

# Spittin' & Drummin'



MISSISSIPPI WILD TURKEY REPORT

2016

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS



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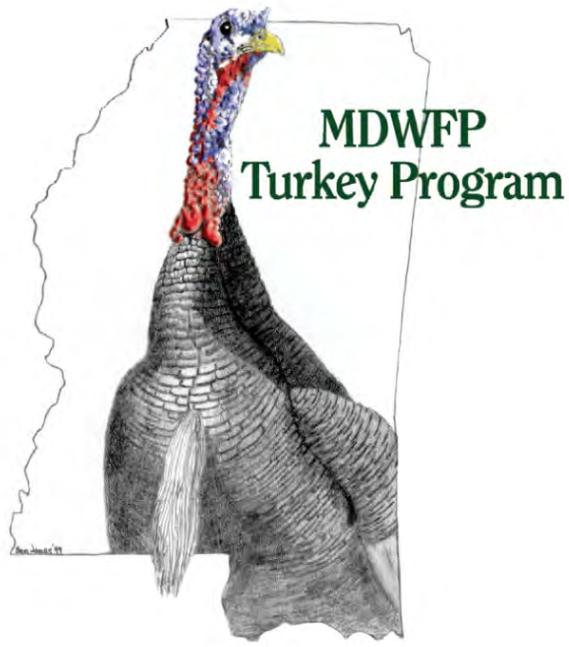
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# Spittin' And Drummin'

## 2016 MISSISSIPPI WILD TURKEY REPORT



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS  
*1505 Eastover Drive | Jackson, MS 39211*

# Mississippi Wild Turkey Population Statistics

*Based on Spring Gobbler Hunting and Brood Surveys*

**T**HE SPRING GOBBLER HUNTING SURVEY (SGHS) WAS INITIATED IN 1995 TO PROVIDE THE MISSISSIPPI Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) biological information about the state's wild turkey resource. Each year, cooperating hunters record information about their spring gobbler hunts. The database obtained from this survey assists the MDWFP in monitoring populations and making management decisions in the best interest of the turkey resource and turkey hunters. The MDWFP appreciates the data collection efforts and comments from all individual hunters and hunting clubs who participate in the SGHS. All turkey hunters, regardless of their ability or experience, are encouraged to participate. This is an opportunity to be directly involved in the conservation and management of the wild turkey in Mississippi. An application for participation in the SGHS is provided in this report.

Private land data from the 2007 – 2015 SGHSs are presented graphically in the following statewide and regional summaries. The remainder of this introduction describes how the data were collected and summarized, along with important points to consider during interpretation. Most parameters are expressed as an average number per every 10 or 100 hours of hunting. Standardizing values by a specific number of hours hunted allows the rates to be compared among regions and years, even though hunter effort varies.

## Reproduction

During June, July, and August, the annual wild turkey brood survey (initiated in 1994) is conducted by personnel from the MDWFP, Mississippi Forestry Commission, U.S. Forest Service, and other cooperators. Brood surveys provide indices to reproduction and are valuable in monitoring turkey population trends. Hens observed with at least one poult are considered successful. Hens without poults are considered unsuccessful and either did not attempt to nest, abandoned their nest, lost their nest to predation or human disturbance or had no poults survive. Average brood size is the total number of poults divided by number of successful hens and is an index to poult survival. "Poults per total hens" is defined as the number of poults observed divided by total number of hens seen. "Poults per total hens" is the most practical reproductive index because it considers successful hens, unsuccessful hens and poult survival.

## Turkey Observations

Turkey observations are classified as gobblers, jakes, hens, or unknowns. Observation rates are reported as the average number of gobblers, jakes, or hens seen during 100 hours of hunting. Total observations combine all turkeys seen, including unknowns. Observation rates provide indices to sex ratios, gobbler age ratios, population size, and population trends. Jake observations reflect the recruitment of males into the population from the previous year's hatch and provide an index to the potential number of 2-year-old gobblers in the population during the next spring turkey season.



Steve Cullledge



Steve Cullledge

## Gobbling Activity

The number of individual gobblers heard and the total number of gobbles heard are used as indices to gobbling activity. Gobbling activity is reported as the average number of gobblers and gobbles heard during 10 hours of hunting. Gobbling activity is considered an indicator of hunting quality and may show a trend reflecting the number of gobblers in the population.

## Harvest Rates and Age Structure

Harvest rates provide an index to hunter success and population size. Spur lengths generally increase with age and therefore provide an index to age structure of harvested gobblers. Spur lengths are classified into four length categories based on the longer of the two spur measurements for each harvested gobbler. Spurs less than half an inch long are classified as jakes or 1-year old gobblers. Lengths between a half and one inch are generally 2 years old. Gobblers with spurs one to one and a quarter inch are considered 3 years old, while birds with spur lengths over inch and a quarter are considered four years old or older. Monitoring spur length distribution should reflect changes in gobbler age structure over time. If age structure is increasing, a higher percentage of gobblers harvested should be in the larger spur length categories. Spur length distributions are used to monitor the impact of harvest on the gobbler population and to evaluate season lengths and bag limits.

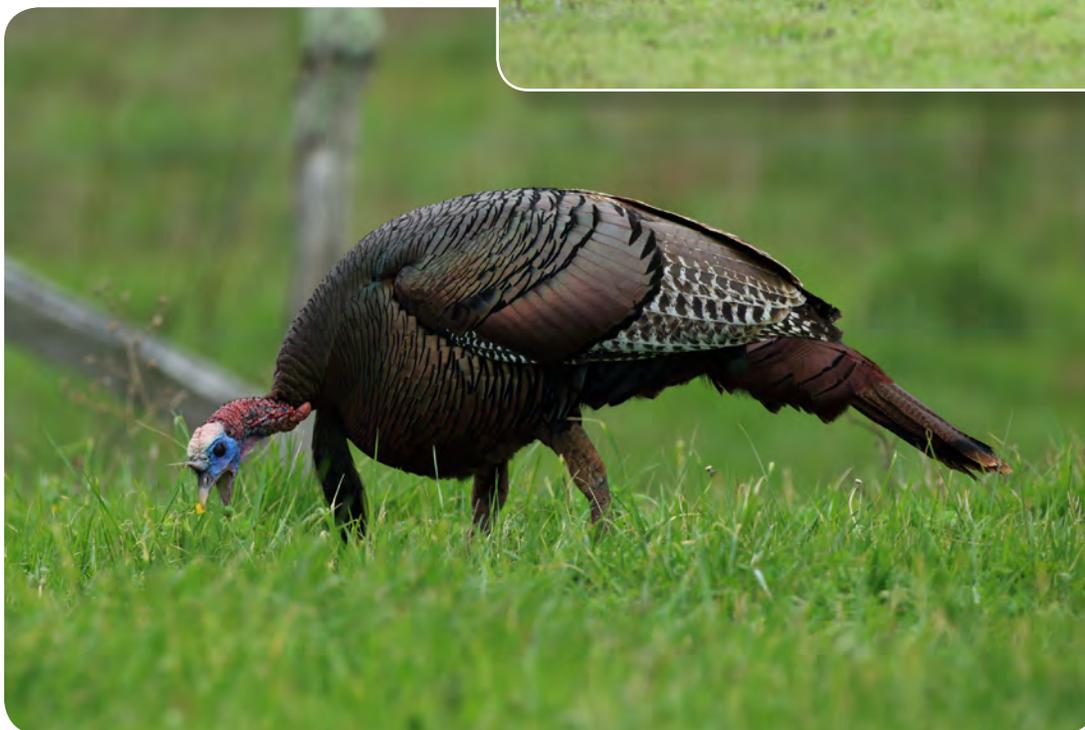
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## Statewide

**S**TATEWIDE PRIVATE LAND DATA WERE COLLECTED DURING THE 2015 season by more than 51 hunting clubs and approximately 481 individual hunters participating in the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey.



### Reproduction

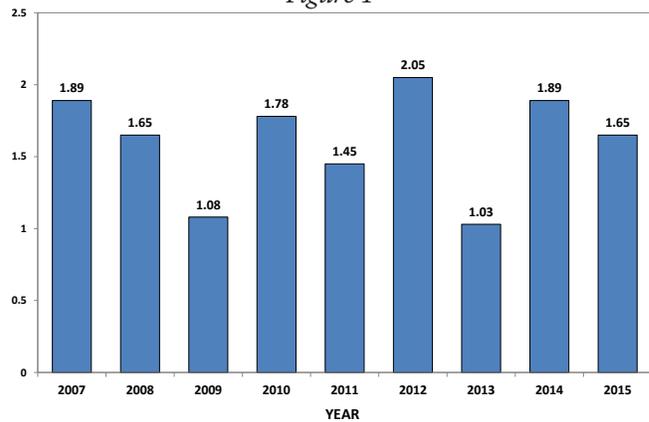
During the summer of 2015, a total of 1,271 hens were observed throughout the MDWFP's turkey brood survey. Of these, approximately 42% (533) were accompanied by broods. A total of 2,100 poults were observed, and the average brood size was 3.94 poults. Across the state, the total number of Poults Per Hen (PPH) observed was 1.65 (*Figure 1*). Over the 8 years prior, the PPH ratio averaged 1.60, suggesting that the 2015 hatch was near the long-term mean, albeit a slight decline from the 1.89 PPH observed during the 2014 summer. As usual, regional variation was observed throughout the state.

### Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Over the past 9 years, statewide Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey (SGHS) hunters have harvested approximately 3.2 gobblers per 100 hours hunted, but harvest per unit of effort was down substantially in 2015. In fact, the 2.5 gobblers harvested per 100 hours hunted (*Figure 2*) was the lowest harvest rate since the inception of the SGHS in 1995. Throughout the state, a total of 516 gobblers were harvested by SGHS hunters. The percentage of those that were 2-year-old age class gobblers (spurs between 0.5" and 1.0") decreased to 43% of the statewide harvest (*Figure 3*), as was expected based on the meager 2013 hatch. Similar to 2014, 12% of the harvest consisted of very old gobblers with at least 1.25" spurs

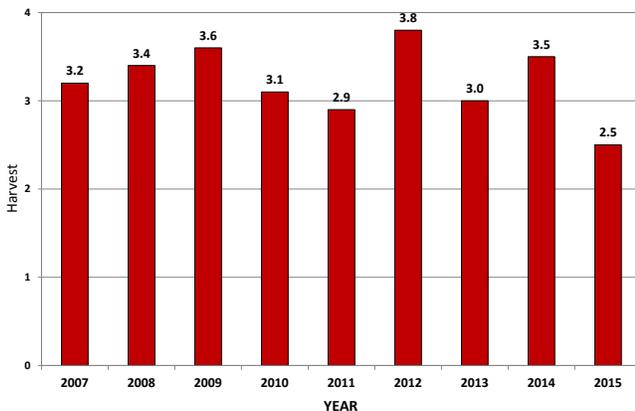
### Poults Per Total Hens

*Figure 1*



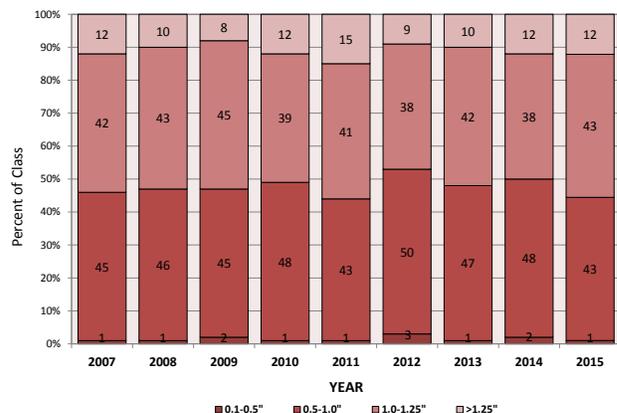
### Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

*Figure 2*



### Spur Length Classes (%)

*Figure 3*

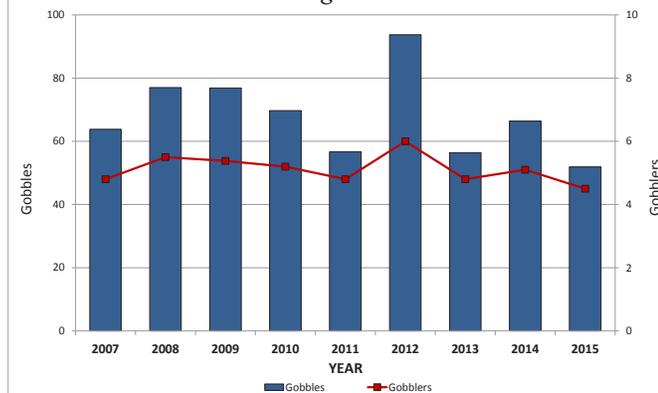


## Gobbling Activity

During the 2015 spring season, gobbling activity was lower than recent years. The statewide 9-year average for total gobbles and individual gobblers heard per 10 hours hunted was 68.1 and 5.1, respectively. The 2015 values for these metrics were a respective 51.9 and 4.5 per 10 hours hunted (**Figure 4**). Similar to previous spring seasons, the number of individual gobblers heard was highest during the youth week with approximately 7 gobblers heard per 10 hours hunted. Also similar to past years, overall gobbling activity peaked during mid-April, with 68.7 total gobbles heard per 10 hours hunted during the 5th week of the season (**Figure 5**).

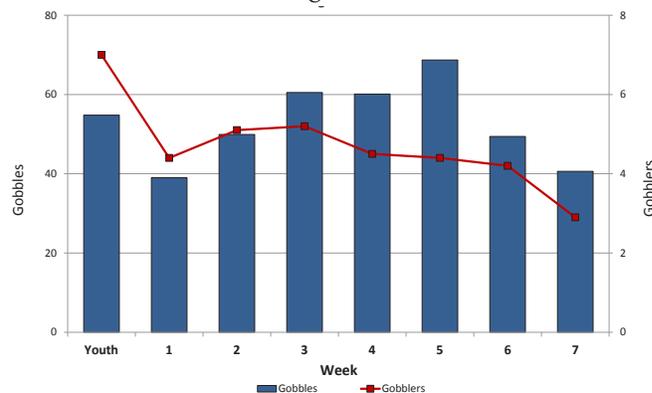
**Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year**

Figure 4



**Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week**

Figure 5

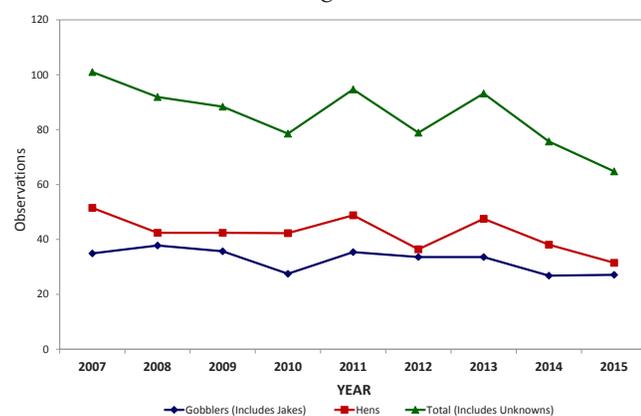


## Turkey Observations

During the 2015 spring season, hunters observed an average of 64.8 total turkeys per 100 hours hunted, including 27.1 gobblers (including both jakes and adult gobblers) and 31.5 hens. Observations of total turkeys and hens declined from the previous year, while observations of gobblers remained relatively unchanged (**Figure 6**). Statewide sightings of jakes increased nearly 54% to 13.1 jakes observed per 100 hours hunted (**Figure 7**).

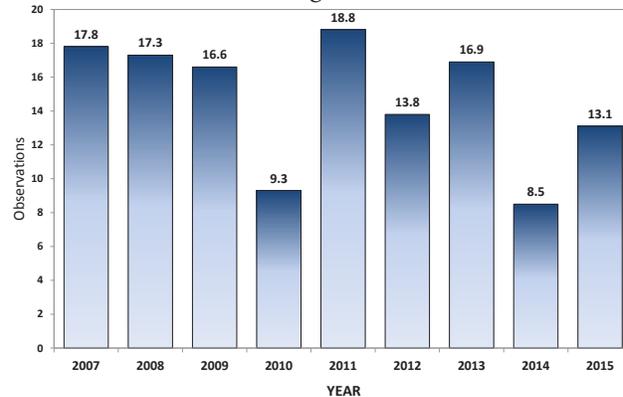
**Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted**

Figure 6



**Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted**

Figure 7



## 2016 Season Forecast

After a slow year in 2015, the average Mississippi turkey hunter should have a much better spring season in 2016. Increased poult sightings during the summer of 2014 translated into more jakes observed during the 2015 spring season, suggesting that the number of 2-year old gobblers available for harvest should go up in 2016. This increase should translate into more gobbling activity and more frequent harvests. An average hatch throughout most of the state last summer suggests that overall turkey sightings will probably be comparable to past years. Spring weather and regional variability will play a large role in the timing of gobbling activity, but if prior years are any indication, Magnolia State turkey hunters will hear the most gobbles during the 3rd to 5th week of the season.

## Turkey Region 1

**T**URKEY REGION 1 CONSISTS OF 21 COUNTIES IN NORTH-CENTRAL AND NORTH-EAST Mississippi. The two primary forest types in Region 1 are oak-hickory and oak-pine. The oak-hickory forest type is located on the western side of the region and in association with the Blackland Prairie. While this forest type is dominated by various oaks and hickories, it also includes beech, black cherry, and yellow poplar. The oak-pine forest type runs along the Alabama state line and in the central portion of the region. Here, upland oaks comprise about 50% of the forest community and are mixed with minor amounts of loblolly and shortleaf pines.

