



Michigan Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Division

2008 Ruffed Grouse and American Woodcock Hunter Cooperator Survey Preliminary Results* and Hunting Forecast for 2009

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Introduction

Ruffed grouse and American woodcock cooperator surveys rely on volunteer hunters that record numbers of hours hunted and ruffed grouse and woodcock flushed each day of hunting. Data obtained from cooperating hunters are summarized by hunt zone and by two-week intervals as the average number of grouse or woodcock flushed per hour of hunting. Flush rates reported by cooperators provide an index of abundance and an indicator of harvest. Grouse and woodcock cooperator surveys are just one of several surveys used by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to monitor ruffed grouse and woodcock populations. Results of this survey will be combined with hunter harvest data and information gathered during spring breeding surveys to forecast grouse and woodcock hunting prospects for the 2009 season.

Cooperator Participation

Hunter records were available from 191 cooperators who hunted in 2008. These hunters spent 5,999 hours afield. In 2007, we received reports from 191 cooperators who spent 5,770 hours afield.

Ruffed Grouse Flush Rates

The number of ruffed grouse flushed per hour by cooperators in 2008 (2.1) was similar to the average number of grouse flushed per hour in 2007 (2.0). Ruffed grouse flush rates were highest in Zone 2 (Northern Lower Peninsula), followed by zones 1 (Upper Peninsula) and 3 (Southern Lower Peninsula), respectively (Figures 1 and 2). The highest average flush rates reported by cooperators were during October 15-30 in Zone 1, September 15-30 and November 1-14 in Zone 2, and October 16-31 in Zone 3 (Table 1).

American Woodcock Flush Rates

The average number of woodcock flushed per hour statewide by cooperators was similar between 2008 (1.3) and 2007 (1.2). Woodcock flush rates were highest in Zone 2 (1.5), followed by zones 3 (1.4) and 1 (0.9), respectively (Figures 3 and 4). Average flush rates peaked during October 1-15 in all zones (Table 1).

Table 1. Average ruffed grouse and American woodcock flush per hour^a, by two week intervals, as reported by cooperating hunters in 2008.

Species and dates	Zone ^b		
	1	2	3
Ruffed grouse			
September 15–30	1.9	2.3	0.9
October 1–15	2.1	2.0	1.0
October 16–31	2.5	2.2	1.3
November 1–14	1.3	2.3	1.0
December 1–15	n/a	2.0	0.7
December 16–January 1	n/a	1.4	0.4
American woodcock			
September 15–30	0.7	1.7	1.8
October 1–15	1.2	2.2	2.3
October 16–31	0.7	1.3	1.4
November 1–14	0.2	0.4	0.8
December 1–15	n/a	0.0	0.0
December 16–January 1	n/a	0.0	0.0

*The results will be final when the annual status report is published.

^aDoes not include hunting data when effort was <20 hours.

^bSee Figure 2 for boundaries of zones.

2009 Hunting Forecast

The upcoming ruffed grouse hunting season looks promising as we are most likely near the peak of the 10-year grouse population cycle. It is expected that the population will be near the high point around 2010 or 2011. For woodcock hunting this fall, it is anticipated that woodcock numbers will be similar to last year. The best grouse and woodcock hunting opportunities will continue to be in areas of young early forest successional habitat.

