

2023 UPLAND SEASON FORECAST



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With the fall seasons nearly here, upland game bird hunters can expect plenty of opportunity to hunt birds across the state.

So far, the 2023 nesting and brood-rearing season has been above average, coupled with a mild winter. We expect good numbers of turkeys, pheasants and ruffed grouse throughout habitats suitable for each of these species.

2023 SEASON DATES

RUFFED GROUSE ZONE A | Sept. 16 to Jan. 7, 2024

RUFFED GROUSE ZONE B | Oct. 14 to Dec. 8

TURKEY STATEWIDE | Sept. 16 to Nov. 17

TURKEY ZONES 1-5 | Nov. 18 to Jan. 7, 2024

BOBWHITE QUAIL | Oct. 14 (9 a.m.) to Dec. 6

PHEASANT | Oct. 14 (9 a.m.) to Jan. 7, 2024

HUNGARIAN PARTRIDGE | Oct. 14 (9 a.m.) to Jan. 7, 2024

CROW | Sept. 16 to Nov. 16 | Jan. 19, 2024 to Mar. 20, 2024

Wisconsin DNR



TURKEY FORECAST

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The DNR issued 85,131 fall turkey harvest authorizations in 2022, and hunters registered 4,398 birds. That's 11% more harvested than in 2022. The 2022 fall turkey harvest was highest in Zones 2 and 3. Hunters registered 1,345 birds in Zone 2 and 890 birds in Zone 3. These zones had success rates of 5.5% and 5.2%, respectively. Hunters found the highest success rate in Zone 6, where 7.2% of harvest authorizations were filled.

The [full harvest report](#) and a [zone map](#) are available on the DNR website.

Fall turkey hunters receive one harvest authorization with the purchase of their fall turkey license or Conservation Patron license. Bonus turkey harvest authorizations went on sale Aug. 12.

RUFFED GROUSE FORECAST

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Ruffed grouse are the most widely distributed nonmigratory game bird in North America.

However, a loss of early successional forest habitat has challenged grouse populations. Ruffed grouse are a habitat specialist due to their strong reliance on young forest habitat.

The Natural Resources Board made the rule permanent, with the ruffed grouse season now ending on the Sunday nearest Jan. 6.

The border of ruffed grouse hunting Zones A and B changed in 2020 due to the [2020-2030 Ruffed Grouse Management Plan](#).

This expanded Zone B westward to the Mississippi River.

PHEASANT FORECAST

DAILY PHEASANT SHOOTING HOURS CLOSE AT NOON ON THE FOLLOWING PROPERTIES:

- » Allenton Wildlife Area (W.A.) | Washington County
- » Brooklyn W.A. | Dane and Green
- » C.D. "Buzz" Besadny Fish and W.A. | Kewaunee
- » Dunnville W.A. | Dunn
- » Eldorado Marsh W.A. | Fond Du Lac
- » Goose Lake W.A. | Dane
- » Grand River W.A. | Green Lake and Marquette
- » Holland W.A. | Brown
- » Horicon W.A. | Dodge
- » Jackson Marsh W.A. | Washington
- » Killsnake W.A. | Calumet and Manitowoc
- » Mazomanie Unit of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway | Dane
- » Mud Lake W.A. | Dodge
- » Mud Lake W.A. | Columbia
- » New Munster W.A. | Kenosha
- » Nichols Creek W.A. | Sheboygan
- » Pine Island W.A. | Columbia and Sauk
- » Theresa W.A. | Dodge and Washington
- » Tichigan W.A. | Racine
- » Vernon W.A. | Waukesha
- » White River W.A. | Green Lake and Marquette

Both the spring ring-necked pheasant crowing survey and the rural mail carrier survey were completed in 2023. The 2023 pheasant crowing survey indicated pheasant numbers similar to 2022. The 2023 rural mail carrier survey results indicated a 9% increase in pheasant populations from 2022, with the highest numbers of pheasants seen in Kenosha, Polk and Door counties.

The State Game Farm has been working tirelessly to change logistics and operations to retain our normal levels of stocking while also protecting the safety of staff. We plan to release 75,000 pheasants in 2023.

Enrollment in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has declined significantly in Wisconsin. CRP pays landowners to retire their cropland for 10-15 years and plant permanent cover like grass or trees. A long-term decline in stable grassland cover across the state has contributed to a decline in ring-necked pheasant populations.

In 2022, the number of pheasant hunters decreased from 2021, with 34,402 hunters spending 373,315 days afield and harvesting 288,522 birds. More birds were harvested in 2022 compared to the 224,098 in 2021.