

P.E.I. GAME SURVEY 1999-2000

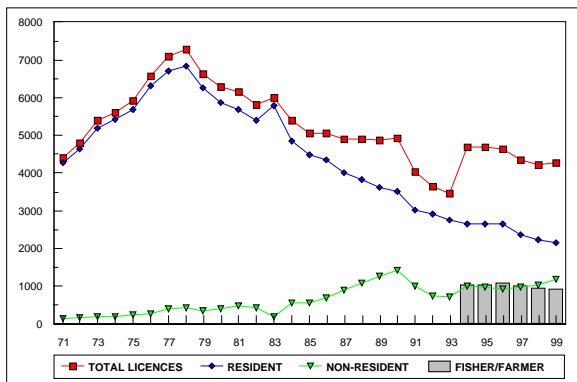
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The annual survey of P.E.I. small game hunters provides a yearly index to game abundance and harvest. A questionnaire was mailed in February to one-third of all licensed hunters (resident, non-resident and commercial fisher/farmer) and the responses to that questionnaire are summarized below.

Hunting Licenses

Sales of resident hunting licenses declined in 1999 to 2,150 from 2,234 in 1998 (Fig. 1), while non-resident license sales increased to 1,192 from 1,034 the previous year. Commercial fisher/farmer hunting licenses decreased to 934 from 954. Prior to 1994, farmers and commercial fishermen were

Figure 1. Annual sales of provincial hunting licenses



exempt from hunting license requirements. This license, issued free of charge, enabled this previously unsampled group of hunters to be included in the game survey results. The total

number of licenses issued in 1999 was 4,276, an increase of 54 (1.3%) from 1998.

Results

Of 1,285 survey cards mailed, 775 (60.3%) were returned. Non-residents again had a higher return rate (75.3%) than residents (54.0%) and fisher/farmer (56.6%). Lower response rates to the first mail-out prompted a second mailing to non-respondents.

Survey results are presented in the following figures, table and discussion.

Total Harvest

Total harvest in 1999 for most major species (those hunted by more than 20% of licensed hunters) decreased slightly from 1998. The exception was snowshoe hare. The 1999 harvest results and comparisons with previous years are summarized in Fig. 2 and Table 1 (over).

The ruffed grouse harvest decreased to 5,614 and was below the 25-year average of 9,485. This species is probably at the bottom of its 10-year population cycle. The snowshoe hare harvest increased to 9,961 from 7,955 in 1998. The kill of Canada geese exceeded 30,000 in 1999, just slightly below last year's record harvest of 32,000. An abundance of geese combined with fair hunting weather contributed to the record high kill. The harvest of black ducks and other ducks decreased slightly from 1998. Waterfowl surveys flown in November indicated black ducks and Canada geese were plentiful but fair weather probably contributed to slightly lower harvests of all waterfowl. The black duck harvest decreased by only 560 while other ducks decreased by 1,100.

The short season and the small number of grey partridge hunters resulted in another low harvest for this species in 1998. Total kills of woodcock and snipe vary considerably from year to year due to the small number of hunters that pursue each, and variability resulting from the small sample size.

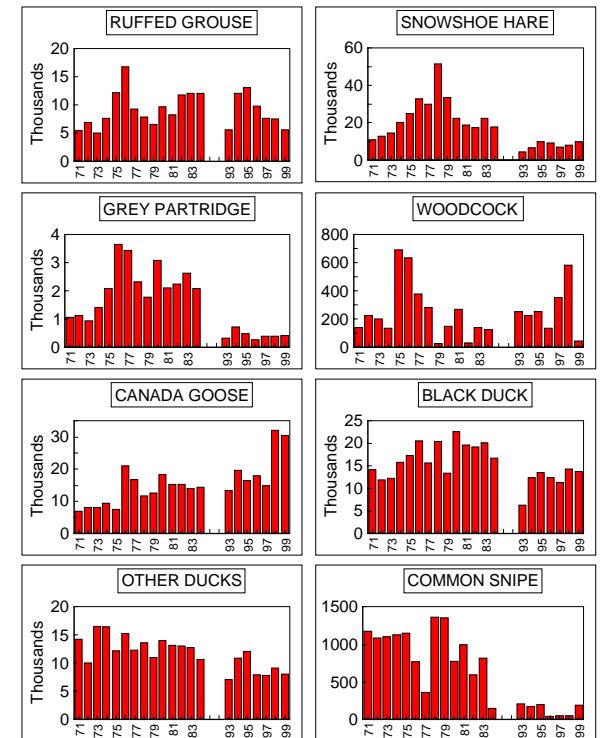
Interest in woodcock hunting appeared to decrease among Island hunters in 1999 with only 0.9% of licensed hunters (42) actively pursuing this species.

