2026
IOWA AUGUST
ROADSIDE SURVEY



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2026 IOWA UPLAND WILDLIFE POPULATIONS

This report is a summary of the 2026 Iowa August roadside survey. Iowa DNR Enforcement and Wildlife Bureau personnel throughout the state conduct the survey each year during the first half of August. Individuals involved in this survey should be credited for their efforts to collect these data during the early-morning hours. This survey is partially funded by the Pittman-Robertson Act, Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program.

The August roadside survey generates data from approximately 225, 30-mile routes on ring-necked pheasants, bobwhite quail, gray partridge, cottontail rabbits, and white-tailed jackrabbits. Counts conducted on cool mornings when the sun is shining, with heavy dew, and no wind yield the most consistent results. Comparisons between 2025 and 2026 are based on routes that are directly comparable between years (routes with no alterations and started with good dew). Long-term trends are based on all routes completed. The two factors that determine the abundance and distribution of upland game populations in Iowa are **weather** and **habitat.**

SUMMARY

Statewide, Iowa experienced a normal winter, followed by a wetter and warmer than normal spring. Iowa's weather model predicted pheasant numbers would be unchanged from 2025 based on these weather trends. This prediction was incorrect as the roadside counts showed statewide pheasant numbers decreased significantly (-17%) compared to 2025. Pheasant numbers showed statistically significant decreasing trends in 4 of the 9 survey regions, with stable or slightly declining non-significant trends in the other 5 regions. Bobwhites showed a slight downward trend, but it was not statistically significant. Gray partridge and cottontail numbers were unchanged from 2025. A more "normal" overwinter hen survival rate this year verses 2025 is likely a key reason for the decreases seen in 2026. Even though pheasant counts declined from the 20 year high recorded in 2025, counts in 8 of the 9 survey regions remain at or above their 10-year averages, as do the counts for bobwhite, gray partridge and cottontails. This fall represents Iowa's 101st year of pheasant hunting, and upland hunters should have another good year in the Hawkeye state!!

2025-26 IOWA WEATHER SUMMARY

Iowa pheasant numbers increase with mild winters (less than 19 inches snowfall) followed by warm, dry springs (less than 6 inches rainfall). They decline with snowy winters (30 or more inches of snowfall) followed by cold, wet springs (8 or more inches of rainfall), and remain generally stable with average weather conditions, (winters with 20–30 inches of snow and springs with 6-8 inches of rainfall).

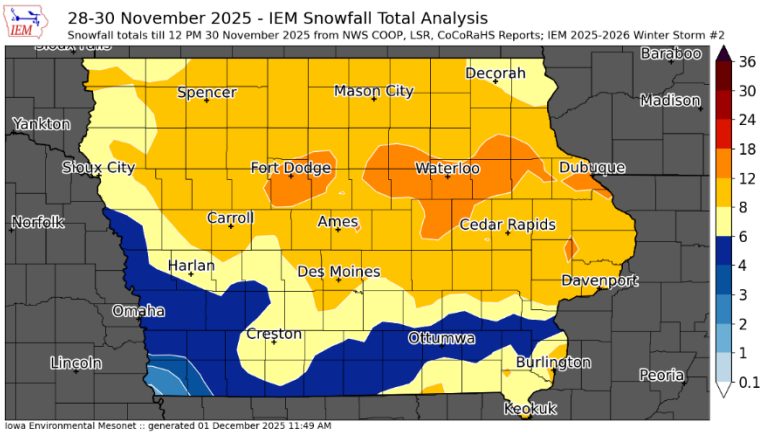
Table 1. Iowa 2025-26 weather. Normal winter snowfall is 25 inches, while normal nesting season rainfall and mean temperature is 7 inches and 55F.

Weather Variables	Survey Regions									
	NW	**NC**	**NE**	**WC**	**C**	**EC**	**SW**	**SC**	**SE**	**State**
Winter Weather*										
Total Snowfall (inch)	24.0	30.9	34.7	18.9	32.9	28.8	10.3	12.8	20.9	**25.6**
*Departure***	*-2.6*	*2.0*	*5.4*	*-8.3*	*7.8*	*4.6*	*-11.1*	*-8.9*	*-2.0*	*0.3*
Spring Weather										
Total Rainfall (inch)	6.5	7.1	8.6	6.5	9.1	8.3	9.0	10.6	9.0	**8.3**
Departure	*0.5*	*0.2*	*1.4*	*-0.5*	*1.9*	*1.0*	*1.5*	*3.0*	*1.5*	*1.2*
Mean Temperature (F)	54	55	55	56	57	58	58	59	59	**57.0**
Departure	*0.6*	*1.4*	*1.9*	*0.6*	*2.4*	*2.0*	*1.1*	*2.5*	*2.0*	*1.6*

*Winter weather period (1 Dec.-31 Mar.) and spring period (1 April-31 May).

**Departures calculated using thirty-year NOAA average from 1961-1990.

Statewide the 2025-26 winter snowfall was unremarkable, right at the long-term average (Table 1). However, winter started with a severe snowstorm in November dropping close to a foot of snow across a larger portion of Iowa, the state climatologist reported Nov. as the 4th snowiest Nov. in 138 years records. Fortunately, winter conditions moderated after a snowy start. Total snowfall was below normal, 19 inches or less, in southwestern Iowa, WC, SW, and SC regions, and snowier than normal, 29-35 inches, in Northeastern Iowa, NC, NE, C, and EC regions (Table 1, Figure 1). These conditions likely led to normal overwinter survival in the SW, but below normal overwinter hen survival particularly for species in the NE region of the state. The peak nesting season months of April and May were a mixed bag as the state climatologist reported April as the 18th warmest and 6th wettest in 154 years of state records, while May was the 60th warmest and the 35th driest. (Table 1, Figure 1). Warm temperatures in March and April likely led to earlier than normal nesting for pheasant, bobwhite, and gray partridge. Field staff reported the first pheasant brood May 10th, which was even earlier than last year. However, above normal rainfall in SC, SE, EC, C, and NE regions likely impacted nesting and brood-rearing in these regions. In summary, the weather of 2025-26 can be summed up as a better winter in western Iowa, a snowier winter in northeastern Iowa, while rainfall was favorable in northwestern Iowa, but excessive in southern and eastern regions. The Wildlife Bureau's statewide weather model predicted no change in the pheasant population mainly because of the warmness of the spring. However, the 2026 roadside counts confirmed a decrease in pheasant populations from last year.