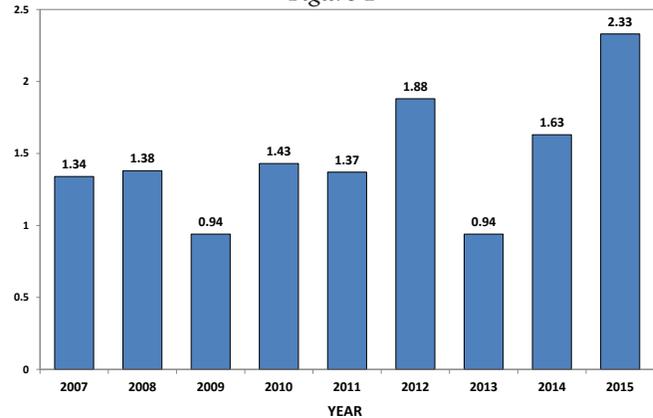


### Reproduction

Turkey reproduction increased substantially during the summer of 2015 in Region 1. Surveys tallied over 222 broods with an average 2.33 poults observed per hen (*Figure 1*). This was up considerably from the 1.62 Poults Per Hen observed the previous year and is nearly 60% above the average of the prior 8 years. The Northeast Region led the state in nest success and nearly 52% of hens were observed with broods. This region also posted the highest brood size in 2015 with an average of 4.47 poults per brood.

### Poults Per Total Hens

*Figure 1*

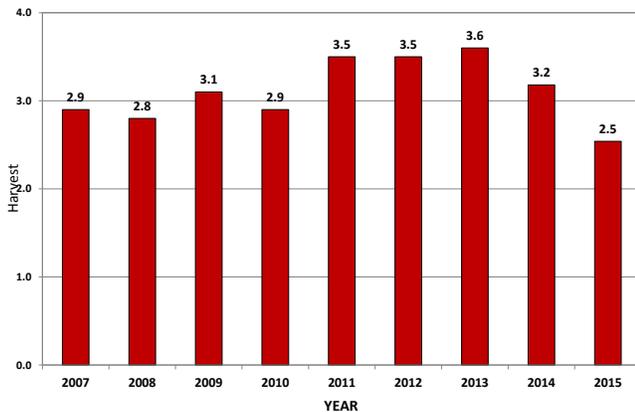


### Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Harvest rates dropped in Region 1 during 2015. Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey (SGHS) participants harvested 2.5 gobblers for every 100 hours hunted during the spring season (*Figure 2*). This was 22% below the long-term average for that figure. Age structure within the harvest increased in northeast Mississippi. Gobblers that were likely 3 years old or older comprised just over half of the harvest, which was the largest percentage comprised of that age class since 2009 (*Figure 3*).

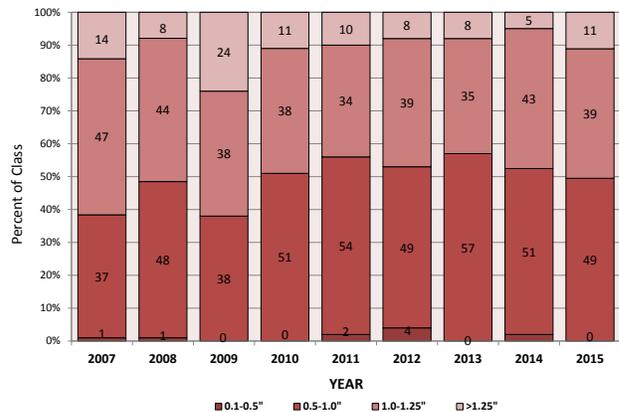
### Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

*Figure 2*



### Spur Length Classes (%)

*Figure 3*

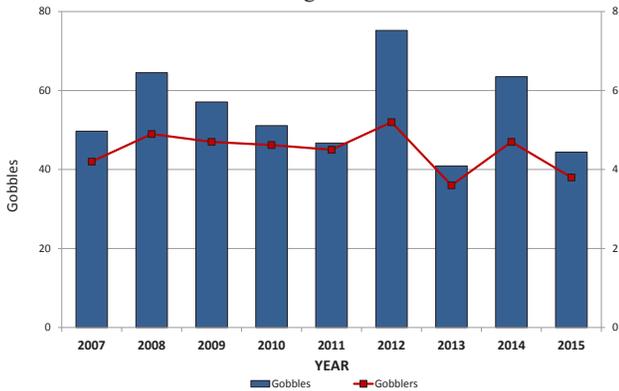


## Gobbling Activity

During the 2015 season, hunters heard an average of 3.8 gobblers and 44.4 gobblers for every 10 hours hunted (Figure 4). Each of these values were lower than the previous year, and below their long-term average. The number of individual gobblers heard was highest during the youth week, whereas the total number of gobblers heard peaked at 66.1 per 10 hours hunted during the 5th week of the season (Figure 5).

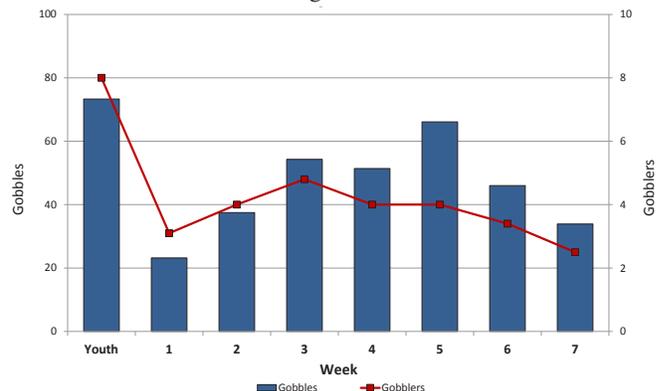
**Gobblers & Gobblers Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year**

Figure 4



**Gobblers & Gobblers Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week**

Figure 5

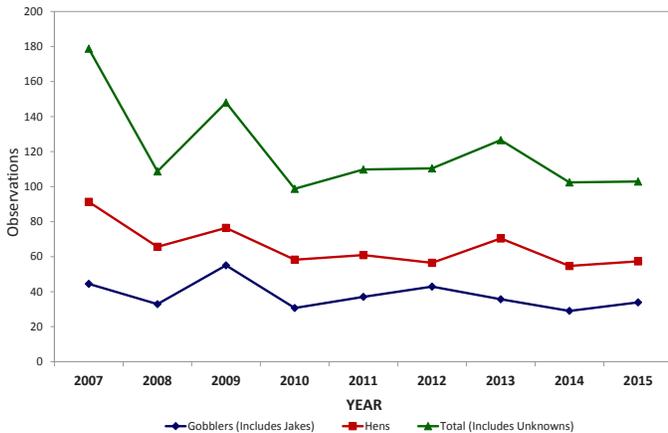


## Turkey Observations

Sightings of turkeys stayed relatively unchanged from the previous year in Northeast Mississippi during the spring of 2015. For every 100 hours hunted, SGHS participants saw 102.9 total turkeys, including 57.3 hens and 33.0 total gobblers (including jakes and adults; Figure 6). Jake observations increased nearly 72% from 2014. Hunters saw an average of 17.9 jakes per 100 hours hunted, which was just under the long-term average for the region (Figure 7).

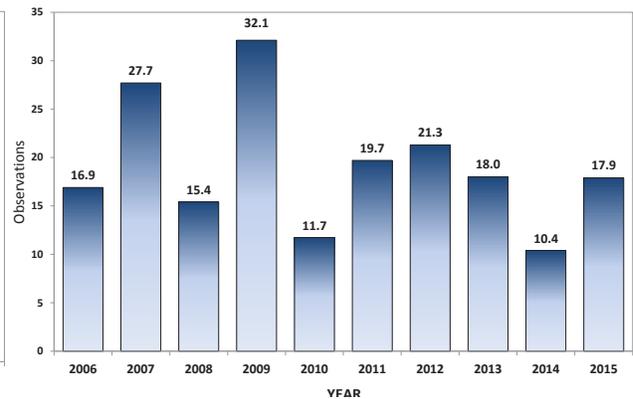
**Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted**

Figure 6



**Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted**

Figure 7

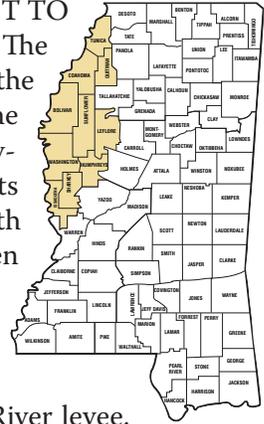


## 2016 Season Forecast

Data available to the MDWFP suggests that the 2016 spring turkey season in Northeast Mississippi should be considerably better than last year and more comparable to the norm of the past decade. While it likely will not be a boom year, solid jake observations during the 2015 season suggest hunters should expect more 2 year old gobblers this season. The real beauty of 2016 will be that overall turkey numbers should increase dramatically on the heels of an excellent 2015 hatch. While this should certainly improve harvest rates in future seasons, gobblers hatched in 2015 will not be legal birds for adult hunters during the 2016 season.

