



Pheasants Forever's 2005 Pheasant Forecast

Holy C R P, look at all the birds!

For Immediate Release

Bob St.Pierre (877)773-2070

Overview: The 2005 pheasant season should prove to be a year to remember. Across nearly the entire pheasant range, pheasant numbers are up thanks to quality Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands, Pheasants Forever chapter habitat projects, a series of mild winters, and advantageous spring weather. In fact, South Dakota experts report their pheasant population to be at a 40-year high. For many states, 2003 was the high-water mark for pheasant populations in the post-Soil Bank era. Cold spring rains hurt nesting and brooding success last year and resulted in a drop for 2004. However, this year's forecast shows nearly every pheasant range state to be up and 2005 should challenge 2003 for total pheasant harvest numbers across the range. The following six states are considered to be the top tier of pheasant states based on annual average harvests of 400,000 or more birds a season.

NOTE: ALWAYS CONSULT STATE HUNTING REGULATIONS AND SEASON DATES BEFORE EVER TAKING TO THE FIELD

The Top Tier of Pheasant States (In Alphabetical Order)



Iowa: There was a 30% drop in harvested birds to a total of 750,000 in 2004. Nevertheless, Iowa remains the second biggest pheasant state and this year should reinforce that position. This year's roadside survey showed a 19% increase from 2004. The central part of the state showed the largest gain from 2004 with a 45% jump, while the northeast and northcentral rebounded from 2004's drenching rains to show double digit increases. Surveys indicate the northwest to hold the highest overall bird densities. **Season: Oct. 29 – Jan. 10**

Kansas: Bird numbers were up last year with hunters harvesting 685,000 birds in 2004 compared to 646,000 in 2003. That trend should continue this year as April rains greened up the wheat to conceal nesting hens. Nesting success and chick survival should also have been high with the weather drying out in May and June. Expect the biggest improvements in western Kansas. **Season: Nov. 12 – Jan. 31**



Minnesota: The 2003 pheasant season was MN's best in over a decade with hunters harvesting over 500,000 roosters. Like Iowa, bird numbers dropped significantly in '04, but Minnesotans still managed to bag over 420,000 birds last year. This year, that harvest number should climb back over half a million with roadside counts showing a whopping 75% increase over last year. That dramatic increase is attributed to more habitat on the ground than any time in the last 15 years, four consecutive mild winters, and warm spring weather. The southwest and south-central regions showed the best bird densities.



Season: Oct. 15 – Jan. 1

Nebraska: The biggest gainer last year with hunters harvesting over 406,000 birds, up from 368,000 in 2003. A cold and wet early June hurt early nesting success, but improved weather after June 10th helped late nesters and re-nesters. Roadside counts show the state's western half making gains, while the eastern half's numbers declined or held steady. Overall, there was a 9% increase in birds determined by the August roadside survey. The southwest had the state's highest average counts.



Season: Oct. 29 – Jan. 31

North Dakota: Cold May rains were likely rough on early nesters, but landowners are reporting good numbers throughout the state thanks to summer rains greening up brooding cover. Hunters should expect a modest increase from 2004 when 587,600 birds were harvested. The southeast had the best spring nesting weather and will be the best region of the state again this year. South of Interstate 94 across N.D. is considered to be the state's best range. **Season: Oct. 8 – Jan. 8.**



South Dakota: S.D. Department of Game, Fish, and Parks reported that their annual brood survey was higher in 2005 than any time in the last 40 years. Almost every area of the state showed at least 10 year highs with a 21% increase from 2004. South Dakota's CRP, combined with mild winters and a favorable spring equals big pheasant numbers. Hunters may bag as many as 2 million S.D. roosters in 2005. There is no doubt that South Dakota will earn its title as the Pheasant Capital in 2005. **Season: Oct. 16 – Jan. 2**

