

# Sharp-tailed Grouse Harvest & Hunter Survey 2008

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## Permit application

A change to the sharp-tailed grouse harvest permit application took effect in 2003, when the sharp-tailed grouse permit application was no longer included in the Patron License Package. Currently, all hunters who want to apply for a sharp-tailed grouse harvest permit are required to pay a \$3 application fee. All permits were mailed to hunters prior to the start of the hunting season. After harvesting a sharp-tailed grouse, hunters are required to record the date of kill and the deer management unit of kill on the registration stub, and mail it back to the DNR in Madison. In 2008, permit levels were set by the DNR based on spring sharp-tailed grouse dancing ground surveys within deer management unit boundaries. In addition, in 2008 all permit holders were mailed a separate, voluntary survey along with a voluntary request to submit wings from harvested birds for genetic and demographic evaluation.

## Results

### Harvest

Four hundred and sixty (460) hunters applied for sharp-tailed grouse harvest permits in four deer management units across the northwestern part of Wisconsin (Figure 1). Three hundred and eighty-six (386) were successful in drawing at least one permit. Eight hundred and seventy-five (875) permits were available and issued in 2008, a 25.8% increase from 2007 (Table 1).

The 2008 sharp-tailed grouse season was held from 18 October through 9 November. Reported harvest, as recorded on returned hunter registration stubs, was 48 birds, a 16.7% increase from 2007 (Figure 2). No estimate of hunter compliance has been attempted since the harvest permit and harvest reporting system was implemented; therefore, actual harvest of sharp-tailed grouse is probably higher than reported. The deer management unit with the highest sharp-tailed grouse harvest was unit 2, with 27 birds registered (Table 1). Permit success was highest in unit 8 at 32%. Two birds were reported as harvested from unit 9 for the first time in two years. Success rates are not corrected for non-hunters, or non-reporting.

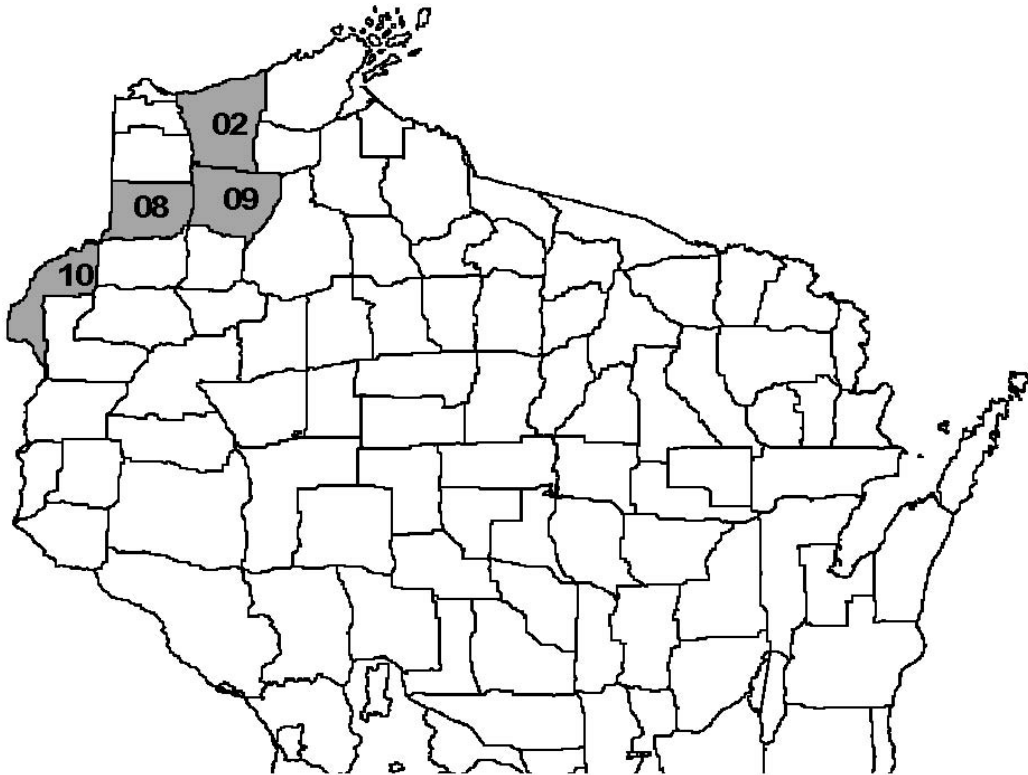
### Hunter survey

Each of the 386 permit holders were mailed a survey asking them a series of questions related to their 2008 hunting experience. Hunters were asked to submit their survey even if they didn't hunt in 2008. Of the 386 permit holders surveyed, 220 responded (57% response rate). This is similar to other upland game hunter surveys administered by Wisconsin DNR. Of the 220 respondents, 55.7% indicated that they hunted sharp-tailed grouse in 2008 down from 57.9% in 2007 (Table 2).

