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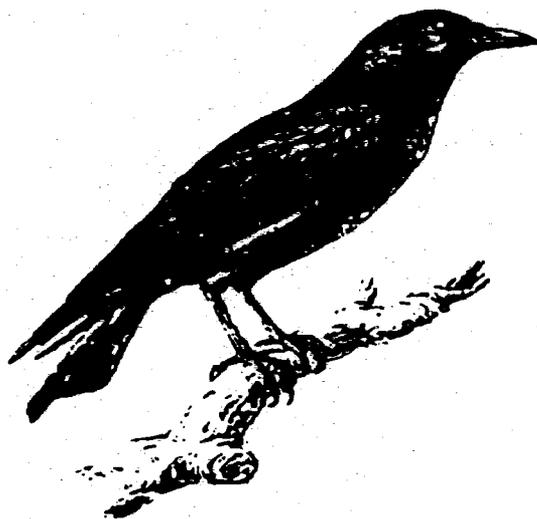
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**Results of the 1995-96 Illinois Crow Hunter Survey**

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Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Wildlife Resources  
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RESULTS OF THE 1995-96 ILLINOIS CROW HUNTER SURVEY

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Abstract: Purchasers of the 1994 Illinois Habitat Stamp who hunted crows the previous year were surveyed (mail questionnaire) to determine their crow hunting activities, harvest, and attitudes and opinions, for the 1995-96 season. The mailing list consisted of 2,755 residents, 1,783 (65%) of which returned questionnaires. Because 556 of the respondents indicated they had never hunted crows, the usable sample was reduced to 1,227. Of these respondents, 673 had hunted crows in Illinois in 1995-96. These hunters were afield an average of 8.6 days; 71% of the days afield occurred during December-February and 27% occurred during July-August. Almost all (95%) of the hunters pursued crows on private land; 74% had little or no difficulty in finding a place to hunt; and 61% utilized woodlots for their sport. The hunters harvested an average of 2.06 crows per day afield and 17.9 crows for the entire season. The vast majority (89%) of the hunters pursued crows for sport; only 14% hunted crows for the simple pur of controllly pests. A majority (61%) of the crow hunters adopted decoying-and-calling techniques to hunt crows. Equipment most frequently used included 12 gauge shotguns (85%), #4 or #6 lead shot (64%), camouflage clothing (85%), and crow calls (73%). Sixteen percent of the hunters used nontoxic shot. Crow hunters also used a variety of unusual equipment, including stuffed fox, red flags, and pie tins. Hunters in northern Illinois preferred the current summer/winter dates for setting the crow hunting season, whereas hunters in southern Illinois opted for fall/winter dates. Ten percent of the hunters--those who wrote in their choices of season dates--preferred the cooler October-March period over the warmer April-September period for crow hunting. Statewide, 65% of the hunters thought the crow population had increased during the last 5 years. The crow hunters averaged 38 years of age, had hunted crows for an average of 16 years, and the vast majority (81%) resided in rural areas or small towns. The "typical" crow hunting party consisted of 2 hunters, and each hunter traveled an average distance (one way) of 17 miles per day afield. Participants in the survey provided 12 recipes for preparing crow for table fare (Appendix A). Crows should be promoted for their sporting qualities and as a renewable natural resource to be enjoyed by the citizens of Illinois.

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J.W. Graber et al. (1987) document the existence of 2 species of crows in Illinois: the well-known and ubiquitous American crow (Corvus brachyrhynchos) and the little-known fish crow (Corvus ossifragus). The fish crow is found only along the Mississippi River north to St. Louis and along the Ohio River to Pope County. The American crow is represented by at least 3 populations in Illinois: local breeders, birds that pass through the state migrating between their breeding and wintering areas, and birds that enter the state to winter (J.W. Graber et al. 1987).

R.R. Graber and J.W. Graber (1963) estimated the statewide crow population at 1.4 million in January 1957 and at 300,000 in June 1957 and 1958. Crows are more abundant in the central portion of the state than in the north or south, and they reach their highest densities in bottomlands (J.W. Graber et al. 1987). It is widely believed that the crow population has steadily increased during the last 2 decades.

In central Illinois, crows begin pairing in early February, begin nest building in late February, reach peak egg production in late March-early April, and fledge most young by late May (J.W. Graber et al. 1987). The latest clutches probably hatch in late May-early June; young require 24-30 days to fledge, after which they are completely dependent on their parents for food for another 2-3 weeks (Black 1941). Thus, the entire mating/nesting/brood rearing period extends from February to July. One brood per adult pair per year is probably the rule in Illinois (J.W. Graber et al. 1987). Compared to the central counties,

mating/nesting/brood rearing chronology is 1 week later in the north and is probably 1 week earlier in the south (J.W. Graber et al. 1987). Yearlings, which do not breed, comprise about 35% of the population at the start of the nesting season (J.W. Graber et al. 1987).

Historically, crows have been both prized for sport and despised for being pests in Illinois. Crows were heavily besieged by shooting and bombing campaigns in the 1930s. Black (1941) listed a death rate of about 100,000 birds per year out of a winter population at roosts of about 1 million.

Federal records indicate the Illinois Department of Conservation (largest agency forming the current Illinois Department of Natural Resources--DNR) implemented restrictions for crow hunting beginning with the 1975-76 hunting season (K.A. Morehouse, pers. commun.). In that year, the season dates were from 1 July to 15 August and from 1 December to 15 February; there were no limitations on the number of birds that could be taken. From 1990 to 1994, an average of 8,700 hunters spent 47,500 days afield and harvested 88,800 crows annually in Illinois (Anderson et al. 1995).

