

Spittin' & Drummin'

MISSISSIPPI WILD TURKEY REPORT

2013



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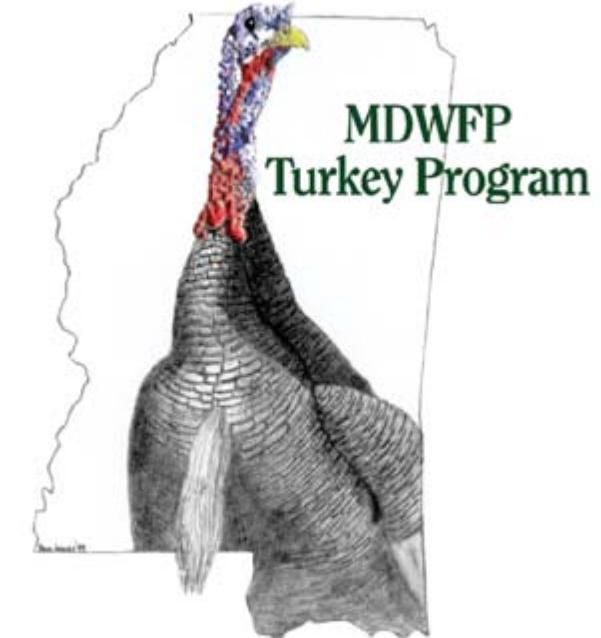
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2013 MISSISSIPPI
WILD TURKEY REPORT



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS
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Acknowledgements

Spittin' & Drummin'

Acknowledgements

THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS IS PLEASED TO SHARE THE latest edition of our Wild Turkey Program Report *Spittin' and Drummin'* with each of you! Springtime is upon us, and the 2013 spring turkey season is here. We know that all Magnolia State turkey hunters are anxious to hit the spring woods in pursuit of our premier game bird, the wild turkey!

Dave Godwin and Adam Butler of our wild turkey program want to take this opportunity to thank each of you that helped develop this program report:



- Kourtney Wong has once again done a great job handling all aspects of graphic design and layout of this publication – she takes our facts and figures and uses her skills to craft them into a visually appealing publication.
- Steve Gulledge of Bruce, Mississippi, has provided a number of professional wild turkey photographs which really help make this publication look great! Steve is a true wild turkey enthusiast and his photos take us into the turkey's world. You can learn more about Steve's photos at www.stevegulledgephotography.net.
- Special thanks are due to several MDWFP employees including: Jason Price, Scott Edwards, Jim Willcutt, Ashley Gary, Marketa Smith, Charlie Welch, Wayne Gordon, Tosha Jordon, and Martin Cate for assistance with many turkey projects during the past year.
- The MDWFP wild turkey program is very grateful to our agency administration for all of the support we have been given, and special thanks are due to Wildlife Bureau Chief Ed Penny and Assistant Chief Chad Dacus for their leadership and assistance.

Acknowledgements

Spittin' & Drummin'

- We thank the Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation for all that they do to support turkey hunters and turkey conservation in our State! You will again find the Mississippi Chapter NWTF newsletter within the pages of this program report highlighting some of the great work this chapter does in our state. If you are not a member of this organization, please consider joining today.



- We particularly want to thank all turkey hunters, especially those who cooperate with the MDWFP to voluntarily collect data for the Spring Gobbler Hunter Survey—these hunters make our glimpse of Mississippi's wild turkey resource possible.
- Finally, special thanks go to our families who continue to do so much to support us and enable us to be successful with our work efforts.

If the MDWFP wild turkey program can be of assistance to you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact Wild Turkey and Small Game Program Coordinator Dave Godwin (662-325-5119; daveg@mdwfp.state.ms.us) or Wild Turkey Program Leader Adam Butler (601-695-6795; adamb@mdwfp.state.ms.us) at any time. We hope that each of you enjoys this report, and that you all take the opportunity to enjoy Mississippi's wild turkey resource this spring! Have a safe and successful season!

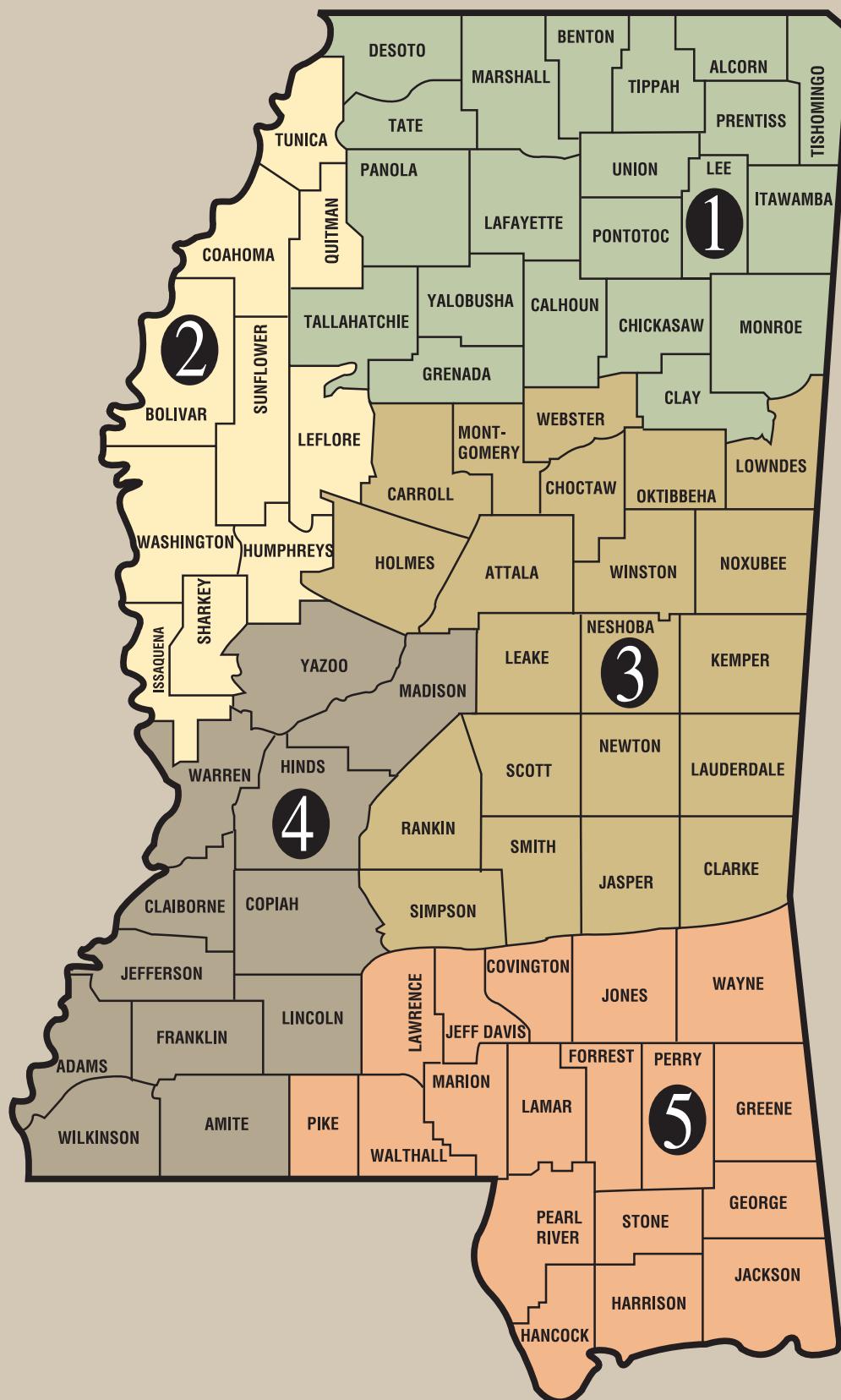
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This report is produced by the Technical Guidance Project, the Statewide Wildlife Development Project, and the Statewide Wildlife Investigations Project and is primarily funded by Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration.

MDWFP Turkey Regions



Steve Gulledge



2013 Mississippi Wild Turkey Report

SPITTIN' & DRUMMIN' IS AN ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND Parks' (MDWFP) Wild Turkey Program. The purpose of this report is to provide turkey hunters and others with information concerning Mississippi's wild turkey resource. The report contains biological and sociological data used by the MDWFP to monitor and manage the state's turkey population. This report is one of the primary tools used by the MDWFP to educate and inform turkey hunters, landowners, and wildlife managers interested in the wild turkey.

We would like to encourage all turkey hunters to become partners with the MDWFP in the conservation and management of Mississippi's wild turkeys. The best ways you can do this are by participating in the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey, joining the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF), and reporting wildlife violations by calling 1-800-BE-SMART.

The Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey is conducted by volunteer hunters and provides a tremendous database that we use to monitor turkey populations and to make and evaluate management decisions. The Mississippi Chapter of the NWTF is an indispensable part of the MDWFP's turkey management program. They annually support numerous educational, habitat, law enforcement, and research projects to benefit the state's wild turkeys and turkey hunters.

If you have any questions or comments concerning turkeys or turkey management, please contact us at anytime!

Springtime from a Turkey Hen's Perspective

TURKEY HUNTERS LIVE FOR THOSE SHORT FEW weeks in spring when they are once again challenged by one of the wildest inhabitants of Mississippi's great outdoors. For these enthusiastic sportsmen, everything else will likely take a backseat to the screeching gobble of an old tom during March and April. The importance of spring's arrival cannot be overstated for this group, so it seems appropriate that spring should also be the most critical time in the lives of their quarry. Spring is the time in which the population is renewed.

Research has repeatedly shown that the three most important factors affecting turkey populations are nest success, poult survival, and hen survival. These factors are almost entirely determined during the short window of spring. So for those concerned about the plight of the wild turkey, it can be very revealing to view the spring in a slightly different light, and see this season through the eyes of a wild turkey hen. This article will follow a hen throughout the springtime, highlight her greatest concerns, and describe her most important needs.

Onset of the Breeding Season

The hen we will follow has just spent the cold, winter months in a flock composed primarily of her female offspring from the previous summer, along with several other successful mothers and their young. As the days grow longer, increased daylight stimulates receptors in the hen's eyes. This causes a response from her endocrine system and begins the production of certain hormones that signal her body that the breeding season is near. Many physiological changes must occur for the hen's body to be ready for egg production.

Behavioral differences will take place as well. Sometime in early March, a great deal of shuffling will occur within the local turkey population, and the hen and most of her winter flock will suddenly part ways. Although gobblers may have been shouting their intentions for weeks, this break-up officially signals the kick-off of the breeding season. Eventually, the hen will settle into a much smaller spring flock, but the membership of this group may be different than her winter flock, and often this shuffle will have led her miles from where she spent the winter.

All the gobbling and displaying by the males will not make an impression on our hen until she has settled into her spring range. It is at this time that courtship really becomes seri-



Steve Gulledge

ous. Any mating that takes place will be initiated by the hen, and while the length of daylight and its hormonal effects on the birds ultimately decides the timing of the mating season, spring weather can have an impact. Warm, early springs can sometimes jump-start mating activity, whereas late cold snaps may force its delay. This can have important implications for the local flock's future; the earlier the hens get started with the chores of laying and incubating, the more successful they will be. While mating between the hen and gobbler may occur multiple times, a hen only needs a single mating attempt to fertilize all of her eggs. In fact, the hen can even lay a fertilized clutch of eggs up to two months after a mating has occurred!

An Expectant Mother's Needs

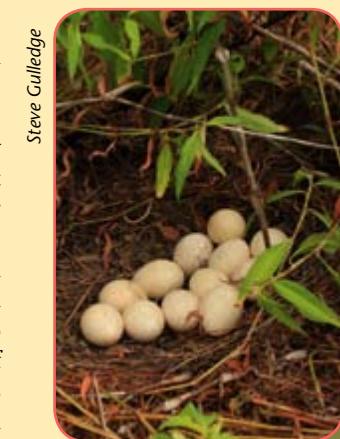
Usually during this time, our hen and her flock will focus most of their activities in areas with scattered fields and openings. While the gobblers prefer these areas because it allows their strutting to be seen from a distance, the hen's choice of habitat is much more practical. A diet centered on carbohydrate-rich foods such as acorns was necessary to get her through winter, but her diet will now change to meet the physiological demands of the reproductive season. Egg laying is expensive for our turkey hen. Her daily energy demand during egg production may be up to 180 % of her pre-breeding requirement. To fuel this unruly appetite, she will dramatically increase her intake of foods rich in proteins, and the fields in which she has chosen to concentrate hold higher numbers of protein-rich grasshoppers and other insects than the surrounding forests.

When it is time to begin making her nest, our hen will spend more and more time alone. What she does during this period is really somewhat of a mystery. The prevailing theory for decades has been that she will systematically "scout" potential nesting habitat throughout her home range until she chooses the perfect spot. However, recent advances in wildlife science have allowed hens to be fitted with special GPS-based radios, and what they have shown has been surprising.

Some hens do not methodically scout for a nest site, as was previously thought. Instead, many females may make long, erratic movements and nest in an area in which they have seldom ventured. The mechanisms behind this behavior are unknown. Are these movements a return to the areas in which they were raised? Or are they remembering prime nesting habitat spotted on a venture months or years earlier? Until science delves deeper into the subject, only our hen will know the answer.

What is certain, however, is that as the hen lays her nest, she will avoid other turkeys. She may flock with others for brief periods, but these interactions will take place at great distances from the nest. She will only lay one egg per day, and she conceals the nest between visits by covering it with leaves. When eggs are laid, the young turkeys inside are already developing, but once deposited, the egg's internal temperature drops, which arrests development until the incubation process begins, ensuring that all the embryos will develop at the same pace. The end of egg laying is triggered by secretions of the hormone prolactin, which suppress egg producing hormones, and causes our hen to adopt a "broody" behavior. After laying 10-12 eggs, the clutch is complete and incubation can begin. Once she starts the incubation process, she will sit for 28 days, and usually leaves the nest only once a day to feed.

These next 28 days will be the most dangerous time of the year for our hen. While her odds of survival are relatively good outside the nesting season, in most years, 1 out of 4 hens are killed while nesting. The reason for this danger is obvious: our hen will spend nearly a month, both day and night, sitting on the ground. Remaining hidden is her only defense, so selection of a nest site has huge implications for survival. Thick cover is essential, and the best nest sites will offer concealment from all sides and above. Our hen also ups her chances for success if she avoids nesting in obvious places where predators will be concentrating: field edges, cutovers, or utility right-of-ways. Instead, our hen chooses a tangle of briars formed amongst a fallen treetop in a mature pine stand. The nest site is a good one.



Steve Gulledge

adequate bugging grounds cannot be found, losses can be even greater.

Young turkeys grow up fast. Males will usually begin strutting within the first week. By ten days of age, most poult will show some signs of flight, and by their seventeenth day nearly all poult will fly well enough to roost in trees. At this point, chances of survival increase dramatically. At three and a half months, the sexes become distinguishable, and separate pecking orders become established among the male and female offspring. By this time, the young turkeys share their mother's diet, behavior, and chances for survival. In early fall, the group will likely shift its home range to areas of abundant bottomland hardwoods, and soon thereafter, most of the male offspring will split off, forming a separate jake flock. The remaining mother-daughter group will remain intact until March, when the process of spring renewal will begin once again.

Thinking like a Hen

All too often, hunters are guilty of thinking of turkey habitat only in terms of the places in which they hunt turkeys, which may not necessarily meet the needs of nesting hens. By following hens through spring, and appreciating their underlying biological requirements, we can begin to think like a turkey hen in our management of the land. When we approach turkey management from this standpoint, we will impact those three factors – nest success, poult survival, and hen survival – that are most important to the future of the local flock by ensuring that the processes of renewal will always be in place.



Steve Gulledge

A New Flock is Born

After nearly a month of development, our hen's young are ready to burst from their shells. During the final days of incubation, the hen begins uttering soft yelps and purrs which can be heard by the poult within their eggs. This early coaching helps ensure that all the poult will begin hatching simultaneously. The hatching process, known as pipping, takes about a day to complete, and once done, the young will need almost another day to gather enough strength to leave the nest to feed. Once again the fields and openings that harbor so many insects will be important to our hen. For their first few weeks of life her young will almost double their body weight every seven days, and growth of those proportions can only be fueled by a diet rich in insects. Losses among young turkeys are guaranteed to be heavy; on average nearly three-quarters will be dead before their fourteenth day, and if

Anticipating the Shift

Understanding Seasonal Habitat Use of the Wild Turkey

TURKEY HUNTERS OFTEN WONDER WHY AREAS that routinely hold large numbers of wild turkeys during the fall and winter frequently have fewer birds during the spring turkey season. Biologists routinely hear stories of hunters seeing large turkey flocks from a deer stand, only to find the same area void of turkeys by April. To help understand why this occurs, we need to better understand wild turkey home range sizes and seasonal habitat preferences.

The extent to which a wild turkey can travel throughout the year can be quite surprising to many hunters. Turkey hunters are used to finding the same gobbling bird for multiple mornings in the same general area, and we often see turkey flocks – especially brood groups – using the same open fields for extended periods. These observations cause us to assume that wild turkeys are a relatively stationary bird. The reality is that while the bird's seasonal ranges can be restricted during certain times, recent research suggests that the average annual home range of a wild turkey in Mississippi is usually over 6 square miles! Turkeys move over relatively large areas during the year, and the largest movements often occur as the birds shift from one seasonal range to the next in search of habitat that meets life requirements at different times of the year.

During the fall and winter, turkey ranges are generally centered on areas that provide easy access to high energy foods such as acorns and other hard mast. In Mississippi, turkeys often spend much of the fall and winter utilizing forested areas with an abundance of mast producing trees, such as oaks, beech, and pecans. Bottomland hardwood stands, upland hardwoods, and mixed pine/hardwood stands experience plenty of turkey use during the cool season when acorns and other hard mast foods are found on the ground.

During the spring, wild turkeys turn their focus toward breeding and reproduction, with hens and gobblers breaking out of winter flocks and beginning to mix and mingle. As the spring season progresses, turkeys will shift their movements from their winter range and begin using areas in close proximity to quality nesting and brood rearing cover that will be critical to hens' success. Information collected from recent radio-telemetry studies indicates that turkeys often may move several miles during this time of the year to areas of suitable spring habitat!

Topography may also affect how turkeys use the landscape during winter and spring. Wild turkeys often use flood prone low-

lying bottomland areas during the fall and winter, but frequently move out of these areas to nest in upland stands during the spring. Availability of suitable cover to nest and raise broods can also be a significant issue for turkeys selecting spring ranges.

Steve Gulledge



structure within 3 feet of the ground. This is needed to conceal the nesting hen turkey from predators. Wild turkeys nest in areas with herbaceous vegetation so thick that these nest site areas are generally avoided by the birds during all other times of the annual cycle. Turkeys tend to select nest sites that not only provide these characteristics, but also are located with close proximity to good brood rearing cover.

Turkey hens rear their broods in cover that is not as thick as nesting habitat. Good quality brood cover should provide lots of high protein foods – primarily insects, and it must provide enough overhead cover to hide poult while allowing the adult female unobstructed vision of potential predators. Good brood habitat can be provided in well-managed forest stands, as well as open field areas.

Where possible, land managers should try to manage their property to provide suitable habitat to meet all the seasonal requirements of turkey throughout the annual cycle. This approach can help hold birds in a relatively small area, particularly during certain phases of the annual cycle. Given the relatively large home ranges of wild turkeys, most landowners should cooperate with neighboring landowners with similar interests when trying to manage turkey habitat.

Steve Gulledge



The MDWFP can provide technical guidance to landowners interested in managing habitat for wild turkeys. For more information on wild turkey habitat and management, see our website at www.mdwfp.com/turkey. For technical guidance on managing turkeys and other wildlife, contact the MDWFP Wildlife Bureau at 601-432-2199.

A Burning Desire to Help the Flock

Turkey Use of Burned Woods

The quick green-up and long-term understory changes that can result from prescribed fire improves foraging conditions and food availability for adult turkeys, and the birds prefer frequently burned woods when they are available. This observation has been corroborated by numerous scientific investigations in Mississippi and throughout the Southeast. Joint research conducted by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) and Mississippi State University (MSU) on private and public lands throughout the Magnolia State has repeatedly illustrated that in pine timber turkeys prefer recently burned stands to non-burned areas, and utilization of pine stands declines rapidly as time-since-burning increases. Hens seem more sensitive than gobblers to the thick "roughs" that develop in the absence of fire, and typically abandon use of pine stands for every activity except nesting within 2-3 years after a burn. Gobblers may continue using these areas longer, but their use often wanes within 4-5 years following a prescribed fire. Unthinned or closed-canopy pine stands may retain limited turkey utilization for longer periods due to their openness at ground-level; however, these conditions offer limited food and cover and are usually inadequate to sustain turkey populations over large areas.

