

2019 Wisconsin ring-necked pheasant season opens Oct. 19

The fall Wisconsin pheasant hunting season opens statewide at 9 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 19, and will run through Jan. 5, 2020.

Several other seasons also open that day, including bobwhite quail, Hungarian partridge and ruffed grouse in Zone B. Like pheasant, the bobwhite quail and Hungarian partridge seasons open at 9 a.m. The ruffed grouse season opens at the start of legal shooting hours.

Hunters should check the Wisconsin Small Game Hunting Regulations for rules and season structures for the game species they will pursue.

"Pheasant hunting offers a fantastic means to

experience the outdoors, and it complements the other upland bird hunting opportunities in Wisconsin very well," Department of Natural Resources Upland Wildlife Ecologist Mark Wietcha said. "Pheasant hunting offers the chance to explore landscapes and habitat types you might not otherwise see."

Pheasants are one of the most sought-after game birds in North America, and populations do best in the agricultural landscape of southern and western Wisconsin, provided there is habitat present in sufficient quantities to meet their food and cover needs throughout

the year, according to Wietcha.

In addition to existing wild pheasant hunting opportunities, DNR wildlife management staff plan to release approximately 80,000 pheasants from the state game farm on more than 100 public hunting grounds, slightly more than were released in 2018. Pheasants raised by conservation clubs as part of the Day-old Chick Program will also be released this fall.

A list of all properties stocked with pheasants is available on the 2019 Pheasant Stocking Information, or go to the DNR website, and search keyword "pheasant."

The 2019 spring pheasant surveys in Wisconsin show that pheasant abundance is above the five-year average with the highest pheasant detection rate in the northwestern part of the state. The average number of pheasants detected during each stop was up 0.64 pheasants per stop compared to 0.59 pheasants in 2018.

To pursue wild pheasants, hunters should look for areas that contain adequate winter cover, such as cattail marshes and dense brush, intermixed with cropland, hay and idle grasslands that provide food and nesting cover. It will be necessary for hunters to identify areas with high-quality

habitat, concentrating their hunting efforts in those areas, according to Wietcha. Hunters are reminded to be polite and notify the landowner before hunting on private property open to public hunting as part of the Voluntary Public Access program.

During the 2018 pheasant hunting season, an estimated 50,831 hunters went out in search of pheasants and reported harvesting approximately 403,766 birds. The top counties for harvest included Kenosha, Jefferson and Waukesha.

The Mentored Hunting Program allows any hunter, born on or after Jan. 1, 1973, to obtain a

hunting license and hunt without first completing Hunter Education, provided they hunt with a mentor and comply with all the requirements under the program. For additional information and the requirements of the program, visit the DNR website and search the keyword "mentored hunting."

Wisconsin's pheasant stamp program uses funds derived from stamp sales to create and maintain the habitat required for pheasants to survive and reproduce year-round. For more information on the pheasant stamp program, go to the DNR website and search keyword "stamps."

Hold on, hunters: wear your harness What goes up, too often falls from treestands

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Chief Warden Todd Schaller urges all hunters who use a treestand to wear a safety harness and avoid becoming another tragic fall statistic.

"A sad documented fact bore out by research shows if you hunt from a treestand, statistics say you are likely to fall," Schaller said. "You can beat these odds if you take the time to review and follow treestand safety practices."

The DNR partnered with the Marshfield Clinic Research Foundation and the UW Hospital and Clinics in 2014 to learn more about deer stand accidents and how to prevent them. A thorough review of medical reports found some common themes, the most important of which is that deer hunters underestimate the risks associated with treestands.

Research published in 2016 by the Wildlife Society research showed the most avid hunters face a 1-in-20 risk of getting hurt in a fall from a treestand. The society's published research indicates that risky climbing behavior can catch up with you the longer you hunt.

"Thinking that 'I am careful' or 'I built that stand myself' does not safeguard you from the fact that falls can happen to anyone. I've experienced one of those close calls, which changed my behavior," Schaller said.

Schaller understands hunters want to enhance their ability to see and bag their deer during the archery season. "Without a mind on safety, the treestand advantage comes with a risk of falling. Falls can cause life-changing injuries or death," he said.

Schaller offers these treestand safety tips:

Always wear a full-body harness, also known as a fall-arrest system. Connect to your tether line and keep your tether line short. The tether is designed to keep you in the seat, not to catch you after you fall.

Always have three points of contact while climbing into and out of the treestand: This means two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand at all times.

Always use a haul line to raise and lower your unloaded firearm or bow into and out of the stand. You can also use the haul for other things like a heavy backpack.

Use a lifeline when climbing up and down; this keeps you connected from the time you leave the ground to the time you get back down.

Be aware of suspension trauma. Suspension trauma can happen in less than 20 minutes and can be fatal. Attaching an additional foot strap to the body harness will take pressure off your upper legs.

Prefer a course instead? Consider taking a free online treestand safety course. A 15-minute investment of your time in taking an online safety course could save your life. The Treestand Manufacturers Association provides a free, interactive course that you can finish in minutes. Tree-stand Safety Course.

Schaller also urges hunters always to inspect their stands -- especially the ones left up all year. "Inspect the tree, check straps, check hardware, wood condition," he said. "Another way to check your stand is to pull on the stand and move it around to see how much it moves."

To learn more about treestand safety and take the free Tree stand safety course, visit the DNR website.



Photo credit: DNR

Research has shown most avid hunters face a 1-in-20 risk of getting hurt in a fall from a treestand.

Season and permit deadlines

October 19

Pheasant season opens at 9 a.m.; runs through Jan. 6. Ruffed grouse in the zone B opens through Dec. 8. (zone A closes Dec. 31)

Sharp-tailed grouse season under review sharp-tailed grouse season.

Bobwhite quail season opens at noon through Dec. 11. Hungarian partridge season opens at 9 a.m. through Jan. 6.

Cottontail rabbit opens in southern zone at noon through Feb. 29.

Raccoon gun and trapping for state residents opens through Feb. 15.

Red and gray fox hunting and trapping opens through Feb. 15.

Period 1 hunting and trapping season for bobcat north of Hwy. 64 through Dec. 25.

Coyote trapping season opens through Feb. 15.

Fisher trapping season opens in various zones, through Dec. 31.

November 23

Regular gun deer season open through Dec. 1.

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