## Turkey Region 2

**T**URKEY REGION 2 COMPRISES THE TEN DELTA COUNTIES AND IS SUBJECT TO extensive, annual spring flooding that has a major impact on turkey reproduction. The dominant forest type in the Delta is oak-gum-cypress. This region can be subdivided into the batture lands (west of the mainline Mississippi River levee) and the interior floodplain. The batture area is dominated by sugarberry, sycamore, cottonwood, sweetgum, elm, and cypress. Pecan is the only hard mast producer of any significance. The interior Delta consists of extensive agricultural areas containing fragmented hardwood forests interspersed with cypress swamps. The major tree species include overcup oak, Nuttall oak, water oak, green ash, sweetgum and cottonwood.



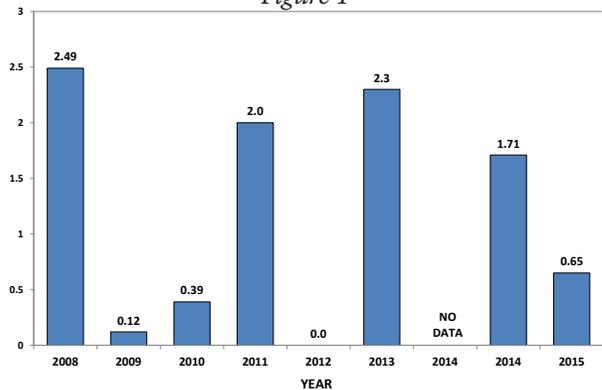
Region 2 is unique in that most of the turkey habitat in the interior Delta is on public lands (national forest, wildlife management areas, and wildlife refuges), and the vast majority of the private land habitat is located in the batture lands west of the Mississippi River levee. Therefore, data from the annual brood survey is biased by the majority of turkey observations coming from public lands in the interior Delta, while all the other information in this section is almost exclusively from private lands between the levees.

### Reproduction

Over the last 8 years, turkey reproduction in Region 2 has been limited and inconsistent. Unfortunately, this trend was not reversed in 2015 as the Delta posted very low hatch numbers. The regional Poult Per Hen (PPH) average was the lowest in the state at a meager 0.65 PPH (*Figure 1*). Of the 123 hens that were observed during the summer brood survey, 42 (34%) were accompanied by young. The low PPH ratio for the region was most likely an artifact of very poor poult survival – the average brood size in the Delta was only 1.9 poults.

### Poults Per Total Hens

*Figure 1*

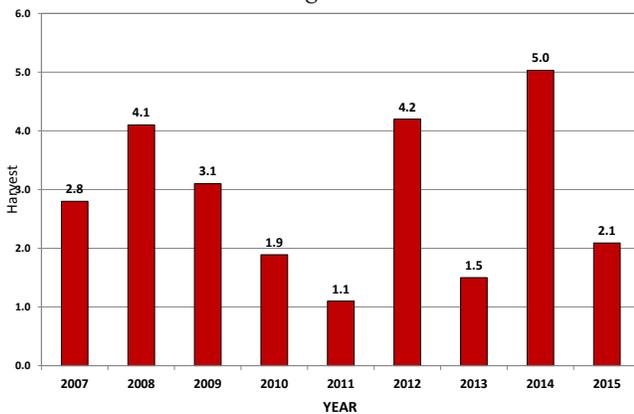


### Harvest Rates & Age Structure

In 2015, Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey (SGHS) hunters in the Delta harvested approximately 2.1 gobblers per 100 hours hunted (*Figure 2*). This was 58% below the 2014 harvest rate (5.0) and nearly 30% below the average of the prior 8 years (2.96). Gobblers with 0.5" to 1.0" spurs decreased as a proportion of the harvest, whereas gobblers with spurs between 1.0" and 1.25" increased, likely due to the aging of birds from the 2013 cohort (*Figure 3*).

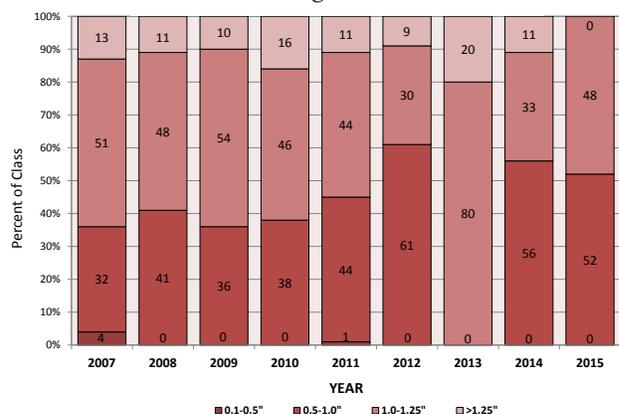
### Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

*Figure 2*



### Spur Length Classes (%)

*Figure 3*

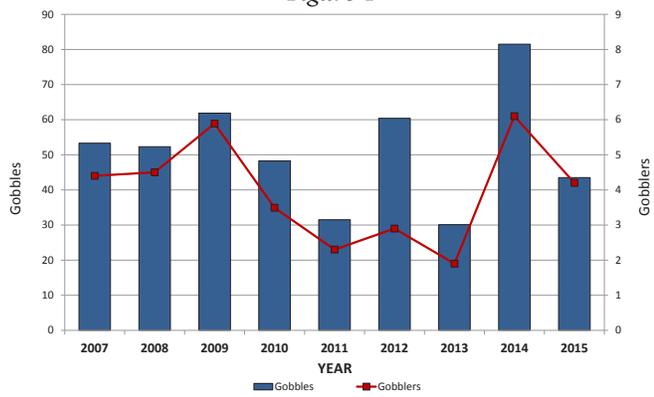


## Gobbling Activity

Delta turkey hunters heard an average of 4.2 individual gobblers and 43.5 total gobbles per 10 hours hunted (*Figure 4*). While both these values declined from 2014, the number of gobblers heard was still above the 5-year average (3.5). Gobbling activity in the Delta generally increased as the season progressed. The total number of individual gobblers heard peaked in the 6th week at 9.9 per 10 hours hunted. Overall gobbling activity peaked in the 6th and 7th weeks of the season at just over 63 total gobbles heard per 10 hours hunted (*Figure 5*).

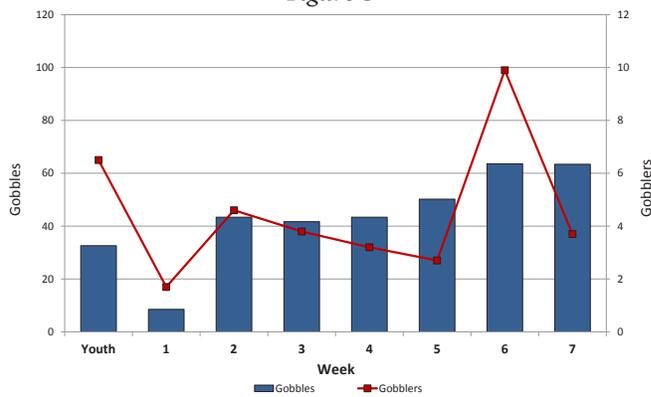
**Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year**

*Figure 4*



**Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week**

*Figure 5*

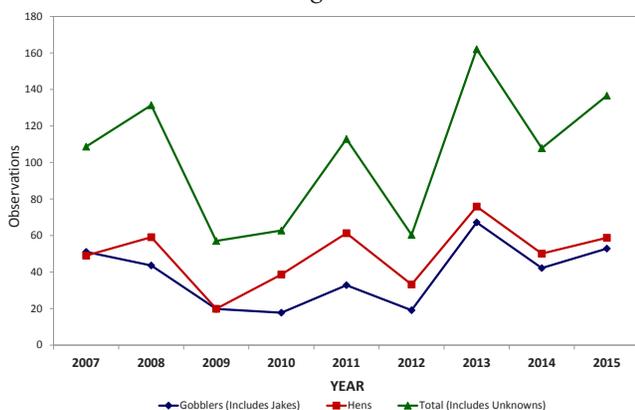


## Turkey Observations

Turkey observations in Region 2 have exhibited a generally increasing trend since 2010. In 2015, the total numbers of turkeys observed per 100 hours hunted (136.6) was the second highest tally of the past 9 years (*Figure 6*). Jake observations increased nearly 300% in 2015, and the Delta tabbed the highest rate of jakes sightings in the state (37.8 per 100 hours hunted; *Figure 7*).