To make sound management decisions, the DNR needs information about the activities, attitudes, and opinions of crow hunters in the state. Answering basic questions about why, where, and when people engage in crow hunting are paramount. Armed with such information, the DNR can establish crow hunting regulations that are both biologically and sociologically acceptable to sportsmen and the general public. Sportsmen are

the DNR's "eyes and ears" for outdoor activities. They are both suppliers of information and beneficiaries of decisions fostered by that information.

#### METHODS AND MATERIALS

A 4-page, 27-question questionnaire was developed specifically for the 1995-96 Illinois Crow Hunter Survey (Fig. 1). This questionnaire and a letter of explanation (Fig. 2) were mailed to 2,755 potential crow hunters on 4 March 1996. Non-respondents were sent 2nd and 3rd copies of the questionnaire, and accompanying letters (Figs. 3 and 4), on 11 April and 20 May, respectively. As of 2 July 1996, 1,783 usable questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 65%.

The mailing list for this survey was developed from information recorded on 1994 Illinois Habitat Stamp stubs. Each stub was designed to capture the purchaser's name, mailing address, and game species (including crows) hunted during the previous year in Illinois (Fig. 5). License vendors were instructed to fill out the stubs and return them to the DNR Permit Office in Springfield. By systematically sampling the 216,474 stubs that were returned (total sales was 284,444), 2,755 purchasers were selected as potential crow hunters.

Data were transferred from returned (filled-out) questionnaires to a computer file using a data management program (Ashton-Tate dBASE III+). The data were analyzed with a statistical program (SPSS Inc. SPSS/P+2.0). Results were tabulated relative to the northern half of Illinois, the southern

half, and the entire state.

The line used to divide the state into north and south halves was route US-36 from the Indiana state line west to Springfield, route IL-29 north to Pekin, and route IL-9 west to the Iowa state line. This is the same line that is used to zone the state for purposes of setting the rabbit, quail, pheasant, and gray partridge hunting seasons.

#### HUNTING REGULATIONS IN 1995-96

Crows were legal game in Illinois from 1 July to 15 August 1995 and from 15 December 1995 to 1 March 1996. There were no limitations on the number of crows that could be taken per day or have in possession. Shooting hours were from sunrise to sunset. By Illinois statute, it is unlawful to take crows and other game birds with a rifle, pistol, revolver, or airgun.

#### FINDINGS

Of the 1,783 people who filled out and returned the questionnaire, 556 (31%) indicated they had never hunted crows. Thus, their questionnaires were not used as a source of data for this study. Of the other 1,227 respondents, 97% purchased a resident Illinois hunting license and 96% purchased an Illinois Habitat Stamp for the 1995-96 season (Table 1). Slightly more than one-half (55%) of the respondents hunted crows in Illinois, and 3.1% hunted crows in another state, in 1995-96. Of those who hunted crows in Illinois, 3.7% also hunted crows in another state.

The vast majority (89%) of respondents who hunted crows in Illinois in 1995-96 did so for sport (Table 2). About one-half (51%) hunted crows for the purpose of controlling pests. However, only 14% of the hunters pursued crows for the single purpose of controlling pests. In comparison, 69% of the hunters engaged in crow hunting for the single purpose of sport. Small percentages of the hunters pursued crows to have a wild game dinner (7%) or for cultural/ethnic reasons (3%). Eleven respondents provided 12 recipes for preparing crow for the table (Appendix A). In view of the fact that crows are primarily vegetarians (Graber et al. 1987), their flesh should make acceptable table fare. Depending on sex and age, crows weigh an average of 459 to 538 g (1.0 to 1.2 lb) in winter (J.W. Graber 1987).

#### Hunting Activities

Fifty-eight percent of the crow hunters and their days afield occurred in the northern half of the state (Table 3). Conversely, the remaining 42% of the hunters and their days afield were located in the southern counties.

The active crow hunters reported spending an average of 8.6 days afield during the 1995-96 season (Table 3). The averages did not differ between the northern and southern portions of the state. Statewide, 49% of the hunters were afield 1-5 days, and 28% were afield 6-10 days. In comparison, the annual hunter harvest survey indicated that crow hunters spend an average of 3.6 days in the field; 85% spent 1-5 days and 10% spent 6-10 days

(Anderson et al. 1996).

Crow hunters were more likely to be in the field during the winter months of December-February (38-50%) than during the summer months of July-August (23-25%) (Table 4). Similarly, 71% of the days afield occurred during the winter months, compared to 27% during the summer months. Hunters in northern portions of the state were more apt to be active during the summer months than hunters in the southern counties.

Almost three-fourths (72%) of the crow hunters were active in only 1 county; 22% were active in 2 counties and 6% were active in  $\geq 3$  counties. Similarly, 78% of the hunters were active in their county or residence, and 54% of them were active only in their county of residence.

Almost all (95%) of the hunters pursued crows on private land (Table 5). Three-fourths (74%) of the hunters had no or little difficulty finding a place to hunt crows. Northern Illinois hunters were more likely to experience (moderate or much) difficulty finding a place to hunt crows than southern Illinois hunters.

A majority (61%) of the hunters utilized woodlots for their crow hunting activities (Table 6). In addition, 47% of the crow hunters utilized corn/soybean fields and 42% used fencerows. About one-fourth (27%) of the crow hunters associated their activities with rivers/wetland areas.

#### Crow Harvest

The hunters reported harvesting an average of 2.06 crows per

hunter per day afield and 17.9 crows per hunter for the entire season in 1995-96 (Table 7). The harvest rates were greater in the southern half of the state than in the northern half. Statewide, 10% of the hunters harvested 0 crows, 36% harvested 1-5 crows, 18% harvested 6-10 crows, 16% harvested 11-20 crows, and 20% harvested  $\geq 21$  crows. In comparison, the annual Illinois Hunter Harvest Survey indicated that an average of 6.7 crows were harvested per hunter during the 1995-96 season; 17% of the hunters bagged 0 crows, 56% bagged 1-5 crows, 11% bagged 6-10 crows, 4% bagged 11-19, and 12% bagged  $\geq 6$  crows. As will be discussed, the present survey is biased toward the more ardent, more dedicated crow hunters.

