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NORTH DAKOTA STATE GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

PITTMAN-ROBERTSON DIVISION

PROJECT 7-R

THE UPLAND GAME AND MIGRATORY WATERFOWL HARVEST
FALL, 1951

H. R. Morgan, Game and Fish Commissioner

Submitted by
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This report presents the results of data gathered by questionnaire from a random group of North Dakota license holders during the 1951 season and a report from 130 non-resident license holders who voluntarily filled out and returned a card attached to the non-resident license. The two sets of data will be treated separately in the report.

SEASONS AND BAG LIMITS

The season on migratory waterfowl opened at 12 o'clock noon on October 5 and closed at sunset November 23, 1951. The hunting hours were from one half hour before sunrise until one hour before sunset. Daily bag limits for all species of ducks except wood ducks was five and the possession limit was ten. A daily bag limit of five geese was provided of which not more than two could be Canada geese or subspecies of Canada geese.

The season on sharptailed grouse, ruffed grouse, and Hungarian partridge opened on September 28 and closed on November 4, 1951. The daily bag limit for all three species was three with six birds allowed in possession.

In the area lying to the west and south of the Missouri River the pheasant season ran from noon October 5 to sunset November 4, 1951. In the extreme southeastern part of the state the season opened on October 24 and closed on November 4, 1951. The daily bag limit in the Southwest was three male birds with six allowed in possession and the bag limit in the Southeast was two male birds with four allowed in possession.

Maps of opened areas are included in the report.

Due to public disapproval to half day shooting on upland game as was in effect in 1950 a new schedule was tried. The open hours were from noon to sunset on week days and from one half hour before sunrise to sunset on Saturday and Sunday. This enabled weekend hunters that had to travel a considerable distance an opportunity to get their second days limit during Sunday forenoon.

Generally, the weather was fair and mild until the last week of October. On October 27, a heavy snow fell throughout most of the state, followed by sub-zero temperatures that froze over all water areas including the Missouri River. This severe weather drove all ducks out of the state in about 24 hours and had a tendency to concentrate pheasants.

During the early part of the season hunters had a difficult time shooting their bag limit of pheasants. It appeared as if the birds were

scattered throughout the stubble fields with very few being found in smaller patches of heavier cover. After the cold weather had concentrated the birds, most of the side roads were blocked and the weather was so cold that few hunters ventured afield the last week of the season. Thus the season virtually ended with the onset of cold weather.

METHOD

Harvest figures were obtained by a random sampling questionnaire sent to approximately 2,250 license holders.

This questionnaire was sent out prior to the opening of the hunting season accompanied with a letter asking their cooperation and explaining how to keep the records.

DATA

Of the 2,250 forms sent out 682 were returned. Of the 682 returned a total of 516 were usable and the figures to be presented are based on the 516 returns.

As in the past the forms were made so that the results of each trip were reported on a party basis. By having them filled out in this manner the hunter does not have to rely on his memory to account for the actual number of birds that he shot on any one hunting trip.

AVERAGE HARVEST PER HUNTER
1951 Season

	Taken	Lost	Total
Pheasants	2.61	0.40	3.01
Grouse (Sharptailed and ruffed)	1.02	0.08	1.10
Hungarian Partridge	0.65	0.10	0.75
Ducks (All species)	9.42	2.08	11.50
Geese	0.37	0.04	0.41

License receipts indicate that about 64,000 resident licenses were sold during the 1951 season. The total statewide harvest for the various species is presented with the figures being rounded off to the nearest thousand.

Species	Total Harvest
Pheasants	193,000
Grouse (Sharptailed & Ruffed)	70,000
Hungarian Partridge	48,000
Ducks (All species)	736,000
Geese (All species)	26,000

Species	1950	1951	1950	1951
Pheasants	1.01	3.01	60,000	193,000
Hungarian Partridge	0.88	1.10	50,000	70,000
Ducks	12.85	11.50	720,000	736,000
Geese	0.57	0.41	32,000	26,000
Total	15.40	16.77	866,000	1,073,000

The comparative figures above indicate about a 300% increase in the pheasant harvest in 1951 over that of 1950. This was somewhat disappointing as the length of the season, area opened, and the liberal bag limit should have produced a far greater harvest. As previously mentioned in the report, the birds were difficult to find and as a result the average hunter became discouraged after two or three trips and gave up hunting pheasants. The hunters that were willing to work for their birds usually got their limit.

The grouse harvest was increased slightly in 1951 over 1950. This was to be expected as a larger area was opened to the hunting of grouse and the season was opened about a week earlier than in 1950 and about a week ahead of the pheasant season. As most grouse are taken in fair, warm weather this earlier opening should have increased the harvest more than was indicated. The slight increased harvest indicates that the average North Dakota hunter will not drive any distance to hunt any upland game bird except pheasants.

The harvest of Hungarian partridge showed a large increase over that of 1950 and was apparently due to the fact that the entire state was open to hunting on this species. It was the only upland species upon which there was a season in the eastern one-third of the state and this may have accounted for actual hunting of the species by local hunters.