Prescribed Fire and Nesting Cover

Studies of radio-tagged turkey hens have shown that hens prefer to nest in areas with thick screening cover that reaches to 3-4 feet above the ground. Furthermore, research has also demonstrated that in forested areas, successful nest sites are typically surrounded by a higher percentage of grass than unsuccessful nests. The prevalence of grass within the understory in timber stands is closely tied to the frequency of burning, and in the absence of fire, most forest understories quickly shift from grasses and forbs to woody shrubs that may not provide adequate screening cover at ground level. This suggests that fire is necessary to maintain quality nesting habitat in many wooded stands, and ample research supports the relationship between prescribed burns and nesting hens. Here in Mississippi, research in Kemper County pine plantations showed that turkey hens, on average, preferred stands that had been burned 3 years prior. Similarly, hens monitored on the Homochitto National Forest preferred nesting in areas that had been burned 3-4 years beforehand, while on sandy, low-quality soils, other studies of turkey hens have demonstrated a preference for areas that have not been burned in well over 3



MDWFP

IN THE DAYS JUST PRIOR TO THE OPENING OF THIS past spring turkey season, my anticipation was almost more than I could stand. Although this is typical for me every spring, this year it was worse than usual because during the weeks leading up to opening day, I had helped conduct a prescribed burn in one of my favorite turkey hunting hotspots. The area is a modest block of pine timber flanked on two sides by hardwood drains, and while it can usually be counted on to hold a gobbler or two, I was certain that the burning we had just done would help in holding the local flocks nearby. Just as expected, on opening morning, my yelping was greeted by the shout of a "fired-up" longbeard, and as the sharp smell of freshly burned piney woods filled my nose, I couldn't help but smile and think, "Mississippi turkeys sure do love a good fire."

Our predecessors that hunted Mississippi's woods even before Columbus set foot in the New World were keenly aware of the benefits of prescribed burning. In fact, recent archeological evidence indicates that nearly all of the Southeastern Coastal Plain, a physiographic region that encompasses most of Mississippi, burned every few years prior to European settlement. Although some of these fires occurred naturally as a result of lightning strikes, much of the burning was due to fires the Native Americans set to attract game into their hunting grounds.

Unfortunately, striking a match to improve wildlife habitat is a tradition we have not maintained at a meaningful scale today, despite the extensive canon of scientific research that demonstrates fire's benefits to species like wild turkeys. In this article, I will cover how different aspects of the life cycle of wild turkeys are favorably affected by prescribed burning.

Prescribed Burning's Effect on the Woods

Prescribed burning is most often, although not exclusively, implemented in mid-rotation or mature pine timber. Pine trees have unique adaptations that allow them to tolerate low intensity fires, whereas many other woody-stemmed plants cannot. Following a fire, the growth of other vegetation, including grasses, forbs, and legumes, is encouraged by the clearing of dead leaf litter, recycling of nutrients, and increases in the availability of sunlight. Therefore, fires oftentimes shift the appearance and composition of forest stands away from thickets of undesirable species such as sweet gum, wax myrtle, yaupon, or privet, to stands in which grasses and flowering plants dominate. This shift makes these stands more accessible to turkey hunters, but will more importantly have significant positive implications for turkey use.

Habitat Management

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nesting habitat, and that ideal nest cover is realized sometime around 3-4 years post-burn.

Interestingly, prescribed burning may assist nesting turkeys in other, more subtle ways. In addition to studying the habits of hens and gobblers, turkey biologists in the Southeast have also radio-monitored turkey nest predators. What these studies have demonstrated has been eye-opening in regards to the importance that prescribed burning has in mitigating the effects of nest predation. Many of the primary nest predators, such as raccoons, actually avoid areas that have been recently burned, and instead prefer to forage in long unburned woods. Therefore, it is very likely that frequently burned pine timber will harbor fewer nest predators than woods left unburned, thus increasing the chances for success for nesting hens in these areas.

Burning and Broods

Due to the dangers they encounter, the outcome of the first few weeks of a turkey's life can be very influential in determining the long-term health of the turkey population. As a result, the availability of brood habitat is the most important component of good turkey country, and frequent fire is the number one prescription for good brood habitat in the pine woods of the South.

The forest understory's structure and composition are critical in determining the relative quality of brood habitat. The vegetation must be dense enough to hide the young

years. The slight differences among these findings are likely due to differing responses of vegetation to fire as a result of soil types, moisture regimes, and overhead tree cover. However, it is clear that some level of burning is important for the maintenance of proper

poults from predators, but open enough to allow them unrestricted movement along the ground, while also remaining low enough that the hen can scan the area for predators. Fire can create these specific conditions by reducing mid-story, opening the ground to sunlight, burning dead vegetation, and jump-starting a lush blanket of weeds that harbor rich insect communities. It is not surprising then that various studies across the Southeast have overwhelmingly shown that brood hens in pine-dominated forests target areas that have been burned within the previous 2 years. This suggests a very close link between the availability of the type of ground cover that results after burning and the subsequent survival of poult during their first few weeks of life.

Getting Help

Prescribed burning on a 2-3 year rotation is likely the most effective means of improving habitat and attracting wild turkeys in upland settings. However, without substantial exposure to the practice of prescribed fire, implementing a burn can seem a little intimidating. However, landowners need not worry, because help is available. Forestry consultants oftentimes may be contracted to conduct prescribed burns. Additionally, wildlife biologists with the MDWFP are available to offer guidance on wildlife habitat management techniques to private landowners, and these recommendations can include tips on implementing prescribed burns.



MDWFP

Financial assistance for those interested in prescribed burning is available through several different sources. For example, the MDWFP is currently offering a prescribed burning cost-share program to landowners in select focal counties that can offset up to 50% of the expense of

implementing prescribed fire. This initiative is being called the "Fire on the Forty" Campaign, and has been made possible by the Partner's for Fish and Wildlife Program.

If you would like assistance with turkey habitat management on your property, or are interested in learning more about the "Fire on the Forty" Program, please contact the MDWFP Wildlife Bureau at (601) 432-2199.



Steve Gulledge

How are Turkeys in My Neck of the Woods?

Mississippi Wild Turkey Population Statistics

Based on Spring Gobbler Hunting and Brood Surveys

THE SPRING GOBBLER HUNTING SURVEY (SGHS) WAS INITIATED IN 1996 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 Agency 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.

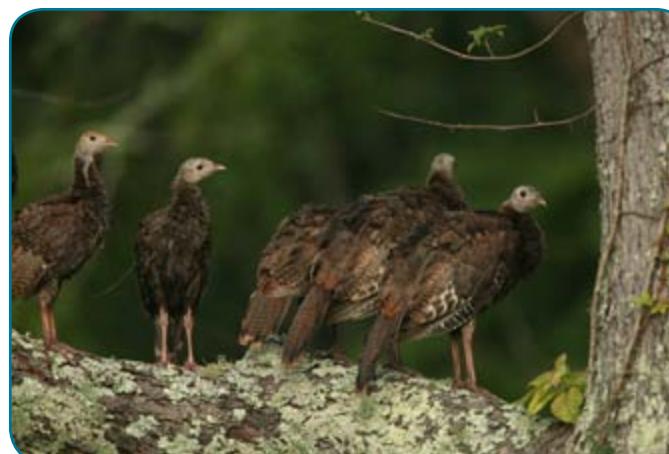
Private land data from the 2005 – 2012 SGHSs are presented graphically in the following two-page statewide and regional summaries. The remainder of this introduction describes how the data were collected and summarized, along with important points to consider during interpretation. Most parameters are 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 poult are considered unsuccessful and either did not attempt to nest, abandoned their nest, lost their nest to predation or human disturbance or had no poult survive. Average brood size is the total number of poult divided by number of successful hens and is an index to poult survival. "Poult per total hens" is defined as the number of poult observed divided by total number of hens seen. "Poult 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 Culledge



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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 an inch and a quarter are considered four plus years of age. Monitoring spur length distribution should reflect changes in gobbler age structure over time. If age structure is increasing, a higher percentage of the 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.



Steve Culledge



Steve Culledge



2012 Summer Brood Survey Results

An Assessment of "The Hatch" Across Mississippi

THE MDWFP AND ITS COOPERATORS COLLECT data every June, July, and August on wild turkey reproduction by recording observations of hens and broods seen during daily field duties. Data from this survey is then compiled and used as a means of judging reproductive output, both on a statewide and regional basis, and is an invaluable tool in monitoring turkey population trends.

The primary parameter used to judge the quality of the hatch is the number of poult seen divided by the total number of hens that were observed. This is the most practical reproductive index that can be used over large geographic areas because it takes into consideration successful hens, unsuccessful hens, and poult survival into a single parameter. Additional information can be assessed by estimating the overall percentage of the female population observed with young, and the average number of individual poult within each brood.

Annual reproduction is paramount to the status of wild turkey populations; regional turkey numbers routinely fluctuate to levels nearly 50% above or below their long-term averages based on the relative success or failure of a year's reproductive season. Many factors combine to determine annual reproductive output by turkeys. For instance, weather patterns during April and May can impact nest success, and early summer weather can be a determining factor for poult survival. As a result, wild turkey populations typically only experience

a "great" hatch every 3-4 years, but these peaks in production are usually adequate to maintain the long-term stability of the population.

During 2012, the environmental conditions that are important to the relative success of the spring turkey hatch aligned perfectly. The statewide acorn crop during the previous fall was abundant, and the ensuing winter was unusually mild. These conditions allowed hens to enter the breeding season in peak physiological condition, and in combination with the unusually early arrival of spring caused nesting to begin earlier than normal. Furthermore, weather conditions during the peak incubation period were ideal, and drought conditions did not become excessive during the early brood-rearing period. All of these factors worked in combination to create a nearly perfect scenario for turkey reproduction this past spring, and as a result the summer brood survey revealed that Mississippi produced its most abundant crop of young turkeys in over a decade. Assessments of the hatch based on data gathered over the summer can be found below, given as statewide and regional averages.

Statewide

The Poulets Per Hen (PPH) statewide average has not topped 2.0 since the summer of 2002, however, that mark

Poulets/Total Hens: 2.05
Hens with Broods: 46%
Average brood size: 4.43

was finally surpassed once again in 2012. Favorable conditions allowed for high nest success; nearly half (46%) of all hens were seen with broods. Furthermore, poult survival was high, as suggested by the average brood size which was over 20% above the 5-year average for that statistic. Though findings did vary across the state, all regions reported satisfactory reproductive numbers.

Region 1: Northeast

Turkey reproduction has not been high across the whole of Region 1 over the last few years, and while the PPH ratio (1.88 PPH) was the lowest in the state, it was an improvement over recent years and should be more than adequate to cause local populations to increase. Both apparent nest success (44%) and average brood size (4.31 poulets per brood) were up substantially from last year.

Poulets/Total Hens: 1.88
Hens with Broods: 44%
Average brood size: 4.31

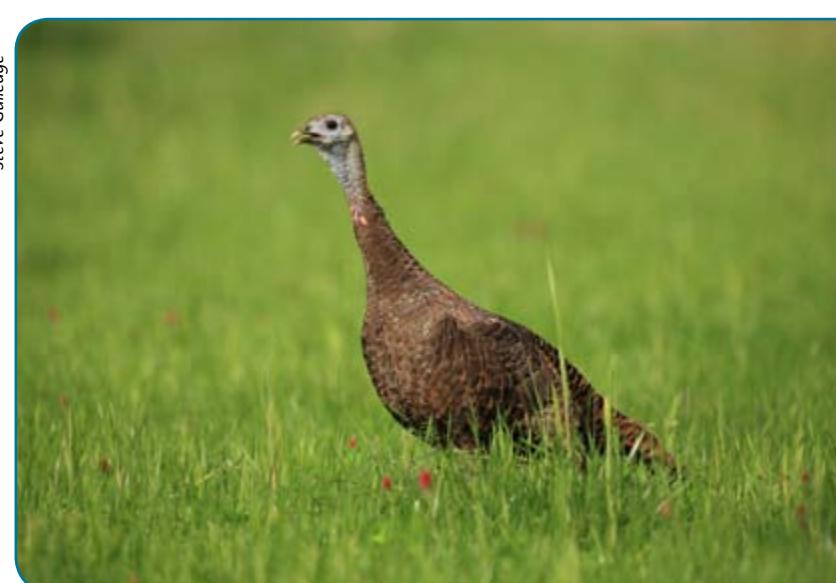
While reproduction was improved across the entire region, numbers were highest in Alcorn, Grenada, Monroe, Pontotoc, and Union counties.

Region 2: Delta

If any region of Mississippi was due for a good hatch in 2012, it was the Delta. Late spring floods have essentially washed away

most spring reproduction 3 times since 2008, and as a result populations have plummeted. The Delta may have finally found relief during 2012

as the region appeared to have a greatly improved hatch. At 2.29 PPH, the Delta led all regions in that category. This strong reproduction was likely a result of exceptionally high nest suc-



Environmental conditions that are important to the relative success of the spring turkey hatch aligned perfectly during the spring and summer of 2012.

cess as 57% of all hens seen in the Delta had broods. Although the ratio data presented here show that turkeys inhabiting the Delta were very successful this summer, it is important to remember that the overall number of hens available to nest was extremely low, therefore the actual amount of young produced was likely insufficient for populations to rebound to the level at which they may have been prior to 2008.

Region 3: East Central

The turkey hatch in East Central Mississippi was very good this past summer with PPH numbers nearly as high as Region 2. Reproduction appeared especially good in a swath of counties through the central portion of this region extending from Noxubee, Kemper, and Lauderdale in the east to Carroll and Holmes in the west. The percent of hens with broods (49%) and the average brood size (4.63 poulets per brood)

Poulets/Total Hens: 2.27
Hens with Broods: 49%
Average brood size: 4.63

were both up from 2011. Turkey populations in East-Central Mississippi should see significant increases as a result of the 2012 hatch.

Region 4: Southwest

Results of the 2011 brood survey were below-average for Southwest Mississippi, but conditions were greatly improved this past summer. Data from 2012 showed 2.07 PPH in Region 4, which is well-above,

Poulets/Total Hens: 2.07
Hens with Broods: 43%
Average brood size: 4.83

the 5-year average for the region. This increase was driven by high poult survival; the Southwest region had the largest average brood size in the state (4.83 poulets per brood). These figures should result in noticeable population increases across the region.

Region 5: Southeast

The overall PPH ratio in Southeast Mississippi was exactly the same as it was in Region 4 – 2.07 PPH, although the factors behind the

Poulets/Total Hens: 2.07
Hens with Broods: 48%
Average brood size: 4.29

figure were different. Brood sizes averaged lower (4.29 poulets per brood) than Southwest Mississippi, but nest success was higher (48%). Though they differ, the net result should be the same, and hunters should see an increase in overall turkey numbers across Southeast Mississippi as a result of the 2012 hatch.

2012 Hatch

- Low
- Average
- Good

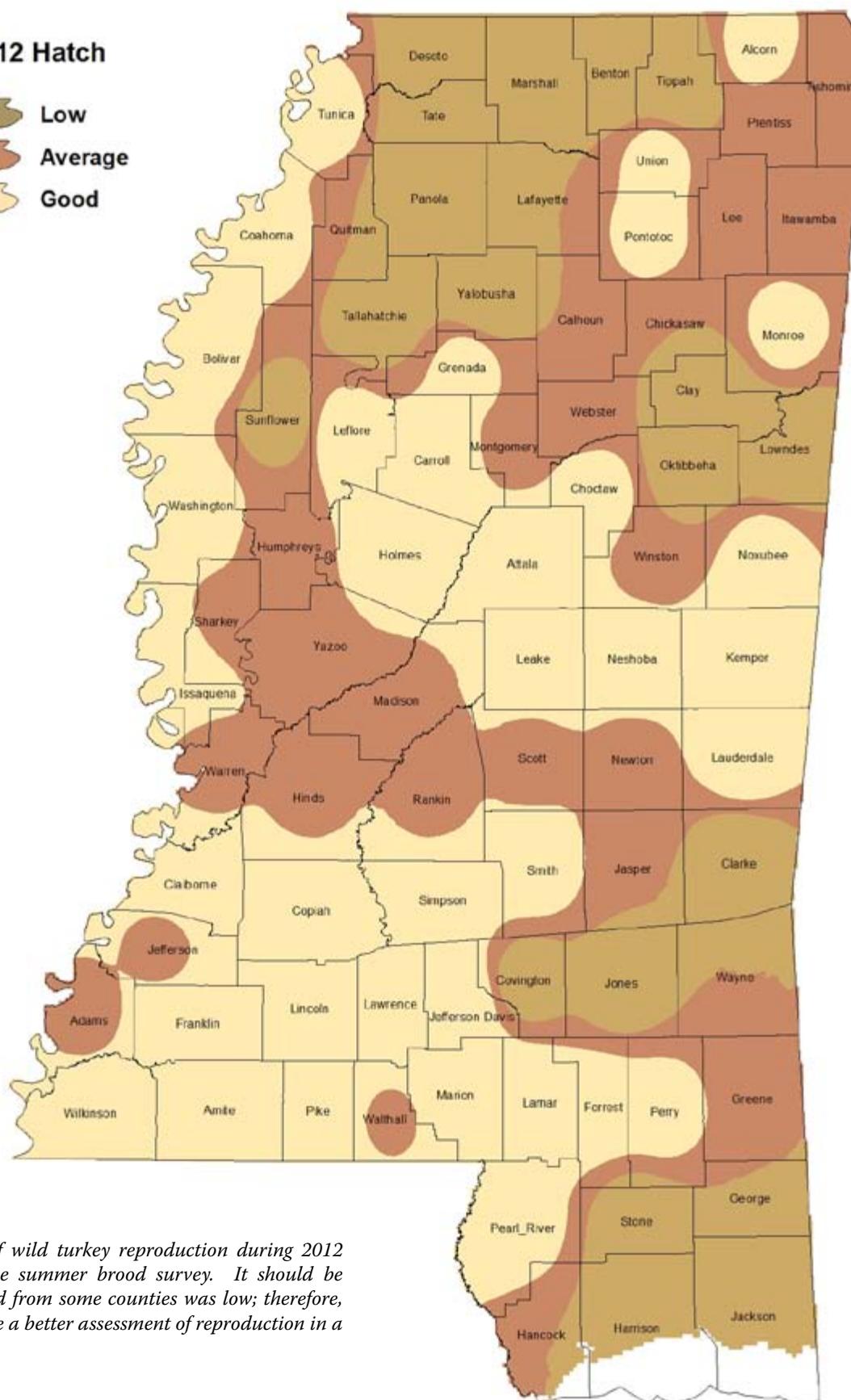


Figure 1: Assessment of wild turkey reproduction during 2012 based on data from the summer brood survey. It should be noted that data reported from some counties was low; therefore, regional averages may be a better assessment of reproduction in a particular county.

Gobbler-to-Hen Ratio

In addition to poult and hen cooperators for the annual brood survey also record the number of gobblers seen throughout the summer. From these observations, the MDWFP is able to calculate a gobbler-to-hen ratio, which can be an index of the number of gobblers that were carried over from the previous season. Since the implementation of the "no jake" regulation in 1998, this ratio has been a reasonable predictor of the upcoming season's harvest; if the gobbler-to-hen ratio goes up, harvest rates for the following season tend to also increase (*Figure 2*). During the summer of 2012, the gobbler-to-hen ratio declined slightly from the previous summer, indicating carry-over of fewer gobblers following the spring season. Regions 3 and 4 showed the greatest gobbler carryover based on gobbler-to-hen ratios, while Region 2, the Delta, showed the least. The statewide decline in this parameter indicates that the 2013 spring season may not yield average harvest rates as high as those seen during 2012.



Nest success appeared high during 2012.

Conclusions

Due to a series of events that provided wild turkeys with excellent environmental conditions, the hatch of 2012 should be considered above average across Mississippi. In most regions, reproductive indices were well above their 5-year averages, and populations throughout the state should increase due to the successful nesting season. In some areas where populations have been suppressed for the past several years, particularly

that was above, or below, the average for the region. Properties with good nesting and brood-rearing habitat typically produce good hatches year-in and year-out; likewise, properties that lack the habitat essentials that nesting hens and growing poult need for survival will rarely experience good turkey reproduction, regardless of other environmental conditions.

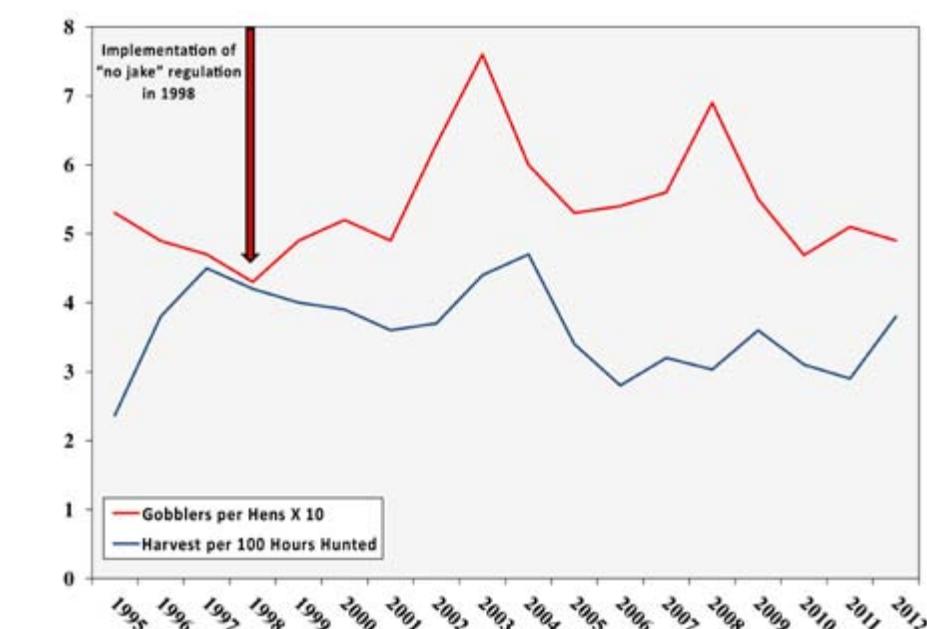


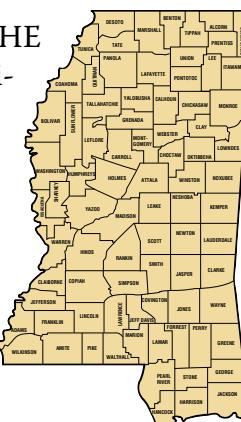
Figure 2: Comparison of the ratio of gobblers seen per hen (x10) from the summer brood survey and subsequent change in harvest rates, 1995 – 2012.

