

Rural Mail Carrier Pheasant Survey 2017

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Abstract

Rural mail carrier sightings of pheasant decreased during the spring of 2017 from 2016 levels, and are still below the long term mean. In 2017 the total number of pheasants observed decreased 6.6% from the previous year, and the number of pheasants seen per 100 miles driven was 0.40 in 2017, a decrease from 0.42 in 2016.

Methods

Survey forms were mailed in early April to postmasters in 32 counties across Wisconsin's pheasant range. Postmasters were asked to distribute the forms to their rural mail carriers. Carriers were instructed to record their route number, distance driven, and the number and sex of pheasants seen along their route on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday in the third full week of April. Data from the returned surveys were entered into the DNR production server and analyzed using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

In an effort to expand coverage of the Rural Mail Carrier Survey, Grant county was added in 1995 to the list of counties surveyed. None of the totals for Grant county will be used in the statewide totals so a long term trend can be observed.

Results

Rural mail carrier participation decreased by 1.2% in 2017. Six hundred and forty-one respondents saw 410 pheasants during the April 18th – 20th, survey period. This is a 6.6% decrease from the total number of pheasants seen in 2016. The counties with the highest number of pheasants seen per 100 miles driven were Dunn (2.06), Door (1.31), Sheboygan (0.87), and Fond du Lac (0.87) (Table 1, Fig. 2).

Rural mail carrier sightings of pheasant decreased during the spring of 2017. Pheasant brood production was down in 2016 and winter (2016-2017) conditions were at or above for temperature and snowfall across much of the state's pheasant range. There were several large rain events in the middle and latter half of the brood rearing season, and while these were not prolonged or followed by below average temperatures, they were rather severe and may have led to the loss of chicks where they occurred. The number of pheasants seen per 100 miles driven was 0.40 in 2017, which is still lower than the long-term average of 0.57 (Figure 1). Losses in habitat due to the reduction of Conservation Reserve Program acres, and more intense farming practices have left wild pheasant numbers much below the levels seen during the 1990's and early 2000's.

Table 1. Rural Mail Carrier Pheasant Sightings 2015-2017.

County	Pheasants Sighted			Sightings/100 miles Driven		
	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
Barron	7	3	13	0.35	0.16	0.78
Brown	6	13	2	0.19	0.30	0.04
Calumet	10	3	2	0.44	0.10	0.15
Columbia	11	3	0	0.24	0.05	0.00
Dane	11	8	12	0.16	0.13	0.18
Dodge	8	7	20	0.17	0.19	0.42
Door	5	39	35	0.26	1.47	1.31
Dunn	14	20	54	0.57	1.55	2.06
Fond du Lac	6	33	28	0.18	0.74	0.87
Grant ¹	18	24	11	0.24	0.30	0.14
Green	8	5	11	0.29	0.16	0.49
Green Lake	5	6	6	0.18	0.23	0.20
Iowa	4	21	4	0.18	0.57	0.12
Jefferson	47	48	32	1.27	1.16	0.65
Kenosha	6	4	4	0.30	0.21	0.19
Kewaunee	5	8	10	0.18	0.35	0.36
Lafayette	15	10	0	0.80	0.54	0.00
Manitowoc	16	34	12	0.49	1.09	0.36
Oconto	9	12	17	0.26	0.39	0.46
Outagamie	2	0	6	0.04	0.00	0.14
Ozaukee	9	20	3	0.39	0.83	0.11
Pierce	8	26	14	0.29	0.76	0.49
Polk	35	32	20	1.05	0.78	0.81
Racine	10	4	5	0.31	0.15	0.19
Rock	15	7	8	0.33	0.23	0.21
St. Croix	34	32	42	0.61	0.64	0.77
Shawano	2	6	4	0.08	0.21	0.15
Sheboygan	7	5	24	0.21	0.16	0.87
Walworth	3	8	9	0.07	0.29	0.26
Washington	8	13	3	0.24	0.32	0.08
Waukesha	18	6	6	0.29	0.13	0.15
Winnebago	2	3	4	0.09	0.13	0.14
Total	346	439	410	0.33	0.42	0.40

¹Not included in totals

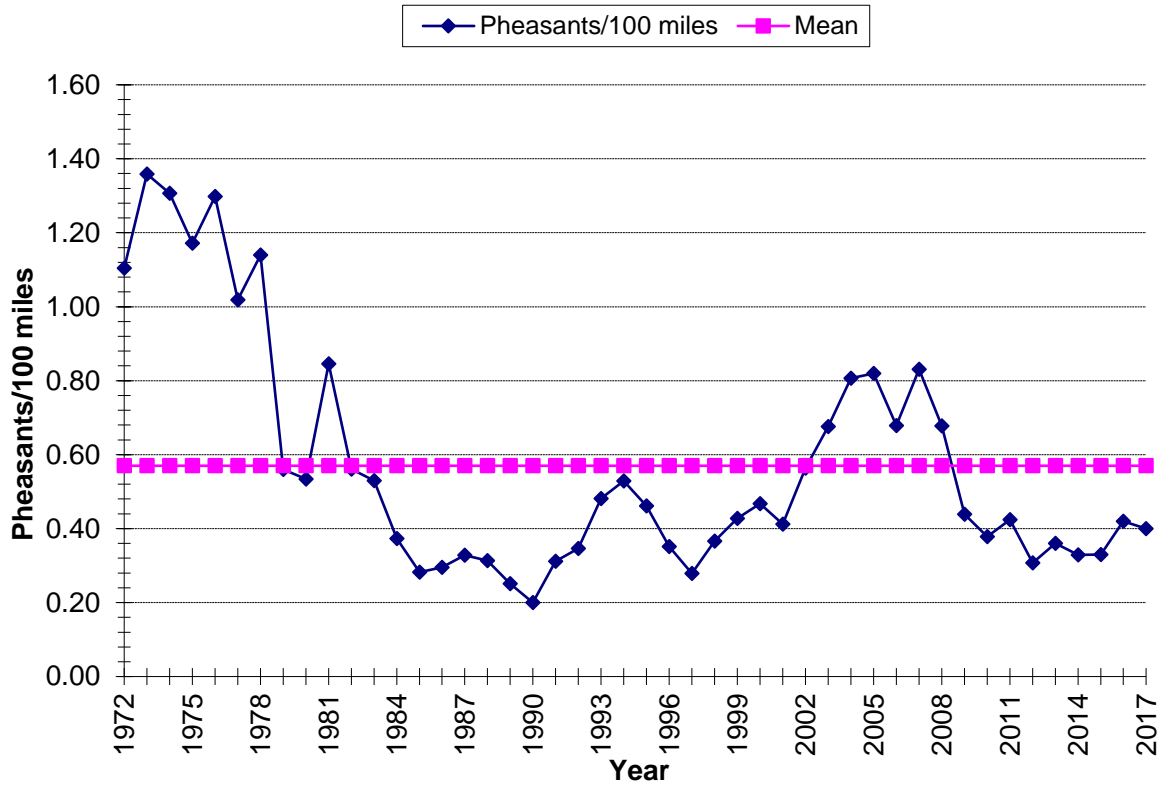


Figure 1. Pheasants seen per 100 miles driven, 1972-2017.



Figure 2. Counties encompassing all or some of Wisconsin's primary pheasant range.