

KEITH SEBELIUS Reservoir News

FRIDAY,
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FISHING — HUNTING
CAMPING — RECREATION
THE NORTON
TELEGRAM

TIME TO GO A HUNTING'

Upland bird hunting looks to be fairly good this year

Upland bird hunting opportunities statewide 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 U.S. 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, Sept. 15 through Oct. 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 Nov. 19 through Jan. 31 in the east and northwest part of Kansas. In the southwest, the season will be Nov. 19 through Dec. 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.

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Upland bird hunting should be good this year, especially in northwest Kansas.

— Photo by Bill Bussen