



## 2011 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, 2011.

Cooperators returned 44 surveys and hunted 255 hours in 23 counties during the survey period. Hunters flushed an average of 0.5 roosters per hour statewide (Table 1). This is similar to the average flush rate of 0.6 roosters per hour statewide in 2010. Individual counties having at least 10 hours of hunting with the highest rooster flush rates were Tuscola, Sanilac, Huron, Saginaw, and Gratiot.

Most respondents (71%) 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 9% thought that the number of pheasants were up from last year (Table 2).

Many hunters commented that it was a disappointing opener and that they weren't seeing many birds. Many hunters also commented on the wet and windy conditions for the first day or two of the season.

A new pheasant restoration habitat 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 [www.michigan.gov/pheasant](http://www.michigan.gov/pheasant) for more information.

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

| Zone      | 2010  |                   |           | 2011  |                   |           |
|-----------|-------|-------------------|-----------|-------|-------------------|-----------|
|           | Hours | Roosters/<br>hour | Hens/hour | Hours | Roosters/<br>hour | Hens/hour |
| 2         | 18    | 0.2               | 0.4       | 0     | NA                | NA        |
| 3         | 321   | 0.6               | 0.6       | 255   | 0.5               | 0.5       |
| Statewide | 339   | 0.6               | 0.3       | 255   | 0.5               | 0.5       |

Table 2. Hunter opinions about pheasant populations.

| Trend         | 2010 (n = 40) | 2011 (n = 44) |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Up            | 13%           | 2%            |
| Slightly up   | 0%            | 7%            |
| Same          | 20%           | 20%           |
| Slightly down | 10%           | 5%            |
| Down          | 58%           | 66%           |

