



**Status of**  
**Wildlife Populations**  
**Fall 2015**

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Fish and Wildlife  
St. Paul, Minnesota



This page intentionally blank

# STATUS OF WILDLIFE POPULATIONS, FALL 2015

(Including 2005-2015 Hunting and Trapping Harvest Statistics)



edited by  
Margaret H. Dexter

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Fish and Wildlife  
Wildlife Research Unit  
Saint Paul, Minnesota  
1 (888) 646-6367  
<http://www.mndnr.gov>

December, 2015 State of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is available to all individuals regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, age, sexual orientation, membership or activity in a local commission, or disability. Discrimination inquiries should be sent to MN-DNR, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4031; or the Equal Opportunity Office, Department of the Interior, Washington, DC 20240.

Printed on recycled paper containing a minimum of 30% post-consumer waste and soy-based ink

This report should be cited as follows:

Dexter, M.H., editor. 2015. Status of wildlife populations, fall 2015. Unpub. Rep., Division of Fish and Wildlife, Minn. Dept. Nat. Res., St. Paul, Minnesota. 305 pp.

Note: Data in this report may change as a result of future verification and more comprehensive analysis.

This page intentionally blank

## Status of Wildlife Populations, Fall 2015

(Including 2005-2015 Hunting and Trapping Harvest Statistics)

This is the 39<sup>th</sup> year that the DNR has compiled this booklet; it is primarily an administrative document intended for DNR personnel. Since 1984 we have also generated a companion volume, *Summaries of Wildlife Research Findings*, containing annual summaries of activities and findings from ongoing research projects in the Wildlife Policy and Research Unit. This publication will be posted on the DNR website and available in other formats upon request. In the on-line format links are available to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Migratory Bird Management to access their reports for Waterfowl Population Status; Migratory Bird Harvest Information Preliminary Estimates; American Woodcock Population Status; and Mourning Dove Population Status.

Most of the fieldwork associated with collection of census and survey data for farmland, wetland, and forest wildlife is performed by wildlife biologists and managers (conservation officers also participate in August roadside counts). The Farmland, Wetland, and Forest Wildlife Population and Research groups coordinate these activities, analyze and interpret data, and prepare recommendations for harvest regulations and season setting. The white-tailed deer aerial population survey was not flown in 2015 due to poor snow conditions. A wolf population survey was conducted in winter 2014-15 and is included in this report. Due to staffing changes and workload considerations some reports were not available at time of publication.

Most of the hunting and trapping harvest estimates are calculated and summarized by St. Paul central office personnel.

Compiling and publishing this report was funded in part under the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, Minnesota project W-69-S.



This page intentionally blank

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Wildlife Populations and Surveys

<b>Farmland Wildlife</b> .....	1-28
2015 Minnesota August Roadside Survey .....	3-16
Monitoring Population Trends of White-Tailed Deer In Minnesota, 2015 .....	17-28
<b>Carnivore Scent Station Survey and Winter Track Indices</b> .....	29-46
Carnivore Scent Station Survey Summary, 2014 .....	31-38
Furbearer Winter Track Survey Summary, 2014 .....	39-46
<b>Forest Wildlife</b> .....	47-92
2015 Minnesota Spring Grouse Surveys.....	49-58
2015 Minnesota Prairie-Chicken Survey .....	59-64
Aerial Moose Survey, 2015 .....	65-70
Registered Furbearer Population Modeling Report, 2015.....	71-85
Minnesota Wolf Population Update, 2015.....	86-92
<b>Wetland Wildlife</b> .....	93-148
2015 Waterfowl Breeding Population Survey Minnesota.....	95-112
Excerpt from <i>Waterfowl Population Status, 2015</i> .....	113-115
Minnesota Spring Canada Goose Survey, 2015.....	116-123
Excerpt from <i>Mourning Dove Population Status, 2015</i> .....	124-126
Excerpt from <i>American Woodcock Population Status, 2015</i> .....	127-131
2015 NW Minnesota Sandhill Cranes Breeding Ground Survey.....	132-147
<b>Hunting and Trapping Harvest Statistics</b>	
<b>Hunting</b> .....	149-264
2014 Small Game Hunter Mail Survey.....	151-160
Excerpt from <i>Migratory Bird Hunting Activity and Harvest, 2014-15</i> .....	161-164
Hunter Activity and Goose Harvest During August and September 2014.....	165-170
2015 Light Goose Conservation Order Harvest .....	171-173
Minnesota's Wild Turkey Harvest, 2015.....	174-180
2014 Minnesota Prairie-Chicken Harvest Survey.....	181-187
2014 Minnesota Black Bear Harvest Report .....	188-210
2014 Minnesota Deer Harvest Report .....	211-256
2014 Minnesota Elk Harvest Report .....	257-262
Minnesota Sandhill Crane Harvest Report, 2014 .....	263-264
<b>Trapping</b> .....	265-276
2014 Trapper Harvest Survey.....	267-273
Minnesota Fur Buyers Survey for the 2014-15 Hunting and Trapping Season .....	274-275
<b>Registered furbearers</b> .....	277 306
Registered Furbearer Harvest Statistics, 2014-15 Report .....	279-305

