

Hillsdale Wildlife Area News

Area News- Fall of 2013

2013/2014 Hunting Outlook



Upland Birds: The fall hunting outlook for quail in the area is fair to poor. Hunters should see similar numbers as last year, if not a slight increase. Timely rains improved nesting conditions, compared to the last two years, when the area experienced severe drought conditions. This year's spring controlled burns, and rains created some great summer brood-rearing conditions. There were plenty of grass hoppers and forb seeds for the chicks to eat, and good cover to move through. The spring and late summer rains also helped produce some very good crops. Weather conditions also have the native grass looking great going into the fall, and there should be plenty of winter cover for the birds. The quail populations are still below average, but with improved habitat conditions, and good management practices, the future looks promising.

Waterfowl: The fall waterfowl hunting outlook is good statewide, but habitat conditions aren't great at the Hillsdale Wildlife Area. Like last year, Hillsdale Wildlife Area is still experiencing drought conditions. All wetlands are dry, and Hillsdale Reservoir is more than 2 feet below conservation pool. We will need some timely rains this fall to allow us to pump water into the wetlands. A majority of the hunting will be on the reservoir. Hunters had some luck on the refuge area, during the teal season. The refuge closes to all activities from October 1st to January 15th. Hillsdale's refuge also offers some goose hunting opportunity late in the season. There are plenty of food sources in the wetland areas, but they will not be available to waterfowl without precipitation. Waterfowl hunters should visit Hillsdale Wildlife Area's webpage (www.ksoutdoors.com) and Facebook page to view weekly waterfowl updates and status of habitat conditions.

Deer: Deer hunting should be fair to good on the Hillsdale Wildlife Area this year. With a mild summer, there were fewer reports of sick deer compared to last year. Deer surveys from last year showed no significant reduction in the deer population around the area. We have seen quite a few deer on the area this spring and summer, including a few nice bucks. Weather conditions have favored crops and woody plants. There should be plenty of food and cover going into the 2013-2014 deer season. Unlike last year, we were able to put in some food plots. We will also plan on putting in some fall wheat and clover. There have been some changes in the deer hunting regulations this year. Make sure to pick up the 2013 Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary wherever licenses are sold, or go online at www.ksoutdoors.com for more information.

Turkey: The fall turkey hunting outlook is good. With good nesting conditions, plenty of young turkeys were seen this summer, and we have continued to see good numbers into this fall. Prescribed burns and a good crop of grasshoppers has created great brood rearing habitat. Fall turkey hunting can become a fun tradition with a youth or novice hunter.

Small Game: The small game outlook for this fall is fair. We have seen good numbers of fox squirrels and cottontail rabbits this summer and fall during field work. Hillsdale has good hardwood areas with mass-producing trees good for squirrels, and plenty of brush piles for rabbits were made while cutting cedars the last couple of years. Cottontail numbers are improved and should provide good hunting opportunity this fall.

Furbearers: Hillsdale is open to the hunting and trapping of furbearers. Like the last few years, there should be plenty of opportunity to harvest beavers and raccoon. Coyote and bobcat populations are also generally fair.

Projects on Hillsdale

The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) has again matched funds with KDWPT to help remove unwanted woody vegetation encroaching warm season native grasses. This kind of management consists of tree removal with a rotary saw connected to a skid-loader. The trees are piled and burned. After the areas are clear of un-wanted vegetation, we continue to maintain the area through disking, burning, mowing, and spraying. The purpose of this management technique focuses on improving native grass and forb diversity for ground nesting birds like bobwhite quail and wild turkey.

We are continually disking, burning, mowing, and spraying in all wetlands during dry periods. We hope to use these dry periods to improve wetland infrastructure and habitat, and will be ready for when the rain comes.

This spring and summer we burned 351 acres, disturbed 32 acres of moist soil, seeded 20 acres of native grass and forbs, removed eastern red cedars on 20 acres, controlled noxious weeds on 190 acres, planted 70 acres of food plots, managed 50 acres for doves, and planted 515 acres to crops.

New: This year was the first year for Hillsdale to require non-toxic shot on designated dove fields. The non-toxic dove field was the best field on Hillsdale; hunters harvested 311 birds in the first two days of the season. Public Lands statewide will continue to require non-toxic shot on designated dove fields in the future.

This September we also did two special dove hunts, one on Hillsdale Wildlife Area and one on Rutlader Wildlife Area. Hunters responded with great feedback, and seemed to enjoy their special hunt opportunity. If you would like to see what special hunts are available for this fall and winter, just follow this link - [KDWPT Special Hunts](#). Hillsdale will plan on also having some wild turkey special hunts this spring. Sign-up date for a spring turkey special hunt is usually in March. Hillsdale Wildlife Area plans on providing more special hunt opportunities in the future.

Hunters Reminded of New Public Lands Regulations:

In June 2012, the Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission approved new regulations relating to hunting on public lands. The following regulations are designed to provide hunters with equal opportunities on limited public lands:

- Baiting while hunting or preparing to hunt is illegal on public lands. Bait is considered any grain, fruit, vegetable, nut, hay, salt, sorghum, feed, or other food or mineral capable of attracting wildlife. Liquid scents and sprays are not considered bait.
- Only two portable blinds or stands are allowed per hunter on public lands.
- Portable blinds and stands must be marked with owner's name and address or KDWP number. Portable blinds may not be left unattended overnight on public lands.
- Decoys may not be left unattended overnight on public lands.
- Commercial guides must have a permit to guide on public lands. The permits are free and must be specific to the land where guiding takes place.

If you would like more information about Hillsdale Wildlife Area

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<http://www.facebook.com/HillsdaleWildlifeArea?ref=hl>