Acknowledgments

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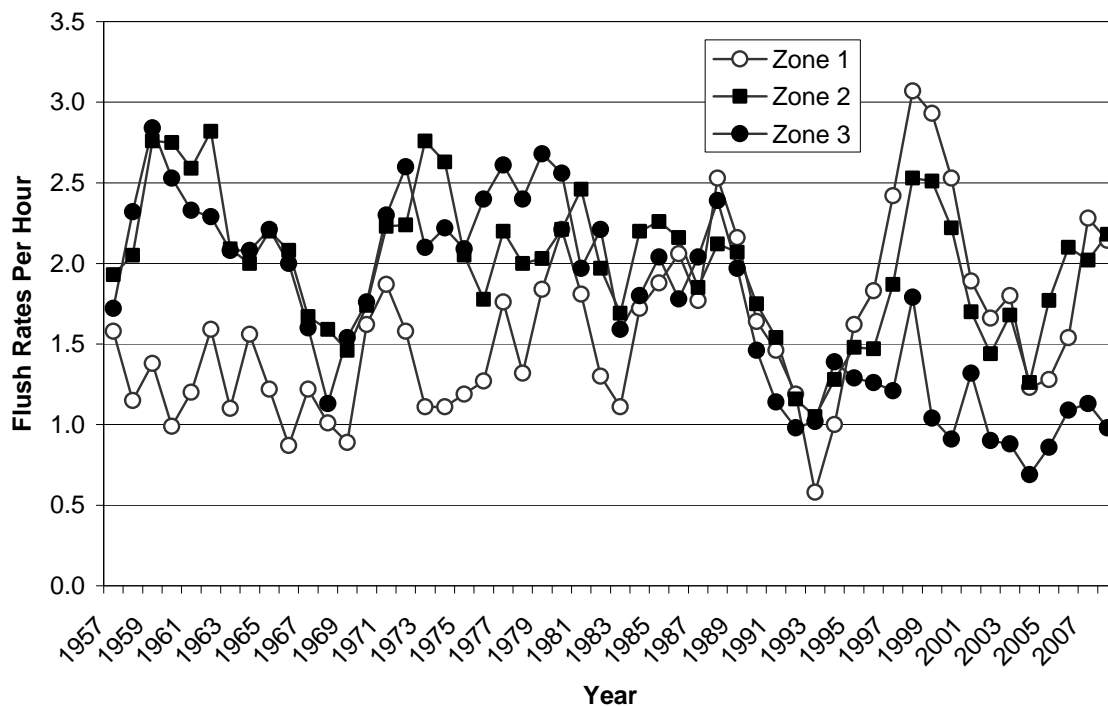
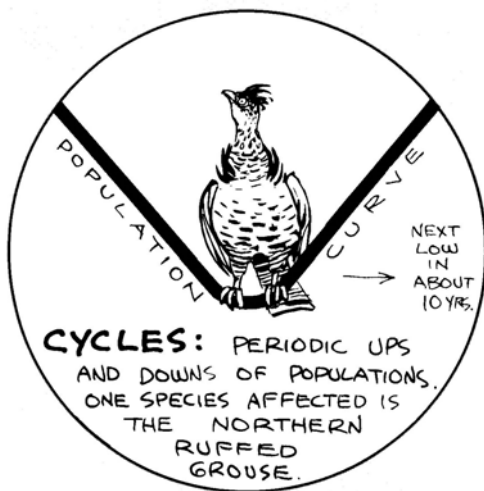


Figure 1. Ruffed grouse flush rates reported by cooperating hunters, 1957-2008.