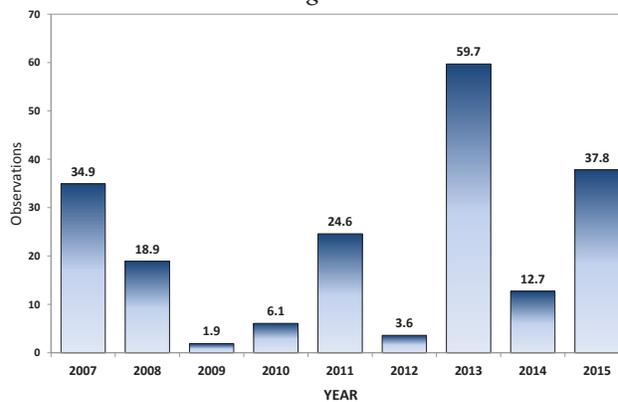
**Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted**

*Figure 6*



**Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted**

*Figure 7*

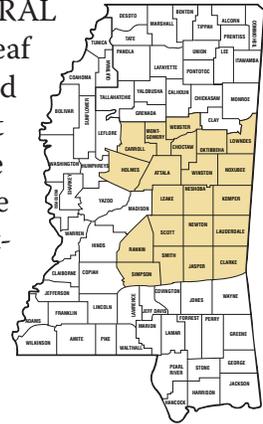


## 2016 Season Forecast

*The Delta seems poised for one of its best seasons of the past decade in 2016 and could likely be a regional hotspot. Jake sightings were very strong in 2015, suggesting an abundance of 2 year old gobblers should be available. The unknown, however, will be the impact of mid-winter flooding in most of the Batture and portions of the south Delta in 2016. Assuming mortality from this unseasonal flood event was low, Delta hunters should have plenty to smile about in 2016.*

## Turkey Region 3

**T**URKEY REGION 3 IS THE 21 COUNTY AREA LOCATED IN EAST-CENTRAL Mississippi. The two major forest types in this region are loblolly-shortleaf pine, which occurs on the drier, more sandy soils, and oak-pine. Loblolly and shortleaf pines constitute more than 50% of the commercial trees in this forest type. Upland hardwoods, primarily various oaks and hickories, make up the rest of the forest community. In the oak-pine type, upland oaks make up more than 50% of the trees with the remaining species including hickories, sweetgum, black gum, loblolly, and shortleaf pines.



### Reproduction

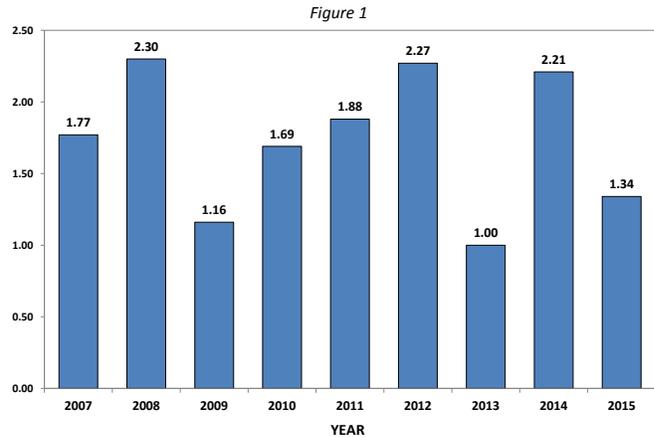
Reproduction was low for much of the east-central portions of the state during the summer of 2015. Region 3 posted a mere 1.34 poult per hen (PPH), the second lowest PPH value in the state (Figure 1). This is nearly a 40% drop from the 2.21 PPH observed during the previous year. Of the 363 hens observed during the summer survey, 38% (137) were accompanied by a brood. The average brood size was 3.55 poult per hen, which was down substantially from 2014.

### Harvest Rates & Age Structure

In 2015, Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey (SGHS) hunters harvested 2.3 gobblers per 100 hours hunted (Figure 2). This was nearly 1 less kill per 100 hours hunted than observed in 2014 and was the lowest harvest rate for Region 3 since the SGHS's inception in 1995. Forty-seven percent of harvested gobblers had between 0.5" and 1.0" spurs, while 51% sported spurs greater than 1" (Figure 3).

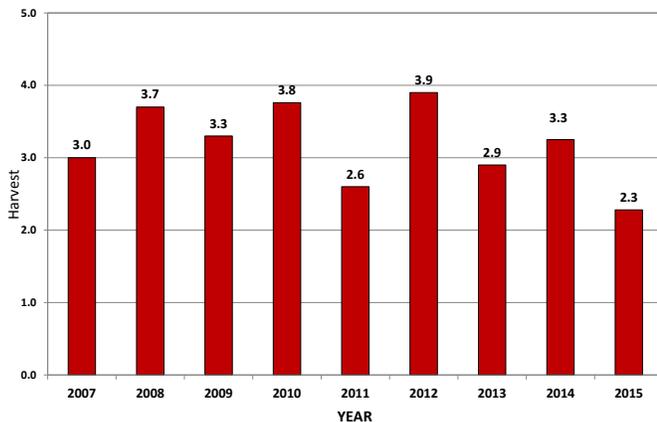
### Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1



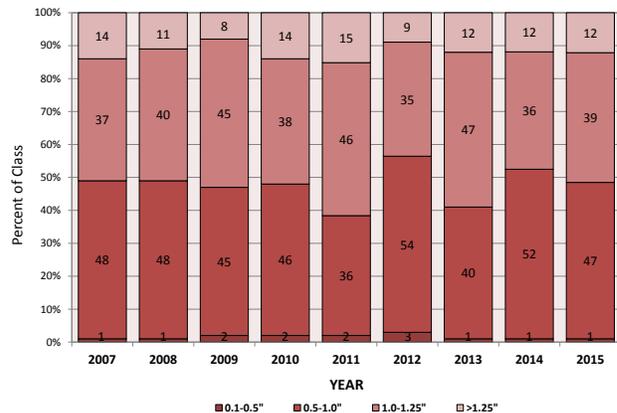
### Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



### Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

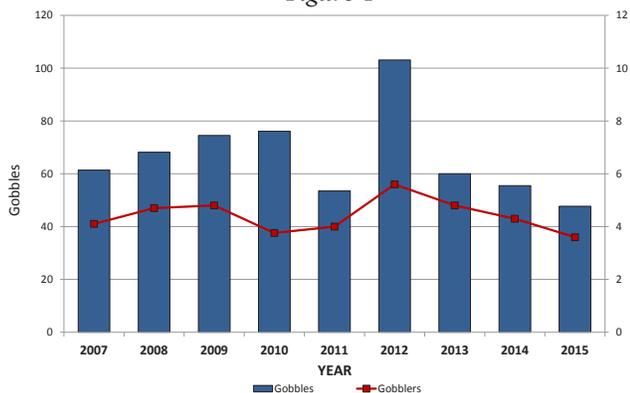


## Gobbling Activity

Similar to the previous 2 seasons, overall gobbling activity decreased in Region 3 during 2015. Hunters heard 3.6 individual gobblers and 47.7 total gobbles per 10 hours hunted (*Figure 4*). The number of gobblers heard per 10 hours hunted was highest during the youth week of the season (7.0), whereas the total number of gobbles heard peaked during the 5th week of the season (*Figure 5*).

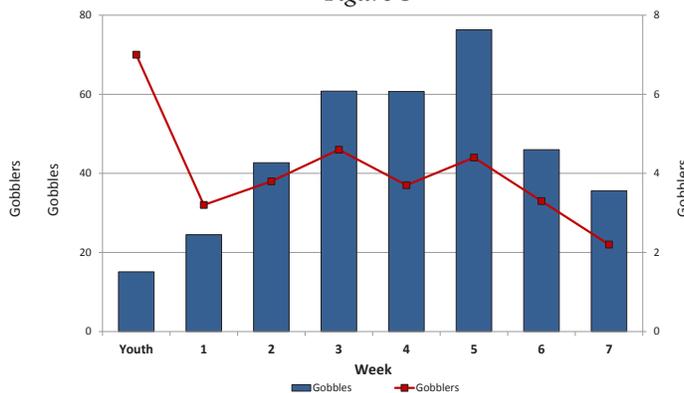
**Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year**

*Figure 4*



**Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week**

*Figure 5*

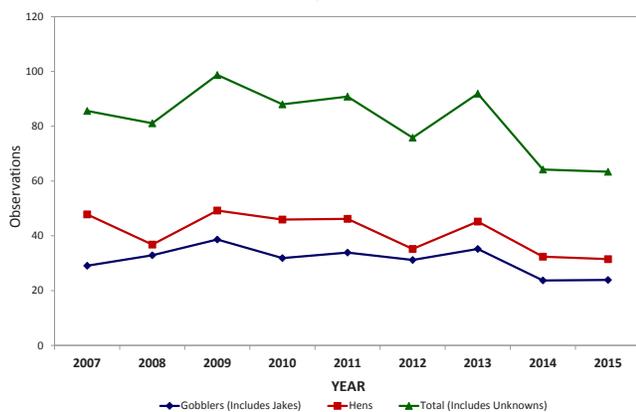


## Turkey Observations

Hunters in Region 3 saw 23.9 gobblers (*Figure 6*), including 11.0 jakes (*Figure 7*), 31.5 hens, and approximately 8 unidentified birds, for a total of 63.4 turkey sightings per 100 hours hunted (*Figure 6*). These values were nearly unchanged from the previous year, with the exception of jake sightings, which increased almost 58%.

