, Manitowoc
Gray Partridge	271	0.1%	1,245	±1,251	131 ±257 0.11	Shawano, Barron, Dodge
Mourning Dove	6,947	3.1%	33,019	±9,813	56,407 ±20,480 1.71	Racine, Grant, Waukesha
Pheasant	42,450	18.8%	418,890	±49,555	301,490 ±48,259 0.72	Fond du Lac, Kenosha, Jefferson
Raccoon	4,579	2.0%	61,189	±28,984	54,769 ±26,733 0.90	Dodge, Clark, Richland
Red Fox	3,857	1.7%	23,650	±8,805	4,127 ±2,984 0.17	Brown, Vernon, Winnebago
Ruffed Grouse	64,533	28.6%	583,917	±60,299	185,336 ±23,964 0.32	Price, Douglas, Marinette
Snowshoe Hare	3,271	1.5%	16,902	±7,967	2,358 ±1,243 0.14	Ashland, Marathon, Price
Squirrel	34,533	15.3%	209,445	±28,058	204,138 ±42,123 0.97	Oneida, Grant, Jackson
Woodcock	15,067	6.7%	121,264	±25,181	69,902 ±16,972 0.58	Douglas, Price, Marinette

\* Confidence interval is 95%.

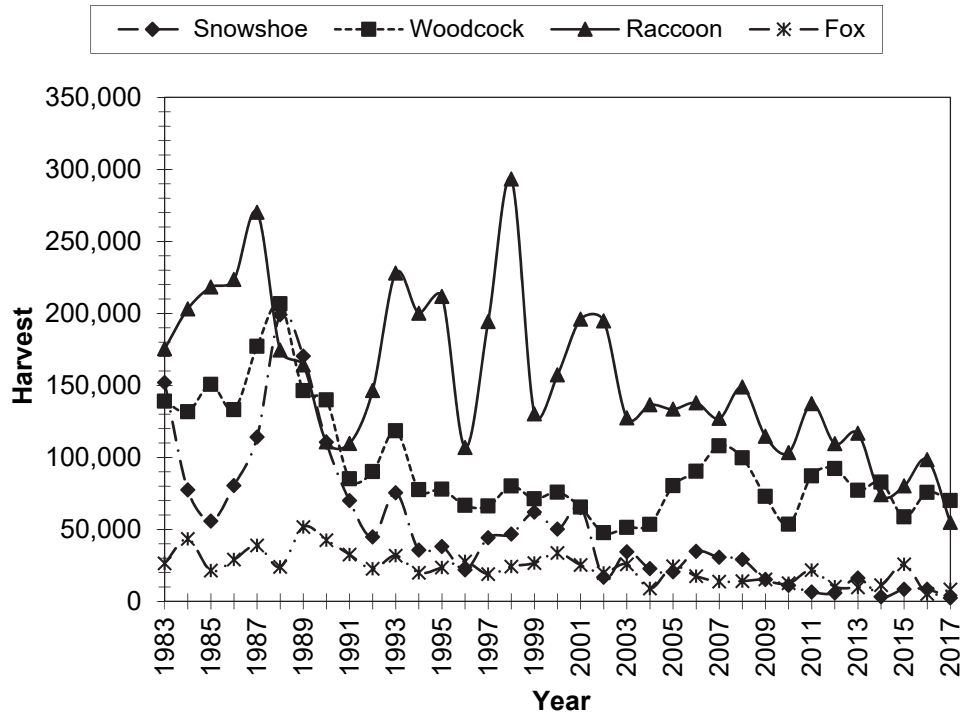
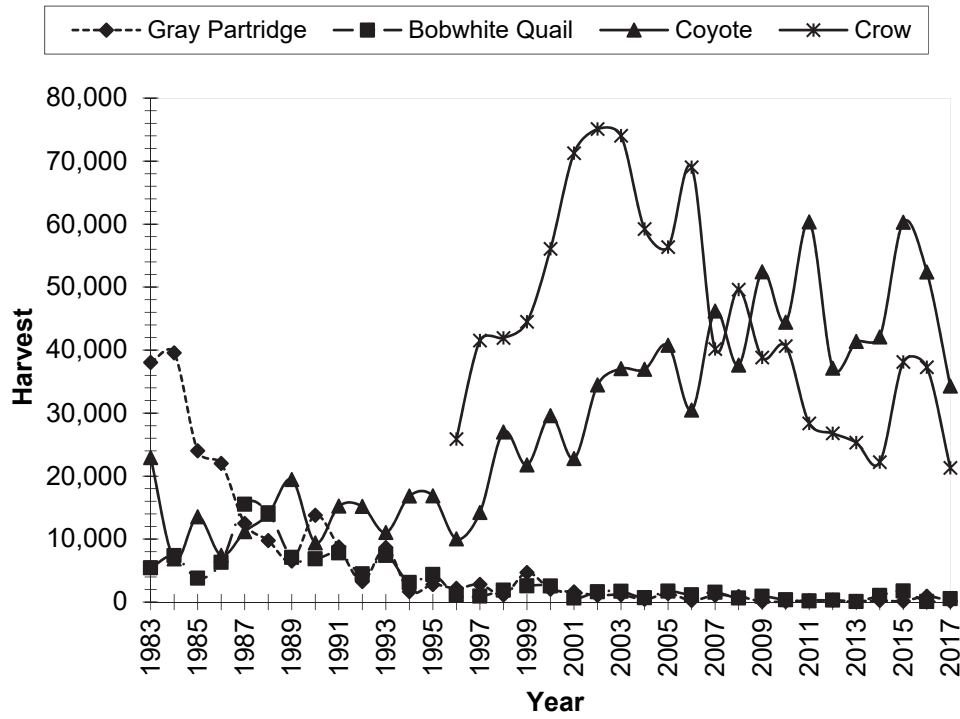


Figure 2. Small game harvest trends for all species 1983-2017.