Average Number of Ruffed Grouse Flushes per Hour by Cooperators, 2008

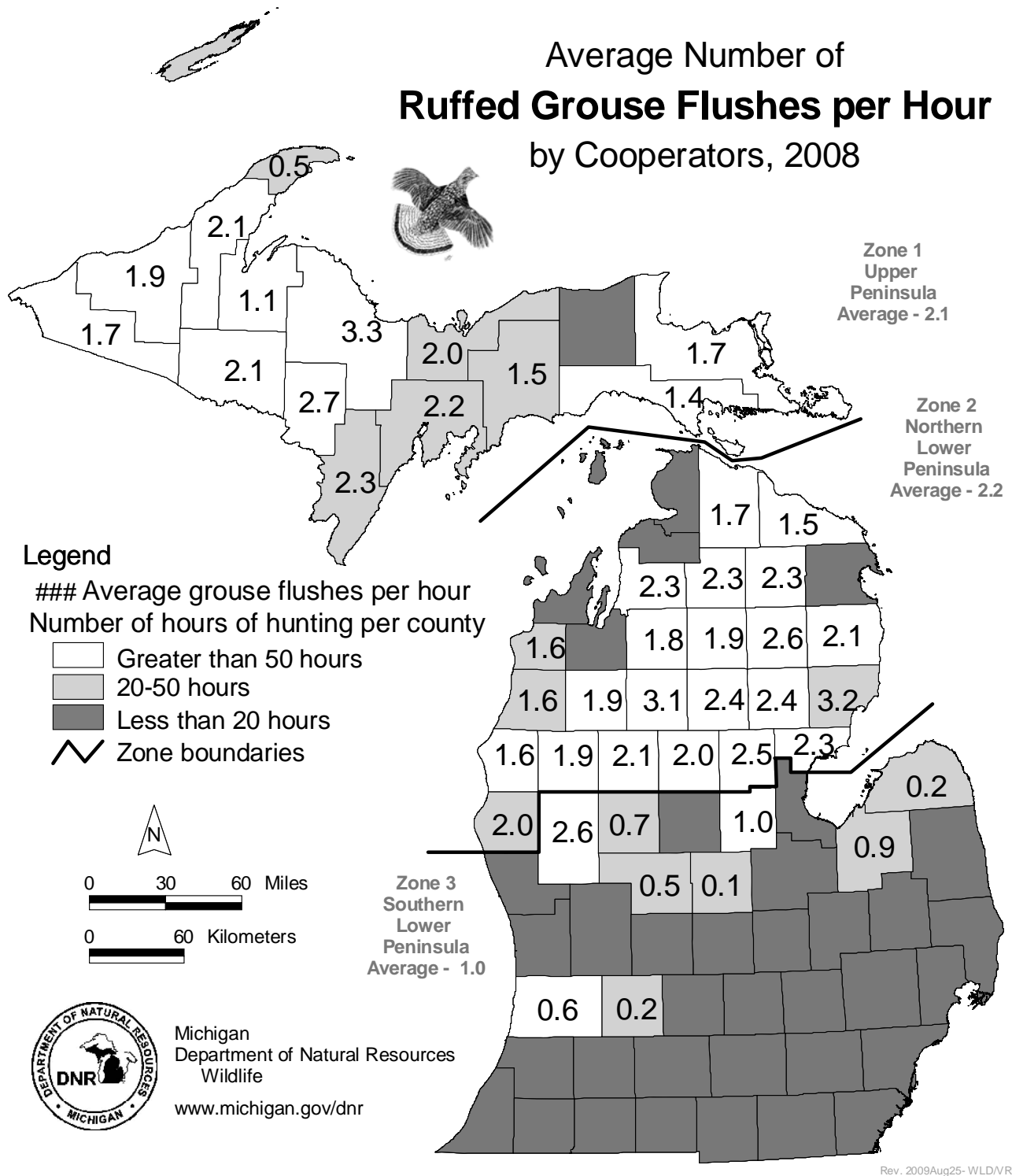


Figure 2. Average number of ruffed grouse flushed per hour by cooperators in 2008.

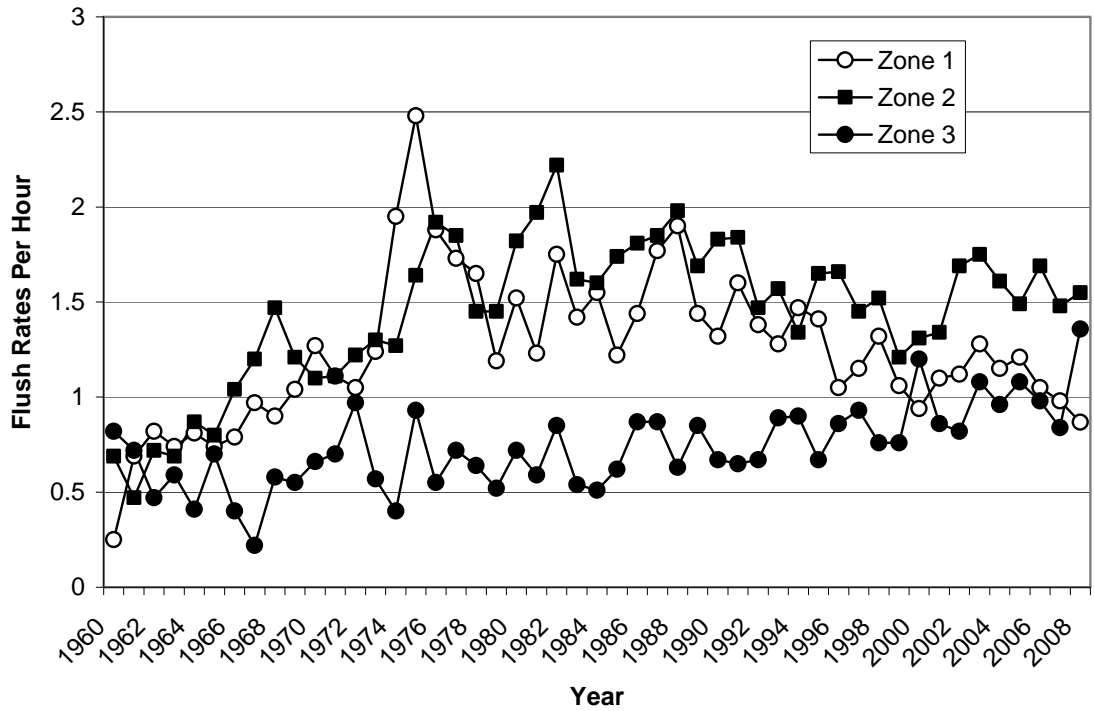


Figure 3. American woodcock flush rates reported by cooperating hunters, 1960-2008.



