

## Wildlife Bureau Survey Note

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# 2024-25 Small Game Harvest Results

A random sample of licensed hunters was chosen from all hunting license buyers following the season to determine the size and distribution of Iowa's small game harvest (Figure 1). Survey letters were mailed to 8,034 deliverable license holders. Survey participants were asked to fill out an online survey of which species they hunted, how many days they hunted, what county they hunted, and how many of each species they harvested. Survey participants completed 1,670 usable online questionnaires for a response rate of 21%. The DNR sold an estimated 235,104 unique hunting licenses in 2024-25, a 2.1% decrease from the previous year. All resident and nonresident hunters (deer, turkey, waterfowl, and small game) are required to purchase a hunting license whether they intend to hunt small game or not. Based on survey responses, an estimated 32.9% of license holders (90,415) hunted small game (pheasant, quail, partridge, cottontail, or squirrel). Small game hunter numbers decreased 4.4% from last year.

By residency, the number of resident small game hunters decreased 2% from 76,545 in 2023, to 74,977 in 2024, while the number nonresident small game hunters decreased 14.5% from 18,063 in 2023 to 15,438 in 2024. Pheasant were the most commonly reported species hunted by small game hunters (86%), while squirrels were the second most sought-after species with 24% of small game hunters indicating they hunted squirrels (Table 1).

Nonresident small game hunters from 32 different states visited Iowa last fall to hunt. Four states comprised 47% of Iowa's nonresident small game hunters, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan in that order. The average small game hunter reported hunting 9.1 days last fall.

Ring-necked Pheasant. - An estimated 77,432 pheasant hunters (33% of licensed hunters, 86% of small game hunters) took to Iowa's fields last fall and harvested 463,884 roosters (Table 1 and Table 2). This year's harvest estimate 463,884 and last year's 590,685 are the best Iowa has seen since 2007 when 631,000 roosters were harvested. The total number of pheasant hunters declined -7%, while total harvest declined -21% compared to 2023 estimates. Broken down by resident and non-resident hunters, an estimated 62,865 resident hunters harvested 379,511 pheasants and 14,567 nonresident hunters harvested 84,373 pheasants in 2024. Iowa's peak year for nonresident pheasant hunters was 1997 with 50,349. Resident hunter numbers declined -5%, while nonresident pheasant hunter numbers declined -17% compared to 2023 (Table 3).

Resident hunters hunted an average of 7.1 days afield last fall and harvested 6 birds during the season. Nonresident pheasant hunters averaged 4.4 days afield and harvested 5.8 birds for the season (Table 3). Hunter success (harvest/day) was highest through the first 9 days of the season (Table 4). Approximately 29% of the total pheasant harvest occurred in the first 9 days of the 2024 season (Table 4). Just over half (51%) of pheasant hunters reported hunting 4 days or less during the 2024 season. Resident hunters accounted for 82% of the total pheasant harvest. Resident hunters in the northern two-thirds of the state reported good hunting success with over 30,000+ roosters reported harvested in each region (Table 5). The 2024 roadside survey showed Iowa's pheasant population was 14% lower than 2023 with the best pheasant numbers in the northern two-thirds of the state and hunters took advantage of the abundant bird numbers.


Bobwhite Quail. - Approximately 11,264 quail hunters (5% of licensed hunters, 13% of small game hunters) harvested an estimated 27,575 quail during the 2024 quail season a decline of 9% over the 2023 estimate (Table 1 through Table 3). Hunter numbers declined -6% compared to 2023 the estimate. Quail hunters averaged 7.9 days a field and harvested 3 birds for the season (Table 3). Sixty-five percent of the quail harvest occurred in the first month of the 2024 season (Table 4). Sixty percent of Iowa quail hunters hunted 4 days or less during the 2024 season. Resident quail hunters accounted for 91% of the total quail harvest. The 2024 roadside counts showed quail numbers were lower (-32%) than in 2023, so the lower hunter numbers and harvest were expected.

**Table 1. Estimated proportion of 2024 license buyers and small game hunters who hunted each species.**

Species	Eligible Hunters <sup>a</sup> (%)	Small Game Hunters <sup>b</sup> (%)
Pheasants	32.9	85.6
Quail	4.8	12.5
Cottontail	7.5	19.4
Squirrels	9.2	23.6
Partridge	1.0	2.7
Mourning Dove	6.1	15.0

<sup>a</sup>All Iowa resident and nonresident hunters (deer, turkey, waterfowl, and small game) are required to purchase a hunting license. All are eligible to hunt small game (e.g. an estimated 32.9% of hunting license buyers hunted pheasants).