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Farmland Wildlife Populations and Research Group  
35365 800<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Madelia, MN 56062-9744  
(507) 642-8478

Forest Wildlife Populations and Research Group  
1201 East Highway 2  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744  
(218) 327-4432

Wetland Wildlife Populations and Research  
102 23rd Street  
Bemidji, MN 56601  
(218) 308-2282

Division of Fish and Wildlife  
Wildlife Policy and Research Unit  
500 Lafayette Road, Box 20  
Saint Paul, MN 55155 - 4020  
(651) 259-5199



# INDEX

	Page
August farmland roadside survey .....	3-16
2015 data .....	9-11
grassland habitat .....	8
historical summary .....	9-16
weather summary.....	5
Badger	
Hunting	
harvest .....	157, 158, 159
hunter success .....	158
number of hunters .....	156
take per hunter.....	1157, 158
pelt prices .....	274, 275
trapping	
harvest .....	273
number of trappers .....	271
take per trapper.....	272
Bear	
hunting harvest and status report.....	188-210
age structure .....	202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 210
harvest .....	188, 189, 191, 196, 198, 200, 201-206, 210
number of hunters .....	191
permits / applicants.....	188, 191, 193, 194, 195
population estimates.....	209
success.....	188, 189, 191, 192, 199
management units.....	190, 194, 195, 196
pelt prices.....	274, 275
Beaver	
pelt prices.....	84, 274, 275
trapping	
harvest .....	273
number of trappers .....	271
take per trapper.....	272
Black duck	
breeding population.....	102, 103, 104, 105
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014.....	162
Bobcat	
carcass examination data.....	74, 75, 76
harvest	
areas open to trapping .....	280
by county.....	283, 284, 285
by method of take .....	288
distribution among takers by year.....	287
distribution by sex and date.....	284, 286

Bobcat (cont.)	
registered take .....	74, 77, 273, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288
pelt prices.....	74, 274, 275
population data.....	72, 74, 75, 76, 77
population model .....	71, 72, 74-77
survey	
scent post indices.....	31, 32, 77
winter track indices .....	40, 44, 77
Bufflehead	
breeding population.....	102, 103, 104, 105
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014 .....	162
Canvasback	
breeding populations	
Minnesota .....	102, 103, 104, 105, 114
North America.....	114
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014 .....	162
Carnivore scent station survey.....	31-38
Cat, domestic	
survey, scent post indices.....	31, 32, 35, 36, 37
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) .....	3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) .....	4, 8, 13
Coot, American	
Breeding population .....	97, 98, 102, 103, 104, 105
hunting	
harvest .....	157, 158, 159
number of hunters .....	156
take per hunter.....	157, 158
Cottontail, eastern	
hunting	
harvest .....	157, 158, 159
number of hunters .....	156
take per hunter.....	157, 158
survey, August roadside.....	3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 15
Coyote	
hunting	
harvest .....	157, 157, 159
number of hunters .....	156
take per hunter.....	157, 158
pelt price .....	274, 275

Coyote (cont.)	
survey	
scent post indices.....	31, 32, 35, 36, 37
winter track indices .....	39, 40, 45
trapping	
harvest .....	273
number of trappers .....	271
take per trapper.....	272
Crane, sandhill	
harvest .....	263-264
survey	
August roadside.....	3, 7, 9, 10, 11
breeding population in NW Minnesota .....	132-147
Crow, American	
hunting	
harvest .....	157, 158, 159
number of hunters .....	156
take per hunter.....	157, 158
Deer, white-tailed	
population trends .....	17-28
permit areas .....	28
pre-fawning deer density .....	24-27
hunting harvest report .....	210-256
archery harvest by permit area.....	221-222
archery harvest by bonus and disease management permit areas.....	223
archery landowner harvest by permit area .....	224
archery special hunts summary.....	223
estimated hunters.....	213, 232-233
firearms harvest by permit area .....	214, 232-233, 237
firearms bonus and disease management harvest by permit area.....	218
firearms landowner harvest by permit area.....	220
firearms special hunt summary.....	219
firearms youth hunt summary.....	228
harvest and success rates .....	211, 213, 214
harvest per square mile.....	215-217, 232-233, 234-236
licenses sold (firearms).....	213
licenses sold (archery) .....	213
muzzleloader harvest by permit area .....	225-226
muzzleloader bonus permit harvest by permit area .....	226
muzzleloader landowner harvest by permit area.....	227
muzzleloader special permit area.....	227
total deer harvest by permit area .....	229-231
zones / permit areas .....	212
lottery distributions	
antlerless lottery distribution, 2014 .....	238-246
firearms special permit area lottery distribution .....	253-255
muzzleloader special permit area lottery distribution .....	247-252, 256