Statewide

STATEWIDE PRIVATE LAND DATA WERE COLLECTED DURING THE 2012 season by more than 50 hunting clubs and approximately 500 individual hunters participating in the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey.

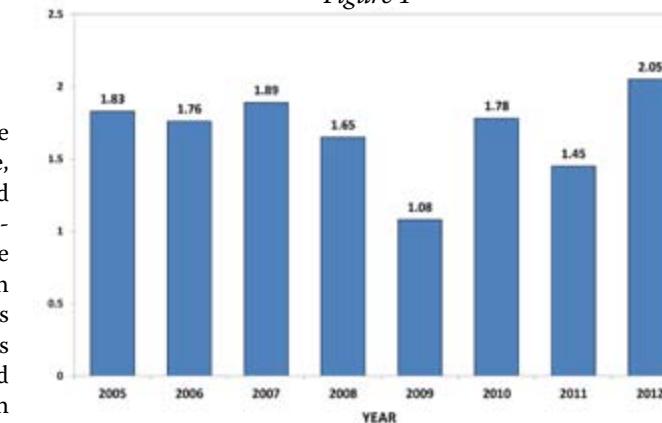
Reproduction

During the 2012 brood survey period, 2,119 hens were observed across the Magnolia State. Of these hens, 981 (46%) successfully produced at least one poult. A total of 4,347 poult were observed, and average brood size was 4.43 poult which was up from 2011. The average number of poult per total hens was 2.05 (*Figure 1*), which was up from 1.45 observed in 2011, and was the highest number of poult per hen observed statewide in the past decade! During the past 8 years, poult per total hens statewide has averaged 1.69 poult, and has ranged from a high of 2.05 poult in 2012 to a low of 1.08 poult in 2009. As usual, we observed some regional variation within the 2012 hatch, but all regions of our State saw reproductive parameters increase during this year.



Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

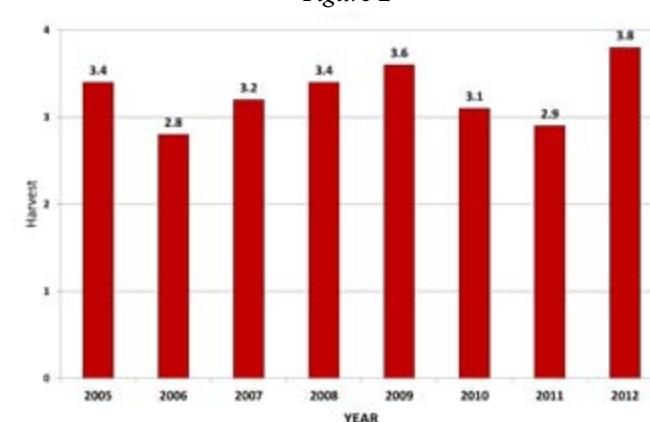


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Statewide harvest rates from the spring 2012 season were significantly higher than those reported in 2011. On average, hunters harvested 3.8 gobblers for every 100 hours hunted (*Figure 2*). Over the past 8 years, harvest rates have averaged 3.3 gobblers per 100 hours hunted. The age structure of harvested turkeys in 2012 indicated a higher proportion of 2-year-old gobblers taken than in recent years, which was expected due to the very good hatch in 2010. Of the gobblers harvested, 50% of the birds harvested were in the 2-year-old age class with spurs between 0.5" and 1.0", which was up from 43% recorded in 2011. Forty-seven percent of the birds harvested statewide were 3 years old or older, with spurs at least 1-inch in length.

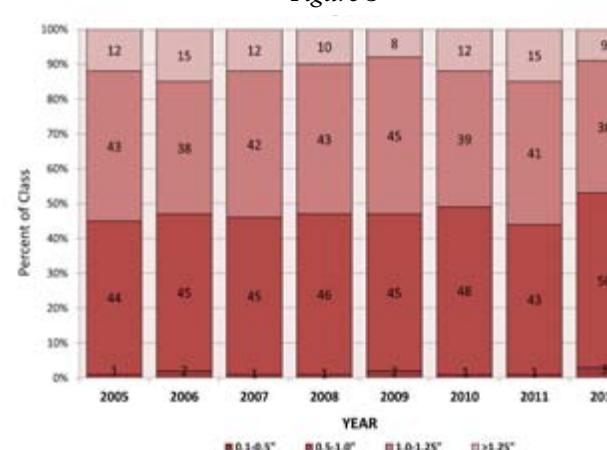
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

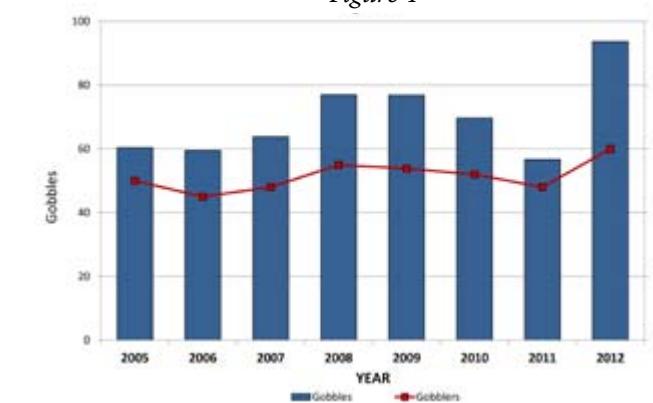


Gobbling Activity

During 2012, seasonal gobbling activity was significantly higher than observed during recent years, which was expected due to the increased number of 2-year-old birds. Hunters heard an average of 6.0 gobblers and 93.7 gobbles for every 10 hours of hunting (*Figure 4*). The number of gobblers and gobble heard was highest during the week of youth season (*Figure 5*), and generally declined across the season from that point. In general, the 2012 season was considered an early spring from the gobbling activity perspective.

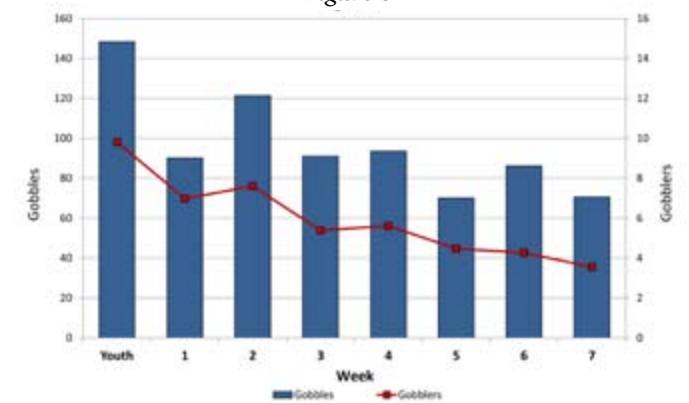
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

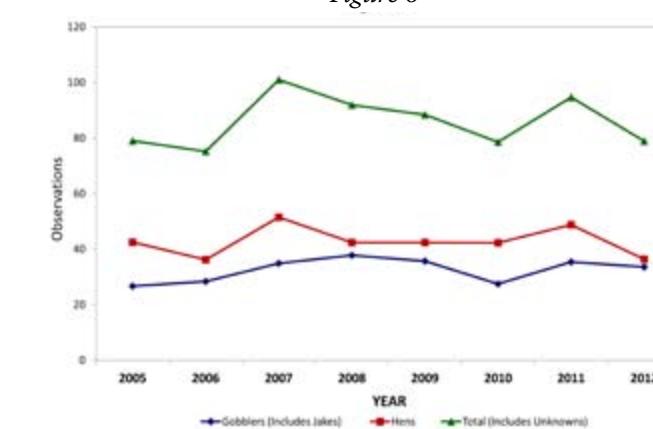


Turkey Observations

During the 2012 season, hunters observed an average of 12.9 adult gobblers, 13.8 jakes, 42.5 hens and 9.8 unknowns for every 100 hours of hunting (*Figure 6*). Overall, total turkey observations in 2012 were lower than observed during 2011, which was expected since the 2011 hatch was considerably lower than the 2010 hatch. As expected, jake observations (13.8 per 100 hours) were significantly lower than observations from 2011 (*Figure 7*).

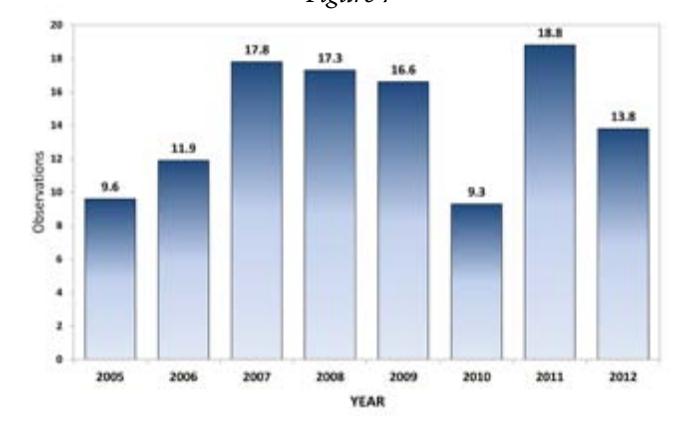
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

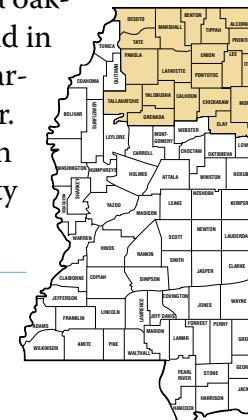


2013 Season Forecast

Hunters should expect to encounter fewer 2-year-old gobblers during the 2013 season as compared to 2012, which should equate to reduced gobbling activity and lower harvest rates. However, there will still be plenty of birds throughout the state to give Magnolia State turkey hunters reason to expect an enjoyable spring. Carryover from a very good 2010 hatch should result in more 3-year-old birds showing up in the harvest, and the great hatch of 2012 should mean more turkey observations overall, with more jakes giving hunters a reason to look forward to an outstanding 2014 season. As usual, we do anticipate some regional variation within the turkey population, and we will look at regional differences in the coming pages of this report.

Turkey Region 1

THIS REGION 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 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.



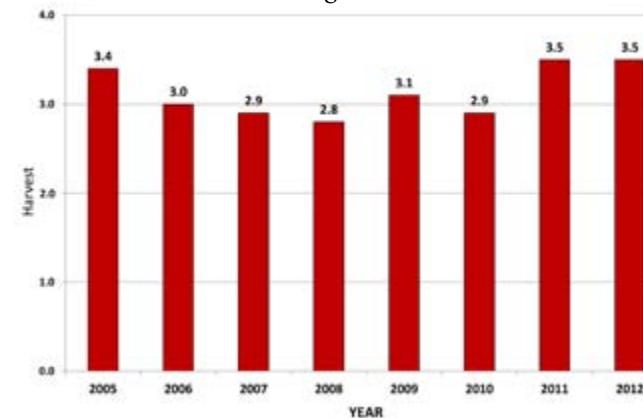
Reproduction

During the 2012 brood survey, we observed 1.88 poult per hen in Region 1 which was up considerably from the 1.37 observed in 2011, and the highest observed in this region in several years (*Figure 1*). However, poult per total hen observations in Region 1 were lower than those observed in all other regions in 2012. A total of 845 hens were observed, of which 368 (44%) successfully raised at least one poult. Successful hens had an average brood size of 4.31 poult, which was up from brood size observed in 2011.

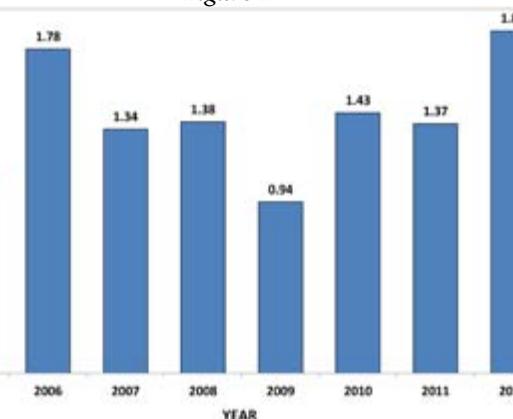
Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Hunters harvested 3.5 gobblers for every 100 hours of hunting during the 2012 season, which was similar to the 2011 season (*Figure 2*). Age structure of harvested birds was comparable to recent seasons, with 49% of the birds falling into the 2-year-old age class (*Figure 3*). Forty-seven percent of the harvested birds were at least 3-years old with spurs greater than 1.0 inch.

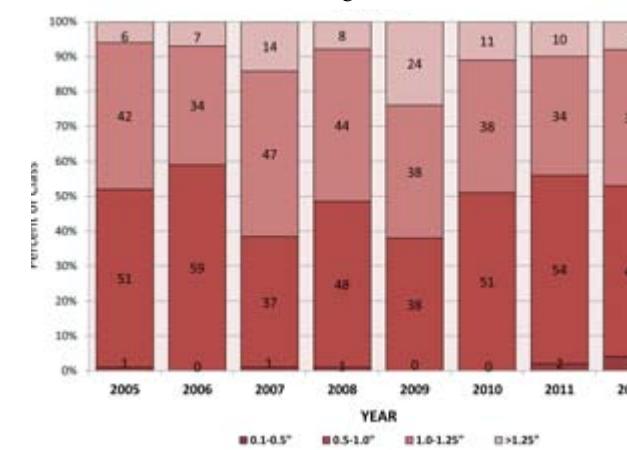
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted
Figure 2



Poults Per Total Hens
Figure 1



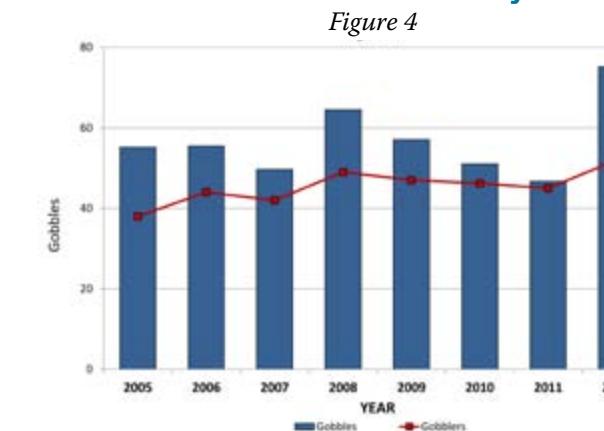
Spur Length Classes (%)
Figure 3



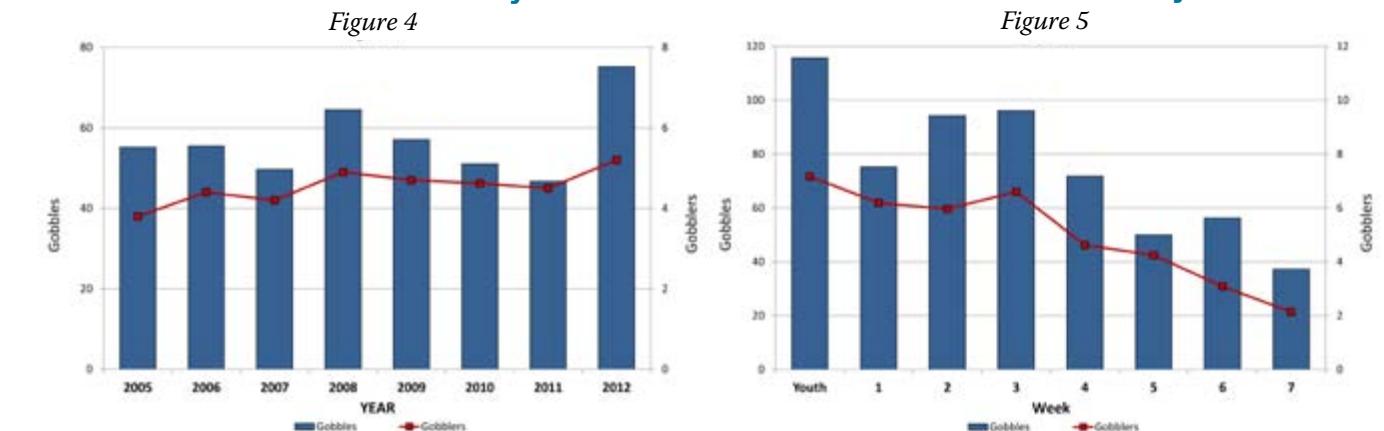
Gobbling Activity

During the 2012 season, hunters heard an average of 5.2 gobblers and 75.2 gobbles for every 10 hours hunted (*Figure 4*). Gobbling activity was up significantly from recent years for Region 1. The number of gobblers and gobbles heard was highest during the youth week during the 2012 season (*Figure 5*).

Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year



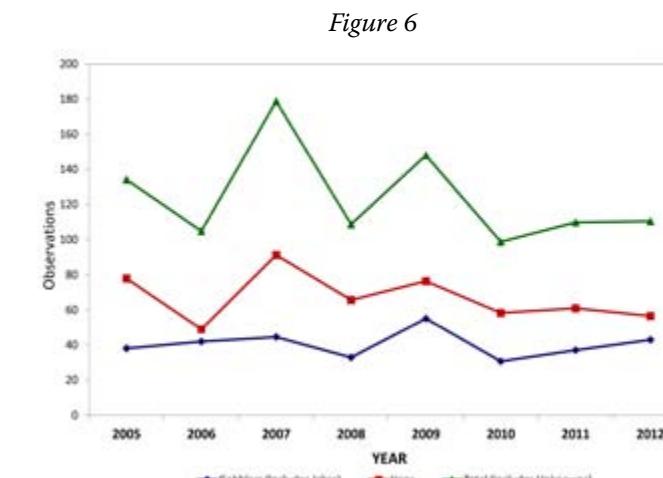
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week



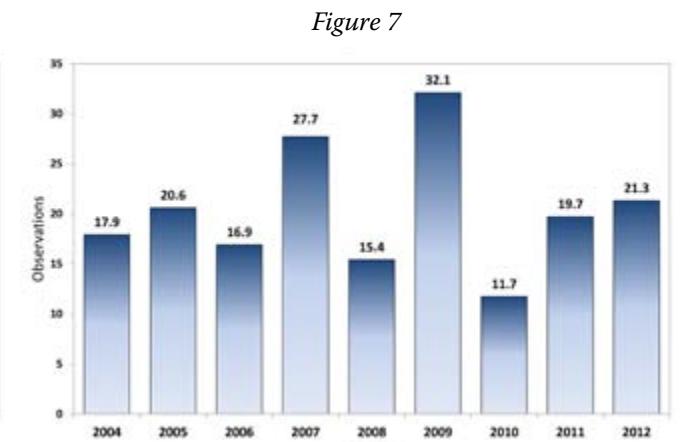
Turkey Observations

Turkey hunters observed an average of 110.4 turkeys per 100 hours hunted in 2012 (*Figure 6*) which was up slightly from 2011. Jake observations (21.3 per 100 hours) were also up slightly in 2012 (*Figure 7*).

Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted



2013 Season Forecast

Data from the brood survey and jake observations from hunters suggest that Region 1 hunters should encounter similar numbers of 2-year-old gobblers during the 2013 season compared to the 2012 season. The 2012 hatch was significantly better than recent hatches in this region, so we expect that hunters will encounter more jakes during the 2013 season. Gobbling and harvest rates should be comparable to the 2012 season.

Turkey Region 2

THIS REGION 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.

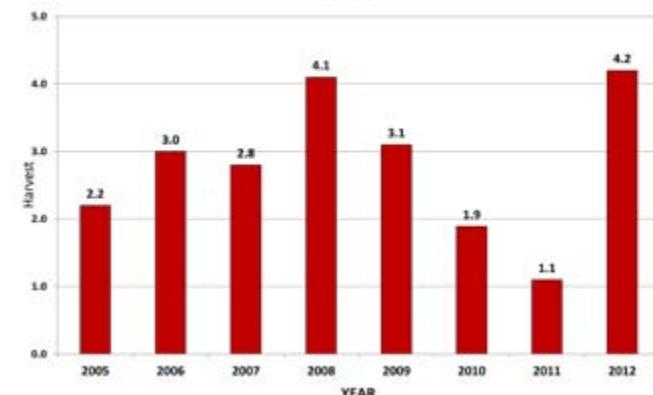
Reproduction

Floodwaters have limited turkey reproduction in this region for 3 of the past 5 years (2008, 2009, and 2011). Fortunately, Region 2 had a good hatch this year, with 2.3 pouls observed per total hen, the best since 2007. Region 2 was also fortunate to have a good hatch in 2010. Hopefully conditions will be favorable for another successful hatch next year, allowing Region 2 turkey populations to recover.

