

2015 Upland Game Bird Population Trends – Clearwater Region

2015 Conditions – Twelve 20-mile upland game brood routes are surveyed annually from mid to late August across the Clearwater Region to index game bird population trends and productivity. These data provide an index of relative abundance and are used to monitor annual changes and long-term trends in regional populations. Due to low detection rates, these data are imprecise and should be interpreted cautiously. During 2015, weather conditions were abnormally warm and dry during the spring and early summer nesting and brood rearing period. There was just one significant precipitation event in very early June, which likely occurred prior to the peak nesting period for most of our regional upland game bird species. The 2015 nesting season was preceded by several years of cool and/or wet springs which resulted in poor bird production. Sizes of game bird chicks observed in late August 2015 were highly variable. This variation in size would indicate some successful nesting occurred during the normal nesting period, while some of this year’s production is the result of later re-nesting attempts. Overall, population trends were mixed, depending on the species.

| Upland Game Bird | Trend from last year (2014) | 10-Year Trend (2006-2015) | Comments |
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| Pheasant | Up | Up | The 115 pheasants observed in 2015 represent a 423% increase from the 22 birds tallied in 2014 and is 147% above the previous 10-year average of 47 birds. There are only six years out of the past 25 where more birds were tallied on regional routes. However, the 115 birds observed in 2015 still represents just 58% of the historical high count of 199 counted in 2005. The 115 pheasants observed on the 240 miles of routes surveyed in 2015 equates to 0.48 pheasants observed per mile surveyed. Thirteen broods were encountered this year. An average of 6.8 broods was tallied on these routes over the past 10 years, including a high of 32 in 2005. The average size of broods observed this year was 5.2 chicks. |
| Chukar | Up | Up | Chukar helicopter trend surveys are no longer conducted by IDFG. The Clearwater Region has experimented with some ground-based survey methodologies in recent years, but to-date, have not identified a reliable trend index. Chukar productivity and populations have appeared to be trending upward in recent years. Observations and reports from field staff and the public appear to indicate very good chukar nesting success and chick survival. Several observations reported many birds, including good numbers of chicks. |
| Gray Partridge (Hun) | Up | Up | The number of gray partridge observed this year was much higher than last years’ total, and above the long-term average. A total of 176 gray partridge were counted in 2015 (0.73 gray partridge per mile surveyed). This figure is higher than both the 2014 total of 61 (+189%) and the previous 10-year average of 94 (+87%). The total number of gray partridge counted this year (176) has been exceeded only twice in |

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| | | | the past 25 years. |
| California Quail | Stable | Down | The number of quail counted this year was nearly identical to last year's total. A total of 118 birds were counted in 2015 (0.49 birds per mile surveyed) compared to the 117 counted last year. This total is 38% lower than the previous 10-year average of 191.5 and is 69% lower than high count of 385 tallied in 2003. |
| Mourning Dove | Stable | Stable | A total of 451 mourning doves were counted on regional routes in 2015 (1.88 doves observed per mile surveyed). This total represents a 6% decrease from the 482 tallied in 2014, and is 12% higher than the previous 10-year average of 402.6. |
| Forest Grouse (Dusky, Ruffed) | No Data | No Data | Forest grouse are not surveyed in the Clearwater Region. Incidental observations and reports from field staff and the public indicate that forest grouse production was above average in 2015. |