Deer (cont.)	
pelt prices .....	274, 275
survey	
August roadside.....	3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 16
Dog, domestic	
survey, scent post indices.....	31, 32, 35, 36, 37
Dove, mourning	
breeding population survey .....	124-126
hunting	
harvest .....	151, 157, 158, 159
number of hunters .....	156
take per hunter.....	157, 158
survey, August roadside.....	3, 7, 9, 11, 16
Duck stamp sales	
Minnesota (federal and state).....	159
Ducks	
breeding populations	
Minnesota.....	95-112
North America.....	113-115
hunting	
harvest	
Minnesota .....	151, 154, 158, 159, 162, 163
nonresidents in Minnesota .....	151, 160
take per hunter, Minnesota .....	156, 158
top 10 states, 2013, 2014 .....	163
number of hunters	
Minnesota .....	156, 157
nonresidents in Minnesota .....	160
Mississippi flyway	
active hunters .....	163
hunter days .....	163
top 10 states, 2014 .....	163
Elk, harvest report .....	257-262
Ermine (see Weasel)	
Fisher	
carcass examination data.....	78, 79, 80
pelt prices.....	78, 274, 275
population data.....	78, 79, 80
population model .....	71, 72, 78, 79, 80
trapping	
areas open to trapping .....	280
distribution among takers .....	293
registered take .....	78, 80, 273, 281, 282, 289, 291, 292, 293

Fisher (cont.)	
take by county .....	289, 290, 291
take by county and sex .....	290
take by date and sex .....	292
Survey, winter track indices .....	39, 40, 44, 80
Fox, gray	
hunting	
harvest .....	157, 158, 159
number of hunters .....	156
take per hunter .....	157, 158
hunter success .....	158
pelt prices.....	274, 275
trapping	
harvest .....	273
number of trappers .....	271
take per trapper.....	272
Fox, red	
hunting	
harvest .....	157, 158, 159
number of hunters .....	156
take per hunter.....	157, 158
hunter success .....	158
pelt prices.....	274, 275
survey	
scent post indices.....	31, 32, 35, 36, 37
winter track indices .....	39, 40, 45
trapping	
harvest .....	273
number of trappers .....	271
take per trapper.....	272
Furbuyers survey .....	274-275
Gadwall	
breeding populations,	
Minnesota .....	102, 103, 104, 105
North America.....	113
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014 .....	162
Gallinules (see Rails and Gallinules)	
Goldeneye	
breeding population .....	102, 103, 104, 105
hunting harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014 .....	162

Goose, Canada	
Hunting	
August and September early season, 2014 .....	165-170
harvest, Minnesota .....	151 154, 157, 158, 159
harvest by flyway .....	164
hunter days .....	164
number of hunters, Minnesota.....	156, 164, 165, 168, 169
number of hunters, nonresident in Minnesota .....	160
hunter success .....	158
take per hunter, Minnesota .....	157, 158, 164
take per nonresident hunter .....	160
Top 10 states, 2014 .....	164
breeding populations	
Eastern Prairie Population breeding survey, 1971-72 thru 2014-15 .....	115
Minnesota .....	95, 97, 98, 99, 102, 103, 104, 105, 109-111
survey, spring population .....	116-123
Goose, other than Canada	
hunting	
harvest, Minnesota .....	157, 158, 159, 171, 173
number of hunters .....	156, 173
take per hunter.....	157, 158, 171, 173
hunter success .....	158
Light goose conservation order, 2015 .....	171-173
Grouse, ruffed	
hunting	
harvest .....	151, 154, 157, 158, 159
number of hunters .....	151, 156
number of nonresident hunters .....	160
hunter success .....	158
take per hunter.....	157, 158
take per nonresident hunter .....	160
surveys	
Spring.....	49-58
Winter track indices .....	40
Grouse, sharp-tailed	
hunting	
harvest .....	157, 158, 159, 181
number of hunters .....	156
take per hunter.....	157, 158
hunter success .....	158
surveys,	
August roadsides .....	7
Spring.....	49-58