Harvest Rates & Age Structure

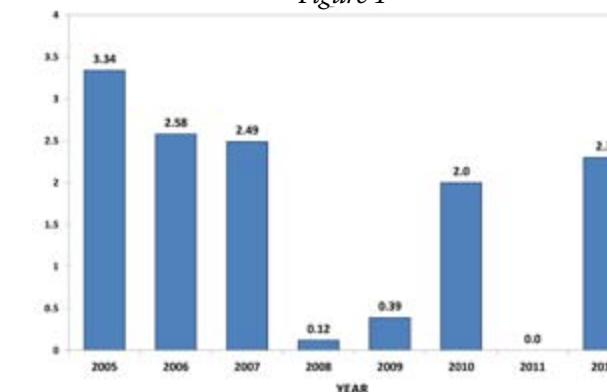
During the 2012 season, an average of 4.2 gobblers was harvested for every 100 hours of hunting (Figure 2), which was up significantly from 2011, largely due to a significant increase in 2-year old gobblers from the solid 2010 hatch. Sixty-one percent of the birds harvested in Region 2 were in the 2-year-

Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted
Figure 2



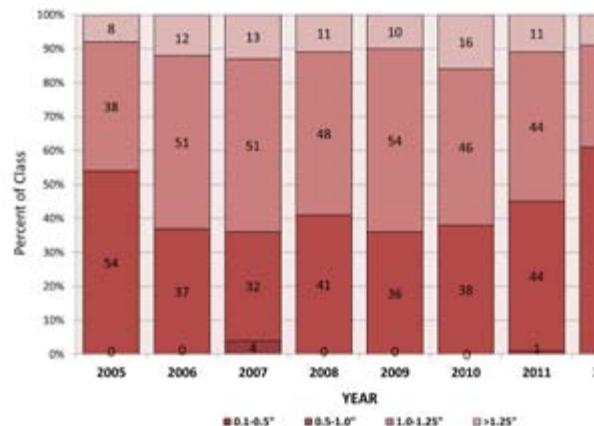
Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3



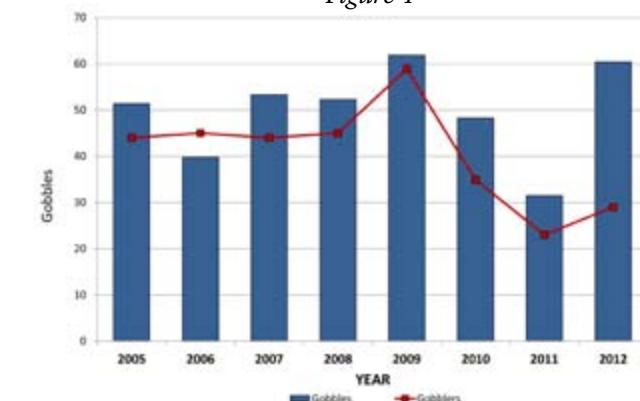
old class with spurs between 0.5 and 1.0 inch long (Figure 3), which was up from 44% in 2011. The remaining 39% of the gobblers harvested in Region 2 were at least 3 years old, with 9% having spurs over 1.25 inches in length.

Gobbling Activity

Gobbling activity for 2012 was higher than that recorded in 2011 for Region 2 (Figure 4). Hunters in this region heard an average of 2.9 gobblers and 60.4 gobbles per 10 hours of hunting. The number of gobblers and gobbles heard peaked during the youth season in Region 2.

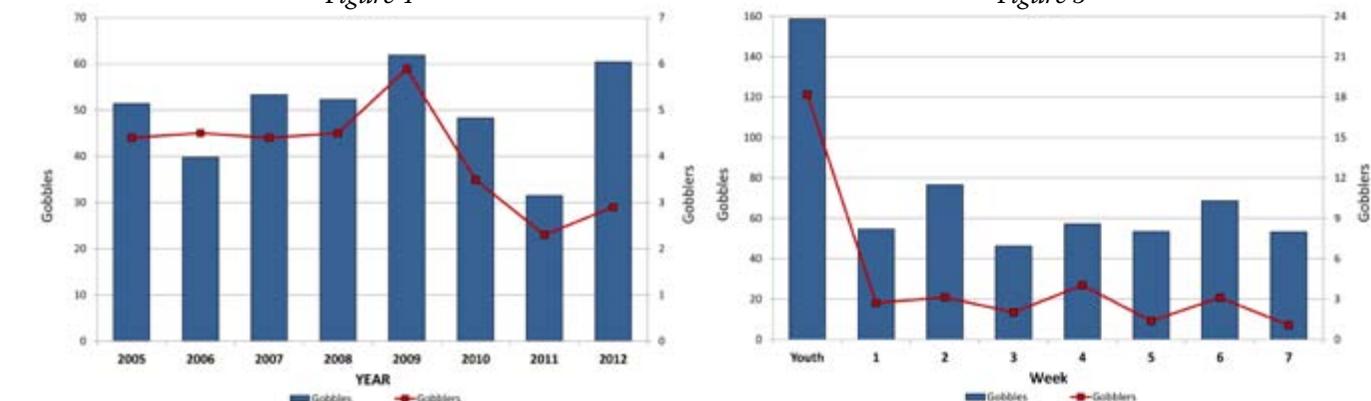
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

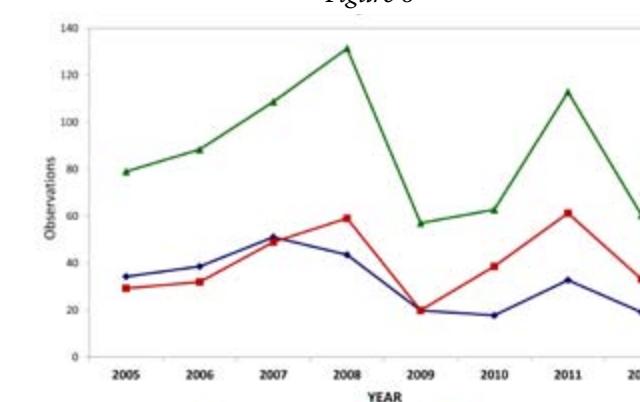


Turkey Observations

Overall turkey observations were down significantly from the previous year during 2012, which was expected following a very poor hatch in 2011. Hunters saw an average of 60.4 birds per 100 hours of hunting (Figure 6). Jake observations also decreased significantly to 3.6, down from 24.6 per 100 hours in 2011 (Figure 7).

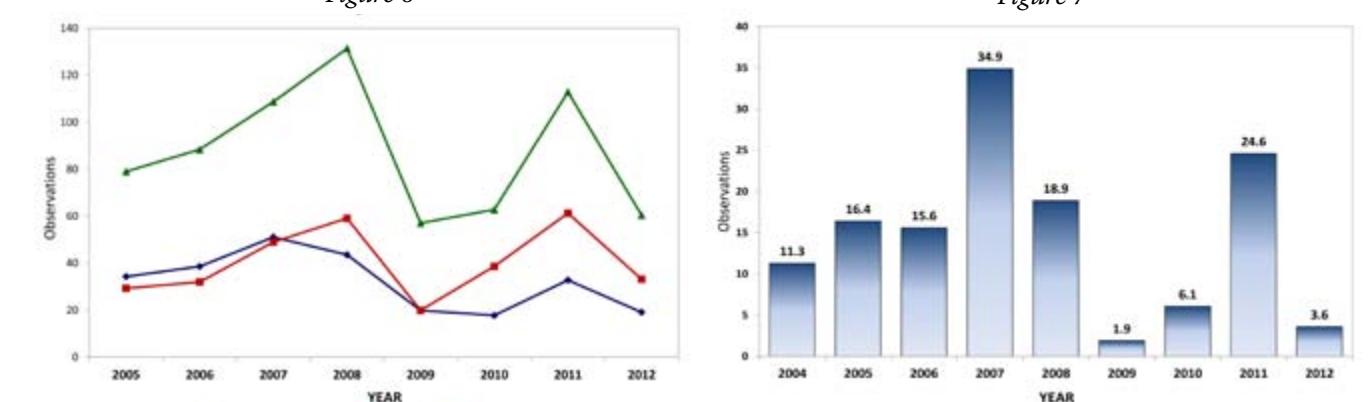
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

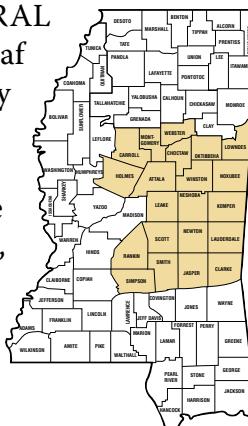


2013 Season Forecast

The very poor hatch in 2011 should mean a significant decrease increase of 2-year-old gobblers throughout the Mississippi Delta. The negative impacts of flood waters on turkey reproduction 3 of the past 5 years will continue to be felt in Region 2 during the 2013 season. However, the solid hatch in 2010 should provide some carryover of 3-year-old birds, and the good 2012 hatch gives reason to be optimistic about the future for turkey hunting in Region 2.

Turkey Region 3

REION 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 and 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.



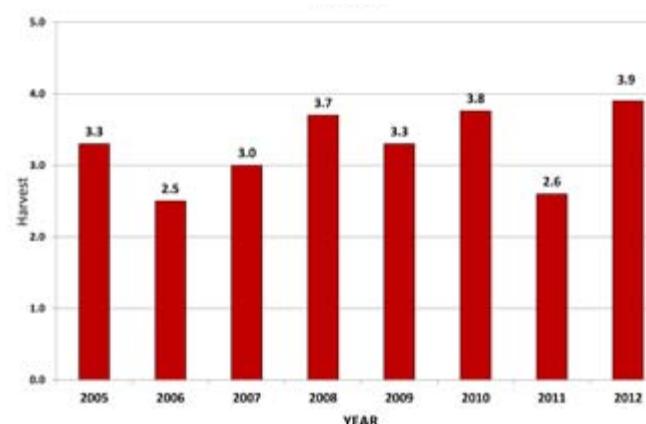
Reproduction

An average of 2.27 poult per total hen was recorded for Region 3 in 2012 (Figure 1) which was up from 1.88 in 2011. Region 3 has recorded an increase in reproduction each of the past 3 years. A total of 691 hens were seen in this region during the 2012 brood survey and 339 (49%) of the hens successfully produced at least one poult. Average brood size was 4.63 poults per successful hen, which was up from 2011.

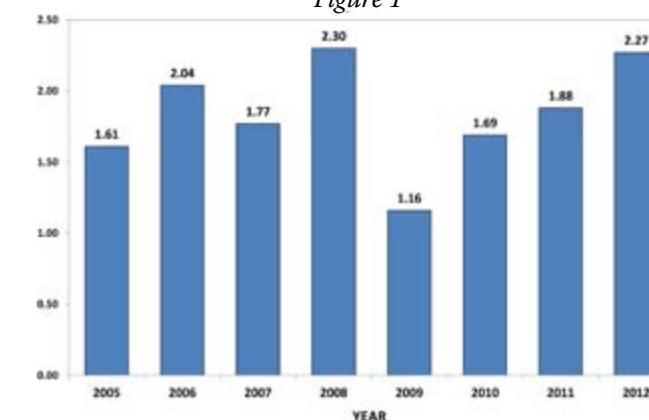
Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Hunters harvested 3.9 gobblers per 100 hours of hunting in Region 3 during 2012 (Figure 2) which was a significant increase from 2011. Fifty-four percent of harvested gobblers were considered 2-year-old birds with spurs of 0.5 to 1.0 inches (up from 36% in 2011), while 44% were considered at least 3 years old (Figure 3).

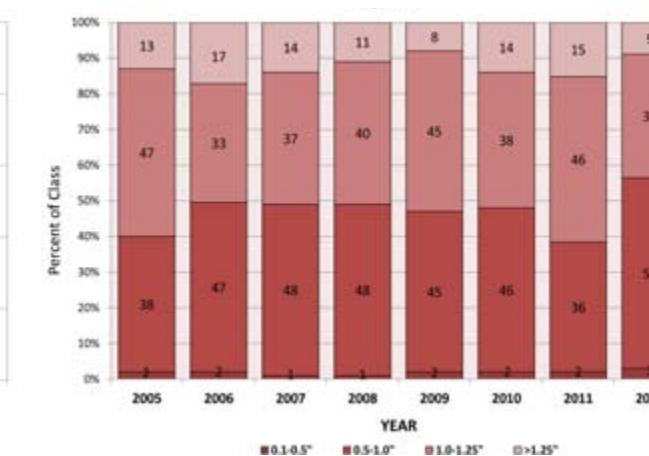
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted
Figure 2



Poults Per Total Hens
Figure 1



Spur Length Classes (%)
Figure 3

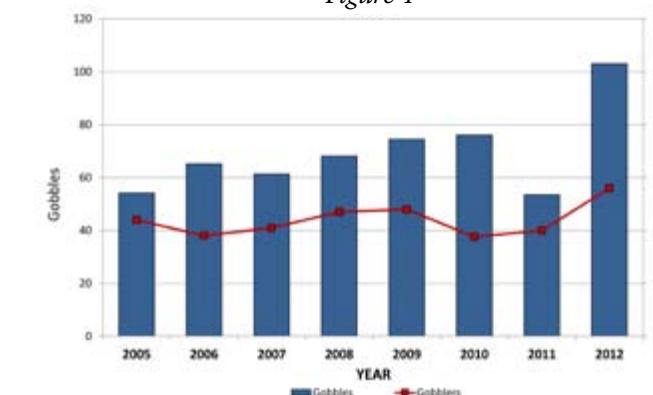


Gobbling Activity

During 2012, hunters heard more gobblers (5.6) and gobbles (103.1) per 10 hours of hunting (Figure 4) than they did in 2011. Gobbling activity peaked in this region during early spring, with hunters hearing the most gobbles and gobblers during the youth season (Figure 5).

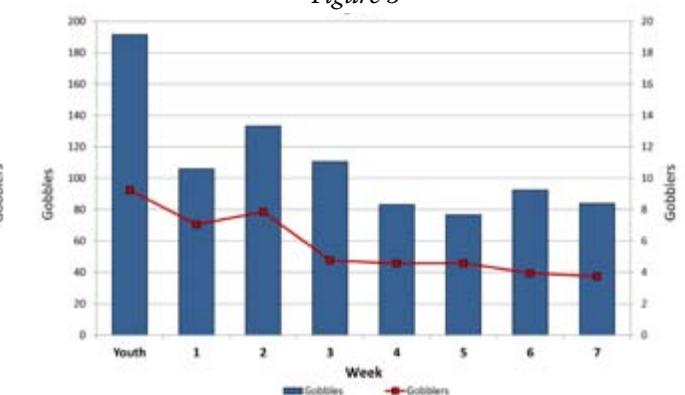
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

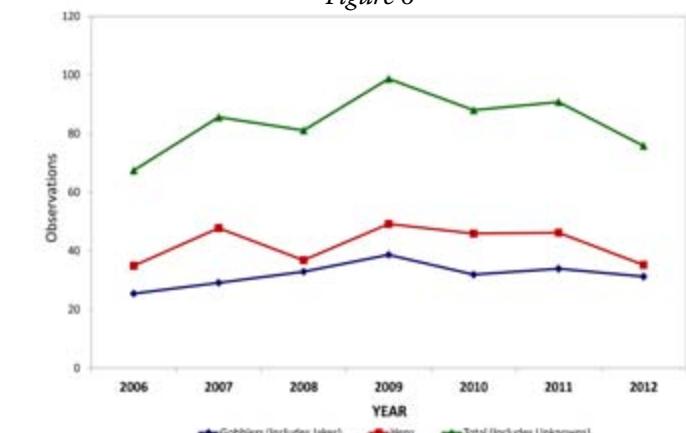


Turkey Observations

Hunters averaged observing 75.8 turkeys per 100 hours hunting during the 2012 season (Figure 6), which was down compared to 2011. Hen observations also decreased considerably to 11.8 per 100 hours hunting (Figure 7).

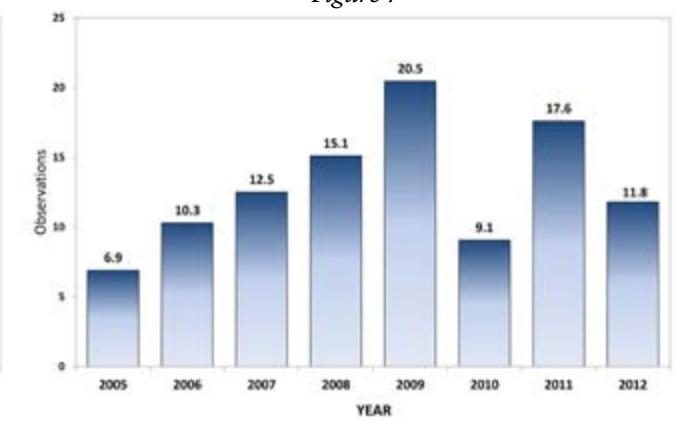
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

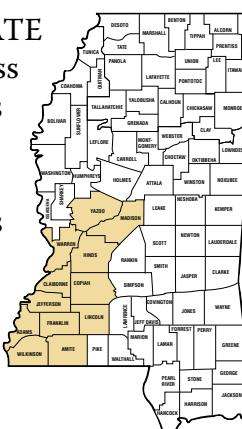


2013 Season Forecast

Brood data depicting increasing trends for Region 3 conflict with hunter observation data for the area suggesting decreasing trends. Generally the number of jakes observed during the previous season tend to be the best predictor for the number of 2-year-old birds seen the following season. This suggests that hunters in Region 3 will encounter fewer 2-year-old birds during the 2013 season compared to last year. Still, the turkey population in Region 3 should provide excellent hunting opportunities, and the good 2012 hatch should mean an overall increase in turkey observations for Region 3 hunters.

Turkey Region 4

TWELVE COUNTIES IN THE SOUTHWEST PORTION OF THE STATE comprise 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.

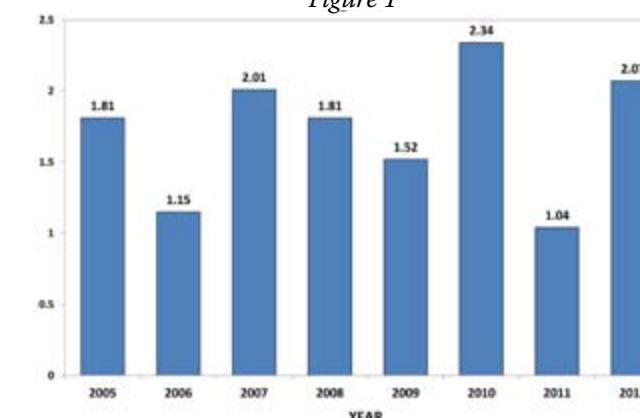


Reproduction

A total of 2.07 poult per total hens was observed for Region 4 during the 2012 brood survey (**Figure 1**) which nearly doubled the observed hatch in 2011 in this region. Forty-three percent of the hens observed successfully reproduced, and average brood size was 4.83 poults for Region 4, both up from 2011.

Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

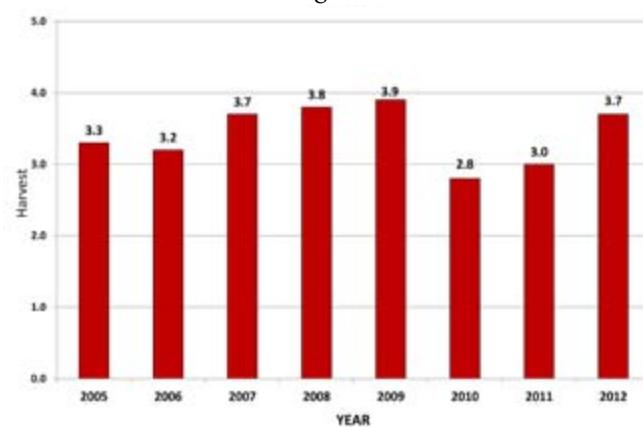


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Region 4 turkey hunters harvested 3.7 gobblers per 100 hours of hunting in 2012 (**Figure 1**) which was up from 2011. The percentage of older gobblers (with spurs at least 1-inch long) was 55% (**Figure 3**) while the percentage of 2-year-old birds in the harvest was 42%, which was very similar to 2011.

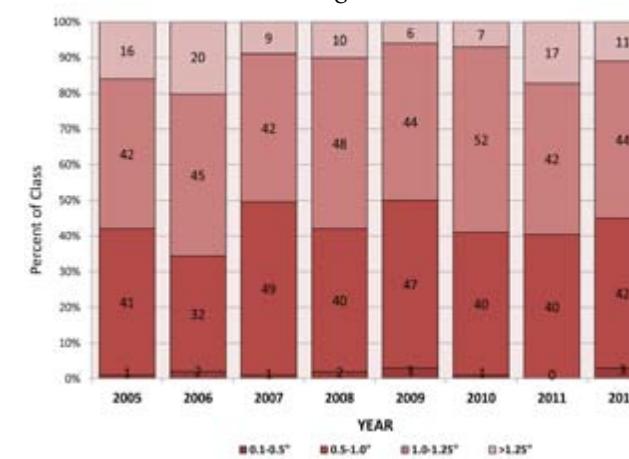
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

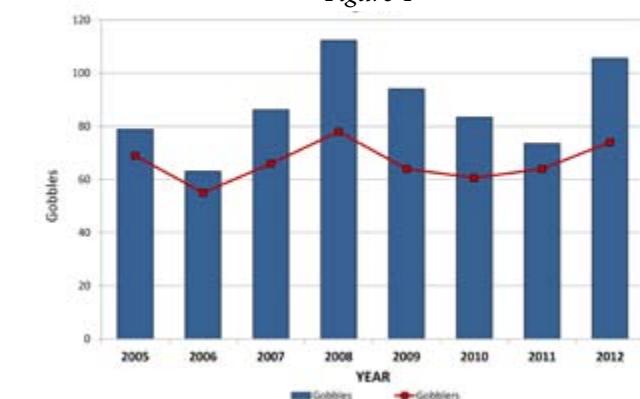


Gobbling Activity

Gobbling activity for Southwest Mississippi was up during the 2012 season (**Figure 4**) as hunters heard more gobblers (7.4) and gobbles (105.7) per 10 hours of hunting. The number of gobblers heard in this region peaked during youth week, while the number of gobblers heard was highest during the second week of the regular season (**Figure 5**).