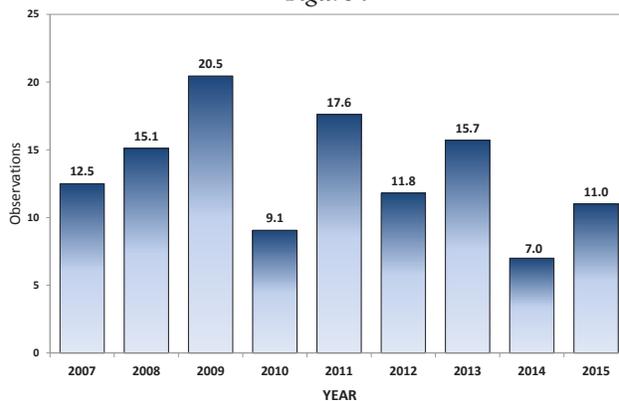
**Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted**

*Figure 6*



**Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted**

*Figure 7*



## 2016 Season Forecast

While the 2014 brood data suggests that East-central Mississippi should be in for a banner season in 2016, most other data indicate that hunters should expect a season similar to the last few years. The region's relatively modest hatch in 2015 likely was not enough to bolster turkey numbers significantly, so overall turkey sightings in 2016 should be near that of recent years.

## Turkey Region 4

**T**WELVE COUNTIES IN THE SOUTHWEST PORTION OF THE STATE comprise Turkey Region 4. The oak-hickory forest type is located along the loess hills bordering the Mississippi River floodplain. Adjacent to the loess hills is a narrow transition zone consisting of the oak-pine forest type. The eastern and southern section of the region is made up of the loblolly-shortleaf pine forest community. Descriptions for these forest types are provided in previous regions.



### Reproduction

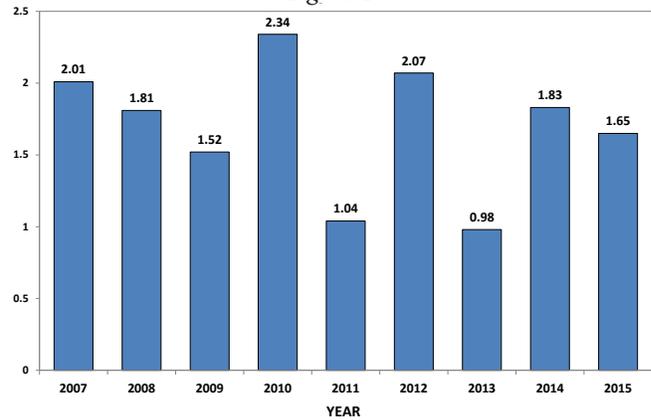
In Region 4, 1.65 poult per hen were observed during the 2015 brood survey. This was down slightly from the hatch observed in 2014, but on par with the 2015 statewide average, and near the Southwest regional average of the 8 prior years (*Figure 1*). Approximately 42% of the hens observed during the survey period successfully nested, and the average size of observed broods was 3.9 poults.

### Harvest Rates & Age Structure

As with other regions during 2015, Southwest Mississippi exhibited the lowest harvest per unit of effort recorded since the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey's (SGHS) inception. The 2.6 gobblers harvested per 100 hours hunted was 30% beneath the average of the previous 8 years (3.5; *Figure 2*). Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey participants reported harvesting 154 gobblers in Region 4 during 2015, and 47% of the harvest was likely 2 year olds with 0.5" to 1.0" spurs. The percentage of gobblers with spurs equal to or greater than 1.25" increased to 18% of the harvest (*Figure 3*).

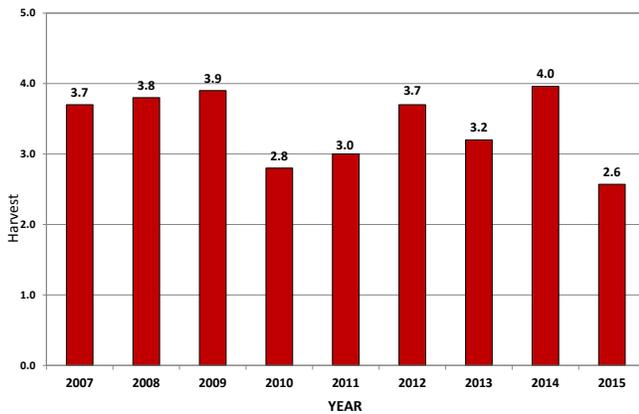
### Poults Per Total Hens

*Figure 1*



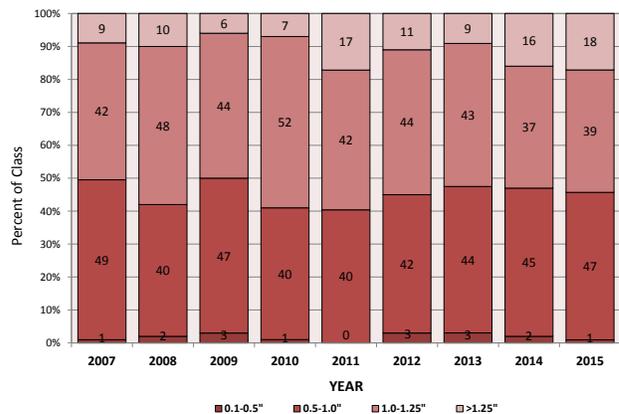
### Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

*Figure 2*



### Spur Length Classes (%)

*Figure 3*

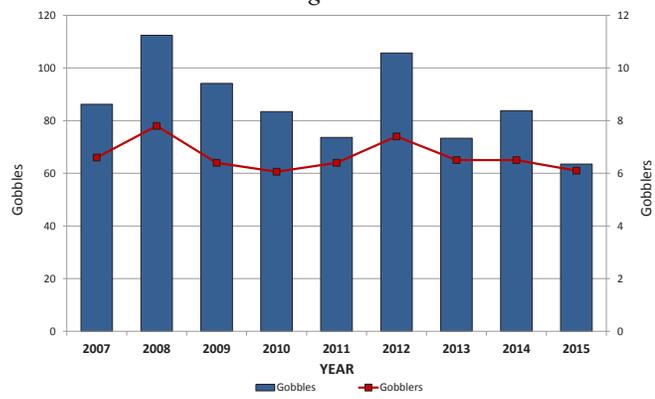


## Gobbling Activity

In 2015, overall gobbling activity was down in southwest Mississippi. The number of individual gobblers heard declined slightly from the previous 2 years to 6.1 gobblers per 10 hours hunted. Total gobbling activity dropped 29% from the average of the previous 8 years. Hunters only heard 63.5 gobbles per 10 hours hunted (**Figure 4**). Regional gobbling activity peaked early, then slowly declined as the season progressed. The youth week and week 2 had the highest numbers of individual gobblers heard at 7.2 and 7.4, respectively, per 10 hours hunted. The youth week also had the greatest overall gobbling activity with 81.1 gobbles heard per 10 hours hunted. During the regular season, the number of gobbles heard was highest during the 4th week (**Figure 5**).

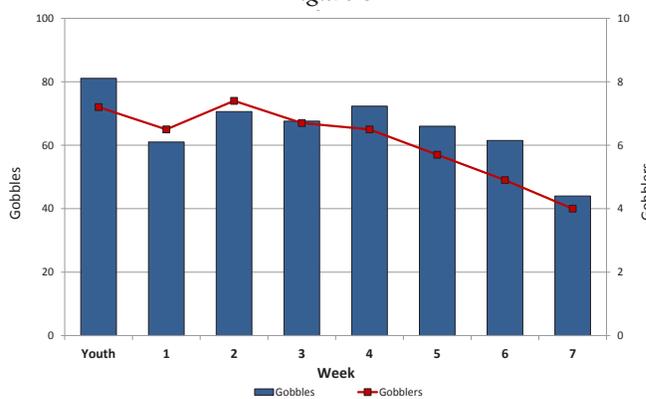
**Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year**

Figure 4



**Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week**

Figure 5

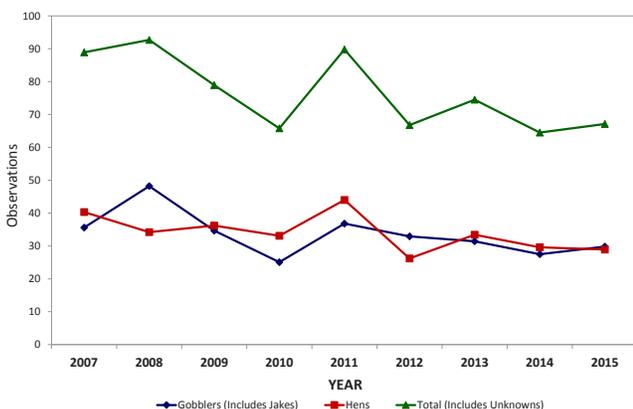


## Turkey Observations

Turkey sightings increased slightly in Region 4 during 2015. Turkey hunters observed 67.1 total turkeys per 100 hours hunted (**Figure 6**). The sex ratio of observations was nearly even; there were 29.8 gobblers and 28.9 hens observed per 100 hours hunted. Jake sightings increased over the previous year to 15.3 per 100 hours hunted (**Figure 7**).