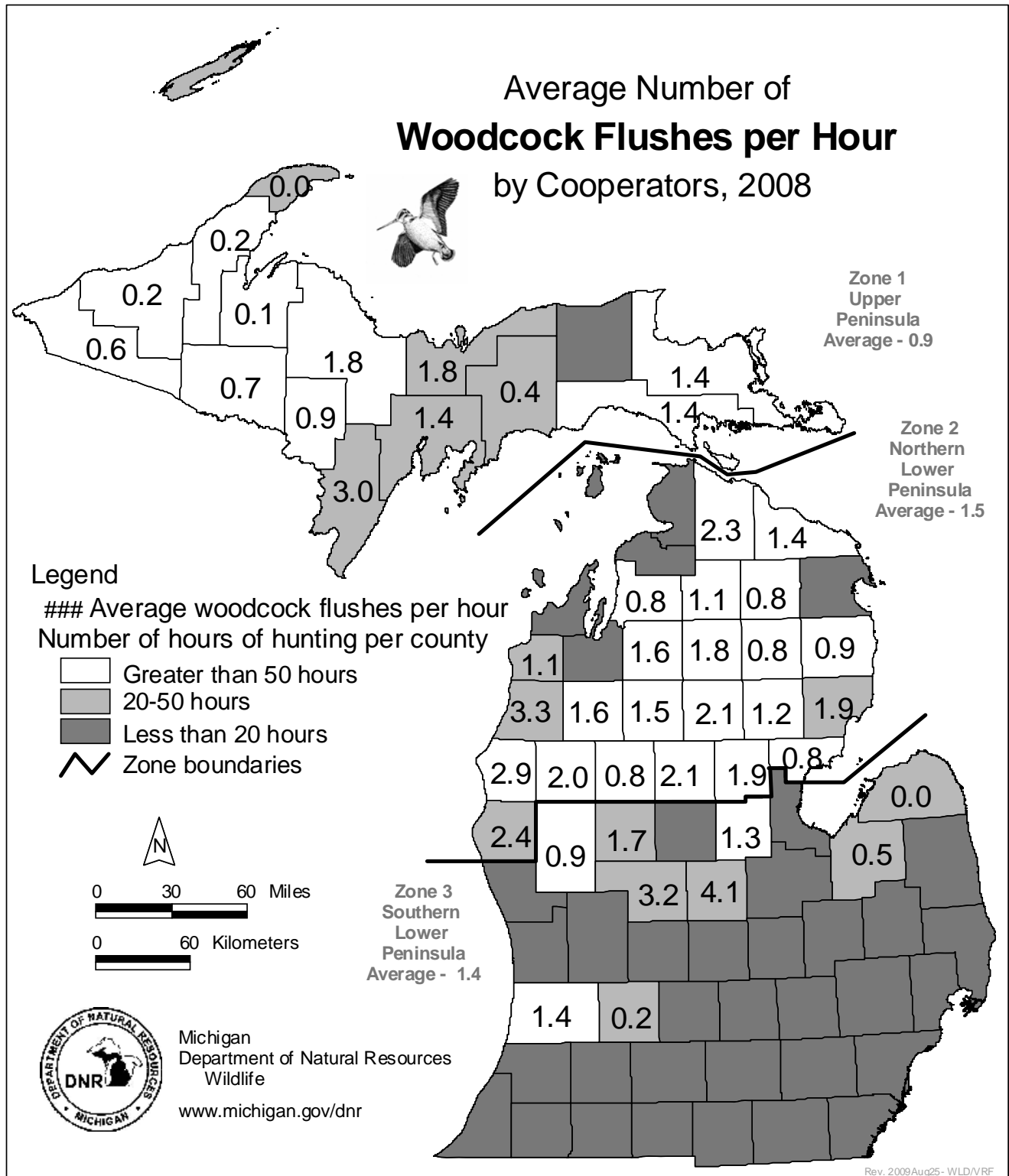


Figure 4. Average number of American woodcock flushed per hour by cooperators in 2008.