Statewide, the hunters reported taking  $\geq 1$  crows on 57% of their days afield (Table 7). They took 1-5 crows on 43% of their days and  $\geq 6$  crows on 14% of their days. The hunters harvested 0 crows on 43% of their days in the field.

#### Hunting Techniques and Equipment Used

A majority (61%) of the hunters adopted decoying-and-calling techniques to hunt crows in Illinois during the 1995-96 season (Table 8). The other hunters employed either hide/wait-and-ambush techniques (21%) or spotting-and-stalking (17%) to hunt crows. Crow hunters appeared to be slightly more active in the morning than in the afternoon (Table 8).

The 12 gauge was the shotgun of choice for the vast majority (85%) of the crow hunters (Table 9). The vast majority (84%) also used lead shot, though 16% said they used steel shot. Two-

thirds (64%) of the hunters selected #4 or #6 size shot for crow hunting.

Other equipment used by a majority of the crow hunters included camouflage clothing (85%) and crow calls (73%). Sizeable percentages of the hunters also used crow decoys (48%) and owl decoys (41%). Additional interesting and "unique" equipment mentioned by the crow hunters included a owl hooter, hawk call, rabbit distress call, rabbit decoy, raccoon decoy, stuffed fox, red flag, black flag, pie tins, and painter's pole.

#### Attitudes and Opinions

Dates for Crow Season. Most (90%) of the hunters were evenly split as to whether the current summer/winter dates (1 July-15 August and 15 December-1 March) or fall/winter dates (1 November-4 March) should be used for setting the crow hunting season in Illinois (Table 10). Hunters in northern counties showed a preference for the summer/winter dates, whereas the southern hunters preferred the fall/winter dates. The remaining hunters (10%) preferred the cooler October-March period (64%) over the warmer April-September period (36%) for crow hunting.

Changes in Crow Population. Majorities of the hunters in northern portions of the state (65%), the southern portions (66%), and statewide (65%) thought the crow population had increased during the last 5 years (Table 11). Relatively few (3-5%) of the hunters thought that crows had decreased in numbers.

Unsolicited Comments. Fourteen respondents submitted 31 separate comments related to crows and crow hunting in Illinois.

Eight of the comments indicated the crow population is increasing and/or crows are pests. Seven comments advocated liberalizing the crow hunting season, especially in the fall. Six comments were statements that hunting areas are hard to find and/or the DNR should allow crow hunting on public areas. Three comments were complimentary of crows as a species, and 3 comments were requests for information about crow hunting and/or preparing crow for the table. One comment pointed out the existence of an American Crow Hunters Association (Mike Russell, P.O. Box 594, Oak Lawn, IL 60454). The remaining comments included 2 statements about crow hunting in general and a complaint about hunting regulations on public areas.

#### Characteristics of Crow Hunters

The crow hunters who participated in the present survey were predominantly residents of rural (41%) or small town (40%) environments (Table 12). Their average age was 38 years, and they had hunted crows for an average of 16 years. On the average, crow hunting parties included 2.0 hunters, and each hunter traveled an average distance (one way) of 17 miles per day afield.

#### Economics of Crow Hunting

The hunters reported spending an average of \$54 each to hunt crows during the 1995-96 season (Table 13). With an estimated 9,938 crow hunters in the state (Anderson et al. 1996), total expenditures was projected at 0.54 million for 1995-96. In

comparison, hunters of rabbits, quail, and pheasants spent averages of \$156-\$294 (totals of \$24.8-\$30.8 million) in Illinois in 1989-1991 (Anderson and David 1991a, 1991b, 1992), and spring turkey hunters spent an average of \$85 (total of \$2.8) in 1990 (Anderson and Garver 1991).

#### DISCUSSION

The mailing list for the present (1995-96) crow hunter survey was developed by systematically selecting purchasers of the previous year's (1994) Illinois Habitat Stamp who (according to information on the stamp stub) had hunted crows the previous year (1993). However, among the returned questionnaires, 31% were from respondents who said they had never hunted crows. It appears that some vendors are not taking the task of filling out the habitat stamp stub seriously and are arbitrarily checking "crow" as one of the species hunted last year.

Respondents who did hunt crows reported going afield an average of 8.6 days and harvesting an average of 17.9 crows per hunter during the 1995-96 season. These data do not compare well with the annual Illinois Hunter Harvest Survey, which indicates that crow hunters spent an average of 3.6 days afield per hunter and harvested an average of 6.7 crows per hunter during the 1995-96 season (Anderson et al. 1996). This latter survey apparently included many participants who shot crows opportunistically or coincidental to other game species, and therefore were not bonafide crow hunters. Furthermore, the mailing list for the present survey was based on people who purchased a habitat stamp

in 1994 and again in 1995, and who also hunted crows in 1993-94 and again in 1995-96. Thus, our crow hunter survey contains some bias toward the more ardent, more dedicated crow hunters.

As a generalization, crow hunting in Illinois appears to be a low-budget, close-to-home outdoor activity. Hunters spent an average of \$54 per hunter to pursue crows in 1995-96 (Table 13), the lowest amount ever documented for a hunting activity in the state. In addition, 78% of the crow hunters were active in their county of residence, and 72% of them were active in only 1 county.

This is not to say there are no avid crow hunters. Indeed, 23% of the crow hunters were afield for  $\geq 11$  days and 20% harvested  $\geq 21$  crows per hunter in 1995-96 (Tables 3 and 7). And, judging from the variety of equipment they use (Table 9), some crow hunters are obviously innovative and highly motivated.