<sup>b</sup>Of the licensed hunters who indicated they hunted small game an estimated 85.6% hunted pheasants).



**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

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GOVERNOR KIM REYNOLDS  
LT. GOVERNOR ADAM GREGG  
DIRECTOR KAYLA LYON

March 1, 2024

**INSERT Address**


Dear **INSERT FIRST NAME**,

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is conducting a survey of hunters who bought a hunting license to provide estimates of harvest and the number of people who hunted upland game during this past hunting season. You have been randomly selected from 150,000 buyers of Iowa hunting licenses to participate in the survey. We greatly appreciate your participation.

The survey consists of several questions that can be completed online at the URL below or by scanning the QR code with a mobile phone. Use the Survey ID # provided below to begin the survey. Step-by- step instructions are printed on the back of this letter. Submit only 1 survey, duplicates will be removed.

URL: <https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7725078/IAUplandHarvest>

Survey ID #: **\*INSERT SURVEY ID HERE BEFORE MAILING\***



*See back for more instructions on accessing the survey.*

This survey is designed to help the Iowa DNR understand who hunted upland game this past hunting season. If you did not hunt any of the species listed in survey, we still need to hear from you. Our goal is to provide hunting opportunity that benefits the greatest number of hunters, and this survey will help inform decisions to reach that goal. Your input is important.

Thank you,

**Figure 1. Online small game survey letter.**

**Table 2. Estimated small game hunters, harvest, effort by species and license type for the 2023-24 small game season.**

License/ Species	Hunters			Harvest			Days		
	Estimate		95% CI	Estimate		95% CI	Estimate		95% CI
<b>All License Types</b>									
Pheasant	77,432	±	8,848	463,884	±	97,179	510,387	±	95,552
Quail	11,264	±	3,965	27,575	±	19,725	80,143	±	42,716
Cotton Tail Rabbit	17,525	±	5,293	77,062	±	40,809	83,843	±	41,233
Squirrel	21,330	±	5,678	124,324	±	45,978	120,041	±	67,843
Hungarian Partridge	2,431	±	1,813	1,346	±	2,217	20,252	±	18,718
Mourning Dove	14,087	±	4,532	142,992	±	78,863	43,204	±	18,875
						Total Days*	824,666	±	161,394
<b>Resident Hunters</b>									
Pheasant	62,865	±	8,607	379,511	±	94,033	446,639	±	94,396
Quail	8,491	±	3,578	25,012	±	19,586	66,716	±	41,768
Cotton Tail Rabbit	16,563	±	5,178	76,925	±	40,809	89,997	±	41,035
Squirrel	20,498	±	5,598	116,214	±	44,778	116,933	±	67,732
Hungarian Partridge	1,909	±	1,620	1,346	±	2,217	17,591	±	18,265
Mourning Dove	13,311	±	4,432	132,418	±	77,514	42,054	±	18,815
						Total Days*	737,876	±	159,871
<b>Nonresident Hunters</b>									
Pheasant	14,567	±	2,048	84,373	±	24,527	63,748	±	14,820
Quail	2,773	±	1,709	2,563	±	2,348	13,427	±	8,951
Cotton Tail Rabbit	962	±	1,095	137	±	189	3,846	±	4,023
Squirrel	832	±	950	8,110	±	10,428	3,108	±	3,907
Hungarian Partridge	522	±	813	0	±	0	2,661	±	4,093
Mourning Dove	776	±	946	10,574	±	14,520	1,150	±	1,500
						Total Days*	86,790		22,126

\*Total days does not include mourning dove days of hunting for historical comparisons.

Estimated number of people who hunted small gam (pheasant, quail, partridge, cottontail, or squirrels): 90,415 ± 9,236.

Estimated number of people who hunted upland game birds only (pheasant, quail, partridge): 64,410 ± 8,305.