Grouse, spruce	
hunting	
harvest .....	157, 158, 159
number of hunters .....	156
take per hunter.....	157, 158
hunter success .....	158
Hare, snowshoe	
hunting	
harvest .....	157, 158, 159
number of hunters .....	156
take per hunter.....	157, 158
hunter success .....	158
survey, winter track indices.....	39, 40, 46
Hunters, deer	
hunting success .....	213, 214
licenses sold (firearms, archery).....	213
Hunters, small game	
harvest.....	157, 158, 159, 160
license sales .....	151, 153, 159, 160
mail survey.....	151-160
estimated hunters .....	155
take per hunter .....	157, 158
success rates.....	158
Hunters, nonresident small game	
harvest.....	160
licenses sold .....	153, 160
mail survey response.....	160
Jackrabbit, white-tailed	
hunting	
harvest .....	157, 158, 159
hunter success .....	158
number of hunters .....	156
take per hunter.....	157, 158
survey, August roadside.....	3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 15
Kingfisher, belted.....	7
Lynx, trapping, registered harvest, .....	273
Magpie, black-billed.....	7
Mallard (domestic)	
hunting, harvest, Minnesota.....	162

Mallard (wild)	
breeding populations	
Minnesota.....	95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106-108
North America.....	113
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014.....	162
Marten, pine	
carcass examination data.....	81, 82
pelt prices.....	81, 274, 275
population data.....	81, 82, 83
population model .....	71, 72, 81-85
trapping	
areas open to trapping .....	280
distribution of harvest among takers.....	297, 298
registered harvest.....	81, 83, 273, 281, 282, 294, 295, 296, 297
take by county .....	294, 295, 296
take by county and sex .....	295
take by date and sex .....	297
winter track indices .....	39, 40, 44, 83
May ponds.....	99, 101, 114
Meadowlark spp. ....	7
Merganser, hooded	
breeding population .....	102, 103, 104, 105
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014.....	162
Merganser, other than hooded	
breeding population .....	102, 103, 104, 105
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014.....	162
Mink	
pelt prices.....	274, 275
trapping	
harvest.....	273
number of trappers .....	271
take per trapper.....	272
Moose, survey, aerial – population estimate.....	65- 70
Muskrat	
pelt prices.....	274, 275
trapping	
harvest .....	273
number of trappers .....	271
take per trapper.....	272



Opossum	
pelt prices.....	274, 275
trapping	
harvest.....	273
number of trappers.....	271
take per trapper.....	272
Osprey.....	7
Otter	
pelt prices.....	84, 274, 275
population data.....	84-85
population model.....	84-85
trapping	
area open to trapping.....	280
distribution among takers.....	305
registered take.....	84, 85, 273, 281, 282, 299-305
take by county.....	299, 300-301, 302-303
take by county and sex.....	300-301
take by date and sex.....	304
Partridge, gray	
hunting	
harvest.....	157, 158, 159
hunter success.....	158
number of hunters.....	156
take per hunter.....	157, 158
survey, August roadside.....	3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14
Pelt prices of furbearers, 2004-05 thru 2014-15.....	274-275
Pheasant, ring-necked	
hunting	
harvest.....	13, 14 151, 154, 157, 158, 159
harvest by nonresident hunters.....	160
hunter success.....	158
number of hunters.....	156
number of nonresident hunters.....	160
take per hunter.....	157, 158
survey	
August roadside	
agricultural region data.....	3, 4
birds observed per 100 miles driven.....	3, 5, 9, 10, 11, 14
broods	
observed per 100 miles driven.....	3, 6, 9, 10
observed per 100 hens.....	9
cocks observed per 100 miles driven.....	3, 5, 9
hatch date.....	3, 9
hens observed per 100 miles driven.....	3, 5, 6
Pheasant stamp sales.....	159

Pintail, Northern	
breeding populations	
Minnesota .....	102, 103, 104, 105
North America.....	114
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014.....	162
Ponds, May (Minnesota, North Central U.S. and Prairie Canada) .....	99, 101, 114
Prairie chicken, greater	
surveys	
August roadside.....	4, 7
Hunter harvest .....	181-187
Spring.....	59-64
hunting	
applicants .....	181, 182, 183, 185
area open to hunting .....	186, 187
harvest .....	181, 184
lottery results .....	183
number of permits available .....	182, 183, 185
number of permits issued .....	182, 183, 185
success rate.....	181, 182, 184, 185
Purple martin.....	7
Rabbit (see Cottontail, eastern; Hare, snowshoe; and Jackrabbit, white-tailed)	
Raccoon	
hunting	
harvest .....	157, 158, 159
harvest by nonresident hunters .....	160
hunter success .....	158
number of hunters .....	156
number of nonresident hunters .....	160
take per hunter.....	157, 158
pelt prices.....	274, 275
trapping	
harvest .....	273
number of trappers .....	271
take per trapper.....	272
survey, scent post indices.....	31, 32, 35, 36, 37
Rails/gallinules	
hunting	
harvest .....	157, 158, 159
hunter success .....	158
number of hunters .....	156
take per hunter.....	157, 158