Illinois' hunters appear to be in need of information about crow hunting and ways that crows can be prepared for table fare. There also appears to be interest in expanding opportunities for crow hunting on public areas, especially in northern portions of the state. To promote crows for their sporting qualities and as a renewable natural resource, the DNR should develop and distribute information about crows, crow hunting, and ways of preparing crow for the table. The recipes listed in Appendix A represent a start. To counter the stigma associated with eating flesh of crow, it should be emphasized that crows consume large amounts of corn and other vegetative matter (Graber et al. 1987)-  
-a diet similar to those of highly prized game species such as

quail and pheasants.

The data indicate that appreciable numbers of crow hunters are active in wetlands, especially in the southern counties (Table 6). Since these areas are utilized by waterfowl, and waterfowl are susceptible to lead poisoning (Sanderson and Bellrose 1986), crow hunters should be discouraged from depositing lead shot in wetlands. We recommend promulgating regulations that require hunters to use nontoxic shot when attempting to take crows along rivers, near marshes, and in other wetland areas.

Some ardent crow hunters have asked the DNR to consider changing the crow season dates from the current summer/winter periods to a fall/winter period. Thus, question #26, which solicited hunters' preferences for crow season dates, was added to the questionnaire (Fig. 1). The responses indicate that crow hunters statewide are evenly split on the season date issue: 45% prefer the summer/winter dates and 45% would like to have fall/winter dates (Table 10). However, when hunters in the northern and southern counties are examined separately, a different picture emerges: the northern hunters preferred the summer/winter dates whereas the southern preferred fall/winter dates. The other hunters--the 10% who wrote in their preferences--favored the cooler months (October-March) over the warmer months (April-September).

A change that would shift some or all of the 46 days of crow hunting currently allowed in July and August to a later period, such as during October-November-early December, would be well

received by hunters in southern portions of the state. Unless July-August hunting is needed to address local nuisance problems, we believe northern hunters will eventually come to appreciate the advantages of crow hunting during cooler weather. Thus, we recommend a gradual (step-wise) reduction in the number of days of crow hunting during summer and a corresponding increase in the number of days during fall. This change, which would be considered experimental, should be evaluated annually for 3 consecutive years to measure hunter acceptance and other possible ramifications.

In closing, we point out that the mating/nesting/brood rearing period for crows extends from February to July in Illinois. Thus, for both biological and ethical reasons, caution should be exercised when considering whether to allow crow hunting in July.

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Table 1. Percentage of respondents to the 1995-96 Illinois Crow Hunter Survey who purchased a resident hunting license, purchased a habitat stamp, hunted crows in Illinois, and hunted crows in another state, during the 1995-96 season (n=1,227 state residents).

Activity	Number	Percentage
Purchased resident Illinois hunting license	1,189	96.9
Purchased Illinois Habitat Stamp	1,175	95.8
Hunted crows in Illinois	673	54.8
Hunted crows in another state	38 <sup>a</sup>	3.1 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Of the 673 respondents who hunted crows in Illinois, 25 (3.7%) also hunted crows in another state.

Table 2. Reasons given by respondents for hunting crows in Illinois during the 1995-96 season. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Reason	Percentage of Hunters		
	North	South	Entire State
For sport	(386) 90	(282) 88	(673) 89 <sup>a</sup>
To control pests	56	49	51 <sup>b</sup>
For wild game dinner	8	6	7 <sup>c</sup>
For cultural or ethnic reasons	3	3	3
Others <sup>d</sup>	7	5	6

<sup>a</sup>69% hunted crows for the single purpose of sport.

<sup>b</sup>14% hunted crows for the single purpose of controlling pests.

<sup>c</sup>Eleven respondents provided 12 recipes for preparing crow (Appendix A).

<sup>d</sup>Includes off-season hunting (2.2%), target practice (1.2%), dog training (0.7%), and 4 miscellaneous reasons (1.6%).

Table 3. Number of days spent afield by crow hunters in Illinois during the 1995-96 season. The season extended from July 1 to August 15 and from December 15 to March 1 statewide. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Parameter	North	South	Entire State	
Percentage of hunters	(386) 58	(283) 42	(669) 100	(669)
Percentage of days afield	58	42	100	(5,751)
Mean days afield per hunter	8.63	8.55	8.60 <sup>a</sup>	(669)

<sup>a</sup>49% of the hunters were afield 1-5 days, 28% were afield 6-10 days, 16% were afield 11-20 days, and 7% were afield 21-70 days.

Table 4. Temporal distribution of crow hunting in Illinois during the 1995-96 season. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Month	North	South	Entire State
	<u>Percentage of Hunters</u>		
	(386)	(283)	(669)
July	25	20	23
August	29	19	25
December	44	42	43
January	49	51	50
February	38	39	38
March	4	6	5
	<u>Percentage of Days Afield</u>		
	(3,140)	(2,213)	(5,353)
July	15	13	14
August	15	10	13
December	24	25	24
January	25	30	27
February	20	20	20
March	1	2	2

Table 5. Ownership of lands used by crow hunters, and the level of difficulty they experienced in finding a place to hunt, in Illinois in 1995-96. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Subject	Percentage of Hunters		
	North	South	Entire State
Ownership of land	(386)	(283)	(669)
Private	96	93	95
Public	4	7	5
Level of difficulty	(382)	(283)	(665)
None	51	60	55
Little	18	21	19
Moderate	22	14	19
Much	9	5	7

Table 6. Types of habitats utilized by crow hunters in Illinois during the 1995-96 season. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Habitat	Percentage of Hunters		
	North	South	Entire State
	(386)	(283)	(669)
Woodlots	65	54	61
Fencerows	41	42	42
Rivers/wetlands	22	34	27
Clover/alfalfa/hay	22	17	20
Corn/soybeans	49	46	47
Weedy/fallow	18	17	18
Others (10 misc. habitats) <sup>a</sup>	3	4	4

<sup>a</sup>Primarily barnyards and landfills.