Estimated number of people who hunted small game mammals only (cottontail, squirrel): 12,983 ± 4,655

#### Youth Pheasant Season

8,501 ± 3,949 Adult Hunters

9,945 ± 4,806 Youth Hunters

7,500 ± 56074 Harvested

**Table 3. Estimated number of small game hunters, harvest, and days hunted, by license type, species, and year, in Iowa during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 small game seasons. N is most recent years sample size.**

Species	N	All License Types			N	Resident			N	Nonresident		
		2023	2024	%CHG		2023	2024	%CHG		2023	2024	%CHG
<b>Ring-necked pheasant</b>	652				498				154			
Hunters		83,602	77,432	-7		66,151	62,865	-5		17,451	14,567	-17
Harvest		590,685	463,884	-21		444,063	379,511	-15		146,622	84,373	-42
Days		600,313	510,387	-15		497,730	446,639	-10		102,583	63,748	-38
Harvest/Hunter		7.1	6.0	-15		6.7	6.0	-10		8.4	5.8	-31

Species	N	All License Types			N	Resident			N	Nonresident		
		2023	2024	%CHG		2023	2024	%CHG		2023	2024	%CHG
Days/Hunter		7.2	6.6	-8		7.5	7.1	-6		5.9	4.4	-26
Harvest/Day		1.0	0.9	-7		0.9	0.9	-4		1.4	1.3	-8
<b>Bobwhite quail</b>	102				78				24*			
Hunters		11,928	11,264	-6		9,359	8,491	-9		2,569	2,773	8
Harvest		30,232	27,575	-9		21,014	25,012	19		9,218	2,563	-72
Days		77,321	80,143	4		65,980	66,716	1		11,341	13,427	18
Harvest/Hunter		2.5	2.5	-3		2.3	3.0	31		3.6	0.9	-74
Days/Hunter		6.5	7.1	10		7.1	7.9	11		4.4	4.8	10
Harvest/Day		0.4	0.3	-13		0.3	0.4	16		0.8	0.2	-77
<b>Cottontail rabbit</b>	145				138				7*			
Hunters		19,660	17,525	-11		19,101	16,563	-13		559	962	72
Harvest		68,451	77,062	13		65,337	76,925	18		3,114	137	-96
Days		97,288	93,843	-4		93,346	89,997	-4		3,942	3,846	-2
Harvest/Hunter		3.5	4.4	26		3.4	4.6	36		5.6	0.1	-97
Days/Hunter		5.0	5.4	8		4.9	5.4	11		7.1	4.0	-43
Harvest/Day		0.7	0.8	17		0.7	0.9	21		0.8	0.0	-95
<b>Squirrel</b>	176				169				7*			
Hunters		21,932	21,330	-3		20,901	20,498	-2		1,031	832	-19
Harvest		94,398	124,324	32		90,062	116,214	29		4,336	8,110	87
Days		99,409	120,041	21		95,790	116,933	22		3,619	3,108	-14
Harvest/Hunter		4.3	5.8	36		4.3	5.7	32		4.2	9.8	132
Days/Hunter		4.5	5.6	24		4.6	5.7	24		3.5	3.7	7
Harvest/Day		1.0	1.0	9		0.9	1.0	5		1.2	2.6	118
<b>Hungarian partridge</b>	27*				22*				5*			
Hunters		3,838	2,431	-37		2,802	1,909	-32		1,036	522	-50
Harvest		2,251	1,346	-40		2,223	1,346	-39		28	0	-100
Days		38,199	20,252	-47		26,989	17,591	-35		11,210	2,661	-76
Harvest/Hunter		0.6	0.6	-7		0.8	0.7	-10		0.0	0.0	0
Days/Hunter		10.0	8.3	-16		9.6	9.2	-4		10.8	5.1	-53
Harvest/Day		0.1	0.1	17		0.1	0.1	0		0.0	0.0	0
<b>Mourning dove</b>	114				109				5*			
Hunters		13,729	14,087	3		13,216	13,311	1		513	776	51
Harvest		194,835	142,992	-27		188,363	132,418	-30		6,472	10,574	63
Days		46,961	43,204	-8		45,655	42,054	-8		1,306	1,150	-12
Harvest/Hunter		14.2	10.2	-28		14.3	10.0	-30		12.6	13.6	8
Days/Hunter		3.4	3.1	-10		3.5	3.2	-8		2.6	1.5	-42
Harvest/Day		4.2	3.3	-20		4.1	3.2	-24		5.0	9.2	85

\*Very small sample size, view estimates accordingly

**Table 4. Mean hunting effort and harvest by time period for resident and nonresident pheasant and quail hunters combined during the 2024-25 small game season.**

