

Preliminary Ten-Week Brood Survey Results, 2009

By Brian Dhuey

Brood rearing conditions in Wisconsin in 2009 were cooler and significantly dryer than they were in 2008. Most of Wisconsin experienced a cool summer, with the average daily temperature running 1 to 3.5 degrees Fahrenheit cooler than normal (Figure 1). Precipitation was average to below over most of the state (Figure 2). No major weather events should have affected the brood rearing season like in 2008.

DNR field personnel were asked to report the number and size of game bird broods observed from 14 June through 22 August during their normal working hours. At the end of the survey period, brood reports were then summarized and compiled by the wildlife surveys program. Budget shortfalls lead to reduced field time for many DNR staff. The result was a reduction in the number of staff returning surveys and the number of hours afield from 2008 levels.

Turkeys showed an 11% decrease in the number of broods seen per observer hour and no change in the size of the broods seen compared to 2008. Three of the 5 DNR regions showed a decrease in the observation rate in 2009 from 2008 levels, northern (-37%), southeast (-16%), and the west central (-62%), while the south central (70%) and the northeast (94%) regions showed an increase. Despite this decrease, the statewide observation rate remained above the long-term mean. The average size of a brood seen in 2009 was 4.4 young per brood, exactly the same as in 2008.

Pheasant broods seen per observer hour was up 25% in 2009 compared to last year. Statewide, pheasant production still remained below the long-term average however. Pheasant production was up in 2 of the 3 regions that compose Wisconsin's primary pheasant range, the south central and southeast. Pheasant production was down in the west central region in 2009. Pheasant brood size was up as well, with an average of 5.3 young per brood in 2009 vs. 4.6 in 2008. The Rural Mail Carrier and the Spring Breeding Pheasant surveys both showed a decrease in the number of breeding pheasants in the spring of 2009. Poor production in the summer of 2008 and harsh conditions during the past winter likely caused some of this decline. Pheasant numbers are also likely impacted by declining grassland habitat throughout the pheasant range. While breeding pheasant numbers were down this spring, pheasant production was up compared to last year.

Statewide, ruffed grouse broods seen per observer hour was up 31% compared to 2008. Ruffed Grouse production was up in 2 of the 3 regions that compose the primary range for ruffed grouse, the northeast and northern regions, while the west central region showed no change from last year. Statewide however, grouse production did remain below the long-term average. Ruffed grouse brood size remained unchanged from last year with broods averaging 4.4 young per brood. Spring breeding grouse numbers were higher than 2008 levels and so is grouse production. While some areas of the primary ruffed grouse range will be better than others, it appears that ruffed grouse numbers this fall will be better than the previous 3-4 years and are well on their way to their cyclic high.

Only one Gray Partridge brood was seen in 2009 and none in 2008. While pockets of gray partridge still exist around their historic range, they are well below the historic highs that occurred during the 1960's and 1970's. Gray partridge exist in some of their historic range at almost undetectable levels.

2008-09 Ten-Week Brood Survey, broods seen per observer hour and average brood size.

	2009 Broods / Observer Hour	2009 Average Brood Size	2008 Broods / Observer Hour	2008 Average Brood Size
Turkey	0.034	4.4	0.038	4.4
Pheasant	0.015	5.3	0.012	4.6
Ruffed Grouse	0.017	4.4	0.013	4.4
Gray Partridge	0.005	12.0 ¹	0.0	0.0

¹ only one gray partridge brood was observed in 2009

Average Temperature Departure from Mean in Degrees F
June 3, 2009 to September 1, 2009

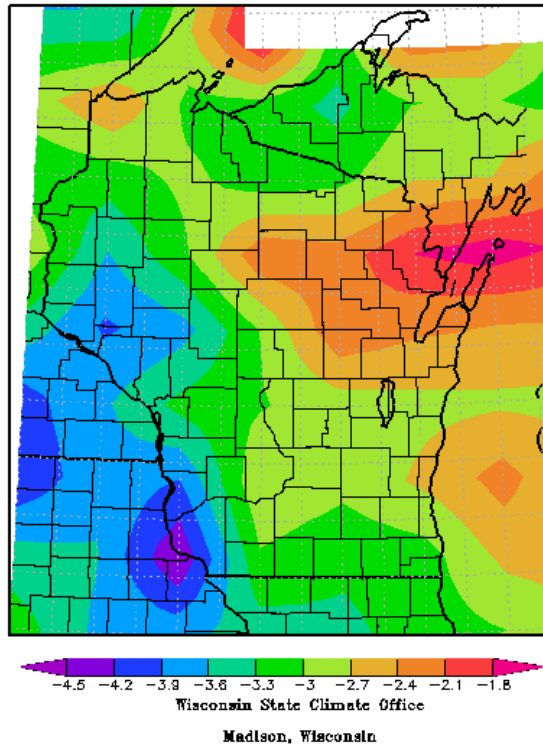


Figure 1. Average Temperature Departure from Mean in Degrees F (3 June to 1 September 2009)¹.

Total Precipitation Departure from Mean in Inches
June 3, 2009 to September 1, 2009

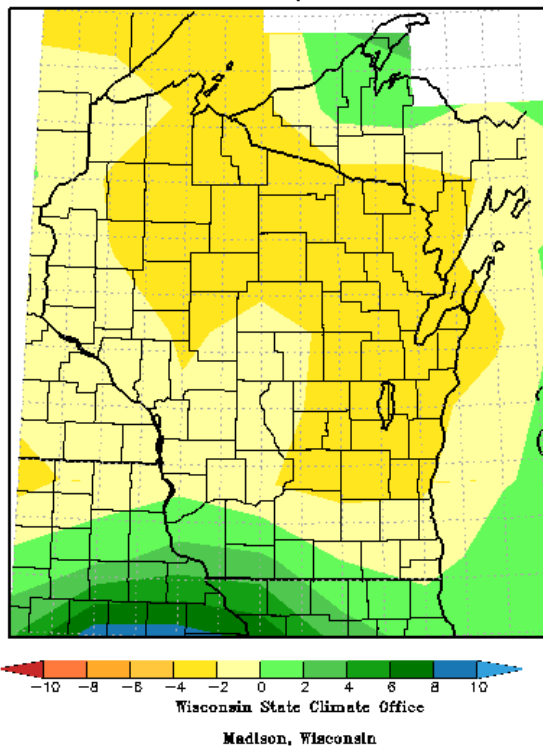


Figure 2. Total precipitation departure from mean in inches (3 June – 1 September 2009)¹.

¹Data obtained from Wisconsin State Climatology Office (<http://www.aos.wisc.edu/~sco/clim-watch/index.html>).