

Good Opening Weekend For Pheasant & Quail Hunters

The two days previous to opening of the 2010 upland bird season brought much-needed rain to a dry Kansas landscape, but the clouds lifted opening morning, leaving moist habitat and good scent conditions for dogs. The downside was that many roads in the state were slippery or impassable, but hunters were undeterred as bird numbers almost mirrored the predictions of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) upland bird forecast. Hunters reported seeing lots of pheasants, especially in the westcentral and western portions of the state. The opening weekend generally lures mostly pheasant hunters, but quail numbers are good in central portions of the state, and hunters reported taking quail in these areas.

Overall, hunters were very pleased with the number of birds this year and especially grateful for KDWP's Walk In Hunting Areas. However, this year's motto seemed to be "west is best" as most of the hunting activity occurred from about the central part of the state west. While many hunters reported birds flushing wild, some said they just couldn't hit them. Still others reported that birds were holding tight, and having good dogs made all the difference.

In Region 1 (northwest Kansas), KDWP staff reported good numbers of hunters who saw lots of birds and averaged an estimated two birds per hunter. Quite a few hunters bagged limits in this region. The exception was the northcentral portion of the region, where the upland bird forecast had predicted a down year. Hunters did better on quail than pheasants in this portion of the region.

Region 2 (northeast Kansas) staff reported very light hunting pressure and few birds taken although success was better in the western portions of the region. A series of heavy snow storms last winter likely took its toll on quail, and rain previous to opening day made many roads impassable.

Hunting success was much better in Region 3 (southwest Kansas), where hunters visiting the regional office in Dodge City reported seeing excellent numbers of birds. One KDWP staff member checked close to 100 hunters over the weekend and estimated close to three birds per hunter.

Hunting in much of Region 4 (southcentral Kansas) was down this year and had lighter hunter pressure, likely due to early reports of high bird numbers farther west. Staff reported little success or hunting pressure in the northern tier of counties in the region, but hunting was better in the southwest portions of the region.

Region 5 (southeast Kansas) saw the lowest hunting pressure, largely because this area of the state is not pheasant country. Staff there reported few upland bird hunters but plenty of archery deer hunters, as was the case in regions 2 and 4. Spring flooding the past three or four years has hurt quail numbers in much of this region.

Opening weekend of upland bird hunting in Kansas is always the busiest time to hunt, but excellent hunts are still waiting for those willing to go afield later in the season. Hunting licenses are valid through Dec. 31, and 2011 licenses go on sale Dec. 15, providing two weeks of hunting in 2010 and all of 2011. Holiday hunting is often excellent, and if snow is on the ground in January, some of the best hunting of the year may yet be in the offing.

