

# 2009 Game Animal Population and Hunting Information

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**District/Wildlife Area:** District Seven (Wenatchee), Chelan and Douglas Counties

**Pheasant:** Game farm raised roosters will be released at traditional sites this fall. These sites and maps can be found at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/mapping/gohunt/index.html>. Hunters can find occasional wild birds in Chelan and Douglas Counties in areas that have a mixture of agriculture, CRP and native cover. Birds are at low density throughout the district with the best hunting opportunities on private lands.

**Quail:** Quail populations appear to be stable, with densities somewhat variable across the district depending on habitat. Informal survey efforts indicate that birds are more abundant than last year in localized areas, with many having large broods. Late summer brood numbers are one of the best indicators of fall hunting success. Birds are most numerous in low elevation and brushy habitats where they have access to alternate food sources. Look for habitats adjacent to agriculture where cover is readily available.

**Gray Partridge:** Gray partridge are much less numerous than quail and chukar, especially in Chelan Co. Good nesting conditions will help in Douglas Co, where they are more common in draws and sagebrush habitat.

**Chukar:** Harvest records show current chukar hunting at its lowest in 15 years. Despite these accounts, chukar can be found in most rocky terrain habitats within Chelan and Douglas Counties. Numerous large broods have been observed this year, possibly resulting from favorable spring conditions. Larger broods should provide better hunting opportunities than last year, especially in terrain that receives less hunting pressure. While the majority of the hunting occurs following snow that move chukars down slope, hunting opportunities can be had for those willing to seek out the higher ridges.

**Forest Grouse:** Ruffed and Blue are most numerous in Chelan County and occasionally observed in forested areas in Douglas Co. Habitat has not changed much in most grouse habitat in Chelan Co (few fires and little logging), but favorable spring conditions should yield good productivity. Prospects should be similar to last season for forest grouse in 2009.

**Wild Turkeys:** Chelan County lacks the quality winter habitat critical to turkey populations, which limits their overall numbers in this district. Hunting is always difficult as birds are at low density, and localized in small concentrations within the county. A few birds are seen in Douglas County with most being harvested on private lands. Reports of numerous poults with adults indicate, as with other game birds, a productive hatch this year. Due to habitat limitations, the hunting prospects will be similar to past years.

**Waterfowl:** Resident populations in Douglas County have been limited by nesting opportunities due to drought conditions impacting pothole and wetland habitats. In Chelan (primarily along the Columbia River) and Douglas Counties, most of the harvest is focused on migrant birds later in the year, which means that fall weather plays the major role in hunter success.

**Dove:** Informal surveys indicate that numbers similar to last year, however banding efforts found much fewer birds than were observed last year. Dry conditions may have them in wetter areas. Favorable hatch this year will help, but prospects are likely down for dove hunting in Chelan and Douglas Counties.

**Deer:** *Chelan County.* Good fawn production in 2008 combined with relatively mild winter conditions point to increased over winter survival in Chelan County. The overall trend on buck survival has declined since its peak in 2003-04, yet it appears to have stabilized over the past few years. Conditions were mild enough last winter that we anticipate more bucks were carried into 2009. Hunting in Chelan County should be equal to or better than last year. Surveys indicate that deer numbers in some of the lower density GMUs, such as 243, are increasing.

*Douglas County.* Hunting success in Douglas County will most likely decline in 2009 with harvest dictated primarily by access to private lands. The open nature of the habitats in Douglas County decreases buck escapement and lowers the age of bucks within the population. Road densities are high, ensuring access to almost all areas, and resulting in few older aged bucks post season. The impacts of extended drought conditions may also be playing a role in fawn production and survivorship.

Deer hunting prospects in Chelan and Douglas County are good this year. Mild winters have allowed for good deer survival as fawn numbers are strong in Chelan County, but lower in Douglas County due to drought conditions. Post-season surveys indicate good buck escapement in Chelan County, but less so in Douglas, where open habitat allows for high harvest.

**Elk:** Elk are not a primary management emphasis for District 7, and as a result, little or no harvest occurs within district GMU's. GMU 251 traditionally has the highest elk harvest, and that pattern held true in 2008 with 42 being taken. GMU's 250 and 249 had much lower harvests with 3 and 4 elk taken respectively. The overall success rate on elk for these three GMUs was 4.3% in 2008, roughly 2% lower than the statewide average and indicating that for elk hunters, District 7 is not a prime location. Hunters should take note that GMU 251 has changed to a "true spike" restriction in 2009 to aid bull recruitment in the Colockum herd.

**Miscellaneous Comments:** Hunters in this District often see fewer game animals and more of their fellow hunters. While Chelan County has a large amount of habitat, road densities are relatively low, thereby concentrating hunters in these areas. Hunters are encouraged to find habitat less traveled, with limited vehicle access, or, with permission, access onto private land where hunting pressure and disturbance is lower.