

Ruffed Grouse Drumming Survey Summary 2015

Christopher D. Kreh – Upland Game Bird Biologist

Ruffed grouse were monitored by counting drumming males on 50 routes throughout 6 mountain ranger districts. Each route consisted of 3-27 listening stations located on game lands. Observers counted drumming males within a 4 minute listening period at each station between March 31st and April 24th, 2015.

Grouse drummed at 117 of the 705 stations (17%). A total of 132 drumming males were detected. Each grouse detected drummed an average of 1.3 times within the 4 minute listening period. As seen in Figure 1, the Cheoah ranger district had both the highest abundance (0.51 grouse per station) and station occupancy rate (41%). Numbers of drumming grouse were relatively high on the Tusquitee district as well, with a station occupancy rate of 34% and an average of 0.40 grouse per station. Grandfather ranger district had the lowest abundance (0.03 grouse per station) and station occupancy rate (3%).

After accounting for variations between ranger districts, significant drumming count fluctuations are sometimes seen between years (Fig 2). The average number of grouse heard per station in 2015 (0.23 grouse per station) is the highest count ever recorded in this survey. The lowest count was recorded in 2007 (0.09 grouse heard per station).

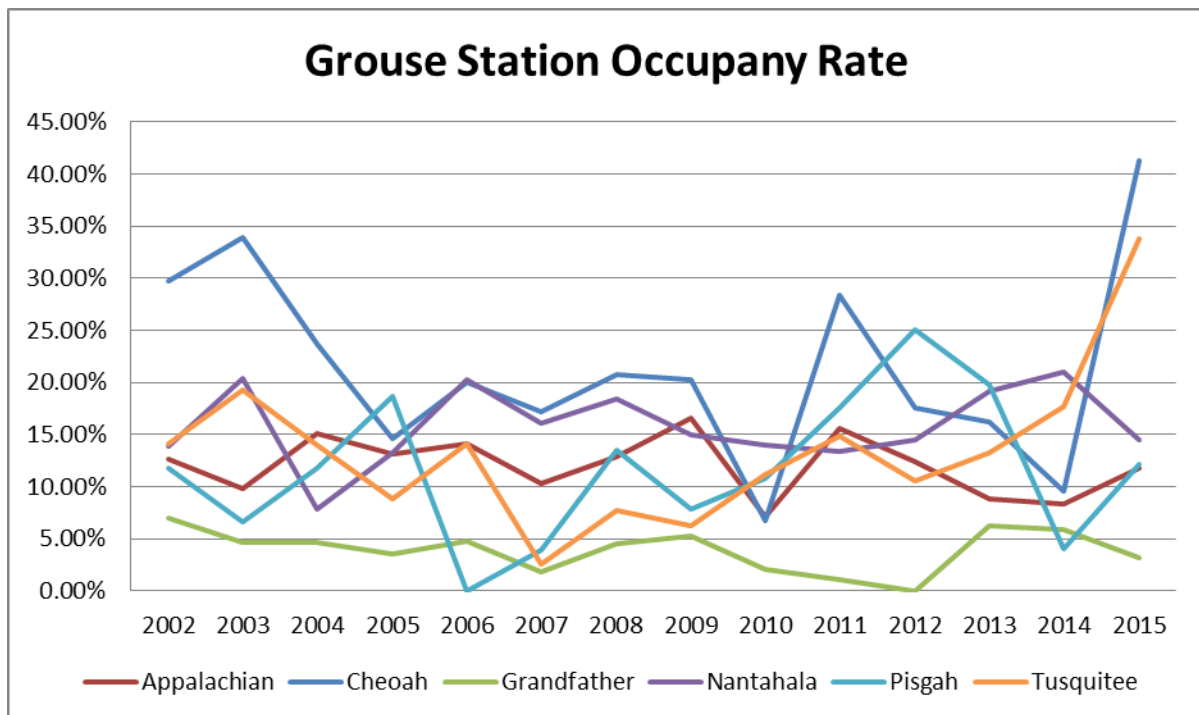


Figure 1. – Average Number of Grouse Heard Drumming Per Station By USFS Ranger District, North Carolina Grouse Drumming Survey, 2002-2015.

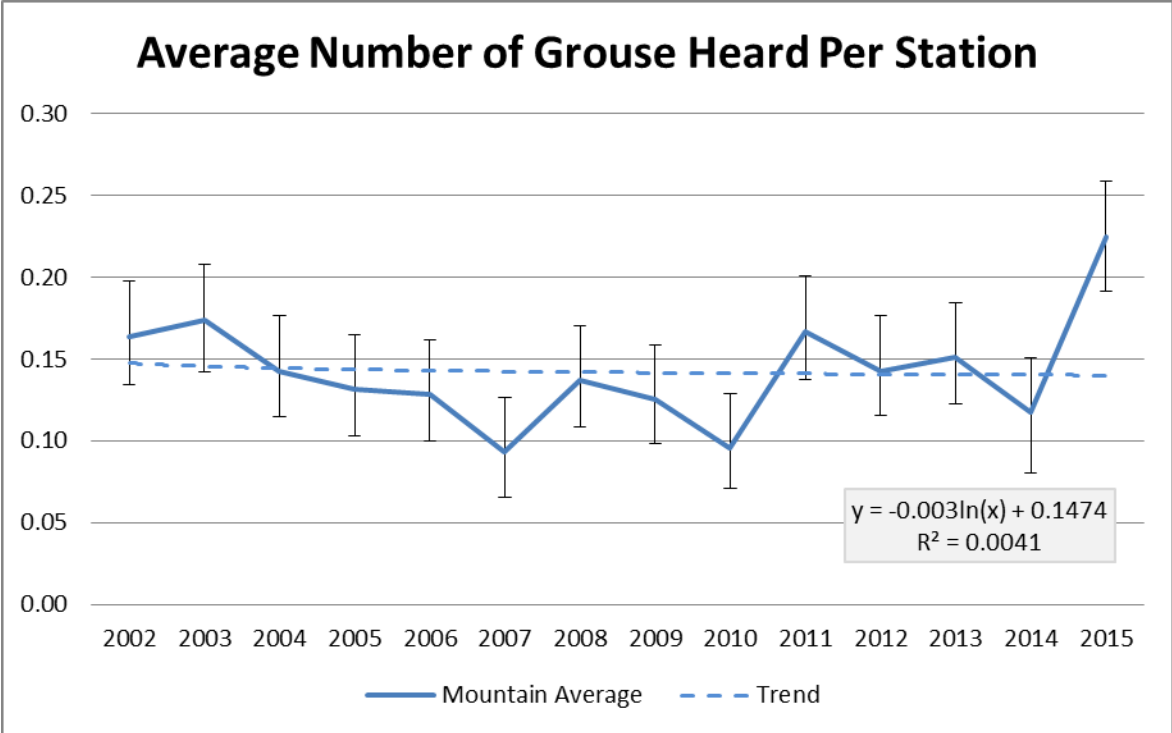


Figure 2. – Average Number of Grouse Heard Drumming Per Station, North Carolina Grouse Drumming Survey, 2002-2015.