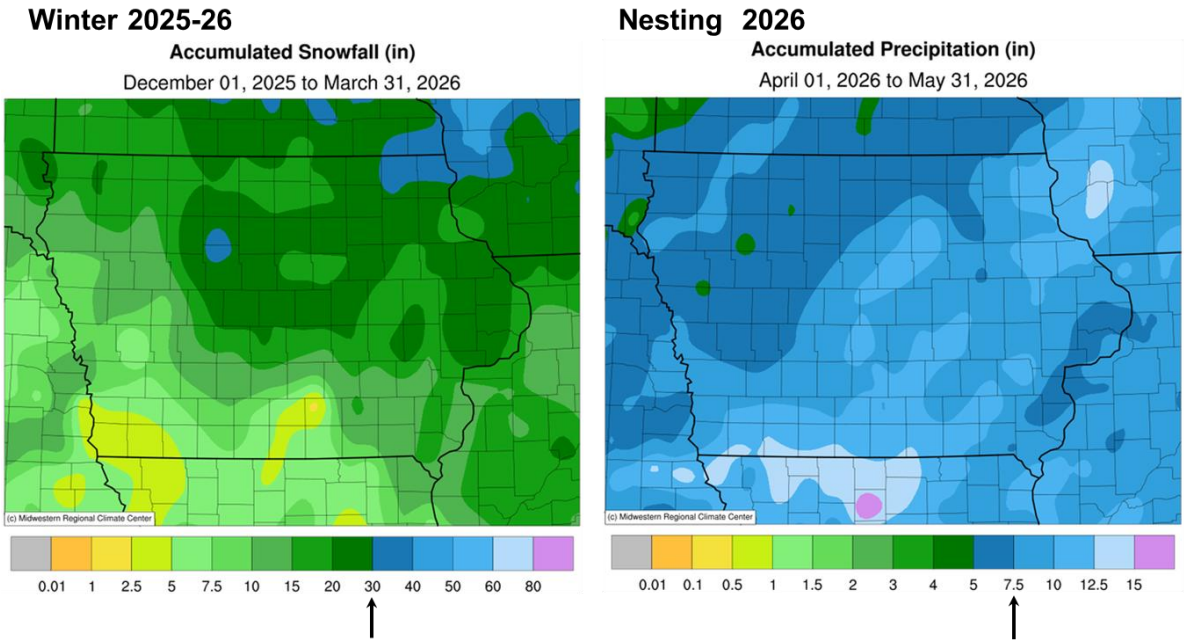


Figure 1. Iowa 2025-26 snowfall and rainfall summary.

UPLAND HABITAT TRENDS IN IOWA

The influence of habitat changes on upland populations are more gradual than the impacts of annual weather. The effects of habitat change are only evident after looking at multiple years of surveys. Information from the USDA shows that between 1995 and 2025 Iowa lost 2,942 square miles of potential pheasant habitat (Table 2). This habitat was a mix of small grains, hay, and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres. To put this loss in perspective, 2,942 mi^2 is a strip of habitat **10 miles wide** that would stretch from Omaha to Davenport. The CRP has become critical for Iowa pheasant populations with the loss of small grains and hay lands to corn and soybean production.

Table 2. Trends in Iowa habitat and total habitat loss from 1995 to 2025, data from USDA

Year	Hay Acres	Small Grains Acres	CRP Acres	Total All Habitat Acres
1995	1,700,000	260,000	2,199,360	4,159,360
2000	1,700,000	198,000	1,598,662	3,496,662
2005	1,600,000	140,000	1,917,574	3,657,574
2010	1,200,000	80,000	1,637,130	2,917,130
2015	1,160,000	72,000	1,484,593	2,716,593
2020	1,160,000	73,000	1,705,188	1,687,873
2025	1,000,000	73,000	1,670,377	2,743,377

Acres of Habitat Lost 1995 vs 2020 - -1,882,684
Square Miles of Habitat Lost 1995 vs 2020 - -2,942

The 2018 Farm Bill increased the CRP program from a 24 million acre to a 27-million-acre program. Nationally, USDA reports 15.9 million acres enrolled in traditional CRP, as of May 2026, the lowest in program history. As of May, Iowa has 1.62 million acres enrolled, with 727,000 acres of Iowa entire enrollment expiring by fall of 2027, this equates to 44% of Iowa's CRP! *Iowa will cease to be a major pheasant hunting state if the CRP is significantly diminished.* Opportunities to enroll additional land into CRP in Iowa are declining. The 2018 Farm bill changed rental payments so landowners do not receive fair market rent for their land, which has significantly reduced interest in the program. The CRP is a federal USDA program, thus folks who value CRP should visit with their elected congressional representatives. In 2025, Iowa had 2.74 million acres of potential pheasant habitat (Table 2). Grassland habitat acres within Iowa are near an all-time low.

The DNR's walk-in hunting program, Iowa Habitat and Access Program (IHAP), is funded through a combination of the USDA grants and DNR license dollars. Most IHAP sites are typically private CRP lands where the DNR has provided incentives to landowners to manage habitat for wildlife in exchange for public hunting access. Iowa DNR has over 30,000 acres in this program. For a list of IHAP sites or information about enrolling visit http://www.iowadnr.gov/ihap.

SURVEY CONDITIONS

The August roadside survey yields the most consistent results on mornings with heavy dew, no wind, and sunny skies. Research by Dr. Klonglan at Iowa State University in the 1950s showed the number of pheasants counted on mornings with medium dew averaged a third fewer birds than routes run on a morning with heavy dew. Heavy dew conditions require good soil moisture in late July and early August. During this year's survey, staff reported 187 routes (88%) started with a heavy dew the same as in 2025. Staff reported sunny starting conditions on only 62% of routes in 2026 versus 87% last year. The US Drought Monitor showed no severe drought across Iowa in early August. Dew conditions were good the first two weeks of August, but sunny mornings were a challenge for conducting counts.

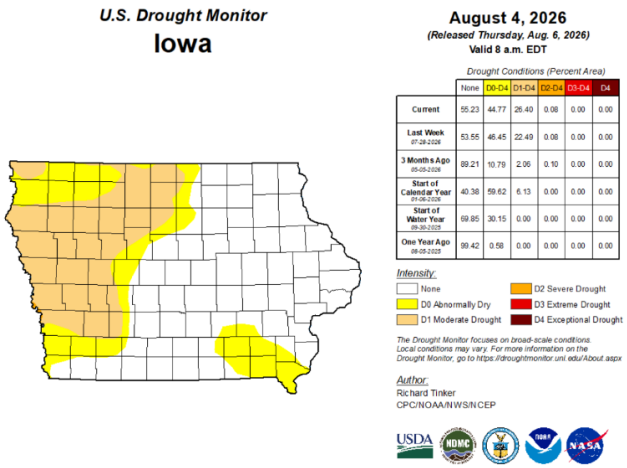


Figure 2. Early August drought map of Iowa.

RING-NECKED PHEASANTS

Statewide: This year the statewide pheasant index of 22.6 birds/route represents a significant decrease over last year's estimate of 27.4 birds/route on comparable routes (Table 3, Figure 3). The statewide pheasant population is 12% above the 10-year trend (Table 4). Iowa research indicates overwinter hen survival, brood survival, and nest success are the major factors influencing annual changes in pheasant numbers. Statewide, the total hens counted on routes were significantly lower than 2025, suggesting lower overwinter survival (Table 3). Total chicks reported was also significantly lower, however, statewide data on chicks/brood (measure of chick survival) and age ratios (chicks per adult hen - measure of overall hen success) were similar to last year, suggesting from an overall statewide perspective Iowa had fewer nesting hens and that winter survival likely drove much of the change seen between 2026 and 2025 (Table 3). The similarity of brood sizes and age ratios suggests that nesting and brood-rearing success were on par with last year and that fewer hens drove most of the changes seen between 2025 and 2026. Past telemetry research in Iowa shows overwinter hen survival averages around 60-65% in a normal winter, but can exceed 90% in mild winters. This year's counts match up well with the winter weather Iowa experienced in 2026 (normal winter) vs 2025 (mild winter).