The average number of ducks taken by the hunter dropped slightly in 1951 from the 1950 harvest and was perhaps due to warm weather followed by a quick freeze up that drove all the ducks out of the state. Although a migratory waterfowl season of 50 days was provided by the proclamation, the North Dakota hunter was limited to about 25 days of hunting by the weather.

In spite of a lower average take per hunter the statewide harvest was somewhat greater than in 1950 due to about a 14% increase in total number of license holders.

The harvest of geese dropped considerably in 1951 and was perhaps due to the smaller flight of snow and blue geese through the state as well as to the early freezing of water areas.

UPLAND GAME AND MIGRATORY WATERFOWL HARVEST BY NON-RESIDENT LICENSE HOLDERS

The non-resident licenses were provided with a detachable postcard for convenience in reporting their harvest of upland game and waterfowl in North Dakota. These cards are returned on a purely voluntary basis.

Out of 2,100 non-resident licenses issued a total of 130 usable cards were returned.

The data here presented was compiled from these 130 returns.

	Average Harvest Per Hunter			
Species	Taken	Lost	Total	Total
Pheasants	1.97	0.24	2.21	4,600
Grouse (Sharptailed & ruffed)	0.53	0.00	0.53	1,100
Hungarian partridge	0.23	0.01	0.24	500
Ducks	8.22	1.16	9.38	19,700
Geese	0.22	0.03	0.25	525
				26,425

SUMMARY

A harvest report was mailed out to approximately 2,250 license holders selected at random throughout the state.

License receipts indicated that 64,000 resident licenses were sold.

A total of 682 reports were returned. Of the 682 returned only 516 were usable.

A compilation of the data revealed a larger harvest of all species of upland game in 1951 than occurred in 1950. The more liberal seasons, bag limits, and area opened as well as larger populations accounted for the increased harvest.

The average take of ducks per hunter was slightly less in 1951 than in 1950 but the increased license sales in 1951 accounted for a somewhat larger statewide harvest in 1951.

The decrease in geese harvested is perhaps due to the small migration of snow and blue geese through the state as well as to the short season brought about by cold weather.

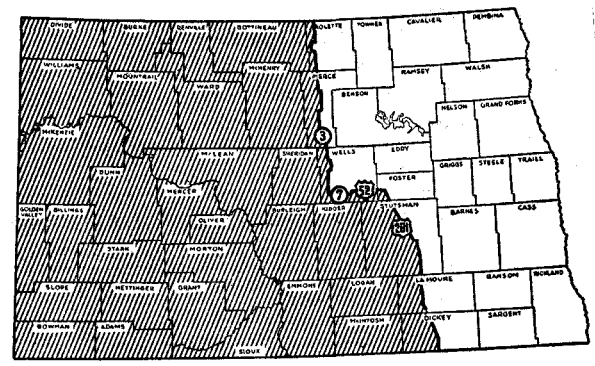
The average harvest per non-resident hunters on all species of game was somewhat less than that of the resident license holder. This is readily understandable if the length of time spent in the state is taken into consideration. Most non-residents do not spend more than a week in total hunting time in the state and of course cannot take out more than

the possession limit of any species.

The non-resident hunter will gravitate to those areas of highest populations of the various species and also are able to hunt during week days with the result that the average take per hunting hour is greater for the non-resident than for the average resident hunter.

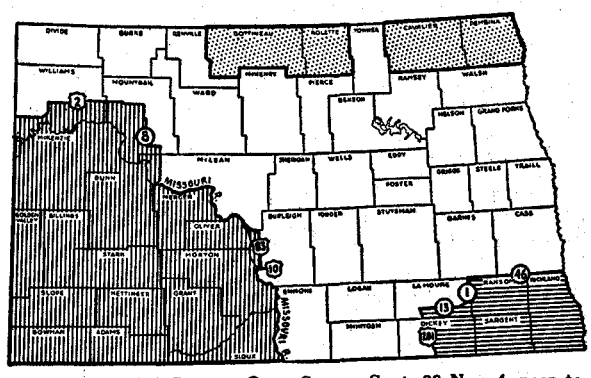
Maps of North Dakota showing areas open to the taking of pheasants and grouse during the 1951 season.

SHARPTAILED GROUSE



Sharptailed Grouse: Open Season Sept. 28–Nov. 4, noon to sunset, except half hour before sunrise to sunset Sat. and Sun. Daily bag limit 3 birds. Possession limit 6.

RUFFED GROUSE – PHEASANTS



Ruffed Grouse: Open Season Sept. 28–Nov. 4, noon to sunset, except half hour before sunrise to sunset Sat. and Sun. Daily bag limit 3 birds. Possession limit 6 birds.

Pheasants: Open Season Oct. 5–Nov. 4, noon to sunset, except half hour before sunrise to sunset Sat. and Sun. Daily bag limit 3 cocks, no hens. Possession limit 6 cocks.

Pheasants: Open Season Oct. 24–Nov. 4, noon to sunset, except half hour before sunrise to sunset Sat. and Sun. Daily bag limit 2 cocks, no hens. Possession limit 2 cocks.