Redhead	
breeding populations	
Minnesota .....	102, 103, 104, 105
North America.....	114
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014.....	162
Registered furbearers	
harvest.....	273, 279-305
population model .....	77-85
Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM).....	4, 8, 13
Ring-necked duck	
breeding population .....	97, 102, 103, 104, 105
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014.....	162
Ruddy duck	
breeding population .....	102, 103, 104, 105
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014.....	162
Sandhill crane.....	3, 7, 9, 10, 11
harvest .....	263-264
survey, breeding population in NW Minnesota .....	132-147
Sandpiper, pectoral.....	7
Sandpiper, upland .....	7
Scaup, greater / lesser	
breeding populations	
Minnesota .....	95, 97, 98, 99, 102, 103, 104, 105, 109-111
North America.....	114
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014.....	162
Scent post survey (see Carnivore scent station survey)	
Scoter	
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014.....	162
Shoveler, northern	
breeding populations	
Minnesota .....	102, 103, 104, 105
North America.....	114
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014.....	162
Shrike, northern.....	7
Skunk, spotted	
trapping, harvest.....	273

Skunk, striped	
pelt prices.....	274, 275
survey, scent post indices.....	31, 32, 35, 36, 37
trapping	
harvest.....	273
number of trappers.....	271
take per trapper.....	272
Snipe, common	
hunting	
harvest.....	157, 158, 159
hunter success.....	158
number of hunters.....	156
take per hunter.....	157, 158
Squirrel, fox	
hunting	
harvest.....	157, 158, 159
hunter success.....	158
number of hunters.....	156
take per hunter.....	157, 158
Squirrel, gray	
hunting	
harvest.....	157, 158, 159
hunter success.....	158
number of hunters.....	156
take per hunter.....	157, 158
Swan, trumpeter.....	7, 98, 102, 103, 104, 105
Teal, blue-winged	
breeding populations	
Minnesota.....	95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106-108
North America.....	113
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014.....	162
Teal, green-winged	
breeding populations	
Minnesota.....	102, 103, 104, 105
North America.....	113
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014.....	162
Trappers	
Mail survey.....	267-273
harvest.....	272, 273
license sales.....	267, 269, 273
number trapping.....	269, 270, 271
take per trapper.....	272

Turkey, wild	
Fall hunting, 2014	
harvest .....	174, 175, 180
permits.....	174, 175, 180
success rate.....	174, 175
Spring hunting, 2015	
area open to hunting by zone.....	179
harvest .....	174, 176, 177, 178, 179
permits.....	174, 176, 177, 178, 179
success rate.....	174, 176, 177, 178, 179
Survey, August roadsides .....	7
Walk-In Areas (WIAs) .....	4
Waterfowl (see Ducks; duck by species name; Geese; and Hunters, waterfowl)	
Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA).....	4
Weasel, long-tailed	
pelt prices.....	274, 275
trapping	
harvest .....	273
number of trappers .....	271
take per trapper.....	272
winter track indices .....	40, 46
Weasel, short-tailed	
pelt prices.....	274, 275
trapping	
harvest .....	273
number of trappers .....	271
take per trapper.....	272
winter track indices .....	40, 46
Wetland Reserve Program (WRP).....	4, 8, 13
Wigeon, American	
breeding populations	
Minnesota .....	102, 103, 104, 105
North America.....	113
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014 .....	162
Wildlife Management Areas (WMA).....	4
Winter track survey .....	39-46

Wolf, gray (timber)	
Survey	
population .....	86-92
scent post indices.....	31, 38, 38
winter track indices .....	39, 40, 45
Woodcock, American	
singing ground survey results .....	127-131
breeding range.....	127
hunting	
days afield .....	130
harvest .....	130, 157, 158, 159
hunter success .....	158
number of hunters .....	130, 156
take per hunter.....	157, 158
recruitment .....	129
Wood duck	
Breeding population .....	97, 102, 103, 104, 105
hunting, harvest, Minnesota, 2013-2014 .....	162
Woodpecker, red-headed.....	7