



2006 REGIONAL HUNTING FORECAST UPLAND GAME

WESTERN REGION

Sage-grouse

Winter and spring precipitation was favorable for forb and grass production until May when rains ceased and temperatures climbed. Available forbs and insects should have provided enough forage for fair to good production of sage-grouse. Dry summer conditions have kept females with broods tied to water sources. Hunters can expect dry and dusty conditions for the beginning of the hunting season. Based on this year's lek surveys and production, hunters should encounter similar bird densities to the last five years. Traditional sage-grouse hunting areas like the Montana Mountains and Owyhee Desert regions of Humboldt County should provide ample sage-grouse to harvest.

Forest Grouse (Blue and Ruffed Grouse)

Overall the forest grouse population should be very healthy going into the 2006-07 season. Fires continue to plague some parts of western Nevada (Humboldt and Washoe Counties) but thus far none have had significant impacts on any critical grouse habitat. Hunters can expect to have very favorable conditions for the fall 2006 season.

Chukar and Hungarian Partridge

The upcoming hunting season is expected to be very good with the potential to be one of the best hunting seasons on record. Adult population levels are at fairly high levels and another good production year should provide plenty of young birds for harvest this coming fall. Hunters may find that chukar and "Huns" are spread out over a wider area due to the fact that so many water sources are available to the birds this year. Once, colder and wetter weather comes, birds will not be as tied to the water sources and hunting will become more challenging. Hunters will have to work harder to get their limits and locate birds. However, with the higher bird numbers, chukar hunting should be good to excellent throughout the hunting season. The 2006-07 chukar hunting season is expected to be very good to excellent in northwestern Nevada. An increase in the possession limit from 12 to 18 birds will allow hunters to take advantage of high bird numbers. Hungarian partridge hunting may be more difficult as overall numbers are not near that of chukar and the birds can be difficult to locate if spread out over a large area.

Quail

Excellent habitat conditions have allowed for good quail production and recruitment of young throughout the Western Region over the last several years. Prior to this breeding season, quail populations were thought to be at moderate levels. Quail populations within the Western Region should experience an increase in numbers due to good production and recruitment observed this summer. Hunters should find more California quail to pursue in the agricultural areas and in areas surrounding the urban interface. Mountain quail should be more plentiful in the ranges where they exist, but will continue to be a challenge to locate in the vast amount of habitat available to them.

Pheasant

There has been a continual declining trend in hunter interest and participation in pheasant hunting. Pheasant hunters who do take to the field this fall in Humboldt, Pershing and Lyon Counties should be able to locate birds. As with past seasons, other counties in the Western Region will mainly rely upon pen reared birds to provide hunting opportunities.

EASTERN REGION

Sage-grouse

Bird availability in the Eastern Region is predicted to be good for the 2006 season except in areas of Elko County where large wildfires destroyed sage grouse habitat. Measurable precipitation occurring immediately prior to and during the season tends to reduce hunting success. Dry conditions often concentrate birds making them more available to the hunter. Hunting is expected to be fair to good in most of the Region for 2006.

Forest Grouse (Blue and Ruffed Grouse)

Forest grouse availability in 2006 is predicted to be fair to good in the Eastern Region. Population levels are predicted to be fair to good in all four counties of the Eastern Region. Eureka and Lander counties have much more limited distribution than Elko and White Pine counties. Blue grouse hunting in 2006 should be fair to good but is not expected to exceed last year's unusually high level.

Himalayan Snow Partridge

Climatic conditions, habitat preference, the snowcocks wary nature, and the current low to moderate population level are expected to keep harvest levels low. Bird availability is expected to be fair during the 2006 hunting season and harvest is expected to remain at a low level.

Chukar and Hungarian Partridge

Chukar hunters are expected to experience good chukar hunting in the Eastern Region in 2006 except for freshly burned areas. Hungarian partridge hunting is expected to be fair and mostly incidental to chukar hunting.

Quail

Eastern Region quail populations are very low compared to most of the State. Small quail populations in some portions of the Region will again provide limited hunting during the 2006 season. Quail hunting overall should be poor with most quail harvested by hunters pursuing other species such as rabbits and chukars. The quail harvest should be similar to or higher than last year in the Eastern Region.

SOUTHERN REGION

Sage-grouse

Winter survival of adults should have been good throughout most sage-grouse ranges of the Southern Region. For central Nevada, favorable moisture patterns during March and April should have allowed for good nesting and early brood rearing habitat conditions, setting the stage for good production. While production is not anticipated to be quite as good as that experienced in 2005, sportsmen taking to the field during the fall of 2006 should find bird availability similar to that experienced over the past 10 years. It is important to note that even with good bird availability; sage-grouse hunter success can vary widely dependent upon localized population densities, fall weather patterns, and an individual's knowledge of specific hunting areas and sage-grouse habits.

Forest Grouse (Blue and Ruffed Grouse)

In regard to forest grouse, even more so than with other species of upland game, erratic fluctuations in data and small sample sizes can make post-season questionnaire data somewhat difficult to analyze. Consequently, the data that may be most helpful in making predictions in regard to blue grouse are birds per hunter and birds per hunter day. These data suggest that bird availability dropped during the 2005 season, but due to a new data gathering and expansion process, this conclusion may be erroneous. Following two years (2005-2006) of favorable climatic conditions in the northern portions of the Southern Region, an improvement in blue grouse availability is expected for the 2006 season, and hunters familiar with the habits of the bird should experience fair to good hunting during the upcoming season.

Chukar and Hungarian Partridge

The 2006-07 chukar season is expected to be good in the northern portion of the Southern Region, and should be comparable to the 2005-06 season. Although bird availability may be somewhat lower than it was during the 2004-05 season, hunters taking to the field this season should find the hunting noticeably better

than that experienced most years between 1999 and 2003. Favorable climatic conditions have continued to benefit upland game populations in the area.

In Lincoln County, the outlook is very good. Production was good during the spring of 2006, and chukars are widespread in good numbers throughout the county. Chukar are being observed this year in areas where they have not been observed for years, as well as places where they have never been observed. Good conditions combined with good production and increased habitats due to wildfires over the past decade are having positive results for chukar which should result in increased harvest.

Bird availability in Clark County is expected to be somewhat below average. Chukars remain in historic "hot spots", but overall, the season outlook is poor to fair for most of the County.

Quail

According to the Western Regional Climate Center, precipitation in southern Nevada is anywhere from 10-20% below average. The combination of a mild winter, wet early spring, and a transition to warmer, drier conditions in May and June should have set the stage for another good year for upland species throughout much of the southern region. Moderate precipitation during the late spring and early summer of 2006 may result in decent recruitment, leading to higher quail numbers. Isolated summer thundershowers may result in areas with moderate to good range conditions that will benefit quail. Gambel's quail populations are at moderate levels, with some isolated areas experiencing good production that may lead to higher numbers this fall and potential increases in harvest.

Pheasant

In 2006, pheasant hunting again will be open statewide. Pheasant hunting opportunities in Moapa Valley remain limited. Pheasants occur in low numbers on private parcels, which increasingly are being taken out of production and developed for residential and commercial uses.

In recent years, opportunities to hunt pheasants in the Southern Region have declined steadily due to downward population trend and habitat loss. Presently, the pheasant population in the Moapa Valley is not deemed viable.