Table 7. Number of crows harvested by crow hunters in Illinois during the 1995-96 season. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Parameter	North	South	Entire State
<b>Mean crows per hunter:</b>			
Per season	(383) 13.7	(280) 23.5	(663) 17.9 <sup>a</sup>
Per day afield	(3,331) 1.58	(2,420) 2.72	(5,751) 2.06
<b>Days harvested:</b>			
0 crows	46%	40%	43%
1-5 "	44	43	43
6-10 "	7	11	9
11-20 "	2	5	4
>20 "	1	1	1

<sup>a</sup>10% of hunters harvested 0 crows, 36% harvested 1-5 crows, 18% harvested 6-10 crows, 16% harvested 11-20 crows, 18% harvested 21-100 crows, and 2% harvested 101-492 crows.

Table 8. Hunting techniques employed by crow hunters, and time of day when afield, in Illinois during the 1995-96 season. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Subject	Percentage of Hunters		
	North	South	Entire State
Hunting technique	(348)	(242)	(590)
Spot and stalk	19	15	17
Hide/wait and ambush	22	19	21
Decoying and calling	58	65	61
Others	1	1	1
Time of day when afield	(385)	(283)	(668)
Mostly in morning	38	39	38
Mostly in afternoon	25	25	25
About evenly between mornings and afternoons	37	26	37

Table 9. Shotguns, ammunition, and other equipment used by crow hunters in Illinois during the 1995-96 season. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Item	Percentage of Hunters		
	North	South	Entire State
Shotgun	(376)	(276)	(652)
10 gauge	2	4	3
12 gauge	85	85	85
16 gauge	3	2	3
20 gauge	9	8	8
410	1	1	1
Type of shotshell	(363)	(270)	(633)
Lead	85	83	84
Steel	15	17	16
Bismuth	0	0	0
Size of shot	(350)	(262)	(612)
#2	7	7	7
#3	1	2	1
#4	28	28	28
#5	9	9	9
#6	36	36	36
#7-1/2	15	16	16
Others	4	2	3
Other equipment	(386)	(283)	(669)
Camouflage clothing	87	83	85
Blind	28	32	30
Crow decoys	48	47	48
Owl decoy	42	40	41
Crow call	73	74	73
Stool/cushion	35	36	35
Others (18 misc. items) <sup>a</sup>	6	2	4

<sup>a</sup>Included binoculars/scopes, owl hooter, hawk call, rabbit distress call, rabbit decoy, raccoon decoy, stuffed fox, red flag, black flag, pie tins, and painter's pole.

Table 10. Opinions of crow hunters as to the dates that should be used for the crow season in Illinois. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Responses to the question,  
 "With a maximum of 124 days allowed by international treaty, which of the following dates would you prefer for the crow hunting season in Illinois in 1996-97?"

	North	South	Entire State
	(349)	(259)	(608)
*From 1 July to 15 August and 15 December to 1 March	48%	41%	45%
*From 1 November to 4 March	40	50	45
*Other	12	9	10
By month listed	(185)	(106)	(291)
July	6%	8%	7%
August	6	8	7
September	6	6	6
October	9	8	8
November	8	8	8
December	12	10	11
January	13	14	13
February	14	13	14
March	10	10	10
April	7	7	7
May	4	3	4
June	5	5	5

Table 11. Opinions of crow hunters as to whether the crow population has increased, decreased, or remained unchanged in Illinois (1995-96). Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Responses to the question,

"In your opinion, has the crow population in your area increased, decreased, or remained unchanged during the last 5 years?"

	North	South	Entire State
	(386)	(282)	(668)
Increased	65%	66%	65%
Decreased	3	5	4
Unchanged	26	21	24
Don't know	6	8	7

Table 12. Some characteristics of crow hunters in Illinois during the 1995-96 season. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Characteristic	North	South	Entire State
Residence	(385)	(282)	(667)
Rural	35%	48%	41%
Small town	41	39	40
Urban	24	13	19
Mean age in years	(385) 38.2	(281) 37.7	(666) 38.0 <sup>a</sup>
Mean years crow hunted	(383) 16.4	(281) 14.4	(664) 15.6 <sup>b</sup>
Mean miles traveled (one way) per day	(385) 17.5	(283) 16.4	(668) 17.0 <sup>c</sup>
Mean number of hunters per hunting party	(384) 1.92	(282) 2.04	(666) 1.97 <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>1% of hunters were  $\leq 15$  years of age, 8% were 16-20 years, 24% were 21-30 years, 28% were 31-40 years, 21% were 41-50 years, 12% were 51-60 years, 3% were 61-64 years, and 3% were  $\geq 65$  years.

<sup>b</sup>32% of hunters had hunted crows for  $\leq 5$  years, 21% had hunted 6-10 years, 19% had hunted 11-20 years, 14% had hunted 21-30 years, and 14% had hunted  $\geq 31$  years.

<sup>c</sup>57% of hunters traveled  $\leq 10$  miles, 22% traveled 11-20 miles, 7% traveled 21-30 miles, and 14% traveled  $\geq 31$  miles.

<sup>d</sup>31% of parties included 1 hunter, 47% included 2 hunters, 18% included 3 hunters, and 4% included 4-6 hunters.

