



2019 RING-NECKED PHEASANT POPULATION STATUS REPORT

August 2019

Summary

Ohio's ring-necked pheasant population has declined steadily over the past several decades. In 2019, the population index derived from the spring crow-count survey was 0.13 pheasants per survey stop, below the 10-year average of 0.17. Notable declines over the past decade have been observed in Champaign, Defiance, Logan, Marion, Union, and Wyandot Counties. Wild pheasant hunters continue to decline in Ohio, with an estimated 10,109 resident hunters pursuing wild pheasant during the 2018-19 season. During the 2018-19 hunting season wild pheasant hunters averaged 4.4 days afield, 1.2 flushes/day (hens and roosters), and harvested an average of 0.8 roosters. The total estimated harvest of wild pheasants during the 2018-19 hunting season was 8,437.

Methods

ODNR Division of Wildlife staff completed 42 roadside pheasant crow-count surveys, each with 12 stops (except 1), in Carroll, Champaign, Columbiana, Defiance, Fairfield, Fayette, Fulton, Hardin, Highland, Logan, Madison, Marion, Pickaway, Ross, Union, Williams, and Wyandot Counties. These early morning surveys were completed between April 15 and May 3. A population index was calculated as the number of pheasants observed per roadside stop.

ODNR Division of Wildlife staff randomly distributed hunter questionnaires to licensed resident hunters via mail and email. Average number of days afield, flushes of roosters and hens, and harvest were estimated from returned surveys. Estimates of total number of resident hunters and harvest were estimated by extrapolating returned estimates to total number of resident hunting licenses sold.

Results and Discussion

A total of 64 pheasants were observed across all routes statewide, with a statewide index of 0.13 pheasants per stop (Fig. 1). The 2019 statewide index was below to the 10-year average (0.17 pheasants per stop). The 5 counties with the greatest population indices (Fig. 2) in 2019 were: Madison (0.52 pheasants/stop), Ross (0.25 pheasants/stop), Pickaway (0.21 pheasants/stop), Marion (0.18 pheasants/stop), and Union (0.11 pheasants/stop).

Of the 3,399 respondents, 453 (13.3%) claimed to hunt pheasants, while 127 (3.7%) reported hunting wild pheasants in Ohio during the 2018-19 season. Wild pheasant hunters averaged 4.4 days afield, 1.2 flushes/day flushes (hens and roosters), and 0.8 roosters harvested during the 2018-19 season. Total number of wild pheasant hunters during the 2018-19 hunting season was estimated to be 10,109, less than the 11,258 wild pheasant hunters from the 2017-18 season. Wild pheasant harvest was estimated to be 8,437 roosters. Average harvest for individuals pursuing wild pheasant in Ohio decreased from 1.1 roosters/hunter in 2017-18 to 0.8 roosters/hunter in 2018-19.

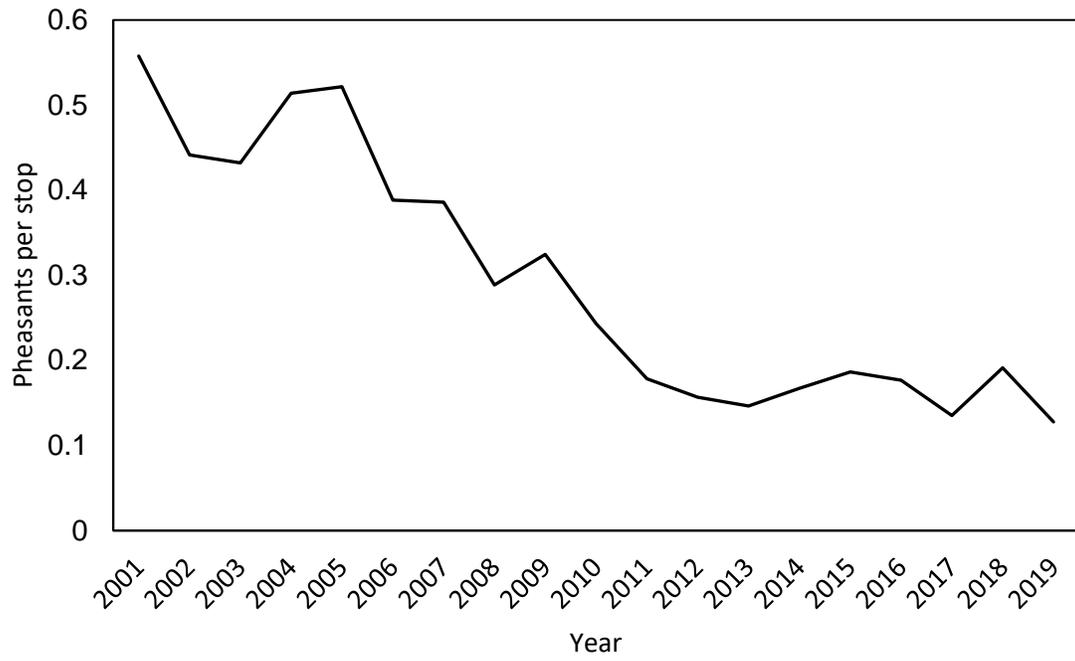


Figure 1. Ohio ring-necked pheasant population index derived from spring crow-count surveys, 2001–2019.



Figure 2. Ohio ring-necked pheasant distribution based on the annual spring crow-count survey, 2019.