

Alberta Conservation Association
2024/25 Project Summary Report

Project Name: Upland Game Bird Fall Forecast

Wildlife Program Manager: Doug Manzer

Project Leader: Jalen Hulit

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Partnerships

Government of Alberta

Landowners

Pheasants Forever – Calgary Chapter

Volunteer survey participants

Key Findings

- Since 2019, volunteer hunters and their bird dogs have increased the distance covered during upland game bird flushing surveys.
- This year was the most habitat surveyed over the past 12 years for both grey partridge and pheasants.
- The encounter rate of flushes per hour and per km walked for pheasants was similar to last year. We saw 0.82 pheasants for each km walked (94 km) and 1.55 flushes for each hour of survey time (19.9 hours).
- In 2024, we saw the highest partridge count over the greatest amount of habitat surveyed, and encountered 722 partridge over 151.2 km surveyed. This translates to 4.78 partridge per km walked over 49.3 hours of survey time.

Details

As in the past few years, we reached out to the hunting dog community in 2024 to ask for their assistance with conducting annual upland game bird productivity surveys throughout Alberta. The survey information collected by the volunteers enabled us to expand the geographical areas covered as well as the overall survey effort, particularly for partridge. We anticipate this will provide a broader representation of the annual survey results for pheasant and partridge recruitment leading up to the annual hunting season.

This year was the most habitat surveyed over the past 12 years for both grey partridge and pheasants. More survey effort went into areas with grey partridge compared to pheasants and as a result, grey partridge numbers are near the 12-year average. Participants covered 151.2 km over 49.3 hours returning 1.83 partridge encounters per hour (singles or coveys). On the other hand, pheasant numbers per km walked are down compared to the past few years, although the number of flushes per hour is about the same. Overall, 77 pheasants were flushed while covering 94.1 km over 19.9 hours of effort, for a flush rate of 1.55 encounters per hour (single or covey)

The information acquired from these surveys helps us understand population trends and brood success for pheasants and partridge, as well as heighten the excitement for the upcoming hunting season as we release the survey results on our website and various social media outlets each fall. More data is required for forest grouse species to understand population dynamics.

Photos



Photo 1. Alberta Conservation Association biologist Jalen Hult with his dog as they take a water break after working a coulee system with habitat preferred by pheasants and grey partridge. Photo: Samuel Vriend