Species	Mean Days	Mean Harvest	Harvest/Day	Proportion of Effort (days) (%)	Proportion of the Harvest (%)
<b>Ring-necked pheasants (N = 480)</b>					
First 9 Days*	1.72	1.97	1.14	23	29
Day 10 - Nov 30	3.11	2.80	0.90	42	41
Dec 1 - Jan 10	2.65	2.12	0.80	35	31
Jan 11 - Jan 31	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Bobwhite quail (N = 69)</b>					
First 9 Days*	1.08	0.46	0.43	17	17
Day 10 - Nov 30	2.57	1.32	0.51	40	48
Dec 1 - Jan 10	2.53	0.69	0.27	39	25
Jan 11 - Jan 31	0.30	0.26	0.86	5	9

\*First 2 weekends of season

**Table 5. Harvest and proportion of harvest by August roadside survey region for the 2024-25 small game season. Harvest apportioned by county of residence, which may not be location where game was harvested.**

Region	Ring-necked Pheasant		Bobwhite Quail		Cottontail Rabbit		Squirrel		Hungarian Partridge		Mourning Dove	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
NW	77,563	16.7	0	0.0	5,274	6.8	11,215	9.0	0	0.0	24,237	16.9
NC	18,658	4.0	56	0.2	1,114	1.4	2,376	1.9	0	0.0	2,342	1.6
NE	60,337	13.0	0	0.0	31,771	41.2	52,137	41.9	1,236	91.8	5,420	3.8
WC	32,137	6.9	987	3.6	10,417	13.5	3,418	2.7	110	8.2	3,075	2.2
C	100,742	21.7	5,501	19.9	5,292	6.9	18,579	14.9	0	0.0	9,382	6.6
EC	30,938	6.7	2,115	7.7	13,907	18.0	19,365	15.6	0	0.0	36,166	25.3
SW	29,488	6.4	7,980	28.9	28	0.0	28	0.0	0	0.0	280	0.2
SC	16,789	3.6	983	3.6	2,723	3.5	6,160	5.0	0	0.0	36,995	25.9
SE	16,159	3.5	7,082	25.7	6,399	8.3	2,936	2.4	0	0.0	14,008	9.8
Nonresident	81,073	17.5	2,871	10.4	137	0.2	8,110	6.5	0	0.0	11,087	7.8
Total	463,884		27,575		77,062		124,324		1,346		142,992	

**Table 6. Harvest and proportion of harvest by August roadside survey region for the 2024-25 small game season. Harvest apportioned by county reported hunted most often. This new data from online format is more accurate reflection of harvest by region.**

Region	Ring-necked Pheasant		Bobwhite Quail		Cottontail Rabbit		Squirrel		Hungarian Partridge		Mourning Dove	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
NW	64,281	13.9	232	0.8	5,137	6.7	3,639	2.9	199	14.8	10,999	7.7
NC	62,293	13.4	695	2.5	6,072	7.9	7,884	6.3	199	14.8	10,999	7.7
NE	45,726	9.9	5,330	19.3	14,478	18.8	30,929	24.9	299	22.2	12,099	8.5
WC	68,920	14.9	1,390	5.0	6,072	7.9	4,852	3.9	249	18.5	7,700	5.4
C	72,233	15.6	1,159	4.2	9,341	12.1	15,161	12.2	249	18.5	24,199	16.9
EC	48,376	10.4	6,720	24.4	10,275	13.3	18,800	15.1	0	0.0	23,099	16.2
SW	19,881	4.3	6,025	21.8	2,802	3.6	1,819	1.5	0	0.0	6,600	4.6
SC	23,194	5.0	3,244	11.8	6,072	7.9	11,523	9.3	50	3.7	23,099	16.2
SE	31,809	6.9	2,317	8.4	10,275	13.3	18,194	14.6	0	0.0	14,299	10.0
Co. Blank	27,170	5.9	463	1.7	6,539	8.5	11,523	9.3	100	7.4	9,899	6.9
Total	463,884		27,575		77,062		124,324		1,346		142,992	

\*County of residence is used to assign harvest location, which may not be location where game was harvested.

Online questions for the 2024-25 hunting season. For all species, days hunted, harvest, and county hunted most questions were asked. If pheasant and quail were hunted then period hunting questions were also asked.

This example shows only part of the online survey for brevity. Period questions were same format for quail as pheasants. Other species questions were in the same format as the dove and ruffed grouse examples.

# IAUplandHarvest

## Hunter Check-in

1. Please enter the SURVID code from the letter you received. \*

111111

Characters used: 6 out of 6.