Overall, pheasant hunters in the Hawkeye state should expect Iowa's 101st year of pheasant hunting to be a good season, with counts at or above their 10-year means in all regions except the SC. The NW, NC, WC, C, and SE regions show the best overall densities. Five (NW, NC, WC, C, SE) of the 9 survey regions reported pheasant averages of 20+ birds per route (Table 3, Figure 5) and should offer good to excellent hunting. Pheasant hunting last fall in the Hawkeye state was very good with a harvest of approximately half million roosters. Given this year's statewide index of 23 birds per route, Iowa pheasant hunters should harvest approximately 350,000 to 450,000 roosters this fall (Figure 3). As of early September, Iowa's corn crop was maturing rapidly, if this pattern continues into October, Iowa could see an early crop harvest, with most fields harvested and plowed by the pheasant opener. Hunter success is usually very good on openers where most crops have been harvested.

Northern Regions: Total pheasants counted in all northern regions showed declines compared to last year, but only the decline in the NE region was significant. Fewer total hens driving most of the changes compared to 2025 (Table 3, Figure 5). Counts in all three regions are at or above their 10-year averages, and counts in NW region are above the long-term mean (Table 4). The NW region averaged 46 birds per route which was the highest density of any region in 2026, while the NC regions reported 29 birds/route, second highest average in the state (Table 3). The NE region showed the largest decline this year dropping from 34 to 19 birds/route, and this region experienced the most snowfall of any region (Tables 1, Table 3). The NW and NC regions should offer good to excellent pheasant hunting, particularly around public and private lands with good winter habitat, while hunters in the NE will likely notice fewer bird compared to last year. Better counts in NW came from, Clay, Emmet, Dickinson, Lyon, Palo Alto, and Pocahontas counties. Butler, Kossuth, and Winnebago counties reported better numbers in the NC region, while the NE region reported the best counts in Bremer, Chickasaw, Howard, and Winneshiek counties (Figure 6).

Central Regions: Counts in 2 of the 3 central regions showed downward trends in 2026, but only the decline in the EC region was significant, counts in the C region were unchanged from last year (Table 3, Figure 5). All 3 regions showed similar brood sizes and age ratios to last year, but total hens and chicks generally declined, suggesting lower overwinter survival, but rainfall during nesting may have impacted the EC region (Table 3). Both the WC and C regions reported over 20 birds/route in 2026 (Figure 5). Counts in all 3 regions are around their 10-year means (Table 4). All 3 regions should offer good to fair hunting this fall where good quality pheasant habitat exists (Figure 6). The WC region reported better counts in Calhoun, Ida, and Sac counties. The Central region reported good bird numbers in Boone, Grundy, Hamilton, and Webster counties, while the EC region reported better numbers in Iowa, Jones, and Scott counties (Figure 6).

Southern Regions: Counts declined consistently in the SE, were variable in the SC, and increased in the SW region compared to 2025. It should be noted densities in the SW and SC regions are still the lowest in the state (Table 3, Figure 5). Counts in the SW and SE remain above their 10-year means, while counts in the SC remain below (Table 4). The SW region was the only region to show more hens than last year likely related to only having 10 inches of snowfall this past year (Tables 1, Table 3). The SC and SE regions saw more winter snowfall and much more nesting season rainfall driving the trends in those regions (Tables 1, Table 3). Some of the better counts in this region in 2026 came from Adair, Adams, Henry, Keokuk, Louisa, Montgomery and Union counties (Figure 6).

BOBWHITE QUAIL

Iowa's statewide bobwhite quail index declined (-21%) from last year with 0.8 quail reported per route in 2026 compared to 1.1 quail per route in 2025, total broods also declined but neither change was significant indicating variability across routes (Table 3, Figure 4). The statewide quail index is right at the 10-year average and -21% below the long-term mean (Table 4). Regardless of region this year's survey shows quail numbers are similar to last year (Table 3, Figure 5). The SW region reported the best overall quail numbers in 2026, followed by the SC and WC regions respectively (Figure 5, Figure 6). Better counts in 2026 came from Adair, Crawford, Louisa, Montgomery, Page, Ringgold, and Wayne counties (Figure 6). Hunters should focus quail hunting where there is a good mix of shrubs, ag fields, and weeds.

Male bobwhite on powerline during a 2026 roadside count. K Fleming

GRAY PARTRIDGE

The 2026 statewide gray partridge count increased 6% when compared to 2025, however, the change was not significant (Table 3, Figure 4). Gray partridge prefer the wide-open and treeless agricultural lands of the northern two-thirds of the state. Typically, partridge numbers increase following mild winters and when spring/summer precipitation is well below normal. This year's counts showed significant upward trend in the NC region and significant downward trends in the NW and NE regions. The C and EC regions reported non-significant increases, meaning there was no consistent trend in gains verses losses among routes within these regions (Table 3, Figure 5). This year's statewide estimate matches the 10-year mean and is -48% below the long-term mean (Table 4). The NW, NC, EC, and C regions reported the best densities in 2026 all averaging greater than 2 partridge/route (Figure 5). Better counts in 2026 came from Boone, Calhoun, Grundy, Hamilton, Hancock, Jones, Kossuth, Lyon, Mitchell, Osceola, Palo Alto, and Wright counties (Figure 6).

COTTONTAIL RABBIT

Staff reported an average of 7.3 rabbits per 30-mile route in 2026, which was identical to the 2025 estimate (Table 3, Figure 4). Cottontails remain very abundant in Iowa with this year's count the highest since 2014. The statewide index is 30% above the 10-year mean and 20% above the long-term mean (Table 4). Regionally, rabbit numbers showed no statistically significant trend in any region, with NW, NC, C, and SE regions showing minor increases and the NE, WC, EC, SW, and SC regions showing minor decreases (Table 3, Figure 5). Cottontails typically increase following mild winters with good moisture during spring and summer, thus given Iowa's average winter and wetter summer in 2026, it should not be a surprise cottontail numbers remained stable. Cottontail hunters can expect good to excellent hunting across most of the state this fall. Staff reported the best cottontail numbers in the SC and SE regions this year, with good numbers also reported in the WC, C, EC, and NE regions (Figure 5, Figure 6).

SURVEY METHODS

The August Roadside Survey was developed by Iowa State University and first deployed in 1936 (Bennett and Hendrickson 1938). Researchers realized it was impossible to count all pheasants on the landscape given their natural instinct is to remain hidden in cover. However, a survey run at the same time of the year, on the same roads, under the same weather conditions, a "standardized survey", can provide a reliable index of the population if it is assumed that the same proportion of the population is available to be seen along roadsides each year. For example, if it is assumed 5% of the pheasant population is along roadsides on August mornings each year and observers detect/see all 5%, then a count done this year should be comparable to one done last year and any change in the count should reflect the change in the total population. Because it is not a total count of the population the August roadside counts are referred to as an index to the population or a relative abundance estimate. The key assumption of the roadside survey is that this detection probability is relatively constant from year to year. All wildlife surveys are faced with the challenge of imperfect detection because not all animals are available for detection or detected when present. If detection changes from year to year, say 5% in one year and then 10% the next year, then a comparison of raw count data would indicate the population increased, when in fact it may be unchanged, just the proportion of the population along the roads changed between years.