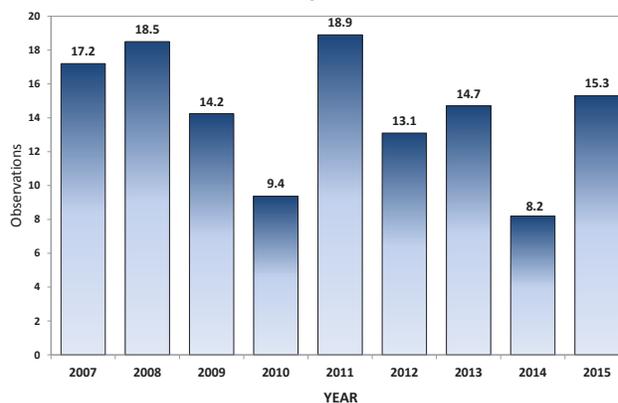
**Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted**

Figure 6



**Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted**

Figure 7

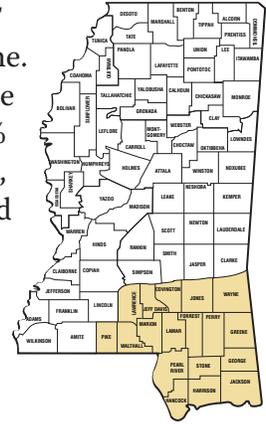


## 2016 Season Forecast

Hunters in southwest Mississippi should not expect a banner year in 2016, although all indication is that it will be a much better season than 2015. Jake sightings were up last spring, suggesting that there will be more 2 year olds to chase. Hatch numbers from last summer were typical for the region. As a result, overall turkey numbers will likely stay similar to recent years, although localized areas throughout the region had an above average hatch.

## Turkey Region 5

**T**URKEY REGION 5 CONSISTS OF 18 COUNTIES IN SOUTHEAST Mississippi. Forests in Region 5 are dominated by longleaf and slash pine. This habitat type includes the pine flatwoods of the coastal counties and the adjoining, rolling, pine hills. Longleaf pine and slash pine compose at least 50% of the forest community. Other common tree species include dogwood, beech, magnolia, and sweet bay along creek bottoms and blackjack oak, post oak, and southern red oak on drier sites.

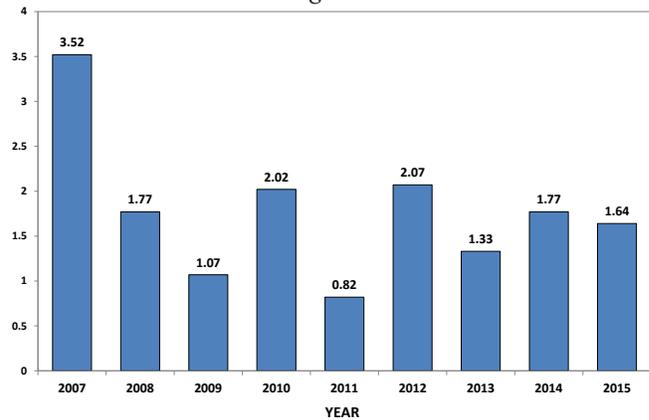


### Reproduction

Turkey reproduction during 2015 in southeast Mississippi was similar to the region's previous summer and to that of Region 4. Brood survey observers saw 152 hens and 249 poults for an average of 1.64 poults per hen (*Figure 1*). Nest success was similar to 2014 and averaged approximately 39%. Average brood size was 4.22 poults per brood.

### Poults Per Total Hens

*Figure 1*

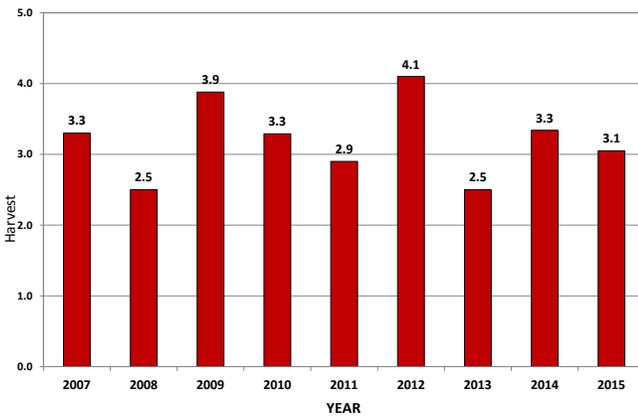


### Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey (SGHS) hunters in southeast Mississippi harvested 3.1 gobblers per 100 hours hunted in 2015 (*Figure 2*), which was just under the average of the previous 8 years. The proportion of 2 year old gobblers (spurs between 0.5" and 1.0") declined to 35% of the overall harvest, whereas gobblers with >1.0" spurs increased to 59% of the harvest (*Figure 3*).

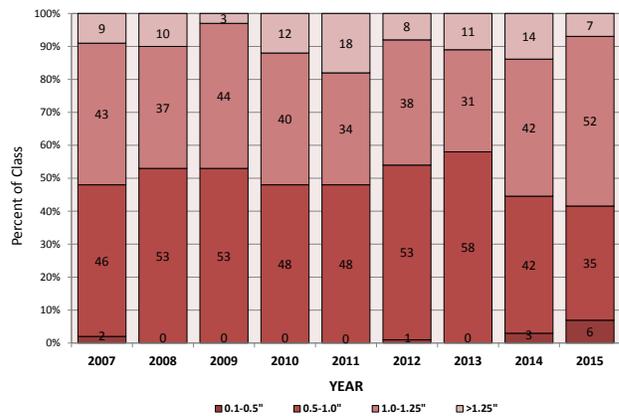
### Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

*Figure 2*



### Spur Length Classes (%)

*Figure 3*

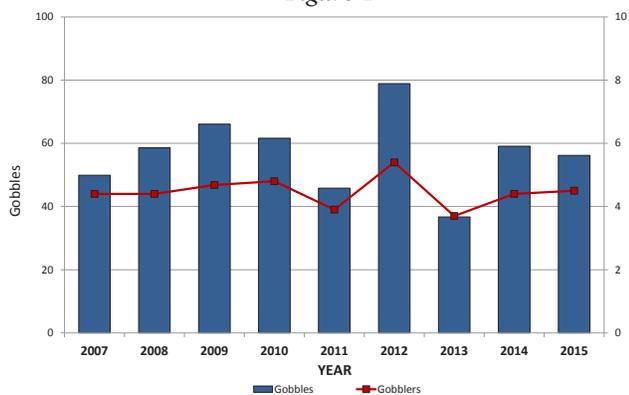


## Gobbling Activity

In Region 5, gobbling activity in 2015 was similar to the previous year. Hunters heard an average of 4.5 gobblers and 56.2 total gobbles per 10 hours hunted (Figure 4). Both of these values were very near the 8-year average for the region. Gobbling activity generally declined throughout the season. The number of individual gobblers heard stayed consistent from the youth week until the second week of the season and averaged 5.2 gobblers per 10 hours hunted. The total number of gobbles peaked during the youth week when hunters heard 88.0 gobbles per 100 hours hunted. The greatest gobbling activity during the regular season came during weeks 3 through 5 (Figure 5).