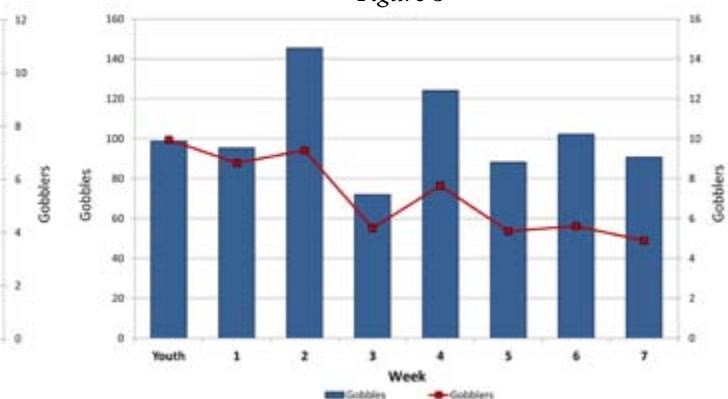
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

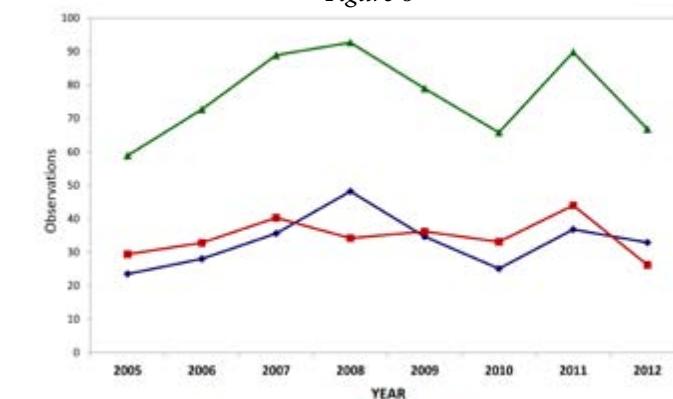


Turkey Observations

Turkey hunters observed 66.8 turkeys per 100 hours of hunting in 2012 (**Figure 6**) which was down from 2011. Hunters observed 13.1 jakes per 100 hours hunting (**Figure 7**) which was down from the 18.9 observed in 2011.

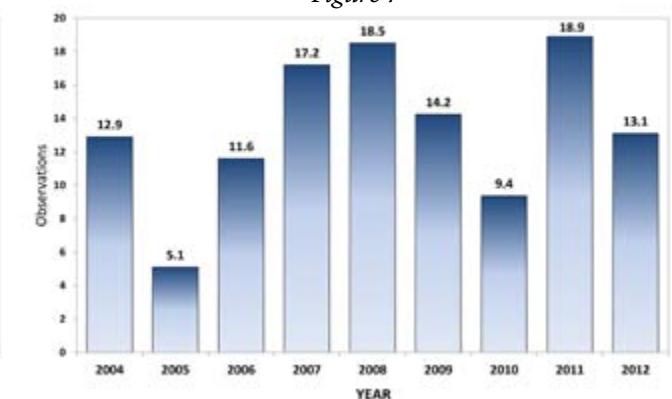
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

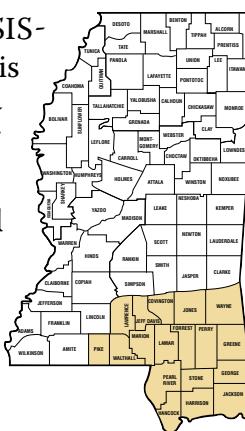


2013 Season Forecast

Hunters in Region 4 should expect to find fewer 2-year-old gobblers to chase during the 2013 due to a reduced hatch in 2011, but the overall outlook is very bright for this region which continues to be a regional hotspot for Mississippi turkey hunters. While turkey reproduction was low in 2011, Region 4 has led the state in turkey reproduction during several recent years, and very good hatches in 2010 and 2012 have hunters comparing current populations there to the glory days of the mid to late 1980s.

Turkey Region 5

THIS REGION 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 the drier sites.

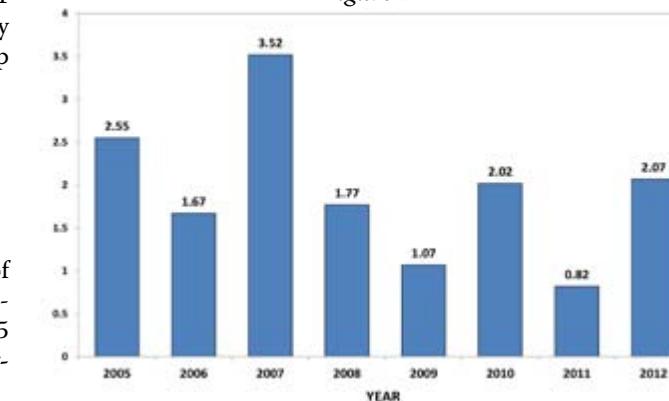


Reproduction

A total of 2.07 poult were observed per hen during the 2012 brood survey (*Figure 1*), which was up significantly from 2011 in Region 5. A total of 48% of the hens observed successfully reproduced, and average brood size was 4.29 poult, both up from 2011.

Poults Per Total Hens

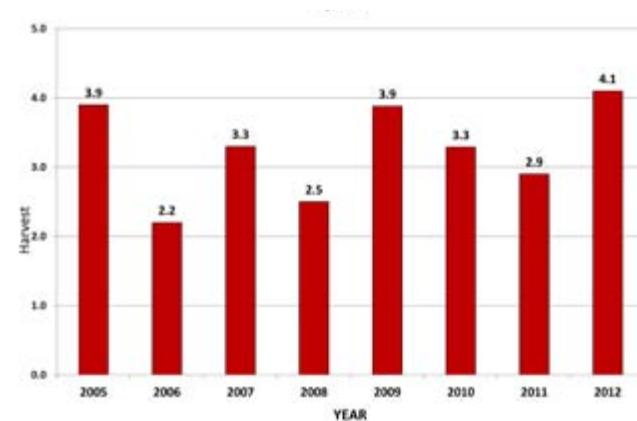
Figure 1



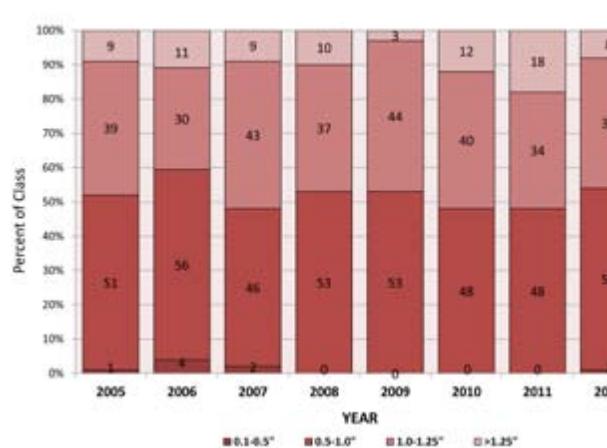
Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Region 5 hunters harvested 4.1 gobblers per 100 hours of hunting in 2012 (*Figure 2*) which was up from 2011. Fifty-three percent of the birds harvested had spurs between 0.5 and 1.0 inches, while 46 % had spurs longer than 1 inch (*Figure 3*).

Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted
Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)
Figure 3

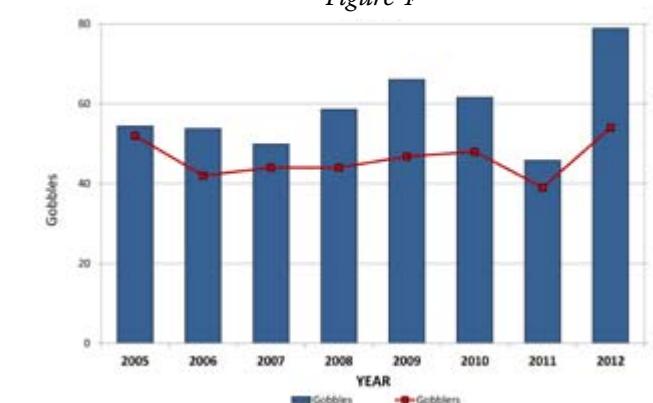


Gobbling Activity

During 2012, hunters in this region heard 5.4 gobblers and 78.9 gobbles per 10 hours, which was up from 2011 (*Figure 4*). The number of gobblers and gobbles heard peaked during youth week (*Figure 5*).

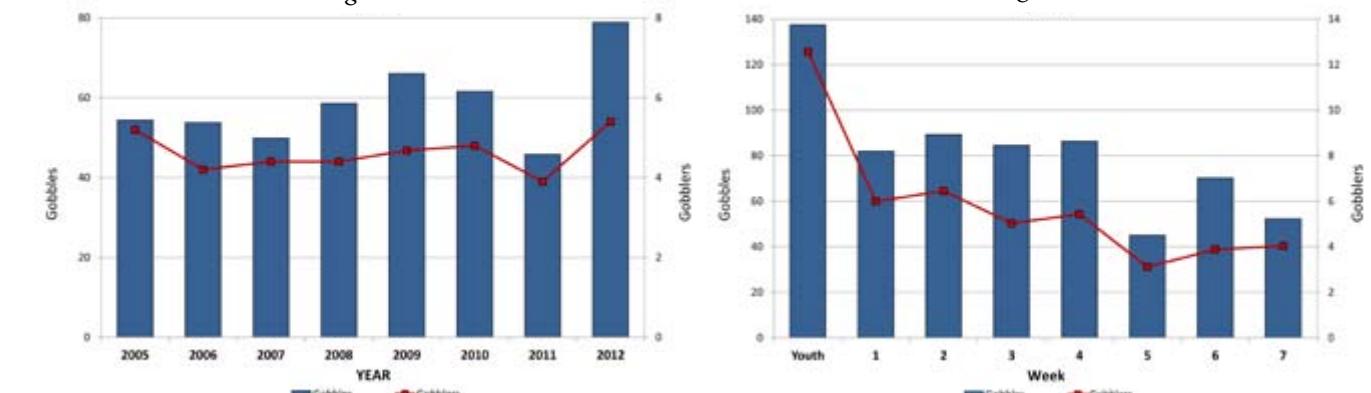
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

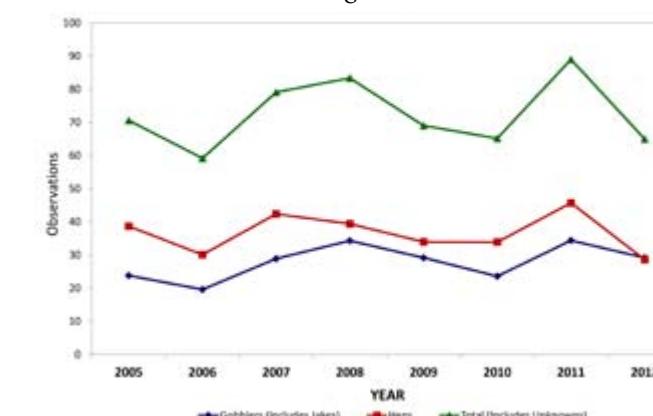


Turkey Observations

Total turkey observations decreased during 2012 to 65.0 birds per 100 hours hunting (*Figure 6*) following a lower hatch in 2011, and jake observations were 10.0 per 100 hours, which was down from 2011 (*Figure 7*).

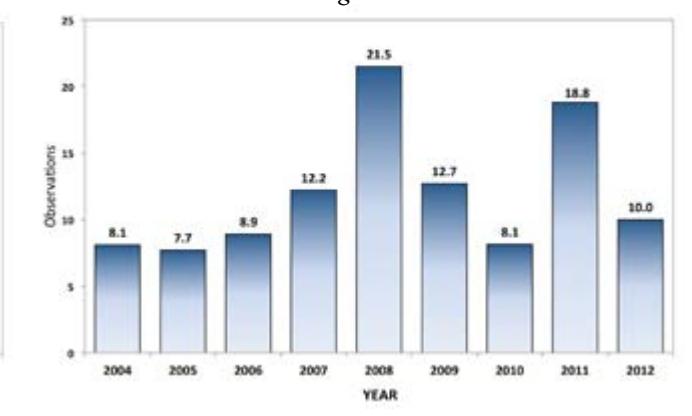
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7



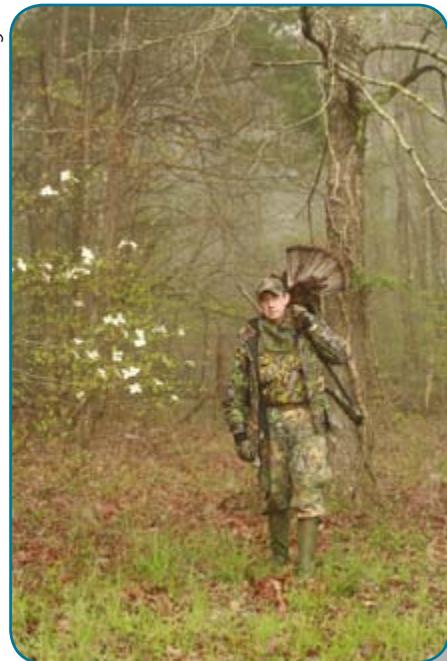
2013 Season Forecast

Region 5 hunters should expect a decrease in the number of 2-year-old gobblers they find during the 2013 season. This should result in decreased gobbling activity and harvest rates since 2-year-old birds tend to be more vocal and susceptible to harvest. The good 2012 hatch in Region should mean an increase in overall turkeys observed, particularly jakes and young hens.

Join Our Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey Team

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

Steve Gulledge



THE 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. This report discusses turkey population trends in each region. It also includes insightful articles that discuss turkey biology and management.
- 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?

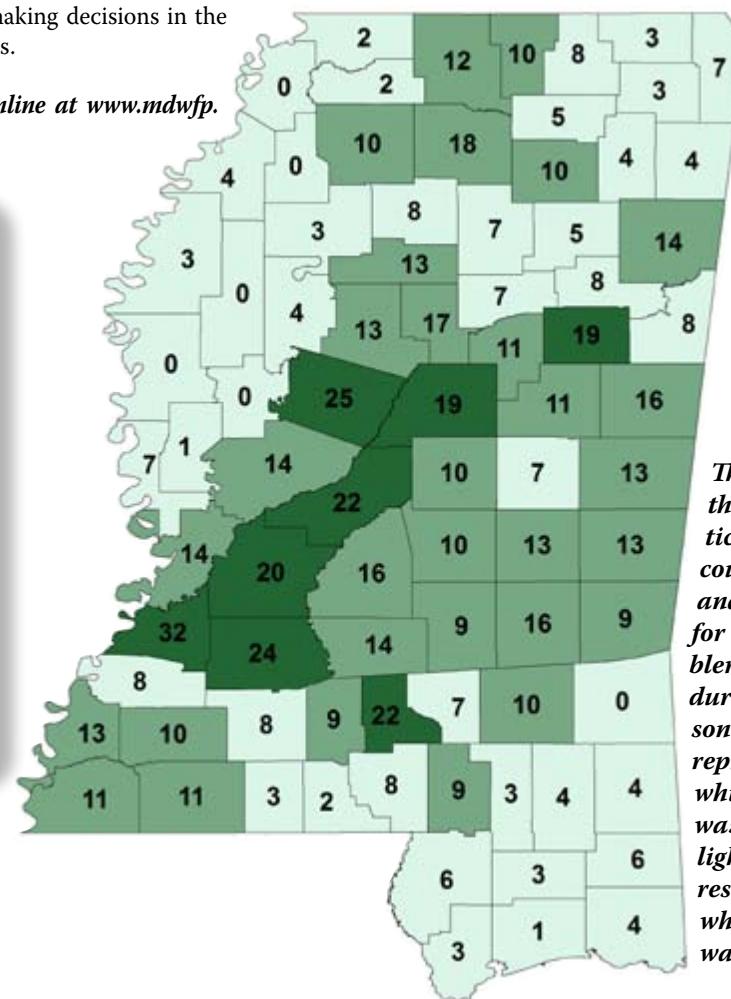


How can I Participate?

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 one of the MDWFP Turkey Program biologists. You can also apply at www.mdwfp.com/turkey. Your efforts will assist the MDWFP in

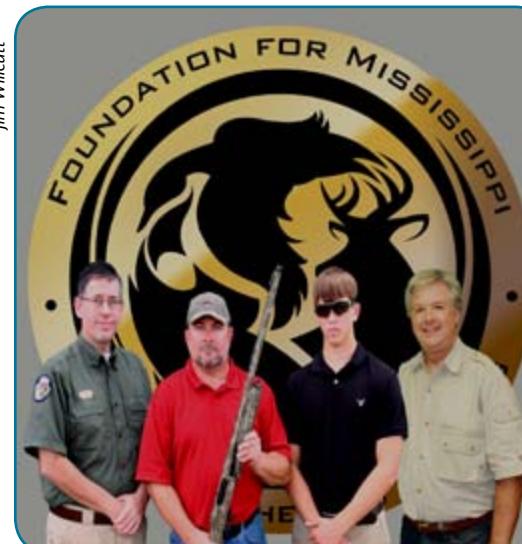
monitoring Mississippi's turkeys and making decisions in the best interest of the resource and hunters.

New SGHS Participants can enroll online at www.mdwfp.com/turkey.



This figure displays the number of participants in each county that collected and returned data for the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey during the 2012 season. Darker shading represents counties in which participation was higher, whereas lighter shading represents counties in which participation was lower.

Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey Participant Shotgun Raffle Continues in 2013



Dave Godwin, MDWFP Wild Turkey Program Coordinator (left) and Clark Gordin, Executive Director of the Foundation for Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (right), present a new shotgun to winner Billy "Blue" Baker (second from left) shown with his son Hunter Baker.

IN AN EFFORT TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN THE SGHS, THE MDWFP has partnered with the Mississippi Chapter NWTF and the Mississippi Foundation for Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks to conduct a shotgun raffle for survey participants. During 2012, two shotguns were given away for this promotion. The general drawing was open to all hunters who participated in the SGHS and returned a data booklet to the MDWFP by the May 15th deadline. The second drawing was for those hunters who referred a new survey participant during 2012.

SGHS Team

Spittin' & Drummin'

Billy "Blue" Baker of Sardis won the general drawing and received a Remington 870 12 gauge turkey gun courtesy of the Foundation for Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. The referral drawing winner was Mr. Kermit Thames, of Laurel, who received a Remington 870 12 gauge turkey gun which was sponsored by the Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

The MDWFP Wild Turkey Program would like to congratulate these two gentlemen and thank them and everyone who participated in this year's SGHS! These data collection efforts are one of the best ways hunters can assist the MDWFP in conserving Mississippi's wild turkey resource. This promotion will be available to SGHS participants again in 2013 thanks to the generosity of our partners!



Scott Edwards



Dave Godwin, MDWFP Wild Turkey Program Coordinator (right) and Jimmy Barton, Regional Director of the National Wild Turkey Federation (left), present a new shotgun to winner Kermit Thames.



Steve Gulledge

Magnolia State Turkey Talk

President's Message

HAVING SERVED AS PRESIDENT OF THE MS STATE CHAPTER IN THE MID 1980'S, I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY to see how far our state chapter and NWTF have grown and prospered over the past thirty years.



Thanks to the thousands of volunteers that have worked tirelessly during this period of time. All of our accomplishments would not have been possible without volunteers and members who are passionate about the conservation of the wild turkey and preserving our hunting heritage. To all of those individuals who have donated their time, energy, resources and talents - a special thank you for all you do and have done. Local chapters continue to have a positive impact on wild turkeys and turkey hunters in our state by hosting JAKES, WITO, and Wheelin' Sportsmen events, awarding scholarships to graduating high school seniors, providing JAKE education boxes to schools, and hosting hunting heritage superfund banquets in their local communities. Local chapters and their many volunteers are the backbone of what makes the NWTF so great! Because of our fund raising banquets and our volunteer involvement, habitat enhancement projects continue to be funded throughout our state. This funding has been taking place since 1985 when the first fund raising banquet took place in Gulfport, Mississippi. I had the privilege of attending that banquet serving as President of our state chapter. Since 1985, over \$1,696,908 has been raised and spent by our state and local chapters on projects within our state.

We have a lot to be thankful for in supporting the NWTF. I think we can all say that the wild turkey and other wildlife in MS have benefited from the work that has been done by the NWTF, state and local chapters and the many volunteers that make up this organization.

A special thank you should be extended to Dave Godwin, Adam Butler, Luke Lewis, Steve Gulledge, Marc Measles and others that have contributed to this publication. Thank you to all the turkey hunters that participate in the spring gobblers hunting survey each spring. Without your input, this publication would not be complete.

Continue to support your state NWTF chapter and the local chapter in your community in 2013. Attend a fund raising banquet, purchase a NWTF membership, consider purchasing a MS chapter tag for your vehicle, and become involved with your local chapter.