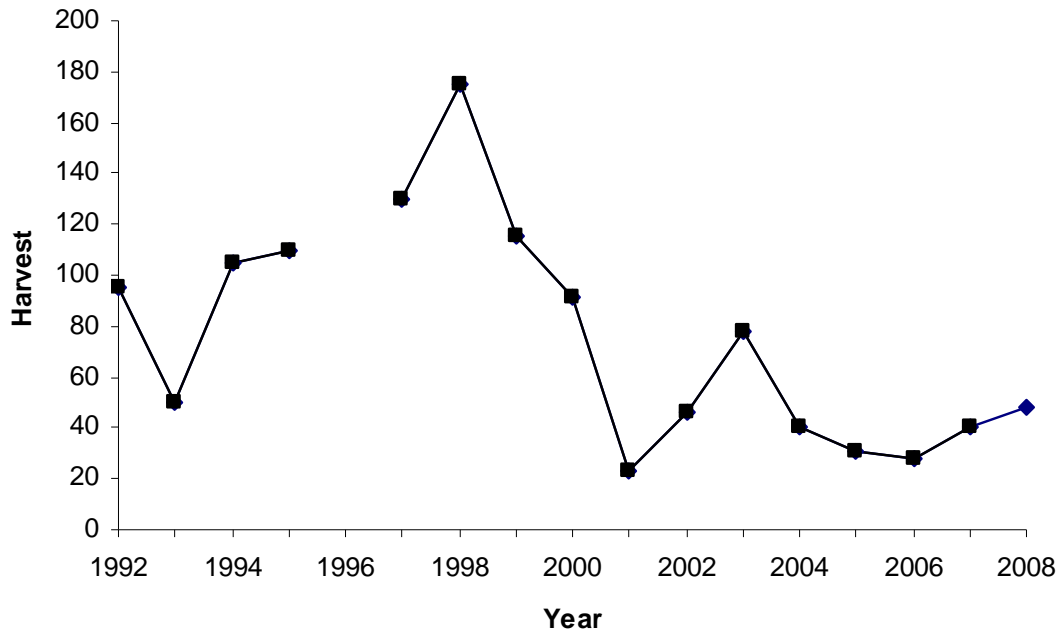
**Table 1.** *Sharp-tailed grouse permit distribution, harvest and permit success, 2008.*

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Permits Available &amp; Issued</b>	<b>Harvest</b>	<b>% Permit Success</b>
2	700*	27	3.9%
8	50	16	32.0%
9	100	2	2.0%
10	25	3	12.0%

\*Includes 1st, and 2<sup>nd</sup> tags



**Figure 1.** *Shaded deer management units were open to sharp-tail hunting in 2008.*



**Figure 2.** *Sharp-tailed grouse harvest, 1992-2008.*

**Table 1.** *2007-2008 Sharp-tailed Grouse Reported Harvest and Hunter Survey Results.*

<u>Category</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
Permits available and issued	695	875
Number of individual permit holders	376	386
Reported harvest <sup>a</sup>	40	48
Number of individuals harvesting multiple birds	5	6
Hunter surveys returned	159 (42.3%)	220 (57.0%)
Surveyed permit holders who hunted <sup>b</sup>	92 (57.9%)	122 (55.7%)
Total trips in the field	226	269
Total hours in field	944	1118
Mean trip length (hours)	4.2	4.2
Hunters making only 1 trip <sup>c</sup>	33 (35.9%)	44 (36.1%)
Hunters making 2 trips	25 (27.2%)	43 (35.5%)
Hunters making 3 trips	17 (18.5%)	16 (13.2%)
Hunters making 4 or more trips	17 (18.5%)	19 (15.7%)

<sup>a</sup> Based on returned harvest registration stubs, not on hunter surveys

<sup>b</sup> Percentages are based on total number of returned surveys. The actual number or percentage of total permit holders is likely lower than the percentage used here.

<sup>c</sup> Permit holders who hunted in each year were placed into 1 of 4 categories (1, 2, 3, 4+ trips) based on how many separate days they went into the field to pursue sharp-tailed grouse. Of the 44 folks who only made 1 trip, 10 harvested a bird on that trip.