

## 2009 Game Animal Population and Hunting Information

**Biologist:** Jeff Bernatowicz

**District/Wildlife Area:** District 8

**Pheasant:** The Yakama Nation conducts standardized surveys each summer. Their 2009 surveys indicate that production was good. Last year was a poor year and populations were down. Expect better numbers than 2008, but it will take a few years for population to rebuild. Most years about 3800 birds are released in District 8. Sunnyside Wildlife Area receives the majority of birds and over the longest timeframe.

**Quail:** Populations had declined every year since near record numbers in 2003. It now looks like 2009 will reverse the trend. Nesting was late, but as summer has progressed, more and larger broods are being seen. Expect better numbers than 2008.

**Gray Partridge:** Poor hunting the last 4-5 years. Estimated harvest in 2008 was only about 400 birds. Populations should be better in 2009, but still not many birds.

**Chukar:** Populations have been low the last few years, probably due to an extended drought. Decent rain fell during May and June in 2009 and good production is being seen in some areas. Populations should be up, but probably below average.

**Forest Grouse:** Initial reports indicate a much better year than 2008. The higher numbers are in Kittitas County.

**Wild Turkeys:** Populations aren't very high anywhere in the district. Most of the harvest comes from GMU's 328, 329, and 335.

**Waterfowl:** Local production increased over a poor year in 2008. Most of the harvest is on migrant birds later in the year. Local grain production is up. If favorable weather conditions occur, there should be enough food to hold migrants in the area.

**Dove:** Trapping has indicated numbers are up from 2008. My catch per unit effort was up 50% from last year and near 2006 and 2007 levels. Even with good numbers of birds in August, hunting success will depend on the weather pattern. Warm weather is needed to keep the birds in the area.

**Deer:** All data suggests the deer population is down by 30-50% since ~2003. The herd decline, first documented in P32 and P33 has spread south into P35 and P36. Fawn production has been pretty good, but Hair-slip seems to be a nagging problem. There might be a slight increase in deer numbers this year.

**Elk:** Calf ratio data collected in February/March data was consistently low across the range. Since calves surveyed in March are spike bulls in the fall, bull harvest is expected to be down.

Colockum = 4000 total elk; 20 calves per 100 cows; 5 bulls per 100 cows

Yakima = 9200 total elk; 30 calves per 100 cows; 17 bulls per 100 cows

**Miscellaneous Comments:** Bird production in Yakima and Kittitas counties is typically better with higher than average moisture and temperatures. Spring 2009 started out cool and dry. Average moisture in May and June seemed to greatly improve production over 2008. The problem is that most populations appeared to be pretty low going into the 2009 nesting season. Bird numbers are improving, but it will probably take a few years to return to above average.