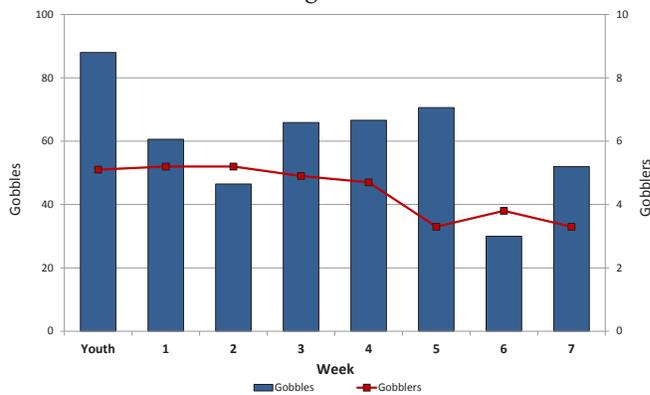
**Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year**

Figure 4



**Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week**

Figure 5

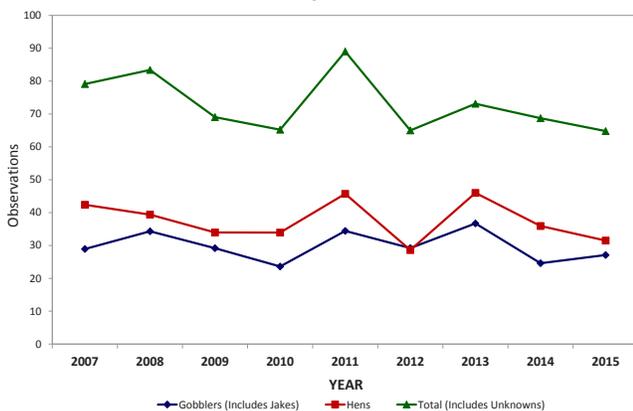


## Turkey Observations

Turkey observations in Region 5 dropped slightly in 2015, continuing the trend of the previous 2 years. Hunters saw a total of 64.8 turkeys per 100 hours hunted, which was 12% below the average of the previous 8 years. Gobbler observations increased (27.1), whereas hen observations decreased slightly (31.5; Figure 6). The number of jakes observed increased to 13.1 per 100 hours hunted and was near the long-term regional average. (Figure 7).

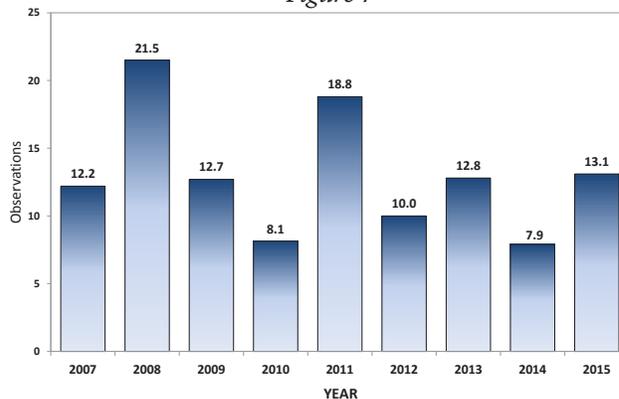
**Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted**

Figure 6



**Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted**

Figure 7



## 2016 Season Forecast

Hunters in Region 5 should expect the 2016 season to be slightly more action-packed than that of 2015. An increase in jakes observed should translate into more 2 year old gobblers in the woods, and the proportional shift in age structure will mean that the gobblers hunters encounter will seem less call shy. The 2015 hatch was average for the region and was likely only enough to hold populations at levels experienced the last few years.

## Join Our Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey Team

Help the MDWFP with the conservation & management of turkeys in Mississippi.

Steve Culleage



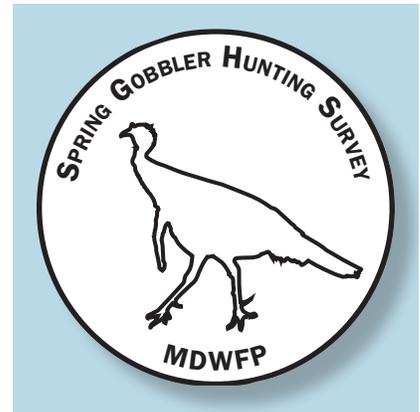
**T**HE SPRING GOBBLER HUNTING SURVEY (SGHS) WAS INITIATED IN 1996 by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) to fill the need for a long-term dataset that would aid in monitoring and managing the state's turkey population. It is one of the sources of data that makes this report possible every year.

The driving force behind the SGHS is Mississippi's turkey hunters. Every day of the season, hundreds of turkey hunters throughout the state take to the woods and record information about the amount of turkey activity they saw and heard while hunting. The MDWFP then gathers this information from its hunting cooperators at the end of each season and analyzes it to gain insight into gobbling activity, hunter effort, harvest rates, age structure, sex ratios, and characteristics of harvested birds. This dataset allows the MDWFP to learn about trends in the Mississippi turkey population on a local, regional, and statewide basis. Ultimately, this knowledge helps the MDWFP make management decisions that link the interests of the sportsmen with the wise use of the state's turkey resource. Participation in this process allows Mississippi hunters a unique opportunity to directly contribute to the conservation and management of turkeys in Mississippi. All sportsmen who hunt turkey anywhere in Mississippi, on public or private lands, are eligible and encouraged to participate.

In appreciation for the collection efforts of the dedicated hunters that participate in our survey, the MDWFP shares the results with the state's sportsmen in our annual Turkey Program Report, entitled *Spittin' & Drummin'*. There are also other ways that hunters can benefit:

### Benefits of Participating in the SGHS

- The information you collect will be made available to you within the MDWFP Turkey Program's annual report, *Spittin' and Drummin'* which is available online at [www.mdwfp.com/turkey](http://www.mdwfp.com/turkey). This report discusses turkey population trends in each region.
- You'll receive an individualized report that summarizes the data you sent us. These reports will allow you to see trends in activity from the time you, or your hunting club, spent turkey hunting. This information can be used to tailor management decisions for your specific property.
- Your name will be entered into a special shotgun raffle aimed at increasing participation in the SGHS.
- You can improve your turkey hunting knowledge and skills by keeping track of your own hunting experiences and habits throughout the season. The MDWFP will provide you with analysis of various topics that will be highlighted for you in special reports and articles.
- Management decisions of the MDWFP that directly affect your recreational opportunities as a sportsman and conservationists will be made using the best available data.
- You will become a part of our natural resource's history by gathering evidence that stands for or against questions such as should season dates be set earlier, later, or left the same? Should we allow a controlled fall season in areas with high turkey densities? Will certain regulations improve hunting quality, carry-over more gobblers, or increase gobbling activity?



### How can I Participate?

If you turkey hunt anywhere in Mississippi, you are eligible and encouraged to participate. There will be absolutely no cost to you to take part in the program. The only thing that we will ask of you is to take approximately a minute or two of your time following every hunt to record information on what you observed. Before turkey season starts, we will send you a data collection booklet that will make it easy for you to document your hunting experience. If you have never participated in the SGHS, but would like to become involved, please fill out and return the application provided in this report, or contact a MDWFP biologist. You can also apply at [www.mdwfp.com/turkey](http://www.mdwfp.com/turkey). Your efforts will assist the MDWFP in monitoring Mississippi's turkeys and making decisions in the best interest of the resource and hunters.

*New SGHS Participants can enroll online at [www.mdwfp.com/turkey](http://www.mdwfp.com/turkey)*

# Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey Application

**T**HE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES AND PARKS IS LOOKING FOR INDIVIDUAL hunters and hunting clubs interested in participating in the annual Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey. Cooperators are asked to record various information about their spring gobbler hunts. Harvest and population data provided by cooperators will be used to monitor and manage Mississippi's wild turkey resource. Results will be summarized in the annual Mississippi Wild Turkey Report. A copy of this report will be sent to all cooperators. Hunting clubs also will receive a summary report for their individual property.

If your hunting club or any individual members are interested, please complete and return the application below. If you participated in the survey last year, you will automatically receive data collection materials and do not have to complete this application. This is an opportunity to be directly involved with conservation and management of the wild turkey in Mississippi. Please encourage other turkey hunters to participate. This application may be copied. Data collection instructions and materials, along with the turkey program report will be sent to you prior to spring gobbler season.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Office) \_\_\_\_\_

***Please complete the following information only if your hunting club wants to participate.***

Club Name: \_\_\_\_\_

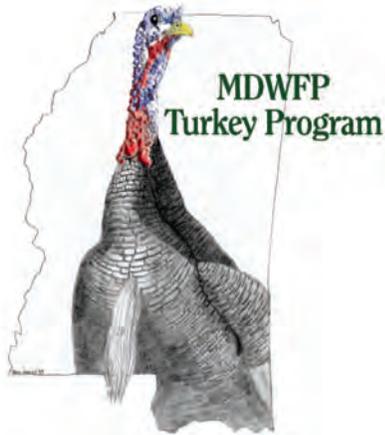
County: \_\_\_\_\_

Forested Acres: (including food plots) \_\_\_\_\_

Estimate Total Number of Hunts Anticipated on this Property During the Turkey Season: \_\_\_\_\_

■ Mail application to: Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey / 1505 Eastover Dr. / Jackson, MS 39211-6322





**The 2016 Mississippi Wild Turkey Report is a cooperative effort between the MDWFP Turkey Program and the Mississippi Chapter of the NWTF.**



The MDWFP is an equal opportunity employer and provider of programs and services. If anyone believes they have been subjected to discrimination on the basis of political affiliation, race, color, national origin, marital status, sex, religion, creed, age, or disability, they may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, Office of Administrative Services, P.O. Box 451, Jackson, MS 39205-0451, or the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1801 L. Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20507.