Since its initial development in 1936, other research has been done to ensure this key assumption of detection is not violated. Klonglan (1955) recommended ideal weather conditions for surveys to minimize variation in detection between years. Wooley et al (1978) noted that total brood counts were more strongly correlated with resulting pheasant harvest than the total pheasants counted along routes. Indices can be unbiased if detection probability remains constant over time. This key assumption while generally thought to be reasonable had not been formally evaluated until Janke et al (2026). This research showed while detection is generally stable it can vary between years and regions and make the index less accurate. The research noted broods rather than individual pheasants are probably better item to count regarding detection since a group of birds is more consistently detected than individual birds. This research provides a method to correct counts for variation in detection between years based on weather variables. Historically the August Roadside report used the raw counts of total pheasants to indicate a change in the pheasant population. This year the report uses this new research to correct the total broods counted for detection differences between 2025 and 2026. If the adjusted brood count was statistically significant, the significance is denoted in bold in the total pheasant column of Table 3. It is denoted in the total pheasant column, as total pheasants have historically been reported in the survey, whereas total broods have not. Other statistically significant changes shown in Table 3 are the analysis of the raw count data, as the research only evaluated detection for broods, not individual pheasants or other species. This change should make the report more accurate regarding changes in Iowa's pheasant population.

Bennett, LJ and GO Hendrickson. 1938. Censusing the ring-neck pheasant in Iowa. Transactions of the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference 3: 719-723.

Janke, AK, ZR Dienes, JS Taylor, PM Dixon, and TR Bogenschutz. 2026. Environmental factors influencing detection of ring-neck pheasant broods during August roadside surveys. Journal of Wildlife Management 90:e70180. https://doi.org/10.1002/jwmg.7018016

Klonglan, E. 1955. Factors influencing the fall roadside pheasant census in Iowa. Journal of Wildlife Management 13: 101-120.

Wooley Jr, JB, DD Humburg, AL Farris, RR George, and JM Kienzler. 1978. Analysis of ring-necked pheasant population surveys. Iowa Conservation Commission Research Bulletin 24: 1-22.

Table 3. Mean numbers of wildlife observed per 30-mile route on the August roadside survey in 2025 and 2026. Only directly comparable routes are used for statistical comparisons.

REGION	n	RINGNECKED PHEASANTS								BOBWHITE QUAIL		GRAY PARTRIDGE		RABBITS	
		TOTAL PHEASANT	COCKS	HENS W/O BROODS	HENS W/ BROODS	HENS	CHICKS	CHICKS / BROODS	AGE RATIO	TOTAL BIRDS	COVEYS	TOTAL BIRDS	COVEYS	EASTERN COTTONTAIL	WHITETAILED JACKRABBIT
Northwest	27														
2026		46.0	6.5	3.6	5.5	10.9	30.4	3.91	2.76			2.07	0.11	3.5	
2025		51.5	5.8	3.6	6.9	12.6	35.3	3.81	2.72			3.48	0.30	3.0	
% CHG		-11%	13%	-2%	-20%	-14%	-14%	2%	1%			**-40%**	-63%	16%	
North Central	25														
2026		28.8	3.8	2.0	3.8	7.0	19.1	3.64	2.51			5.72	0.48	4.3	
2025		35.2	4.6	2.8	4.9	8.8	23.0	3.82	2.57			2.76	0.32	4.2	
% CHG		-18%	-16%	**-28%**	**-21%**	**-20%**	-17%	-5%	-2%			107%	50	3%	
Northeast	21														
2026		19.3	2.6	0.8	2.4	4.3	13.5	3.84	3.22			1.00	0.10	7.0	
2025		34.0	3.2	1.4	3.7	7.6	25.6	4.09	3.23			3.71	0.48	7.4	
% CHG		**-43%**	-21%	-43%	**-35%**	**-43%**	**-47%**	-6%	0%			**-73%**	**-80%**	-6%	
West Central	24														
2026		25.5	3.0	1.5	4.3	6.7	16.8	3.57	2.67	1.96	0.13	1.46	0.13	6.2	
2025		31.2	3.8	2.3	4.1	7.3	21.0	4.16	2.55	1.96	0.13			6.3	0.08
% CHG		-18%	-19%	**-35%**	3%	-9%	-20%	**-14%**	5%	0%	0%			-3%	
Central	28														
2026		23.3	3.9	1.9	3.1	6.0	14.5	3.56	2.50	0.11		3.14	0.46	7.5	
2025		22.8	2.9	1.7	3.1	6.1	15.0	3.40	2.37	0.04		3.21	0.36	6.0	
% CHG		2%	**35%**	8%	-2%	-1%	-4%	5%	5%			-2%	30%	25%	
East Central	22														
2026		13.2	2.0	0.8	1.7	3.2	8.7	3.57	2.37			2.14	0.14	7.2	
2025		17.2	2.1	1.1	2.0	4.4	12.0	3.68	2.74	0.68	0.05	1.50	0.18	8.7	
% CHG		**-23**	-8	-32	-14	**-26**	**-27**	-3	-14			42	-25	-17	
Southwest	16														
2026		11.4	2.7	1.2	1.1	2.7	6.4	3.83	2.18	3.88	0.13			5.1	
2025		7.9	1.9	0.8	0.9	2.1	4.3	3.17	2.21	4.50	0.31			7.1	
% CHG		43%	39%	58%	13%	26%	49%	21%	-1%	-14%	-60%			-27%	

REGION	n	RINGNECKED PHEASANTS								BOBWHITE QUAIL		GRAY PARTRIDGE		RABBITS	
		TOTAL PHEASANT	COCKS	HENS W/O BROODS	HENS W/ BROODS	HENS	CHICKS	CHICKS / BROODS	AGE RATIO	TOTAL BIRDS	COVEYS	TOTAL BIRDS	COVEYS	EASTERN COTTONTAIL	WHITETAILED JACKRABBIT
South Central	22														
2026		5.3	1.3	0.4	0.6	1.4	3.0	3.29	2.05	2.09	0.09			13.1	
2025		8.7	1.7	1.9	0.9	3.1	4.1	3.48	1.93	2.91	0.14			13.7	
% CHG		**-39%**	-26%	**-79%**	-35%	**-57%**	-26%	-5%	6%	-28%	-33%			-4%	
Southeast	24														
2026		21.4	3.2	1.8	2.9	5.5	13.5	3.83	2.24	0.58	0.04			12.4	
2025		27.8	4.3	1.1	3.8	5.5	18.6	4.38	3.68	0.71	0.04			10.3	
% CHG		**-23%**	**-26%**	65%	**-23%**	0%	**-28%**	-13%	**-39%**	-18%	0%			20%	
Statewide	209														
2026		22.6	3.3	1.6	3.0	5.6	14.7	3.69	2.53	0.84	0.04	1.87	0.17	7.3	
2025		27.4	3.5	1.9	3.6	6.7	18.5	3.80	2.69	1.05	0.06	1.76	0.19	7.3	0.01
% CHG		**-17%**	-4%	**-16%**	**-16%**	**-17%**	**-20%**	-3%	**-6%**	-21%	-39%	6%	-10%	1%	

BOLD numbers indicate a mathematically significant change from the previous year (P < 0.10, Wilcoxen Signed Rank Test).

