



2013 PHEASANT AND QUAIL COOPERATORS EARLY SEASON REPORT

Early season reports from pheasant cooperators allow biologists to quickly assess hunter success and local field conditions across Michigan's Lower Peninsula (Zones 2 and 3) at the beginning of the pheasant season. This report summarizes their responses for October 20-23, 2013.

Cooperators returned 25 surveys and hunted 117.4 hours in 17 counties during the survey period. Hunters flushed an average of 0.85 roosters per hour statewide (Table 1). This is higher to the average flush rate of 0.76 roosters per hour statewide in 2012 and the highest it's been since 2005. Individual counties having at least 10 hours of hunting with the highest rooster flush rates were Tuscola, Gratiot and Huron.

Most respondents (48%) thought pheasant populations were down or slightly down from last year in the areas they hunted. About 20% thought that numbers were the same as last year and 32% thought that the numbers of pheasants were up or slightly up from last year (Table 2).

Many Hunters commented on the great cover conditions and the standing corn abundance in areas they hunted. Comments were made on the poor quality of habitat on some Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) lands while others provided positive feedback on the quality conditions on CREP lands and sightings of young birds. Hunters also commented on weather conditions being too windy to be afield hunting and others commented on the great weather conditions in their hunting areas.

A new Pheasant Restoration Initiative will help restore Michigan's pheasant habitat and help increase pheasant numbers in our state. The Department of Natural Resources is partnering with conservation groups, other agencies, and interested landowners on this initiative to increase pheasant habitat. Activities will be focused to the best projects on a larger scale than past efforts. Three priority areas have been identified: Huron, Sanilac, and Tuscola counties; Hillsdale, Lenawee, and Monroe counties; and Gratiot, Saginaw, and Clinton counties. Recovery efforts will be on a landscape scale; multiple properties and state land can be paired up to meet the restoration goals. Please visit [DNR – Ring-necked Pheasant](#) for more information.

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Table 1. Rooster and hen flush rates by zone and year for October 20-23.

Zone	2012			2013		
	Hours	Roosters/ hour	Hens/hour	Hours	Roosters/ hour	Hens/hour
2	0	NA	NA	0	NA	NA
3	101.8	0.76	1.34	117.4	0.85	1.25
Statewide	101.8	0.76	1.34	117.4	0.85	1.25

Table 2. Hunter opinions about pheasant populations.

Trend	2012 (n = 29)	2013 (n = 25)
Up	24%	24%
Slightly up	3%	8%
Same	14%	20%
Slightly down	7%	8%
Down	52%	40%