Have a great spring season and introduce a child to turkey hunting. The rewards will be great!

Sincerely,

Gene Davis, President
Mississippi Chapter, NWTF

Please like us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/#!/MississippiNWTF) and check out NWTF.ORG for more information.



Gene Davis

2012 Mississippi Regional Biologist Update

WHAT A GREAT TIME TO BE A TURKEY HUNTER IN MISSISSIPPI! MANY OF YOU WHO SUPPORT THE MS Chapter of NWTF may ask "Why do I need to be a member of the National Wild Turkey Federation and support this organization?" "Why" is the reason turkey hunters support this conservation organization! To know we are doing our part to hear the continued sound of the wild turkey's spring gobble is what excites most hunters. Maybe your support is for perpetuating our hunting heritage for youth, women, or disabled hunters, and our rights to own and bear arms? Whatever the reason we thank you and hope you continue to be involved with our conservation efforts in Mississippi during the coming year.

The Mississippi Chapter and its members have a great legacy to be proud of. Since 1985 we have spent more than 1.8 million dollars in our state through revenue raised at our hunting heritage banquets. In 2012, the Mississippi Chapter NWTF spent \$58,874.89 dollars on 34 Super Fund Project requests. Our spending in Mississippi falls into five categories: Habitat Enhancement, Hunter Access, Wild Turkey Research, Education, and Outreach.

Through your support of the NWTF in 2012 we visited 50 Mississippi landowners in historic longleaf pine range and developed wildlife management plans for each that impacted 9,175 acres of land in 18 counties, and restored approximately 2,469 acres of prime turkey habitat. Two longleaf pine landowner field days were conducted in the spring and fall of 2012, with 239 landowners and professionals in attendance. This landowner program will be expanded into 2013-2014 through a new Natural Resource Conservation Service "Longleaf Pine Initiative" to provide an additional 40 landowner visits and 2 outreach field days for education and land management planning.

Agency partners such as the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Mississippi Forestry Commission, Mississippi State University, Mississippi Forestry Association, USDA Forest Service, Wildlife Mississippi, Jones County Junior College, Mississippi Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Mississippi Chapter of NWTF were supportive of these two very successful landowner events in 2012. Local landowner association groups from Jones County and Lawrence County, private landowners, and companies such as Georgia Pacific were part of creating these outstanding and informative field days for landowners.

Your Mississippi State Chapter was very active in 2012, funding habitat projects on three wildlife management areas and helping a prescribed burn association to aid landowners in the purchase of a fully equipped prescribed burn trailer which will help individuals implement burning on their land.



Luke Lewis teaches youth about turkey hunting during a JAKES event held at the Binachi Boy Scout camp near Meridian, Mississippi.



NWTF Regional Biologist Luke Lewis with a nice Mississippi gobbler taken during the 2012 season.

In 2012, the Mississippi State Chapter supported 9 local and 1 state scholarships for graduating high school seniors totaling \$6,500. Forty Wild Turkey Education Boxes were distributed to individual teachers throughout Mississippi to help them teach conservation in our schools. Contributions to the US Sportsman's Alliance, NWTF's Hunting Heritage Super Fund, and 4-H Shooting Sports provided financial support of \$6,000 for continuing the efforts to protect our hunting rights in the United States.

One of the new projects supported by the Mississippi Chapter to help encourage more youth participation in conservation and hunting was with the Choctaw Council of the Boy Scouts of America. The Binachi Boy Scout camp near Meridian, Mississippi was the recipient of \$6,000 to support the shooting sports with responsible use of guns and archery equipment on their 450 acre property. Support of their sporting clay shooting range, target gun range, archery range, 3-D Archery course, and other conservation activities will total \$30,000 over the next 5 years. During the fall of 2012, the Binachi facility hosted over 107 boy scouts and their instructors for the

first JAKE's event ever held on their camp grounds. A partnership has been formed with BSA and the Binachi BSA Camp to host annual youth JAKES events, annual MS State Board Meetings, a Archery 3-D Fund Raising Event, and other conservation activities such as mentored youth hunts at their facility.



Brandon Bobo is the new NWTF Regional Biologist in Mississippi.

wild turkeys to suitable habitat we will now turn our attention to identifying specific state habitat projects for the next 10 years, as well as targeting a specific number of new NWTF members we would like to recruit in Mississippi. These new volunteer members will consist of both youth and adults members. Just think if each of the current 3,400 Mississippi NWTF members took one new kid or adult hunting, or invited them to an NWTF Super Fund event next year - we could double our membership and add significantly to our hunting heritage!

This new initiative will allow our Mississippi Chapter State board, the state's turkey biologists, and Mississippi NWTF staff to decide where our most important habitat enhancement priorities should be, and how we can continue to recruit new members and hunters into our organization. Strength is in numbers and it takes financial support to achieve the goals we will set forth as a chapter and state to continue to protect and conserve our precious wildlife resource in Mississippi.

In closing, it has been my privilege to serve Mississippi as your NWTF regional biologist for the last 3 years. We have a lot to be excited about as NWTF members especially now with the ability to bring on a full time NWTF biologist to work closely and compliment the two state turkey biologists and other resource professionals in Mississippi. I personally want to thank my friends who I have known on the MS Chapter state board and the privilege of serving with them to plan and accomplish some incredible habitat and outreach events for our local communities over the last several years. Together we are making a difference in conservation in Mississippi and I see nothing but opportunity for the future if we all work together for the benefit of the wild turkey. Hey turkey chasers, "It's all about the gobble!"

Luke D. Lewis
NWTF Regional Biologist



Mississippi grants and partnerships in 2012 totaled \$163,250.00 from Midway USA, USDA NRCS Longleaf Pine Initiative, Mississippi Forestry Commission Longleaf Grant, MS Chapter of NWTF, and MS Youth Participation Initiative grant. Funds from these grants supported landowner field days, landowner site visits, youth events in MS, and the Mississippi NWTF regional biologist support. Because of this tremendous support, the Mississippi Chapter was able to hire Brandon Bobo, NWTF regional biologist, in January 2013 to be the state's full time NWTF regional biologist. Brandon is a wildlife graduate of Auburn University and will be residing in the Jackson, Mississippi area. Brandon will be working on the MS NRCS Longleaf Initiative, helping coordinate habitat projects and stewardship contracting on state and forest service lands, as well as administering the 34 Mississippi Chapters super fund projects which totaled over \$68,000 in 2012. Brandon is married with a one-year old daughter and can be reached at 256-452-5820 or at bbobo@nwtf.net.

As we enter into 2013, the NWTF will be introducing our newest conservation initiative, "Save the Habitat, Save the Hunt." As the name indicates, now that most of the United States has restored

2012 Mississippi State Super Fund Expenditures

Scholarships

9 Local Chapter Scholarships.....	\$4,500.00
1 State Scholarship	\$1,000.00

Education

2012 Mississippi Turkey Brochure (7,500 copies).....	\$2,400.00
2012 Spittin' & Drummin' Publication – Mailed to Membership (3,398 copies)	\$10,000.00
62 Wild Turkey Education Boxes for Mississippi Teachers.....	\$1,992.40

Hunting Heritage

Mississippi Regional Biologist Support 2012.....	\$10,000.00
Hunting Heritage Foundation	\$500.00
United States Shooting Sports	\$500.00
4-H Shooting Sports.....	\$2,500.00
Binachi Council – Boy Scouts of America Shooting Facility.....	\$3,000.00
Shotgun Drawing – 2012 Spring Harvest Gobbler Survey	\$481.49

Outreach Events

Oxford Chapter JAKE's Event	\$250.00
Marion County Chapter JAKE's Event	\$250.00
Cliff White Chapter JAKE's Event	\$2,000.00
Binachi Choctaw Council BSA JAKE's Event.....	\$1,500.00

Partner Field Days

Lawrence County Spring Landowner Field Day.....	\$500.00
Jones County Fall Landowner Field Day	\$500.00
Mississippi Chapter of The Wildlife Society Annual Meeting.....	\$500.00

Mississippi Super Fund Projects - WMA's, Seed Subsidy, Rewards, & Research

Divide Section WMA 4-Wheeler Drip Fire Torch.....	\$1,695.00
Black Prairie WMA Herbicide NWSG Enhancement	\$1,472.00
Charles Ray Nix WMA Offset Harrow Disk	\$6,400.00
Coldwater Association Prescribe Burn Trailer.....	\$2,959.00
2012 Fall Clover Subsidy and mailer (244 bags of clover)	\$8,323.33
Mississippi Habitat and Reward signs	\$1,225.00
Research-Mississippi Turkey Population Analysis- UGA	\$4,000.00
2012 Turkey Reward Payment.....	\$250.00

Total Super Fund Dollars Spent in 2012 \$68,697.89



Mississippi Longleaf Initiative 2012

"Just What the Doctor Ordered for Turkeys"

FOR THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS THE MISSISSIPPI Chapter NWTF, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), USDA Forest Service, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks (MDWFP), Mississippi Forestry Commission, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Longleaf Alliance have been working with other partners and private landowners to provide planning, education, and cost share programs to individuals in Mississippi interested in restoring longleaf pine within the historical range that it once occupied in our state.

Longleaf Pine once existed on 90 million acres of land from East Texas to Virginia. All of the agencies and non-governmental organizations mentioned previously have partnered to help landowners in Mississippi learn more about longleaf restoration. These groups have provided technical assistance during onsite visits, offered management recommendations, and developed formal wildlife/forestry plans for participating landowners. The goal of this effort was to help landowners restore and manage longleaf pine stands and the native plant understory found in these habitat types.



A young longleaf pine seedling plant in South Mississippi.

Why should a landowner consider planting longleaf pines on their land? You might be interested to know that longleaf pine forests provide one of the most diverse habitat types found in the world. With the exception of the tropical rainforest, the plant community found with the longleaf pine ecosystem is the second most diverse system worldwide, containing as many as 800 plant and animal species on some sites.

Why, you might ask, are longleaf stands so different than other pine forests? It is largely due to the frequency of the use of fire. After you plant these seedlings, you can begin to prescribe burn as early as the second year after planting, and then you can burn every few years after that to maintain the grass, forbs, and legume community. For us turkey hunters, this management regime provides optimum turkey nesting and brood habitat. So if you have a longleaf pine stand that is prescribed burned every two to three years you are never out of turkey habitat. These burned areas become a natural food plot attracting deer, turkey, quail, doves, and songbirds to utilize the myriad of plant foods and insects found on the site. In case you forgot, a turkey poult's diet is 90% insects the first 6 weeks of its life due to the high protein this food source provides.



A wild turkey gobbler using an area recently planted to longleaf pines.

So what if the NRCS or USFWS offered you 75-100% cost share to plant longleaf pine on your land, which could be used to offset the costs of site preparation, purchasing and planting containerized longleaf seedlings, herbaceous release treatments, and possibly two prescribed burns during a 4-5 period. Got your attention? Even better, this assistance includes professional services from the NWTF, MDWFP, or USFWS biologist who will come out and provide a free onsite visit and detailed management plan for your property!

This type of assistance is available right now, and if you're interested in finding out more details about this program and



Participants in two landowner field days learned about the benefits of restoring longleaf pine habitats.



how it can help improve wildlife on your land you need to contact Brandon Bobo, NWTF regional biologist to learn more (bbobo@nwtf.net). Additional assistance can also be received by contacting private land programs with the MDWFP and USFWS to schedule a site visit on your land with a wildlife biologist.

In 2012 the NWTF partnered with the NRCS to provide personal site visits to 50 Mississippi landowners, and wrote wildlife management plans under the "American Tree Farm" system to direct and educate individuals about the opportunities to use the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and recommended other landowners to the USFWS "Partners for Wildlife" program to receive cost share for various aspects of restoring longleaf pine habitats.

Written plans covering over 9,100 acres of habitat were provided to Mississippi landowners, with nearly 2,500 acres restored into longleaf pine. This work took place in 18 central and south Mississippi counties that qualified for longleaf restoration. If you have not considered putting some of your recently harvested timberland, old fields, or existing agricultural land back into this type of habitat, the timing could not be better. In 2012, the Mississippi Chapter NWTF and its state



agency partners hosted two landowner field days in Lawrence County and Jones County that attracted 239 landowners and professionals hoping to learn more about managing longleaf pine, and programs to help individuals restore this habitat to their land.

NWTF will be providing consultation to landowners during the next 30 months to provide longleaf site visits and wildlife plans to private landowners in central and south Mississippi. If you are interested and think your land might qualify, please contact your local NRCS office or Brandon Bobo, NWTF regional biologist for more information.



Kenny Odom looks at wild turkey habitat in Wayne County, Mississippi.



A hunter and a landowner survey turkey habitat in South Mississippi.

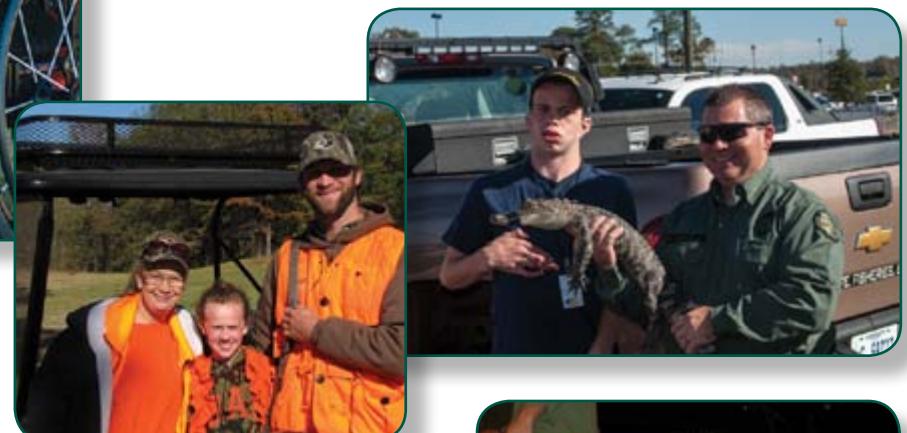
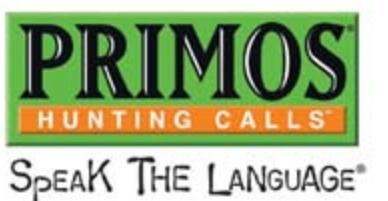
2012 Wheelin' Sportsmen Deer Hunt for Youth with Disabilities



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISH-
eries, and Parks, National Wild Turkey Federation,
Bass Pro Shops, Primos Hunting Calls, Outback Steakhouse,
Mississippi Braves, and Mazzio's co-hosted the 7th annual
Wheelin' Sportsmen Deer Hunt for Youth with Disabilities on
November 9-11. This year there were 79 youth from Missis-
sippi and Louisiana that participated in the event.

On Friday, all the hunters checked in at Bass Pro Shops in Pearl and visited the Magnolia Rifle and Pistol Club where MDWFP Conservation Officers and biologists assisted them with sighting in their rifles. Activities at Bass Pro Shops included MDWFP Fisheries Bureau helping with fishing, NWTF Jake's Take Aim BB gun shooting, the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science with snakes and turtles, and MDWFP Wildlife Bureau with an airboat and a couple of alligators.

Friday night activities included a concert by Jason Fratesi and the Dirt Road Jam Band at Trustmark Park and dinner provided by Outback Steak House. Santa even made a special trip from the North Pole to give every hunter a goodie bag.



Choctaw Council of Boy Scouts of America Hosts JAKES Event in Meridian, MS

THE CHOCTAW COUNCIL OF BOY SCOUTS OF America hosted its first JAKES event on September 22, 2012 at the Binachi Scout Camp south of Meridian in conjunction with the Mississippi Chapter NWTF. There were 127 young men and approximately 40 adults in attendance for the Saturday event. The scheduled event was included in a 3-day camporee weekend for the local Boy Scout council.



Boy Scouts having fun between stations at the Binachi JAKES event.

The JAKES event included 6 fun filled stations including the JAKES Take Aim Trailer (air gun shooting), archery, turkey and deer biology, turkey calling and hunting techniques, gun safety, and preparing food plots. Local NWTF Chapter representatives and Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks personnel were on hand as instructors. The event was a huge success and a great start to opportunities to recruit new scouts and JAKES members. Ken Kercheval, Scout Executive Director said, "I cannot thank you enough for all the help that you provided.

The NWTF really stepped up! Our partnership should be a model to other organizations of what can happen when collaboration is on the forefront. From Luke Lewis, the national organization, the State Chapter, and now the local chapter, we cannot thank you guys enough."

In December of 2011, the Mississippi Chapter entered into a partnership with the Choctaw Area Council to support the Binachi Scout Camps shooting sports facilities. The Mississippi Chapter has entered into a 5 year agreement to provide \$6,000 per year for a total of \$30,000 to aid in the development and maintenance of the camp's shooting facilities such as a target gun range, 5-stand and trap range, and 3-D Archery range. Through assistance from the NWTF regional biologist and NRCS, the Binachi Camp has restored over 100 acres of longleaf pine on their 450 acre tract of land. One of the most interesting benefits of being a part of the Choctaw Council of Boy Scouts is the opportu-

nity to be included in designated deer and turkey hunts with a guardian on the Camp Binachi site. This takes our hunting heritage full circle as we introduce the young kids to the shooting sports, educate them about conservation, and allow them to enjoy hunting on the camp property.

The partnership with Camp Binachi also has benefits to our state chapter as the chapter will have the opportunity to use the Camp Binachi facilities for annual state board meetings, youth events such as JAKES, and fundraisers. The NWTF is currently working with the camp to host a 3-D Archery Fund raiser in 2013 that will benefit both the scouts and the state chapter. The Choctaw Area Council has also received support to train scout instructors across the state to conduct Mississippi Hunter Education classes at each of the 5 Boy Scout camps across the state in 2013.



Scout leaders enjoy the Binachi JAKES event.



Adam Butler and Dave Godwin discuss wild turkey biology and management with Boy Scouts.



William McKinley teaches Boy Scouts about white-tailed deer biology.



Boys Scouts learn about archery at the Binachi JAKES event.

Midway USA Donates to Mississippi State University Shooting Team

ON OCTOBER 10, 2012, AT THE STARKVILLE GUN Club, the Mississippi State University Shooting Team was awarded a \$20,000 check from the NWTF! Mississippi State University is one of only 33 colleges or high schools in the United States to receive this scholarship support through a partnership with Midway USA.

Larry and Brenda Potterfield, owners of Midway USA and partners of the NWTF, committed this support to schools across America in 2012 to help shooting teams purchase equipment and help with travel costs to competitive shooting events. In addition to this generous support, the Potterfields have provided financial support to help buy NWTF JAKES Take Aim trailers for each state. These units allow youth to experience the opportunity to enjoy shooting a BB gun or pellet rifle at targets with adult supervision.



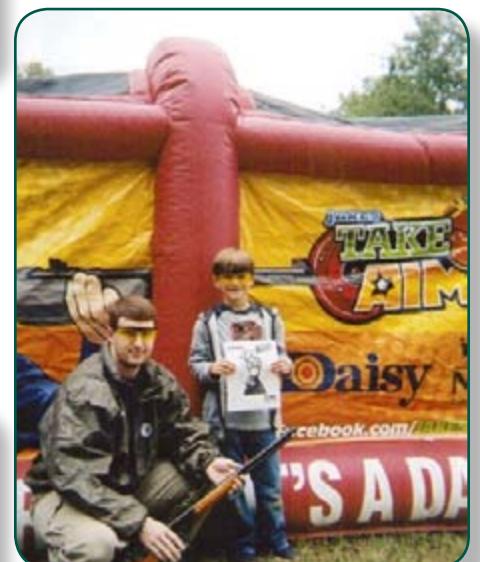
NWTF leaders present checks to members of the MSU Shooting Team.



These JAKES Take Aim trailers were made available through a partnership between NWTF, Midway USA, Daisy BB Guns, Remington, and others.



Youth enjoying shooting air guns at the JAKES Take Aim station.



This young man enjoyed learning how to shoot a BB gun thanks to the JAKES Take Aim trailer.

Daisy BB Gun Company was selected as the manufacturer of these inflatable stations, and Remington Arms also has provided financial support for this outreach program. These trailers are available to be used by local chapters for youth outreach events. Interested chapters should contact their NWTF Regional Director to schedule use of this equipment by appointment.

This is a great example of how partnerships with NWTF, Midway USA, MSU, Remington, Daisy BB Guns, and the Mississippi State Chapter can provide education, fun, and safe competition to the youth of our state. This is one of the good stories for our country that might produce our next Olympic champion in shooting sports, or introduce a new young girl or boy into the shooting or hunting world because we as NWTF volunteers made it fun and safe!

2012 Habitat Projects Supported by the Mississippi Super Fund



An ATV mounted drip torch provided by the NWTF is used to improve wildlife habitat on public land.

4-Wheeler Prescribed Burn Drip Torch – to enhance 300 acres of Native Warm Season Grass fields and 10,000 acres of upland habitat on Divide Section WMA in north Mississippi through prescribed burns. This habitat enhancement will improve brood and nesting cover for wild turkeys.....\$1,695.00



Establishing Native Warm Season Grasses on Black Prairie WMA. Funds from the NWTF were used to enhance these areas for wild turkeys.

Herbicide chemical to improve Native Warm Season Grasses – 25 gallons of Accord XRT2 to control fescue and Johnson grass on 50 acres of Native Warm Season Grass fields for turkey brood and nesting cover on Black Prairie WMA\$1,472.00



This heavy disk will be used for habitat management on public Wildlife Management Areas.