Total pheasant statistical significance based on brood detection probability (Janke, AK, ZR Dienes, JS Taylor, PM Dixon, and T Bogenschutz. 2026. Environmental factors influencing detection of ring-necked pheasant brookds during August roadside surveys. Journal of Wildlife Management. https://doi.org/10.1002/jwmg.70180)

Table 4. Historical upland wildlife numbers from the August Roadside Survey. Numbers represent the average number of animals counted on 30-mile routes[a].

YEAR	Pheasants										Bobwhite Quail Statewide	Gray Partridge Statewide	Eastern Cottontail Statewide	Whitetailed Jackrabbit Statewide
	NW	NC	NE	WC	C	EC	SW	SC	SE	STATE				
1980	51.2	61.7	81.2	98.7	72.2	63.5	82.1	68.9	37.2	67.0	2.05	8.81	4.2	0.15
1981	66.4	53.5	83.6	92.9	57.8	72.9	97.1	57.8	35.2	65.9	2.60	8.08	7.8	0.31
1982	26.7	27.9	38.9	55.5	23.1	20.9	41.6	47.7	19.3	32.3	0.79	4.21	6.4	0.10
1983	9.6	12.8	21.7	21.6	13.3	25.3	42.6	51.1	27.5	23.7	1.44	2.65	6.8	0.05
1984	8.8	11.1	19.2	22.1	14.4	24.5	23.8	38.5	26.4	20.6	0.66	4.22	5.6	0.08
1985	21.6	28.0	36.4	40.0	32.7	26.0	59.2	72.6	42.0	38.9	1.37	9.75	7.4	0.07
1986	27.5	20.4	48.2	31.2	24.8	29.0	49.7	65.2	27.2	34.8	1.42	9.62	7.7	0.12
1987	40.2	36.8	59.7	61.4	41.1	33.2	58.5	64.2	39.0	46.8	2.70	14.93	8.6	0.12
1988	33.6	35.0	45.1	60.8	29.6	26.0	45.7	49.8	29.8	38.1	1.96	19.00	4.5	0.17
1989	25.3	36.5	52.1	69.9	57.1	35.3	38.6	40.0	39.0	43.2	1.91	17.27	5.4	0.22
1990	34.3	49.4	63.9	57.9	44.3	24.7	44.5	31.7	27.3	41.2	1.48	8.75	9.2	0.19
1991	37.3	45.3	48.8	77.6	41.6	33.3	61.2	49.4	41.6	46.8	1.34	4.59	5.5	0.07

YEAR	Pheasants										Bobwhite Quail Statewide	Gray Partridge Statewide	Eastern Cottontail Statewide	Whitetailed Jackrabbit Statewide
	NW	NC	NE	WC	C	EC	SW	SC	SE	STATE				
1992	24.4	50.5	30.5	44.0	42.1	37.8	29.4	23.6	34.2	35.8	1.07	3.58	6.0	0.14
1993	15.8	21.4	15.2	55.2	23.8	25.0	34.3	24.0	28.1	25.9	0.96	0.85	5.5	0.03
1994	45.0	74.1	33.3	83.3	55.6	67.8	47.3	46.0	56.7	56.9	1.58	6.17	6.3	0.15
1995	26.0	63.2	37.6	44.7	54.3	54.3	43.7	27.8	43.2	44.6	1.37	2.47	7.0	0.06
1996	54.7	61.8	29.5	45.2	49.8	59.4	29.8	19.5	28.2	43.4	0.51	2.37	6.2	0.09
1997	46.1	62.0	41.2	37.3	54.7	47.4	31.7	28.8	41.3	44.8	0.77	5.10	4.9	0.10
1998	74.2	56.7	43.1	33.9	49.6	53.9	18.1	15.7	41.7	44.6	0.72	6.42	5.1	0.09
1999	42.7	33.6	21.6	19.5	37.9	36.0	17.5	12.9	27.0	29.1	0.57	2.83	5.9	0.06
2000	60.6	33.3	14.9	29.0	50.3	37.0	25.5	19.3	22.0	34.3	0.57	2.53	6.4	0.03
2001	22.4	16.0	6.2	8.4	22.0	19.0	12.0	7.3	4.6	13.9	0.29	1.90	3.8	0.05
2002	47.0	42.9	13.6	32.0	49.9	32.0	15.7	11.7	22.6	31.7	0.39	2.82	5.3	0.03
2003	81.2	67.3	20.7	36.1	61.2	35.6	29.3	21.8	28.2	44.9	0.89	2.76	8.8	0.03
2004	54.4	34.4	19.0	21.5	35.6	24.4	24.9	19.6	24.4	29.7	0.93	2.12	8.1	0.03
2005	63.5	42.3	25.3	32.0	49.9	25.9	28.9	12.6	23.5	35.1	0.69	2.79	6.2	0.02
2006	48.3	36.1	18.4	23.7	36.8	20.4	20.3	9.0	20.0	27.0	0.82	2.01	6.4	0.05
2007	41.3	35.0	20.1	26.0	36.2	25.0	12.8	5.6	19.8	25.8	0.81	1.62	4.3	0.02
2008	49.4	25.4	9.1	21.2	18.6	7.4	5.7	4.4	5.3	17.5	0.45	1.03	6.3	0.00
2009	35.5	16.6	2.6	23.5	19.1	9.3	10.0	4.8	10.1	15.4	0.72	1.17	5.0	0.01
2010	29.6	16.2	4.7	8.8	11.7	5.3	6.1	1.8	6.6	10.8	0.33	0.93	3.1	0.00
2011	11.1	7.3	2.4	5.5	10.2	5.9	6.3	2.9	4.7	6.6	0.22	1.15	2.2	0.02
2012	16.3	10.9	1.3	3.5	12.3	6.3	4.4	4.0	5.4	7.8	0.36	1.47	2.0	0.01
2013	14.3	9.0	2.7	5.2	7.1	4.2	2.5	4.4	6.3	6.5	0.36	0.81	5.1	0.01
2014	29.3	18.1	2.6	20.8	19.9	13.0	6.5	9.8	19.8	16.3	0.86	2.13	7.8	0.03
2015	42.4	22.5	8.1	23.6	36.4	16.7	11.3	8.2	27.8	23.2	1.42	3.26	7.2	0.02
2016	33.0	24.1	11.2	20.5	30.9	15.4	8.7	7.8	22.2	20.4	1.65	2.76	5.2	0.01
2017	25.8	15.1	5.3	13.0	22.7	12.0	6.8	5.8	15.5	14.4	1.11	1.99	5.4	0.01
2018	25.9	18.1	13.1	22.7	37.4	12.2	8.7	12.3	22.2	20.2	1.37	2.09	6.8	0.02
2019	23.3	20.9	12.8	26.4	27.3	9.1	7.3	6.8	12.3	17.0	0.84	1.35	5.7	0.01
2020	28.5	22.9	24.4	25.4	20.9	13.6	7.3	6.4	28.2	20.0	0.72	1.90	5.2	0.01
2021	28.8	30.6	19.7	31.6	25.5	10.3	4.9	8.3	10.3	19.7	0.39	2.00	4.3	0.01
2022	31.5	26.7	16.0	29.2	22.4	13.3	4.9	6.6	12.6	18.9	0.82	1.71	4.5	0.00

