

Upland Bird Regional Forecast

General Information



Overall upland bird hunting opportunities appear to be very good for the upcoming seasons. Good cover conditions, as well as more than 1 million acres of [Walk In Hunting Areas](#) and more than 500,000 acres of public wildlife areas

available to hunters will again make Kansas one of the premier destinations for [pheasant](#) , [quail](#) and [prairie chicken](#) hunters. Hunters will find long seasons and liberal bag limits in Kansas.

STATEWIDE SUMMARY

PHEASANT -- Pheasant numbers appear to be up considerably in the western half of the state. East of highway 281, substantial rains the first two weeks of June may have hurt chick survival. Statewide, summer brood counts show the number of broods seen is similar to last year.

QUAIL -- Quail seem to be significantly up in the west, as well as most of the southcentral part of the state. Early June wet weather may not have substantially impacted the quail hatch, since the peak is usually the last two weeks of that month. While some areas have been impacted, the hunting opportunities should be similar in the eastern half of the state as the past couple of years.

PRAIRIE CHICKEN -- Kansas is home to both the greater and lesser prairie chicken. Lesser prairie chickens are found in the southwest part of the state. Populations of both species appear stable across the major portion of their ranges, and do offer some good hunting opportunities not found in other states. There is an early season, September 15 through October 15, for greater prairie chickens in the eastern half of the state with the best opportunities being in the Flint Hills region. There have been some changes to the late prairie chicken season in Kansas. That season will be November 19 through January 31 in the east and northwest part of Kansas. In the southwest, the season will be November 19 through December 31.

REGIONAL SUMMARIES

Region 1 - Northwest and Northcentral Kansas

Nesting and brood rearing habitat conditions were good this year throughout most of Region 1. Extremely hot, dry conditions during July and heavy rains in the northeast portions of the region probably impacted brood survival to some extent. However an early hatch in many areas with

some re-nesting in others appears to have moderated those losses, and good numbers of birds should be available this fall.

In addition to more than 72,000 acres of state and federal public ground, more than 420,000 acres of WIHA will be open in Region 1 this year. Late summer rains benefited grass and forb growth. Hunters should concentrate on areas that provide quality cover with good food sources.

Pheasant -- Overall, pheasant densities for 2005 appear to be similar or improved over 2004 throughout most of Region 1, with the highest densities occurring in the eastern half of the region. However, look for noticeable improvements in the west in areas of good cover, especially in the northern counties.

Quail -- Quail numbers appear to be continuing on an upward trend. Quail densities appear moderately higher than last year throughout most of the traditional quail habitats in Region 1, especially in the east. Also, hunters should find increased numbers of birds in pockets of the central portion of Region 1.

Prairie Chicken -- Prairie chicken populations appear to be expanding in both numbers and range within the region. The better hunting opportunities will be found in the eastern and central portions of the region. Production appeared to be good this year, with many small flocks occupying the larger blocks of native rangeland.

Region 2 - Northeast Kansas

Pheasant -- The pheasant population in Region 2 continues to be below the long term average. It appears that pheasant numbers will be similar to last year in most of the region with numbers up slightly in the northwestern counties. Habitat conditions will be good to excellent throughout the region. The best opportunities will be in the northwest counties, but the outlook will probably be only fair for even this area. Region 2 has 101,684 acres enrolled in the WIHA program this fall.

Quail -- Quail numbers appear to be below average in Region 2 again in 2005. Late summer heavy rains in much of the region may have had some negative impact on the population. These rains have created good to excellent habitat conditions. Early reports from landowners indicated a slight increase in quail numbers but few broods are being seen this fall. Heavy cover may be a factor in this. The hunting projection for quail in the region will be poor to fair with some spotty areas of better conditions.

Region 3 - Southwest Kansas

Overall, Region 3 will provide a good to excellent upland bird season this year. More than 407,000 acres of WIHA are available in the region this year. Last season was good in most areas of the southwest, and there were good numbers of adult birds carried over this spring for breeding. Production has been very good in most counties with the best reports for pheasant and quail being from Garden City east. Some hail in counties along the Kansas -- Colorado line may have hurt local bird numbers. Much of the southwest has heavy cover going into the fall hunting

season.

Reports for the Cimarron National Grassland indicate pheasant and quail numbers may be down some from last year but still fair to good for pheasants and good for quail. Lesser prairie chicken hunters should be able to find good numbers of birds on the Grassland.

Region 4 - Southcentral Kansas

Region 4 will have 25,255 acres signed up in WIHA this fall. Cover conditions for all of Region 4 are excellent because of abundant summer rainfall. Excellent cover may be preventing observations of late broods. Late June rains delayed a portion of the wheat harvest which may have been beneficial to brood survival. July storms brought some locally heavy hail in portions of southern Reno and Kingman counties. Hail also hit in parts of Rice, McPherson and Marion counties. Heavy August rains in much of the region flooded low-lying fields and may have reduced success of late nesting efforts.

Quail -- In the Flint Hills counties, quail numbers appear to be similar to last year (somewhat improved over several years ago). In the north part of the Flint Hills, populations are still somewhat depressed when compared to the 10-year average. In the southern Flint Hills, ranchers are reporting more quail than seen in several years. Quail in the southern and western portions of Region 4 range from fair to good. Overall, populations seem to be very similar to last year.

Pheasant -- Pheasant carryover in the primary Region 4 pheasant range was excellent. Production this year appears to be about average in much of the region, which will mean a higher percentage of adult birds in the population when the season opens. Good reports have come from areas in Marion, McPherson, Rice and Reno counties. Overall, populations will be similar to last year with some increases locally.

Prairie chickens -- Very few reports have been received. Range conditions have improved significantly in the northern Flint Hills over the droughts of 2001-2003. Hunting success should be similar to last year.

Region 5 - Southeast Kansas

Quail -- Overall, quail numbers in the Region 5 continue to be below the long-term average. However, the eastern portion of the region anticipates improved conditions compared to last year; this improvement is based on contacts with landowners and increases in whistle counts and brood surveys. Severe weather through the summer probably impacted quail populations locally. More than 44,000 acres of WIHA are available in Region 5 this fall.

Prairie Chicken -- Prairie chicken production was poor this spring and summer, as is the fall outlook. A combination of extensive spring burning and severe weather are the primary reasons for the poor production year with an overall population that is struggling. Most landowners are reporting seeing few small broods.