A better indicator of hunter success and species abundance is the average season kill per active hunter, which follows.

Average Harvest

Average season harvests from 1971 to 1999 for all game species are summarized in Figure 3 (over).

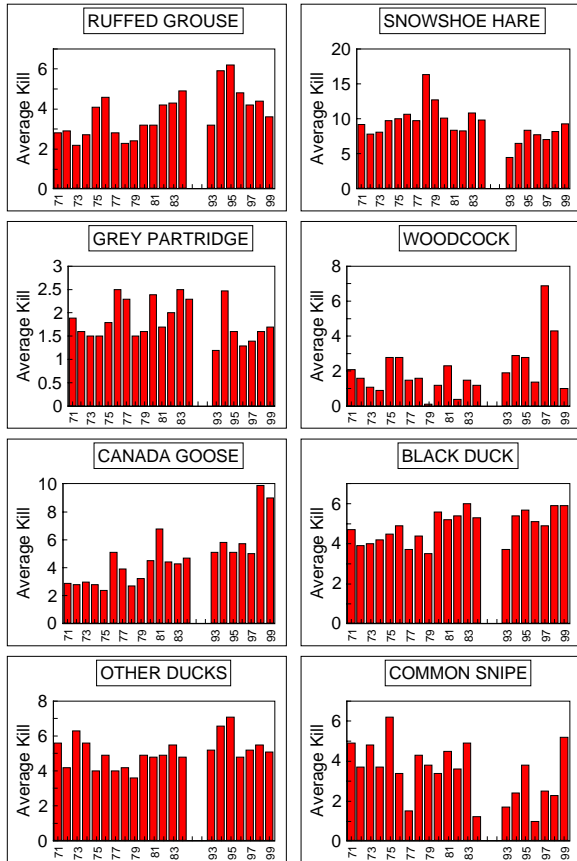
Figure 2. Estimated total harvest of all species.



The average season bag for ruffed grouse decreased significantly from 4.4 to 3.6 and probably reflects the bottom of the decline in the

grouse population cycle. Snowshoe hare populations were reported to be healthy, and this species appears to be rebounding from the bottom of its cycle. The average season kill increased from 8.2 in 1998 to 9.3 in 1999. The big story again in 1999 was the high average goose kill of

Figure 3. Average season harvest per active hunter.



9.0, reflecting high numbers in the annual November aerial survey combined with fairly good hunting weather conditions. The sub-population of geese in the eastern Atlantic region remains healthy.

Grey partridge continue to provide recreation to a limited number of hunters. The one-week increase in hunting season length initiated in 1998 had little impact on harvest. *Total kill* and *kill per active hunter* increased only slightly over 1998.

Interest in snipe hunting increased in 1999 as did the kill but they are still below average. The number of woodcock hunters declined considerably in 1999 and this was reflected in the overall kill, which was less than 20% of the average.

Hunter Activity

Statistics on the amount of time spent hunting each species were again gathered this year. Results are summarized in Table 1. Not surprisingly, more time was spent hunting geese than any other species (20,530 hunter trips). This was followed by black duck (13,439), ruffed grouse (10,806) and other ducks (9,178). Snowshoe hare hunters took 6,945 hunter trips, grey partridge hunters 749, and woodcock and snipe hunters 160 and 122 hunter trips, respectively. This year's figures for *total hunter trips* and *average trips per active hunter* showed a slight decrease from 1998's figures for all species.

Additional Information

This report presents a brief summary of the information gathered from the game survey. More details may be obtained by contacting:

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