YEAR	Pheasants										Bobwhite Quail Statewide	Gray Partridge Statewide	Eastern Cottontail Statewide	Whitetailed Jackrabbit Statewide
	NW	NC	NE	WC	C	EC	SW	SC	SE	STATE				
2023	38.3	28.3	26.9	27.3	25.6	10.1	12.7	8.3	13.3	21.9	0.74	2.42	4.6	0.02
2024	32.1	23.7	23.9	26.1	21.8	13.3	3.6	5.2	14.8	19.2	0.48	1.49	5.3	0.00
2025	54.4	34.0	34.0	31.1	21.7	17.5	9.0	9.0	27.8	27.5	1.01	1.82	7.1	0.01
2026	46.0	28.8	19.3	25.5	23.3	13.2	11.4	5.3	21.4	22.6	0.84	1.87	7.3	0.00
Statistics:														
10 Year Avg.	33.5	24.9	19.5	25.8	24.9	12.5	7.7	7.4	17.8	20.1	0.8	1.9	5.6	0.0
Long-term Avg.	39.3	40.4	37.3	42.2	40.4	37.1	44.3	28.3	24.4	36.9	1.29	3.48	5.93	0.12
Percent Change from:														
10 Year Avg.	37%	15%	-1%	-1%	-6%	6%	48%	-28%	20%	12%	1%	0%	30%	-100%
Long-term Avg.[b]	38%	-16%	-9%	-26%	-46%	-53%	-80%	-68%	14%	-25%	-21%	-48%	20%	-92%

[a]Values do not match those in Table 3 and Figure 5 because historical data is based on ALL routes completed, whereas values in Table 3 and Figure 5 are calculated between only directly comparable routes.

[b]All data is used to compute long-term averages, but several years of historical data are not shown in table because of limited space.

Statewide Pheasant Trends

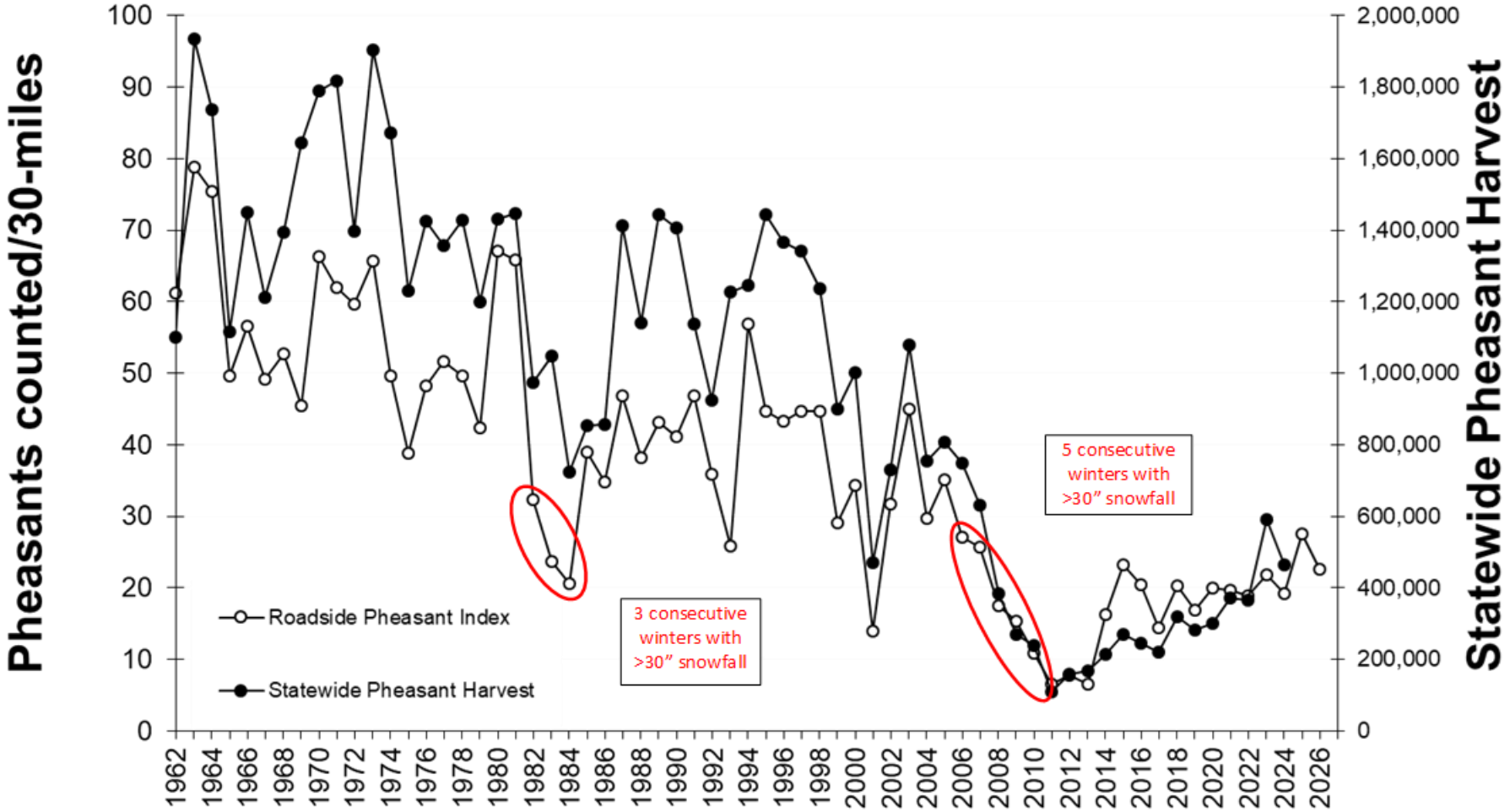


Figure 3. Mean number of pheasants counted on 30-mile August roadside survey routes, statewide, 1962-present, compared to total statewide pheasant harvest.