Table 13. Expenditures by crow hunters in Illinois during the 1995-96 season. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Expenditure	North	South	Entire State
			(664)
\$0-\$25	45%	45%	45%
\$26-\$50	27	25	26
\$51-\$100	16	17	17
\$101-\$200	8	9	8
\$201-\$300	2	2	2
≥300	2	2	2
Mean	\$52	\$56	\$54
Total	\$0.30 M	\$0.24 M	\$0.54 M <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Based on an estimated 9,938 resident crow hunters in 1995-96 (Anderson et. al.).

1995-96 ILLINOIS CROW HUNTER SURVEY



INSTRUCTIONS

Please answer the following questions, beginning below, for your crow hunting activities in Illinois during the 1995-96 season.

If you did not hunt crows in Illinois during the 1995-96 season, answer only the questions that apply to you (PART I and PART III). Your opinions are important even if you did not hunt.

Report only your kill. DO NOT report the kill of others with whom you may have hunted. Your responses are strictly confidential and will never be associated with your name. Since you are part of a small, randomly selected group, your participation is very important.

If you can't remember the exact figures, give your best estimate. When completed, insert questionnaire into the self-addressed envelope and mail.

Your comments are welcome but please write them on a separate sheet of paper to receive proper attention.

---

PART I: General Information

1. Did you purchase a 1995 resident Illinois hunting license?  
(circle number for appropriate answer)

Yes.....1

No.....2

2. Did you purchase a 1995 Illinois Habitat Stamp for your personal use?

Yes.....1

No.....2

3. Did you hunt crows in Illinois during the 1995-96 season?  
NOTE: the season extended from 1 July to 15 August 1995 and from 15 December 1995 to 1 March 1996. (circle number for appropriate answer)

Yes.....1

No.....2

4. Did you hunt crows in another state during the 1995-96 season? (circle number for appropriate answer)

Yes.....1

No.....2

Figure 1. The questionnaire used for conducting the 1995-96 Illinois Crow Hunter Survey (continued).

IF YOU DID NOT HUNT CROWS IN ILLINOIS DURING THE 1995-96 SEASON,  
SKIP TO PART III - QUESTION #21.

PART II: Crow Hunting Activities

5. On how many different days did you hunt crows in Illinois during the 1995-96 season?.....\_\_\_\_\_days
6. In which month, or months, did you hunt crows most in Illinois during the 1995-96 season?

	<u>Month</u>	<u>Number of Days</u>
Hunted most	_____	_____
Second most	_____	_____
Third most	_____	_____
Fourth most	_____	_____
Fifth most	_____	_____

7. In which county, or counties, did you hunt crows most in Illinois during the 1995-96 season?

	<u>County</u>
Hunted most	_____
Second most	_____
Third most	_____

8. How many crows did you harvest (kill and retrieve) in Illinois during the 1995-96 season?

Number of crows harvested \_\_\_\_\_

9. On how many different days during the 1995-96 season did you harvest:
- a. Zero crows.....\_\_\_\_\_days
  - b. 1-5 crows.....\_\_\_\_\_days
  - c. 6-10 crows.....\_\_\_\_\_days
  - d. 11-20 crows.....\_\_\_\_\_days
  - e. More than 20 crows.....\_\_\_\_\_days

10. On average, about how many miles did you travel per day (one way) to hunt crows in Illinois during the 1995-96 season?

\_\_\_\_\_miles (one way)

11. Did you hunt crows primarily on private land or primarily on public land in Illinois during the 1995-96 season? (circle number for appropriate answer)

Private land.....1

Public land.....2

12. Please rate the level of difficulty you experienced in finding a place to crow hunt in Illinois in 1995-96. (circle number for appropriate answer)

No difficulty.....1                      Moderate difficulty.....3  
Little difficulty.....2                    Much difficulty.....4

13. Which of the following best describes the type, or types, of habitats in which you hunted crows most in Illinois during the 1995-96 season? (check [✓] all that apply)

a. Woodlots.....                      d. Clover/alfalfa/hay fields...  
b. Fencerows.....                      e. Corn/soybean fields.....  
c. Rivers/wetlands..                    f. Weedy/fallow fields.....  
g. Other (write in) \_\_\_\_\_

14. Did you hunt crows mostly in the morning, mostly in the afternoon, or split your time about evenly between mornings and afternoons? (circle number for appropriate answer)

Mostly in morning.....1  
Mostly in afternoon.....2  
About evenly between mornings and afternoons....3

15. Including yourself, what was the most common number of hunters in your crow hunting party in 1995-96?.....\_\_\_\_\_

16. What gauge of shotgun did you use most for hunting crows in Illinois during the 1995-96 season?.....\_\_\_\_\_

17. What size of shot did you use most for hunting crows in Illinois during the 1995-96 season? (circle appropriate answer)

#2    #3    #4    #5    #6    #7-1/2    #8    Other\_\_\_\_\_

18. Was the shot usually lead shot, steel shot, or bismuth shot? (circle number for appropriate answer)

Lead.....1                      Steel.....2                      Bismuth.....3

19. What hunting technique did you use most for hunting crows in Illinois during the 1995-96 season? (circle number for appropriate answer)

Spot and stalk.....1                      Decoying and calling.....3  
Hide/wait and ambush...2                    Other (write in) \_\_\_\_\_4

20. Which of the following items did you usually use when hunting crows in Illinois during the 1995-96 season? (check [✓] all items you usually used)

a. Camouflage clothing...                      d. Owl decoy.....  
b. Blind.....                                      e. Crow call.....  
c. Crow decoys.....                              f. Stool/cushion..  
g. Other (write in) \_\_\_\_\_

PART III: Background Information and Opinions

21. How old were you on your last birthday?.....\_\_\_\_\_years

22. How many years have you hunted crows?.....\_\_\_\_\_years

23. In what type of community do you now live? (circle number)

- Rural (country, farm, town less than 500 residents)....1
- Small town (500 to 20,000 residents).....2
- Urban (over 20,000 residents, suburban, city).....3

24. About how much money do you think you spent for hunting crows in Illinois during the 1995-96 season? (circle number for appropriate answer)

- |                |                 |                  |
|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| \$0-\$25.....1 | \$51-100.....3  | \$201-300.....5  |
| \$26-50.....2  | \$101-200.....4 | Over \$300.....6 |

25. Which of the following best described your reason(s) for hunting crows in Illinois? (check [✓] all that apply)

- For sport.....
- For control of pests.....
- For wild game dinner.....
- For cultural or ethnic reasons.....
- Other (write in)\_\_\_\_\_

25a: If you have a favorite recipe for preparing crow, we would appreciate it if you would share it with us.