10'2" Offset Harrow Disk– This disk is to be used on Charles Ray Nix WMA and other local wildlife management areas in north Mississippi for fire lane establishment and preparation of wildlife openings.....\$6,400.00



The NWTF helped make this equipment available to private land managers around Holly Springs, Mississippi.

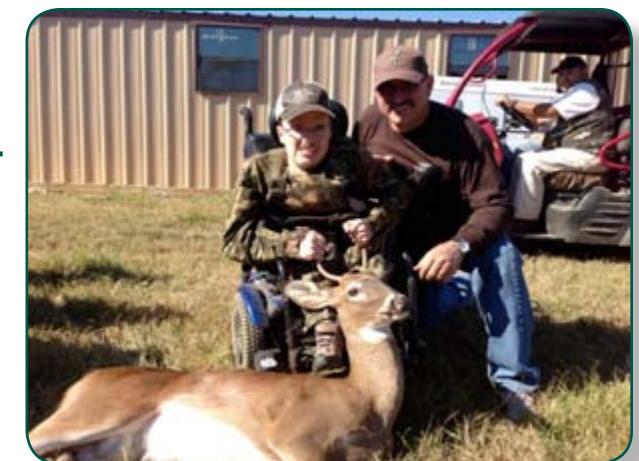
Prescribed Burn Trailer– purchased and donated to the Coldwater Prescribed Burn Association near Holly Springs, Mississippi. Trailer will be used by multiple private landowners to implement habitat enhancement burns on their lands and stored at the Strawberry Plains Audubon Center.....\$2,959.00

NEWS FROM THE FLOCK



Anna Rawls 2012 Mississippi State Chapter Scholarship Winner

Anna Rawls representing was the recipient of a \$2,000 Mississippi State Scholarship for 2012. Photo (left to right). Billy Young- Stone County Chapter President, Sammy Tebo- Strong River Chapter President, Anna Rawls, and Jerry King, Chairman of the Mississippi Chapter Scholarship Committee.



Cliff White Chapter

On the weekend of November 9, 2012 the Cliff White Chapter of the NWTF in Laurel, Mississippi hosted a Wheelin' Sportsman event for children with disabilities. Thirty disabled youth from various parts of the state participated in a weekend long deer hunt where over 20 deer were harvested. This event was made possible by generous donations from local businesses and individuals and thru a partnership with the MDWFP. The event was hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Billy Jenkins.



Scott Cumbest Receives Gift as Outgoing Mississippi State Chapter President

Scott Cumbest (left) received a prescribed burn drip touch from incoming Mississippi Chapter President Gene Davis (right) for his two year service as Mississippi State Chapter President. Through Scott's efforts during his term as president, the Mississippi state board approved 65 Super Fund projects totaling \$116,277.25 dollars for improving habitat, education, outreach, research, and protecting our hunting heritage in Mississippi.

During Scott's tenure, Mississippi received \$355,300.00 dollars in grant funds for the Longleaf Pine Initiative, support for US Forest Service Stewardship Contracting, Mississippi Youth Participation Initiative, and the Boy Scout Conservation Badge Initiative. Under Scott's presidency the Mississippi Chapter Super Fund account increased from \$89,572.65 in FY 2011 to \$111,237.13 in FY 2012.

Scott's passion for helping the wild turkey in Mississippi was not only displayed in his leadership as State Chapter President, but also in the management of his own land near Lucedale, Mississippi where he is actively restoring longleaf pine and enhancing habitat through mid-story hardwood removal and prescribed burning to help wild turkeys. That is why the Mississippi State Board opted to show its gratitude to Scott for his tireless efforts by providing him his own drip torch to conduct prescribed burns on his land. The Mississippi Chapter genuinely appreciates his tireless efforts and dedication in helping us accomplish so much during these last two years.

First Annual Juggin For Jakes Fishing Tournament



In August 2012 the first annual Juggin For Jakes Jug Fishing Tournament was held at the Ross Barnett Reservoir in Rankin county Mississippi. The event raised funds for the NWTF's youth shooting program and is going to become an annual event. This Event raised \$3,500 for youth shooting programs in Mississippi.

Photo Gallery

MS LONGLEAF PINE LANDOWNER FIELD DAY

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS:
Forestry Continuing Education Units Offered

DATE and TIME: May 10, 2012
Registration at 8 a.m.
Program begins at 9 a.m.

LOCATION: Jack Wellborn
502 Firetower Road • Silver Creek, MS 39663

LUNCH: Meal Provided

COST: \$5

REGISTRATION REMITTANCE TO:
Lawrence County Forestry Association
435 Brinson Street, Apt. B • Monticello, MS 39654
Phone: (601) 587-2271 • Fax: (601) 587-0754

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
Amanda Walker – (601) 587-2271
amandan@ext.ms.state.edu

Discrimination based upon race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or veteran status is a violation of federal and state law and MSU policy and will not be tolerated. Discrimination based upon sexual orientation or group affiliation is a violation of MSU policy and will not be tolerated.



Local Chapter News



NWTF booth at the Atwood Music Festival - Lawrence County Chapter



South MS Strutters in Richton Mississippi hosted their first ever banquet on October 13, 2012. Preston Pittman was the guest speaker for their event.





A landowner field day on longleaf pine was held on October 30, 2012 in Jones County.



MISSISSIPPI LONGLEAF PINE FIELD DAY

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS: Forestry Continuing Education Units Offered

DATE and TIME:
October 30, 2012
Registration at 8 a.m. • Program begins at 9 a.m.

LOCATION:
Jones County Junior College Advanced Technology Center
11 Technology Blvd. • Ellisville, MS 39437

LUNCH: Dean's Smokehouse BBQ

COST: Registration is \$5 (includes meal)

REGISTRATION REMITTANCE TO:
Jones County Forestry Association
Attn: Linda Jelcoat • P.O. Box 448 • Laurel, MS 39441
(662) 428-3188 Fax • (662) 428-3201 Phone

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
Kim Tolbert (662) 428-3201 • ktolbert@ext.msstate.edu



The Mississippi State Chapter board meets at Bass Pro Shops in Pearl, Mississippi to discuss chapter business.

The North Waterway and the Hill Country Strutter Chapters of the National Wild Turkey Foundation partnered with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) and the Corps of Engineers to sponsor a JAKES event on October 13, 2012 at Jackson Camp Youth and Handicap Area on Bay Springs Lake on the Tennessee Tombigbee Waterway. Many of the youths had Mom, Dad or both with them at the event. The event has been held for the last nine years for youth in the local area in an effort to promote safety and to introduce children to the outdoors as well as the NWTF. Activities this year were geared for 8-15 year old youths, and consisted of five stops.

Archery safety was one of the stations available. At this stop the youth learned how to safely handle archery equipment and then had the chance to practice shooting at clay targets as well as balloons. Participants were amazed to see how accurate they were with a little practice. Rifle and shotgun safety ranges were made available by the MDWFP, with participants learning the basics of rifle and shotgun safety prior to getting the opportunity to shoot rimfire rifles and shotguns on a safe range. Deb Waz from the Mississippi Natural Science Museum taught the kids about wildlife conservation in the state, while members of the NWTF Hill Country Strutters chapter manned a BB gun station which was very popular with the younger participants.

A pizza lunch was provided by the chapter. During lunch Park Ranger Ben Davis with the Corps of Engineers talked with the group about the importance of wearing a life jacket while using a boat to get to and from hunting locations. Each Jake participant was also entered into a drawing for door prizes, including a new twenty gauge shotgun! After the remaining door prizes were given out, NWTF Chapter president Terry Farris thanked the group and parents for coming and invited them to join the best conservation group around. Over one hundred people attended this JAKES event, including 58 youth participants.



A JAKES event participant at the shotgun shooting station.



NWTF member and Corps of Engineer Ranger Craig Koon pictured with this year's winner of the grand prize 20-gauge shotgun.



Participants at the JAKES event held at Bay Springs, October 13, 2012.



A total of 58 participants enjoyed a day of education and fun!

Renew or Sign-up a Friend.

Join the Flock Today!

Join America's Leader in Upland Conservation to help improve upland wildlife habitat and introduce youth, women and people with disabilities to the outdoors.

Yes, I want to support the National Wild Turkey Federation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation of the wild turkey and preservation of our hunting heritage, and receive a collectible NWTF Hat.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Preferred contact method: surface mail E-mail

No, I would not like to receive the NWTF's latest news and information via e-mail.

Charge my credit card:

Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Sign me up for automatic annual renewal to this credit card until I notify you otherwise.

Make checks payable to the National Wild Turkey Federation
Please mail form and payment to:
NWTF, P.O. Box 530, Edgefield, SC 29824

www.nwtf.org

Please check membership option:

Annual Membership: \$35

- Regular NWTF Member
- NWTF's Women in the Outdoors
- Wheelin' Sportsmen NWTF

JAKES Member: \$10

Birth year _____

Xtreme JAKES Member: \$10

Birth year _____

Sponsor NWTF Member: \$250

Incentive Gift

State size (Small, Medium, Large,
XLarge, 2X, 3X, 4X, 5X, 6X) _____

Life Sponsor:

- Silver \$5,000
- Diamond \$10,000
- Patron \$25,000



Steve Gulledge

**Long Beards &
Curved Spurs:
Mississippi
Wild Turkey
Records**

Mississippi Wild Turkey Records

ALL WILD TURKEYS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED TROPHIES, BUT SOME ARE MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN OTHERS. Therefore, hunters annually contact the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) to find out how their bird compares to those harvested by others. Due to the interest from turkey hunters, the MDWFP has a database for gobblers harvested in Mississippi. The purpose for maintaining turkey records is to allow sportsmen to recognize and fully appreciate the quality of individual turkeys.

Turkey records are presented for the following categories: Top Scoring Typical, Top Scoring Non-typical, Heaviest, Longest Spurs, and Longest Beard. Non-typical turkeys have multiple beards. Total score is obtained by adding the turkey's weight plus 10 times the combined length of both spurs plus 2 times beard length. Weight should be measured to the nearest ounce on certified scales. Beards are measured in 1/16 inch increments from the center point of the beard's base where it attaches to the skin to the end of the longest bristle. Spurs are measured in 1/16 inch increments along the outside center of the spur from the point at which the spur protrudes from the scaled leg skin to the tip of the spur. All weights and measurements should be converted to decimals. A registration form is provided in this report for those who wish to have their harvested gobbler included in the Mississippi Wild Turkey Records.



This fine bird, harvested by Paul Davis during the 2012 season, sported spurs 1.75" long which ranked 4th in the state.

Top Scoring Typical

Rank	Score	Date Harvested	County Harvested	Hunter
1	80.57	4/8/2005	Smith	Amp Frith
2	80.39	4/11/2009	Panola	Lauren K. Russell
3	79.20	4/18/2003	Copiah	Doug Borries
4	78.50	3/31/2009	Lafayette	Greg Vaughan
5	77.75	3/29/2007	Alcorn	Mike Suitor
6	77.00	3/28/1987	Kemper	Robby Ellis
7	76.70	4/13/2005	Pearl River	Kris Collins
8	76.10	4/13/2004	Lowndes	Chris Herring
9	76.06	4/5/1997	Jefferson Davis	Shay Stephens
10	76.05	4/16/2007	Lauderdale	Dr. Don E. Marascalo
11	75.57	4/6/2002	Monroe	Monty R. Roberts
12	75.05	3/30/2004	Newton	Hunter T. Hayes
13	74.75	3/26/2002	Scott	Michael Walker
14	74.66	4/7/2001	Grenada	Todd Roberts
15	74.63	3/23/1998	Warren	Freddy Gaumnitz
16	74.50	3/24/2007	Claiborne	James D. Greer
17	74.38	4/24/2010	Noxubee	Robert Dinsmore
	74.38	4/3/2008	Monroe	Tyler Hood
19	74.33	4/8/2000	Kemper	Terry Frierson
20	74.25	4/8/2000	Leake	Ronald D. Coleman

Top Scoring Non-Typical

Rank	Total Score	Number Beards	Total Length	Date Harvested	County Harvested	Hunter
1	157.06	9	60.25	4/8/2010	Pontotoc	Don Shumaker
2	151.16	7	57.25	3/17/2008	Tishomingo	Jerrell Keele
3	148.30	7	52.69	3/28/2002	Amite	James R. Scheer
4	143.17	9	53.26	3/20/2000	Marion	Andy Stinger
5	141.63	6	48.99	4/12/2011	Claiborne	J.R. Robinson
6	139.50	5	46.50	4/29/2008	Simpson	Bobby Tebo
7	139.26	8	52.69	3/23/1998	Scott	Richard Latham
8	137.13	6	51.69	3/24/2009	Tishomingo	Lee Oaks
9	135.72	9	52.86	4/14/2005	Tishomingo	Jerry Smith
10	134.98	5	45.50	3/24/2001	Alcorn	Mike Suiter
11	131.89	5	45.94	4/21/2001	Noxubee	Will Austin
12	130.25	5	44.25	3/24/1989	Hinds	Robbie Barlow
13	128.12	5	46.63	4/6/2008	Jefferson	Wayne Ponder II
14	126.04	5	43.07	4/14/2006	Warren	Kenneth Grogan, IV
15	125.75	5	42.38	4/3/1995	Calhoun	Walter Mitchell
16	125.69	4	38.75	4/11/1986	Noxubee	Robert E. Persons
17	124.28	6	43.14	3/15/2006	Jefferson	Bobby Hughes
18	122.86	6	43.63	3/22/2000	Tishomingo	Jeff Stephens
19	122.64	7	41.59	3/28/2003	Marion	Wade McKenzie
20	122.25	6	41.56	3/9/2008	Adams	Brandon Hebert

Longest Beard

Rank	Beard Length	Date Harvested	County Harvested	Hunter
1	17.25	4/30/2001	Monroe	Monty Roberts
2	16.25	4/8/2005	Smith	Amp Frith
3	16.00	4/6/2002	Monroe	Monty Roberts
4	15.50	4/19/2012	Tippah	Dan Glover
5	15.00	3/28/2003	Marshall	Carlton Gibson
6	14.75	4/4/2007	Claiborne	Dale Collins
7	14.19	4/10/2003	Monroe	Charles C. Langley
8	14.13	3/19/1989	Wilkinson	Todd Thomas D'Aquin
9	14.00	4/8/2000	Kemper	Terry Frierson
	14.00	4/15/1981	Jefferson Davis	Robert W. Polk
11	13.88	3/22/2011	Newton	Sidney Odom
12	13.75	3/30/2002	Covington	Owen Cole
	13.75	3/27/2003	Lawrence	W.J. "Wild Bill" Smith
14	13.63	4/9/2004	Leake	Brian Terrell
15	13.50	4/10/2001	Attala	James C. Cain
16	13.06	3/25/2009	Neshoba	Tim Warren
17	13.00	4/19/1997	Neshoba	Darron Smith
	13.00	4/24/2003	Benton	Steve King
	13.00	4/8/2001	Holmes	Richard Wiman



Lauren Russell harvested this trophy gobbler, the heaviest in the state, in Panola County.

Heaviest

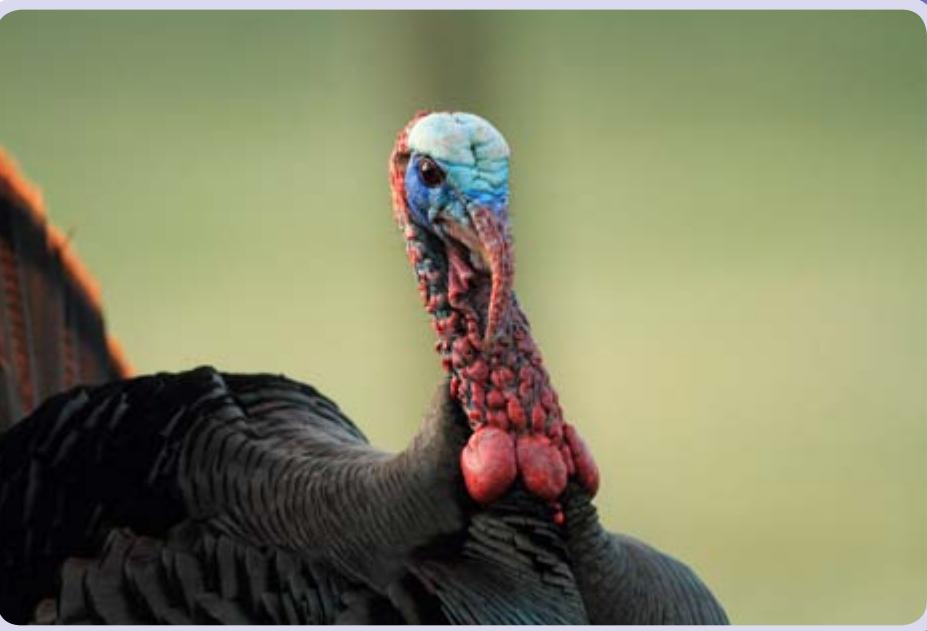
Rank	Weight	Date Harvested	County Harvested	Hunter
1	25.27	4/11/2009	Panola	Lauren K. Russell
2	25.25	3/30/2004	Newton	Hunter T. Hayes
3	25.19	3/26/2004	Neshoba	John Robb
4	24.68	4/18/2003	Copiah	Doug Borries
5	24.44	4/2/2005	Neshoba	Chad Young
6	24.00	3/16/2009	Forrest	Matthew Saucier
	24.00	3/18/2008	Adams	Chasen Gann
8	23.94	3/18/2005	Chickasaw	Brian Fikes
9	23.75	4/22/1996	Monroe	Jeff Daniel
	23.75	3/29/2007	Alcorn	Mike Suior
11	23.69	3/28/2005	Prentiss	Doug Taylor Jr.
12	23.63	3/11/2012	Kemper	John Ross Briggs
13	23.50	3/24/1990	Jefferson Davis	Danny Sinclair
14	23.38	4/8/1995	Sharkey	R. Revel Rawlings
15	23.30	3/16/2009	Washington	Anonymous
16	23.19	4/13/2000	Pearl River	J. B. Hodge
17	23.10	3/14/2010	Leake	Chris McMurry
18	23.00	4/14/2006	Holmes	Joseph Mohamed
19	22.87	3/24/2000	Choctaw	Tommy Trussell
20	22.75	3/25/1995	Tishomingo	Phil Byram

Longest Spurs

Rank	Spur Length	Date Harvested	County Harvested	Hunter
1	1.880	4/16/2007	Lauderdale	Dr. Don E. Marascalo
2	1.812	3/31/2009	Lafayette	Greg Vaughan
3	1.810	4/30/1990	Claiborne	Marvin Muirhead
4	1.750	3/18/2012	Claiborne	Paul Davis
	1.750	4/13/2005	Pearl River	Kris Collins
	1.750	4/8/2000	Leake	Ronald D. Coleman
	1.750	4/5/2000	Copiah	Rickey Thompson
	1.750	4/17/2004	Chickasaw	Mike Soper
	1.750	4/2/2003	Jefferson	Thomas McAlpin, Jr.
	1.750	3/24/2007	Claiborne	James D. Greer
5	1.690	4/13/2004	Lowndes	Chris Herring
	1.690	3/26/2002	Scott	Michael Walker
	1.690	4/11/2004	Rankin	Michael Willoughby
	1.690	3/25/2000	Choctaw	Zach Crowley
6	1.687	5/1/2011	Tippah	Michael Hyde
	1.687	4/8/2010	Smith	David Stagg
	1.687	4/2/2009	Jasper	Sam White
	1.687	3/22/2008	Wilkinson	Heath Chenier
7	1.630	4/18/2003	Copiah	Doug Borries
	1.630	4/17/1999	Leake	Roger D. Latham
	1.630	4/29/2002	Clarke	Gary D. Rodgers
	1.630	4/7/2000	Covington	Jeffrey Daniel Adams
	1.630	3/26/1989	Rankin	Richard Latham
	1.630	4/5/1997	Jefferson Davis	Shay Stephens
	1.630	4/21/1986	Coahoma	J. C. Gilbert
	1.630	4/13/1985	Jasper	Robert B. Caston
	1.630		Warren	Don G. Presley
	1.630	4/27/2006	Warren	Zachary Smith
	1.630	4/7/2000	Covington	Jeffery Daniel Adams

National Records: Eastern Wild Turkey

Top Scoring Typical	Top Scoring Non-Typical	Longest Beard	Heaviest	Longest Spurs
Score:104.81 Date: 04/22/99 State: Kentucky	Number of Beards: 8 Total Length: 74.875 Total Score: 199.90 Date: 05/09/10 State: Missouri	Beard Length: 22.50 Date: 04/06/07 State: Texas	Weight:35.81 Date: 04/28/01 State: Iowa	Spur Length: 2.25 Date: 04/22/99 State: Kentucky



Steve Gullede

Fall Turkey Hunting in Mississippi

Fall Turkey Hunting in Mississippi

DURING 2012, THE MDWFP CONTINUED TO PROVIDE a limited opportunity for fall turkey hunting in conjunction with an ongoing evaluation of this type of season. Open dates were October 15 - November 15, 2012, and included the following counties or portion of counties, on private lands where a fall turkey hunting application was completed and fall turkey tags were issued by the MDWFP:

Delta Zone:

Bolivar County - west of the main Mississippi River levee and those lands east of the main Mississippi River levee known as 27 Break Hunting Club; Coahoma, Desoto, Issaquena, Tunica, and Washington Counties - west of the main Mississippi River levee;

North-Central Zone:

Benton, Lafayette, Marshall, Panola, Tippah, and Union Counties; and

Southwestern Zone:

Adams, Amite, Claiborne, Copiah, Hinds, Franklin, Jefferson, Lincoln, Madison, Warren, Wilkinson, and Yazoo Counties.