Statewide Upland Game Trends

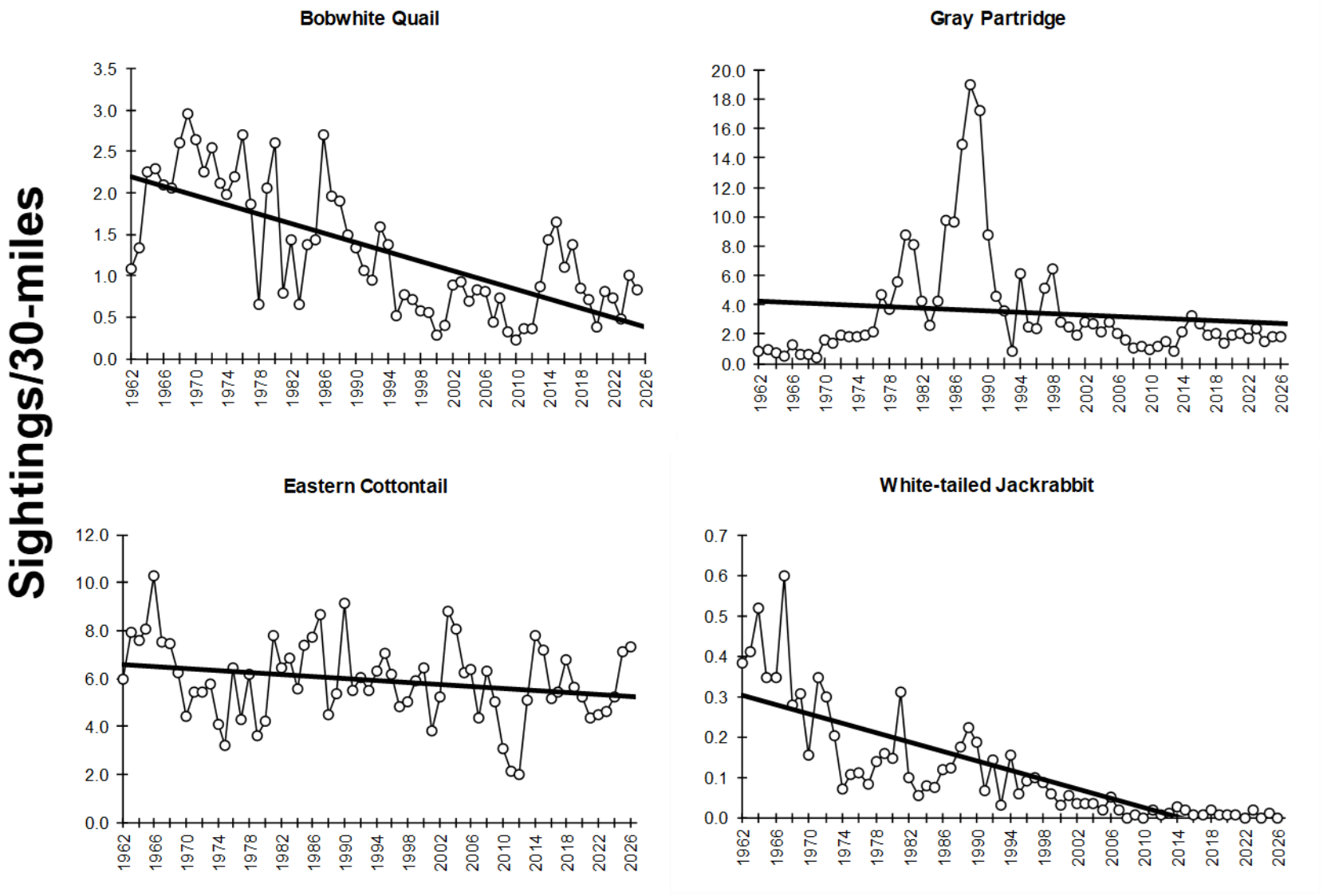


Figure 4. Mean number of quail, partridge, cottontails, and jackrabbits sighted per 30-mile route on the August roadside survey, statewide, 1962-present.

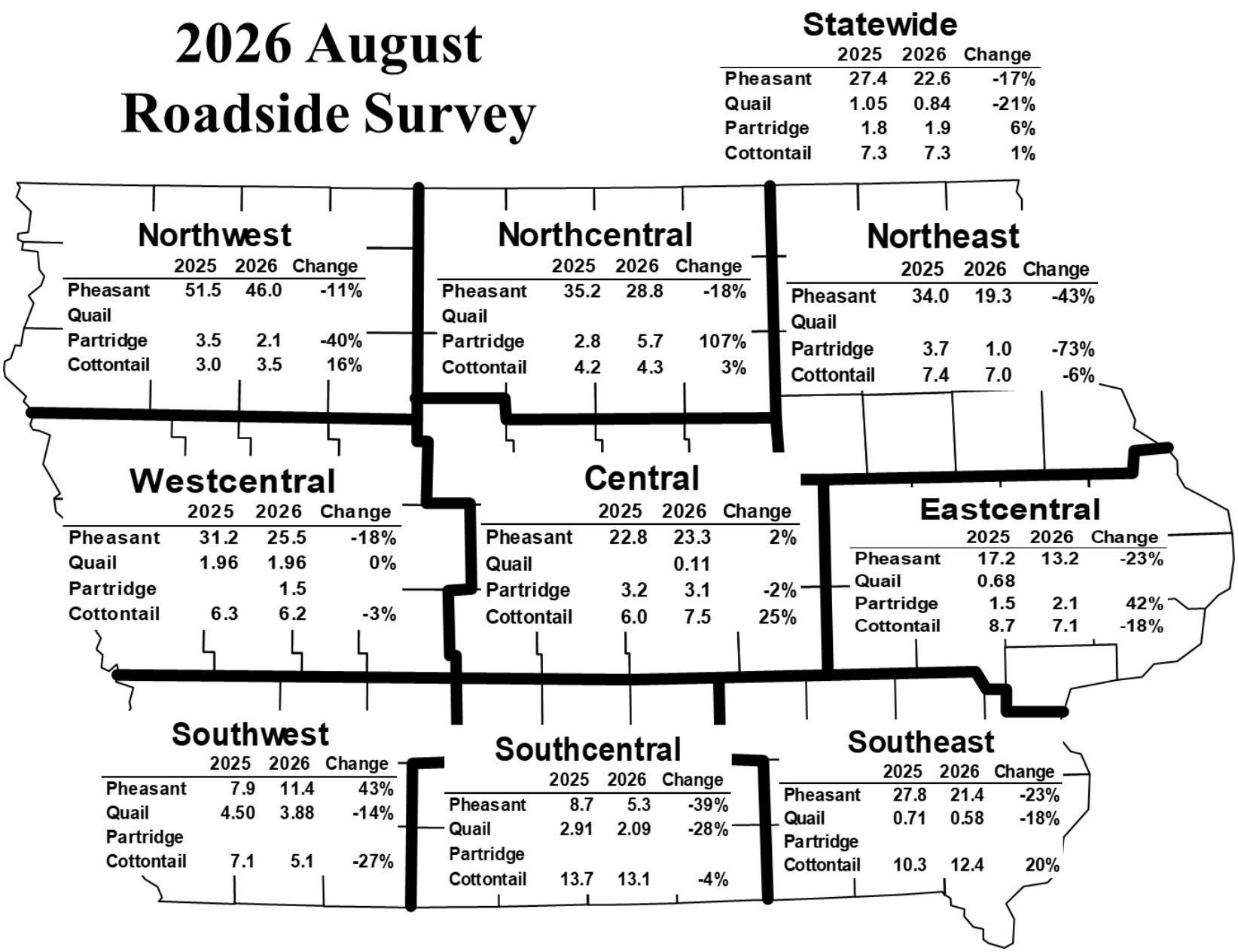
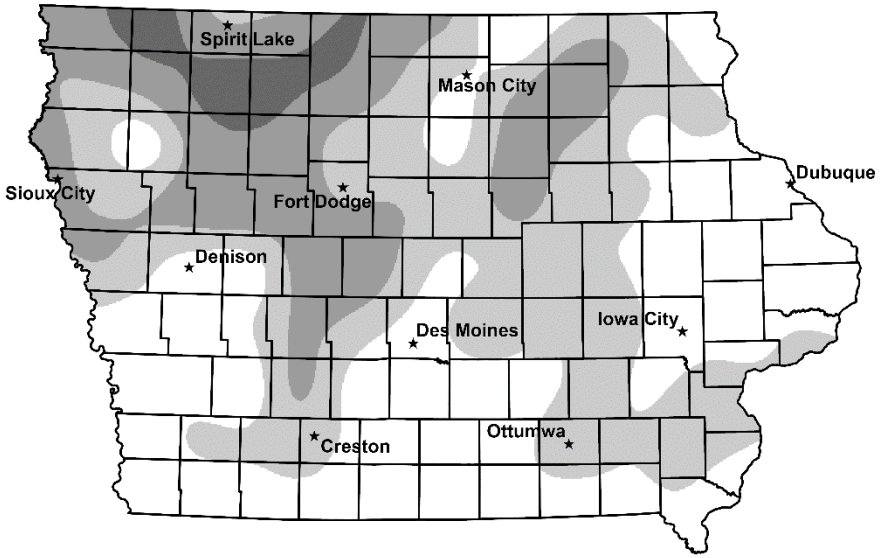