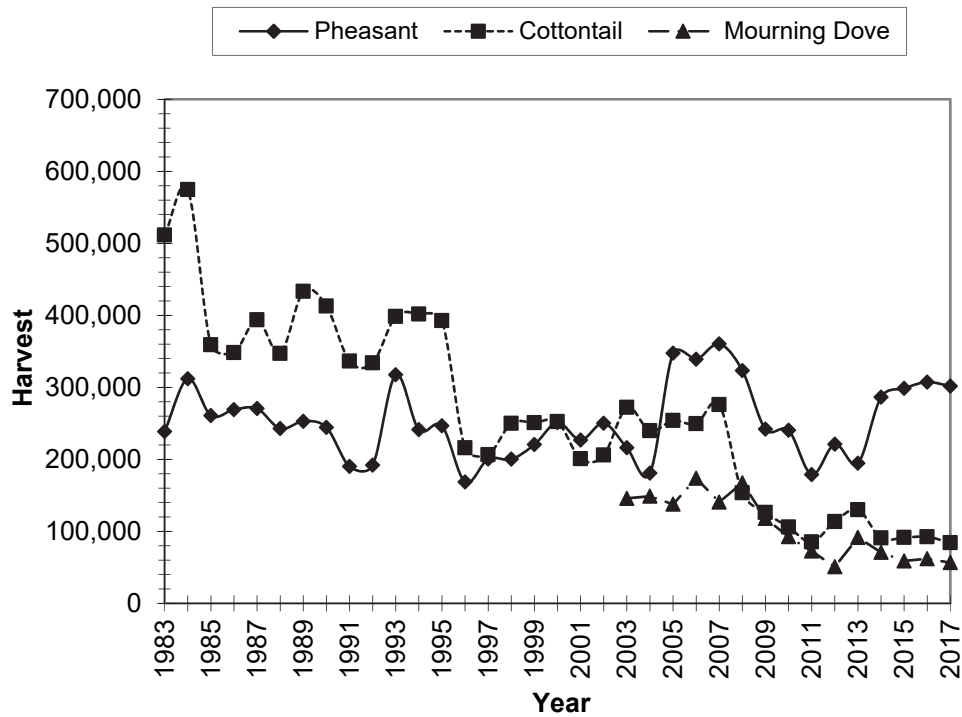
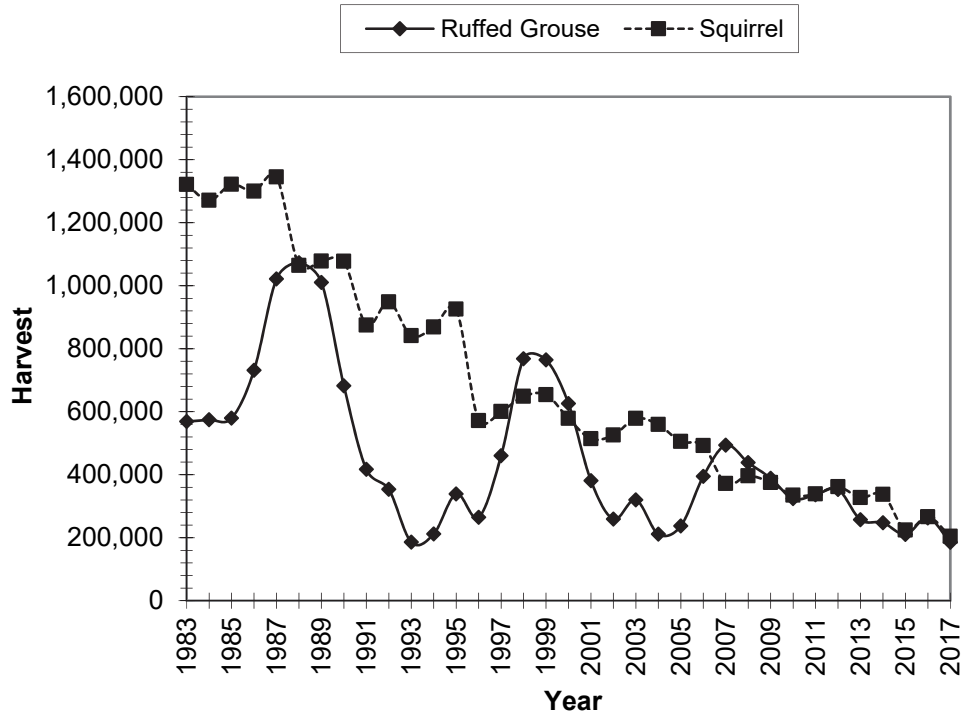


Figure 2. Small game harvest trends for all species 1983-2017 (continued).