26. With a maximum of 124 days allowed by international treaty, which of the following dates would you prefer for the crow hunting season in Illinois in 1996-97? (circle number for appropriate answer)

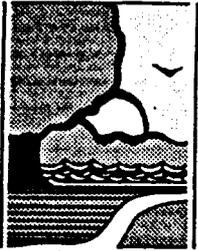
- \*From 1 July to 15 August 1996 and from 15 December 1996 to 1 March 1997 (same as in 1995-96).....1
- \*From 1 November 1996 to 4 March 1997.....2
- \*Other (write in)\_\_\_\_\_..3

27. In your opinion, has the crow population in your area increased, decreased, or remained unchanged during the last 5 years? (circle number for appropriate answer)

- Increased..1    Decreased..2    Unchanged..3    Don't know..4

Thank you for your cooperation

POSTAGE IS PREPAID



ILLINOIS  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**NATURAL RESOURCES**

524 South Second Street, Springfield 62701-1787

Jim Edgar, Governor ● Brent Manning, Director

Dear Fellow Sportsman:

You are one of a select group of Illinoisans asked to provide information about your crow hunting activities during the past hunting season.

The information supplied by you and other selected hunters is needed to properly manage crows in Illinois. Our goals are to grant maximum crow hunting opportunities to license holders, to maintain an attractive level of hunter success, and to minimize nuisance animal problems.

The information you provide is used to better understand the characteristics of our crow population and crow hunters. It will also help us understand how crow hunters view their sport.

Your reply is very important, even if you did not hunt crows or you were not successful. Only a limited number of crow hunters can be contacted, therefore, your response is urgently needed.

Please take a few minutes to fill out the parts of the enclosed questionnaire that apply to you. If you do not remember exact figures, please give your best estimates.

Drop the completed questionnaire in the mail. Postage is prepaid.

Sincerely,  
  
Jeffrey M. Van Steeg  
Chief, Wildlife Resources

JMV:WLA  
Enclosure  
C1

Figure 2. The letter that accompanied the first mailing of the questionnaire.



ILLINOIS  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**NATURAL RESOURCES**

524 South Second Street, Springfield 62701-1787

Jim Edgar, Governor ● Brent Manning, Director

Dear Fellow Sportsman:

Recently, we mailed you a Crow Hunter Questionnaire and requested that you fill it out and return it as soon as possible. We have not received your form at this time. Perhaps you have misplaced the questionnaire or you have not found time to complete it and return it to us.

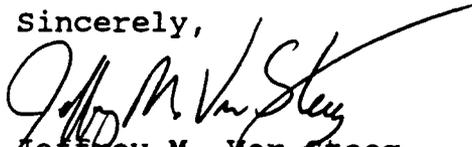
We are providing another questionnaire which we hope you will complete and return as soon as possible. If you have already returned the first questionnaire, please throw this one away. The information supplied by you and other crow hunters being sampled is needed to better manage crow populations.

Please fill out the questionnaire completely and return it even if you did not hunt crows or you were unsuccessful.

Please drop the completed questionnaire in the mail. Postage is prepaid. Your prompt attention will be sincerely appreciated.

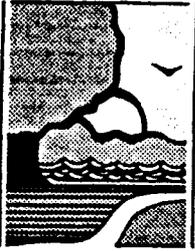
Thank you.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey M. Ver Steeg  
Chief, Wildlife Resources

JMV:WLA  
Enclosure  
C2



ILLINOIS  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**NATURAL RESOURCES**

524 South Second Street, Springfield 62701-1787

Jim Edgar, Governor ● Brent Manning, Director

Dear Fellow Sportsman:

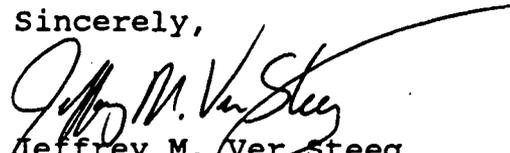
This letter is to remind you that we still would like to receive a report of your crow hunting activities for the past season. We don't like to keep bothering you, but this information is very important which only you can provide.

Another copy of the questionnaire is enclosed. We hope you will complete it and return it as soon as possible. If you have already returned a questionnaire, please discard this one. Your response is needed, even though you did not hunt crows or you had an unsuccessful season.