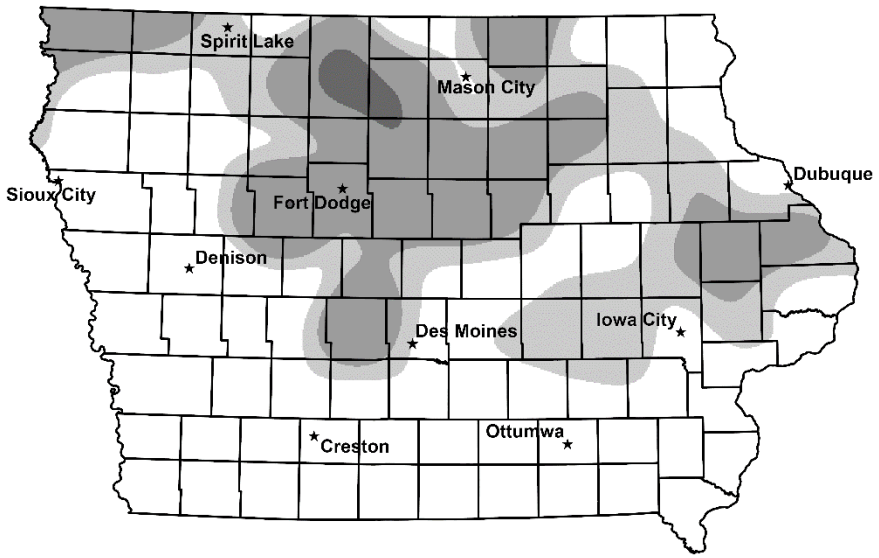
Figure 5. Numbers indicate the average number of animals counted on 30-mile routes in each region (e.g., the northwest region counted an average of 46 pheasants on survey routes in 2026). Data from 209 of 225 comparable returned surveys.

2026 GAME DISTRIBUTION

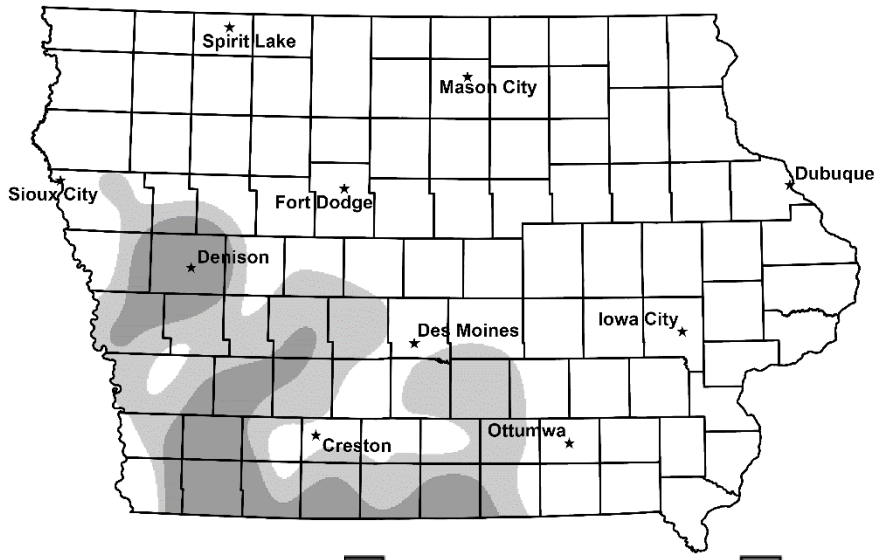
PHEASANT



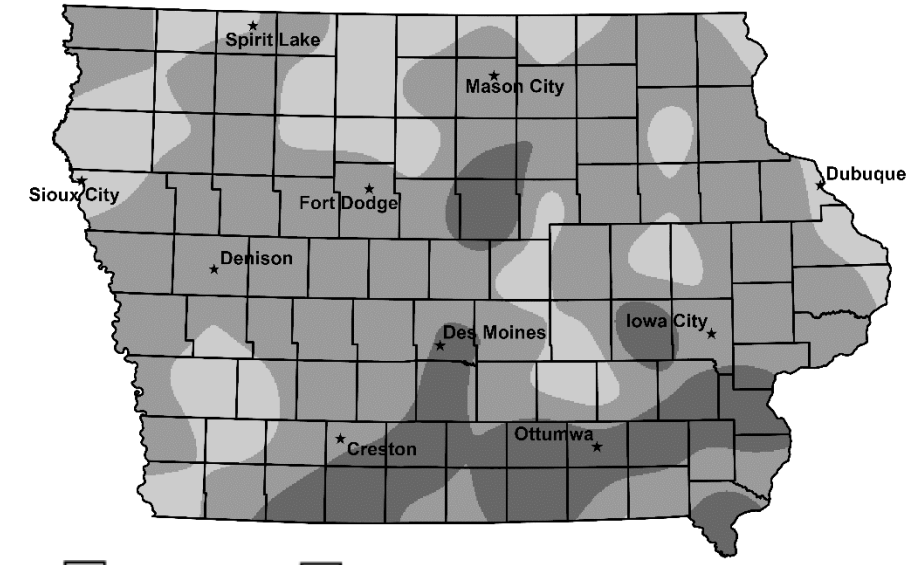
GRAY PARTRIDGE



QUAIL



COTTONTAIL



EXCELLENT GOOD FAIR POOR

Figure 6. Iowa small game distribution maps represent generalized game abundance. There can be areas of low game abundance in regions with "high" counts and vice versa.