You were randomly selected from among approximately 150,000 buyers of Iowa hunting licenses to receive this survey. This survey will provide estimates of harvest and the number of people who hunted Upland Game during the 2023-2024 hunting season. If you did not hunt any of these species in Iowa we still need to hear from you. **Please answer the first question even if you did not hunt upland game in Iowa during 2023-2024; it is important to know what proportion of hunters did not hunt upland game.** Use the Next button to advance to the next question: Back & Forward arrows at the bottom of pages are also available. Thank you for your contribution to this survey effort.

Next

0%

## Upland species hunted

2. Which Upland Game species did you hunt in Iowa between September 1, 2023 and February 28, 2024? (Check all that apply) \*

☐ Did not hunt any of these species in Iowa

☐ Wild Pheasant (Non game farm)

☐ Wild Bobwhite quail (Non game farm)

☐ Cottontail rabbit

☐ Squirrel

☐ Hungarian partridge

☐ Doves (Mourning & Eurasian Collared)

☐ Ruffed grouse

BackNext

4%

## Land type hunted

3. On what type of land did you hunt Upland Game in Iowa during 2023-2024? \*

☐ Only Public land & public access walk-in areas

☐ Only Private land

☐ Both Public and Private Land

BackNext

8%

## Days hunted Upland Game in Iowa

4. How many DAYS did you hunt for Upland Game in Iowa between September 1, 2023 and February 28, 2024? \*

BackNext

12%

Pheasant Days and Harvest

5. How many total **DAYS** did you hunt WILD (non-game farm) **PHEASANTS** in Iowa between October 28, 2023 and January 10, 2024? \*

Characters used: 0 out of 3.

6. What was your **TOTAL HARVEST** of WILD (non-game farm) **PHEASANTS** in Iowa between October 28, 2023 and January 10, 2024? \*

Characters used: 0 out of 3.

Back

Next

16%

Pheasant county

- In which **COUNTY** did you hunt **PHEASANTS** most frequently during the 2023 - 2024 season?

Please select the county you hunted pheasants most often, if you do not know or recall the county scroll to the bottom of the list.

Don't Know the County

Back

Next

20%

Pheasant Region



If you cannot recall the specific county you hunted most frequently for pheasants, in which Region of Iowa did you hunt pheasants most often?

7. In which Region did you hunt pheasants most frequently?

- ☒ Northwest
- ☐ Northcentral
- ☐ Northeast
- ☐ Westcentral
- ☐ Central
- ☐ Eastcentral
- ☐ Southwest
- ☐ Southcentral
- ☐ Southeast

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Next

24%

Pheasant Days Cont.

8. Of the **3** total days you hunted **PHEASANTS**, How many **DAYS** did you hunt **wild pheasants** (not game farm) in Iowa during **EACH** of the following time periods?  
Enter a value for each time period, if none enter the numeral zero.

October 28, 2023 - Nov. 5

Nov. 6 - Nov. 30

Dec. 1 - Jan. 10, 2024

Back

Next

28%

## Pheasant Harvest Cont.

9. Of the **3** total pheasants you harvested, How many wild (*not game farm*) **pheasants** did you **HARVEST** in Iowa **during EACH of the following time periods?**  
Enter a value for each time period, if none enter the numeral zero.

October 28, 2023 - Nov. 5

Nov. 6 - Nov. 30

Dec. 1 - Jan. 10, 2024

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## Doves

10. How many **days** in Iowa did you hunt **Doves** in the 2023 - 2024 hunting season, **and** how many Doves did you **harvest**?  
*(Enter a value for both DAYS and HARVEST)*

Total DAYS hunted for DOVES?

Total HARVEST of DOVES?

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## Dove county

- In what **COUNTY** did you hunt **DOVES** most frequently during 2023 - 2024?

BOONE

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## Ruffed Grouse

11. How many **days** in Iowa did you hunt Ruffed Grouse in the 2023-2024 hunting season, **and** how many Ruffed Grouse did you **harvest**?  
*(Enter a value for both DAYS and HARVEST)*

Total DAYS hunted for Ruffed Grouse in Iowa?

Total HARVEST of Ruffed Grouse in Iowa?

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## Ruffed Grouse cont.

- In what Iowa **COUNTY** did you hunt **RUFFED GROUSE** most frequently during 2023 - 2024?

ALLAMAKEE

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## YOUTH PHEASANT

12. Did you hunt or take a youth pheasant hunting during the 2023 **Youth Pheasant Season?** \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

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# YOUTH PHEASANT CONT.

13. If YES, how many youths hunted with you and how many pheasants were harvested **during the Youth season?**  
(Enter a value for both YOUTHS and HARVEST)

Number of Youths hunting?

Number of Wild pheasants harvested by youths?

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