Postage is prepaid for returning the questionnaire. Please drop the completed questionnaire in the mail. Your prompt attention will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey M. Ver Steeg  
Chief, Wildlife Resources

JMV:WLA  
Enclosure  
C3

<b>Habitat Stamp ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION 1994</b>		<b>278011</b>
Name	County of Residence	<b>*Check species hunted last season</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Rabbit <input type="checkbox"/> Quail <input type="checkbox"/> Pheasant <input type="checkbox"/> Squirrels <input type="checkbox"/> Furbearers <input type="checkbox"/> Crow <input type="checkbox"/> Doves <input type="checkbox"/> Woodcock <input type="checkbox"/> Deer <input type="checkbox"/> Partridge <input type="checkbox"/> Groundhog
Address	City, State & Zip Code	
Signature of Applicant	Date	
(This Stub To Be Returned To Department)		
<b>Habitat Stamp ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION 1994</b>		<b>278012</b>
Name	County of Residence	<b>*Check species hunted last season</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Rabbit <input type="checkbox"/> Quail <input type="checkbox"/> Pheasant <input type="checkbox"/> Squirrels <input type="checkbox"/> Furbearers <input type="checkbox"/> Crow <input type="checkbox"/> Doves <input type="checkbox"/> Woodcock <input type="checkbox"/> Deer <input type="checkbox"/> Partridge <input type="checkbox"/> Groundhog
Address	City, State & Zip Code	
Signature of Applicant	Date	
(This Stub To Be Returned To Department)		

Figure 5. The stubs that were attached to the 1994 Illinois Habitat Stamps.

Appendix A: Crow Recipes from the 1995-96 Illinois Crow Hunter Survey.

Crow in Caper Sauce

Tenderize crow breast	2 Tbsp sour cream
2 Tbsp butter	2 tsp corn starch
2 Tbsp flour	2 tsp lemon juice
black pepper	1 Tbsp capers
chicken stock	pinch tarragon-dried
1 Tbsp white vinegar	
1 egg yolk	

Marinate in wine or milk. In large skillet, melt butter then stir in flour to make a roux. Add crow and coat with roux. Season with black pepper. Cover meat about 1/2 way with chicken stock. Add vinegar. Simmer until tender, then stir in remaining: egg yolk, sour cream and lemon juice. Stir until gravy thickens. Blend in capers and tarragon. Add mushrooms if desired.

Serve with wild or brown rice.

John Husar - Willow Springs, IL

Crow Gravy Over Biscuits

3 lbs crow breast and thigh meat, boned and cubed into 1/2 to 3/4" cubes	
1 can Campbell's mushroom soup	1/2 tsp black pepper
3 large white or yellow onions, diced	1 1/4 tsp tabasco
1 Tbsp ground nutmeg	1/2 tsp sage (ground)
1/4 stick butter or margarine	1/2 tsp garlic powder
1/2 tsp tarragon	2 tsp curry powder

Combine butter and dry ingredients over low heat. Bring to a slow simmer, stir in crow and tabasco. Simmer slowly for about 45 minutes or until meat is tender. Add onions, mushroom soup and 1/2 cup water, and continue simmering until onions are done. Serve over biscuits, toast or rice.

This recipe also goes well with chicken, pheasant, etc.

Mike Gebbards - Minonk, IL

Crow Pot Pie

Par-boil meat. Cook with vegetables in a pie crust top and bottom (like a pot pie). Thicken with chicken broth.

Brad Gillis - Concord, IL

### Roasted Crow

Rub the crow breasts with garlic and onion powder. Salt and pepper. Put in roaster pan and cover breasts with bacon. Cook for 1 hour at 350 degrees. Every 10 to 15 minutes, rub the grease from the bacon onto the breasts.

Nathan Ellett - Mascoutah, IL

### Fried Crow

Roll crow meat in flour seasoned with salt and pepper. Other seasons can be added to flour if desired. Fry in skillet, half filled with shortening, until brown on one side. Then flip and brown on other side. Serve with Worcestershire sauce.

Anthony Woosley - Plano, IL

### Fried Crow

Bread in flour. Fry until light brown on both sides. Bake at 350 degrees in roaster pan with 1 1/2 cups water, covered.

Joel Young - Benld, IL

### Grilled Crow

Ginger (fresh or can)  
Chili Powder  
Paprika  
Lawrey's Seasoned Salt  
Fresh lemon (2)  
Bacon

Wash crow meat with cold water and salt well. On a gas grill use LOW heat. Before placing crow on grill, heavily drench them in lemon juice. Sprinkle on all seasonings in equal amounts. Go heavy on the ginger if desired. Place a strip or two of bacon on each bird. Turn every 5 minutes. Continue to season while turning, always moving bacon to the top. Meat should be done by the time bacon turns crisp.

Dennis Fahrlander - Yorkville, IL

### Grilled Crow Breast

Peel out breast and soak in water for 2 hours. Punch holes in breast (4 times each side) with fork. Marinate in favorite steak sauce or red wine overnight. Cook outside on grill for approx. 10 minutes per side. Don't overcook or undercook, or it will be too tough.

Chuck French - Congerville, IL

### Crock Pot Crow

Line pot with thin slices of raw, unpeeled potatoes (bottom and sides of pot). Put in approx. 2 dozen breasts in pot. Pour 1 cup onion soup and 1/2 cup water over breasts. Cook 2 hours on high and then 4 hours on low. Take meat out when done and cut from bone into cubes. Dip in steak sauce.

Chuck French - Congerville, IL

### Grilled Crow Breast

Marinate crow breast in ranch dressing overnight and grill on gas outdoor grill or charcoal grill. Cook slowly with low heat.

Jay W. Williams - Mt Zion, IL

### Grilled Barbecued Crow Breast

Filet breast from crows. Soak meat in cold water until blood is removed (about 3 days). Marinate crow breast in Italian Dressing, garlic, salt, pepper and steak sauce overnight (different spices are optional). Place 2 jalepeno peppers between 2 crow breasts, wrap with bacon and place toothpicks through bacon and breasts to hold together. Barbecue on grill until done and add barbecue sauce if desired. This is also the best way to eat doves.

Name and town not available

### Grilled Crow

8 - 10 breasts	1/2 cup white wine
1 Tbsp pepper	1/2 cup soy sauce

Marinate overnight. Grill as desired.

Paul Ast - Schaumburg, IL

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