

2015 Upland Game Bird Population Trends – Magic Valley Region

2015 Conditions – Cool and wet weather during spring and early summer were generally favorable for upland bird nesting. In addition, abundant rainfall in June provided excellent summer brood-rearing habitat for many species. Grass and forbs stayed green well into late summer. Department personnel are reporting good numbers of broods for all upland game species. Generally, bird numbers are up this year compared to the 2014 season and may provide the best hunting in many years. Hunters are encouraged to contact the Magic Valley Regional Office at 208-324-4359 if they would like to learn more about upland game bird status and trends.

Upland Game Bird	Trend from last year (2014)	10-Year Trend (2006-2015)	Comments
Pheasant	Stable	Down	Pheasant numbers have remained relatively low in the Magic Valley since the mid-1980s because of changes in farming practices and the resultant loss of habitat. Pheasant stocking will continue at Niagara Springs WMA and on several Bureau of Reclamation tracts in Minidoka County. Hunters might also want to obtain a Wildlife Tracts map from the Magic Valley Regional office that shows the locations of 284 tracts of public land with nearly 33,000 acres that provide upland bird hunting opportunity.
Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse	Stable	Stable	Spring lek surveys and anecdotal information suggest sharp-tailed grouse numbers may have experienced a small decline during the past decade. However, populations remain strong and currently provide liberal hunting opportunities (Oct. 1–31; 2-bird daily bag). The best hunting is typically in or near fields enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program. Fields with a forb component (e.g., alfalfa) are typically the best. If conditions are dry, hunters should expect early movement of grouse up into mountain shrub communities (serviceberry) and to areas where green forbs can still be found. Land enrolled in the <i>Access Yes!</i> program in Cassia, Power, and Oneida counties provide ample access to hunting areas. You can get a guide to <i>Access Yes!</i> properties at Fish and Game offices and at many license vendors. The guide can also be viewed on the Fish and Game website at: http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/ifwis/huntplanner/accessyesguide.aspx .
Chukar	Up	Stable	After four consecutive years (2003-2006) of above average populations, chukar populations declined to lower levels in 2007-2013. No chukar surveys are conducted in the Magic Valley Region, but early reports from around the region suggest that hunters should find more birds this year than last.

<p>Gray Partridge (Hun)</p>	<p>Up</p>	<p>Stable</p>	<p>Following better than average hunting seasons in 2010, 2011 and 2012 harvest declined in 2013. Given better habitat conditions, hunters should expect to find more birds this fall than in 2014.</p>
<p>California Quail</p>	<p>Up</p>	<p>Up</p>	<p>During the past several years, quail hunting has been very good in the Magic Valley and it appears there is another bumper crop this year. Hunters should expect to find areas with abundant quail along the Snake River and its tributaries west of Twin Falls although good quail numbers are also being observed as far north as Shoshone.</p>
<p>Forest Grouse (Dusky, Ruffed)</p>	<p>Up</p>	<p>Stable</p>	<p>No population surveys are conducted in the Magic Valley Region, but anecdotal reports from field personnel and early reports suggest an above average hatch and higher fall populations of dusky grouse in the northern portions of the Magic Valley Region.</p>