Tags were issued to a specific property and could only be used on that property. The bag limit was two turkeys of either sex per season. Each contact person listed on the fall turkey hunting application was required to complete and submit a harvest report provided by the MDWFP. Additionally, all participants were required to complete a survey following the season to evaluate hunter satisfaction and related issues.



Steve Gulledge



Steve Gulledge

Fall 2012 Turkey Hunt Results

County	Total Properties	Total Acres	Total Tags	Total Harvest	Gobblers	Hens
Adams	1	2,195	5	5	0	5
Amite	2	276	2	0	0	0
Benton	3	502	3	0	0	0
Bolivar	1	850	2	0	0	0
Claiborne	17	8,240	28	1	0	1
Coahoma	2	13,360	28	6	2	4
Copiah	15	6,731	22	1	1	0
Desoto	1	1,900	4	0	0	0
Franklin	7	2,922	10	3	2	1
Franklin & Lincoln	2	273	2	0	0	0
Hinds	4	838	5	0	0	0
Jefferson	5	2,603	8	0	0	0
Jefferson/Claiborne	1	132	1	0	0	0
Lafayette	11	2,559	12	1	0	1
Lincoln	3	401	3	0	0	0
Madison	3	5,295	12	0	0	0
Marshall	5	2,486	7	2	1	1
Panola	3	593	3	1	1	0
Tippah	2	264	2	1	0	1
Tippah/Benton	1	251	1	0	0	0
Union	1	200	1	0	0	0
Warren	3	3,157	8	0	0	0
Warren/Claiborne	1	2,000	4	0	0	0
Washington	1	5,300	11	0	0	0
Wilkinson	5	2,973	8	0	0	0
Yazoo	8	11,182	26	1	1	0
Grand Total	108	77,483	218	22	8	14



Steve Gulledge

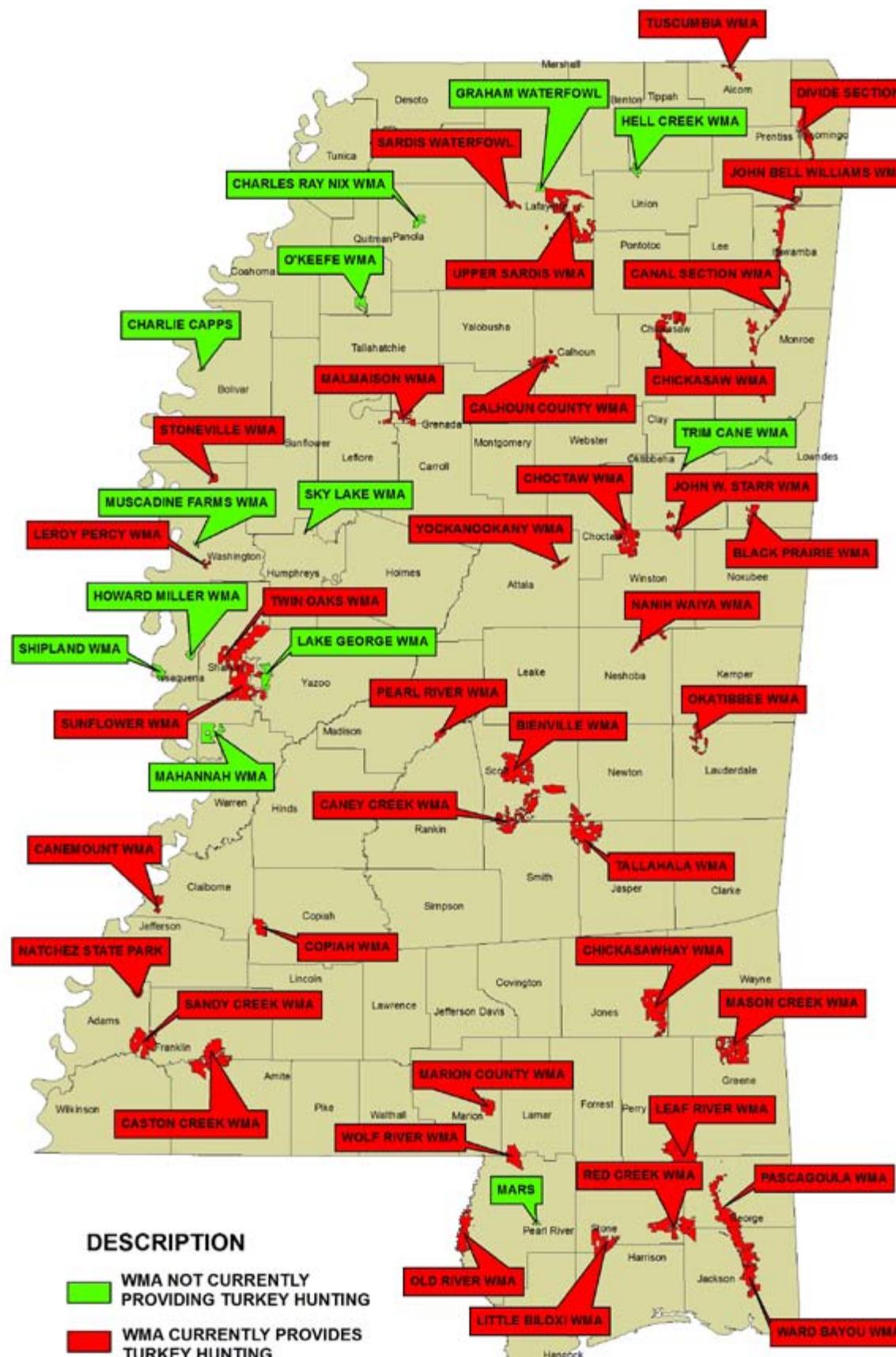


Steve Gulledge



Steve Gulledge

Wildlife Management Areas



Wildlife Management Areas

Offering turkey hunting opportunities near you!

MAGNOLIA STATE TURKEY HUNTERS ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE A WEALTH OF PUBLIC HUNTING areas that provide excellent turkey hunting! In addition to open U.S. Forest Service lands, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuges, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lands found throughout the State, turkey hunters can find great public hunting opportunities on many of the Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) managed by the MDWFP. Information on each of the WMAs that offer turkey hunting is provided in this section. Be sure to read area regulations for each WMA prior to hunting, as turkey hunting rules for many of these areas vary from statewide seasons and bag limits. For additional information on these and other WMAs, including maps and area regulations, please visit our agency website at www.mdwfp.com.

Bienville WMA

By Amy C. Blaylock, WMA Biologist

Bienville WMA is located within the Bienville National Forest just north of Morton in Scott County. The area encompasses approximately 26,136 acres, and is primarily composed of pine timber with some mixed stands of upland hardwoods. Many management practices occur on Bienville WMA that promote turkey habitat. Timber on the WMA is on long rotation intervals (70+) years to facilitate Red Cockaded Woodpecker management. In these older timber stands, underbrush is removed to create open, park-like conditions, and prescribed fire is used on three-year intervals to reduce fuel loads. This combination of management practices results in an interspersion quality nesting and brood-rearing habitat throughout the area. Permanent wildlife openings have also been created to benefit turkeys.

Hunting is limited to randomly-drawn hunters for approximately the first week and a half of the season. During the 2012 turkey season, Bienville WMA accrued 909 hunter-days, and 46 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Bienville WMA, contact the WMA Regional Office at 601-469-1918.

Black Prairie WMA

By Amy C. Blaylock, WMA Biologist

Black Prairie WMA is a 5,673 acre area located in Lowndes County near Brooksville, and consists primarily of agricultural fields, ditch rows, fence rows, small patches of woods, and scattered old fields. Most of the WMA does not contain suitable habitat for sustainable wild turkey populations; however, adjacent lands to the north hold turkeys, and these birds occasionally range onto the WMA.

Turkey hunting on this area is restricted to 4 draw hunts. Draw hunts occur for 3 days (Friday – Sunday) during each weekend of April. A maximum of 5 hunters are selected for each hunt. During the 2012 season, Black Prairie WMA accrued 14 hunter-days of hunting, and 1 harvested bird was reported. For more information on Black Prairie WMA, contact the WMA Regional Office at 662-272-8303.

Calhoun County WMA

By Brad Holder, WMA Biologist

Calhoun County WMA is a 10,900 acre area located in Calhoun County near Bruce. The area is heavily forested with variably-aged loblolly pine stands. Some mature hardwoods exist along steep slopes and drains, providing hard mast during fall and winter. Clear cuts and young pine stands are scattered throughout the area and provide nesting and foraging areas along edges. Permanent openings are managed by MDWFP personnel to provide additional habitat for wild turkeys and other wildlife.

Calhoun County WMA offers an early spring gobbler season to youth hunters in addition to the open spring gobbler season. During the 2012 season, 201 hunter-days and 12 harvested gobblers were reported for youth and open turkey seasons. For more information about this WMA, contact the WMA regional headquarters at 662-487-1946.

Canal Section and John Bell Williams WMAs

By Brad Holder, WMA Biologist

Canal Section WMA (32,500 acres) and John Bell Williams WMA (3,000 acres) share common boundaries so turkey harvest data is combined for these areas. These areas stretch approximately 54 linear miles along the west side of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway from MS Hwy 4 at Bay Springs Lake to 5 miles south of MS Hwy 45 at Aberdeen. The WMAs span portions of Tishomingo, Prentiss, Itawamba, and Monroe counties.

The northern portion of Canal Section WMA is predominantly bottomland hardwoods southward to Hwy 6 at Amory. The old Tombigbee River parallels the Tenn-Tom Waterway through this section, resulting in numerous sloughs which make closing on a gobbling tom a challenge. The southern end of the Canal Section WMA is mostly old agricultural fields that were reforested in hardwoods around 1995.

The John Bell Williams WMA is located just south of Hwy 4 on the west side of the Canal Section WMA. This area has both upland mixed and bottomland forest habitat. Hardwood stands provide hardmast during fall and winter months. Both areas have old fields and maintained levees which provide critical foraging and nesting areas for wild turkeys. Use of prescribed fire and herbicides has increased on these areas and will help to improve nesting, foraging, and brood-rearing habitat.

Both areas offer an early spring gobbler season to youth hunters in addition to the open spring gobbler season. Youth and handicapped hunters may turkey hunt the Acker Lake portion of Canal Section Sundays through Tuesdays during respective seasons. It is open to all other turkey hunters Wednesdays through Saturdays. During the 2012 season, 1296 hunter-days and 34 harvested gobblers were reported for youth and open turkey seasons. For more information on these WMAs, contact the WMA regional headquarters at 662-862-2723.

Caney Creek WMA

By Amy C. Blaylock, WMA Biologist

Caney Creek WMA is approximately 28,000 acres that stretches across the Scott and Smith County line in the Bienville National Forest. Major habitat types include pine and mixed hardwoods on the upland sites, and bottomland hardwoods along Caney Creek and the Strong River. Management practices conducted on the WMA which are beneficial to wild turkeys include prescribed fire and long-rotation management of pine timber stands. Additionally, permanent wildlife openings have been created for utilization by turkeys for feeding and areas to raise young.

Hunting is limited to randomly-drawn hunters only for approximately the first week and a half of the season. During the 2012 turkey season, Caney Creek WMA accrued 1,129 hunter-days, and 47 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Caney Creek WMA, contact the WMA Regional Office at 601-469-1918.

Caston Creek WMA

By Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

Caston Creek WMA is a 27,785 acre WMA located within the Homochitto National Forest near Meadville in Franklin and Amite Counties. The fire-maintained pine stands combined with mixed pine-hardwood and hardwood stands attract many visitors to the WMA. Management activities conducted on Caston Creek WMA that benefit wild turkeys include prescribed burning, timber thinning, and permanent opening maintenance.

In order to reduce the hunting pressure during the early season, hunting during the first two weeks of the season is limited to permitted hunters who applied for the special draw period and were randomly selected. During the 2012 turkey season, Caston Creek WMA accrued 1,095 hunter-days, and 46 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Caston Creek WMA, contact the regional WMA headquarters at 601-277-3636.

Chickasaw WMA

By Brad Holder, WMA Biologist

Chickasaw WMA is a 27,259 acre area located within the Tombigbee National Forest in Chickasaw County near Houston. The area is heavily forested with variably-aged pine and hardwood stands. Annual prescribed burning conducted by U.S. Forest Service personnel helps maintain some nesting, foraging, and brood-rearing habitat within forest stands. Permanent openings are managed to provide additional habitat for wild turkeys as well as other wildlife.

Chickasaw WMA offers an early spring gobbler season to youth hunters in addition to the open spring gobbler season. During the 2012, 873 hunter-days and 29 harvested gobblers were reported for youth and open turkey seasons. For more information on this WMA, contact the WMA regional headquarters at 662-862-2723.

Chickasawhay WMA

By Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

Chickasawhay WMA is approximately 35,000 acres and is located within the Desoto National Forest south of Laurel in Jones County. The fire-maintained pine stands along with scattered creeks and drains make this area attractive to many sportsmen. Management practices on the area that are beneficial to wild turkeys include periodic timber thinning and prescribed burning.

During the 2012 turkey season, Chickasawhay WMA accrued 896 hunter-days, and 22 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Chickasawhay WMA, contact the regional WMA headquarters at 601-598-2323.

Choctaw WMA

By Amy C. Blaylock, WMA Biologist

Choctaw WMA is a 24,500 acre area located within the Tombigbee National Forest near Ackerman in Choctaw County. The area is heavily forested with various ages of loblolly pine stands and mature hardwoods stands. Some permanent openings exist and are managed to provide habitat for wild turkeys and other wildlife species. Annual prescribed burning conducted by U.S. Forest Service personnel helps to improve habitat conditions. Future habitat improvement efforts on the Tombigbee National Forest will focus on creating nesting and brood-rearing habitats within timber stands through improvement thins and continued use of prescribed fire. Choctaw WMA offers an early season to youth hunters in addition to the regular spring gobbler season. During spring 2012, a total of 37 gobblers were harvested on Choctaw WMA during 709 hunter-days of effort. For more information on Choctaw WMA, contact the WMA Regional Office at 662-272-8303.

Copiah County WMA

By Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

Copiah County WMA is a 6,583 acre, state-owned area approximately 15 miles west of Hazlehurst. The WMA consists of pine stands with mixed pine-hardwood stands along the creeks and drains. Numerous permanent openings throughout the WMA are maintained with native vegetation and supplemental plantings. Habitat conditions on the WMA have dramatically improved recently due to an increase in prescribed burns and creation of numerous permanent openings. Many of the habitat improvement projects have been sponsored by money from the National Wild Turkey Federation; these include the establishment of new firelanes and fields to be used as bugging areas for hens with pouls.

In order to reduce the hunting pressure during the early season, hunting during the first two weeks of the season is limited to permitted hunters who applied for the special draw period and were randomly selected. During the 2012 turkey season, Copiah County WMA accrued 449 hunter-days, and 11 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Copiah County WMA, contact the WMA headquarters at 601-277-3636.

Divide Section WMA

By Brad Holder, WMA Biologist

Divide Section WMA (15,300 acre) lies along both sides of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway from the northwest side of Bay Springs Lake northward to MS Hwy 25 near Pickwick Lake. A small portion of the area is in Prentiss County, the remainder lies in Tishomingo County. Approximately one-third of the WMA is disposal area, where material excavated during the construction of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway was placed. The 32 disposal areas range in size from less than 100 acres to over 600 acres, and are scattered along the length of the WMA. They are separated by forested hills and drainage ditches. The disposal areas have very poor soil and, though created in the late 1970s and early 1980s, are still in early stages of plant succession. However, they are gradually reaching the vegetative stage where turkeys can move through them. The material that was excavated was highly erodible, acidic (low pH), and void of organic material. An attempt to reforest the disposal areas with hardwoods occurred shortly after they were created, but has yielded little success. The use of prescribed fire has increased on the area along with herbicide use and establishment of native warm season grasses in designated disposal areas. These activities will increase cover and food resources for wild turkeys.

Divide Section WMA offers an early spring gobbler season to youth hunters in addition to the open spring gobbler season. Youth and handicapped hunters may turkey hunt the Jackson Camp Peninsula portion of Divide Section Sundays through Tuesdays during respective seasons. It is open to all other turkey hunters Wednesdays through Saturdays. During the 2012 youth and open turkey seasons, Divide Section WMA accrued 512 hunter-days of effort, and 12 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Divide Section WMA, contact the WMA regional headquarters at 662-862-2723.

John W. Starr WMA

By Amy C. Blaylock, WMA Biologist

John W. Starr WMA is an 8,244 acre area located near Starkville in Oktibbeha and Winston counties. The area is heavily forested with various ages of loblolly pines and mature hardwood stands. The forest on the area is managed exclusively by the Mississippi State University College of Forest Resources. Nesting and brood-rearing habitat conditions are fair on the area; however, future plans to increase use of prescribed fire and stand thinning on the area should improve forest habitat conditions and forest health. Permanent openings are managed to provide habitat for wild turkeys and other species of wildlife. John W. Starr WMA offers an

early spring gobbler season to youth hunters in addition to the regular spring gobbler season. During spring 2012, 6 gobblers were harvested during 103 hunter-days of effort. In addition to normal hunting license and WMA permit requirements, a special permit from Mississippi State University is required to hunt on John W. Starr WMA. This permit may be obtained from MSU by writing Starr Forest Permits, Box 9680, Mississippi State, MS 39762, or by calling 662-325-2191, Monday – Friday from 8am-4pm.

Leaf River WMA

By Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

Leaf River WMA is one of, if not the, most storied Wildlife Management Areas in Mississippi. During the 1950s and 1960s, Leaf River WMA was one of the few places in the state that had abundant turkey populations. The area served as the trapping site for many of the restoration attempts that eventually repopulated the state's turkey populations. The rich history and excellent hunting make this area a popular draw for south Mississippi hunters.

This 41,411 acre WMA, located within the Desoto National Forest in Perry County, is a mix of fire-maintained pine stands and scattered creeks and drains. Periodic timber thinning and prescribed burning conducted by the U.S. Forest Service benefit wild turkeys on Leaf River WMA.

During the 2012 turkey season, Leaf River WMA accrued 1,367 hunter-days, and 52 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Leaf River WMA, contact the regional WMA headquarters at 601-598-2323.

Leroy Percy WMA

By Jackie Fleeman, WMA Biologist

Leroy Percy WMA is a 1,642 acre parcel located in Washington County approximately 6 miles west of Hollandale on Highway 12. Leroy Percy WMA is located on Leroy Percy State Park, and it is the only WMA located on a State Park. This area is dominated by bottomland hardwood timber stands that currently consist of even age classes. Only a few food plots are planted on this WMA due to its small size and most of these are located in the no-hunt area around the park headquarters.

Turkey hunting is by permit only during the first part of turkey season. In the 2012 season, Leroy Percy WMA accrued no hunter-days of turkey hunting and no birds were harvested. For more information on Leroy Percy WMA, contact Leroy Percy State Park at 662-827-5436.

Little Biloxi WMA

By Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

Little Biloxi WMA is a 15,622-acre WMA located in Stone and Harrison counties. A portion of the WMA lies within Desoto National Forest with the remainder owned by Weyerhaeuser Company. Habitat types vary across Little Biloxi WMA due to different management objectives. The WMA consists of a mix of fire-maintained mature pine stands, young pine plantations, clearcuts, and mixed pine-hardwood stands along the creeks and drains. Scattered permanent openings across the WMA are maintained with native vegetation and supplemental plantings.

During the 2012 turkey season, Little Biloxi WMA accrued 466 hunter-days, and 11 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Little Biloxi WMA, contact the regional WMA headquarters at 601-598-2323.

Mahannah WMA

By Jackie Fleeman, WMA Biologist

Mahannah WMA is located in Warren and Issaquena Counties, approximately 15 miles north of Vicksburg, Mississippi. The WMA consists of approximately 12,695 acres of bottomland hardwoods, agriculture fields, hardwood reforestation, and waterfowl impoundments. Mahannah WMA is part of one of the most ecologically intact and biologically diverse bottomland hardwood ecosystems in the Mississippi Delta. The area is a unique balance of flooded timber, cypress swamps, and controlled flooded agricultural lands. Mahannah WMA is owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and managed by the MDWFP under a cooperative agreement.

Due to impacts of flooding on the turkey population on this area, Mahannah was closed to turkey hunting during the 2012 season. For more information on Mahannah WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-661-0294.

Malmaison WMA

By Brad Holder, WMA Biologist

Malmaison WMA is a 9,483 acre area located between Grenada and Greenwood in Carroll, Grenada, and Leflore Counties. Mature hardwoods are the dominant cover type in both the delta and hill sections of this WMA and provide fall and winter hard mast. Numerous openings are managed to provide habitat for wild turkeys and other wildlife. Forest stand improvements in sections of the delta and hills portions of the WMA are slated for 2012. This will provide additional cover and food for wild turkeys and improve forest health.

Malmaison WMA offers an early spring gobbler season to youth hunters. The first two weeks of the regular spring gobbler season are permit-only. After that, the area is open to all during the rest of the season. During 2012, 18 gobblers were harvested during 378 hunter-days of effort. Harvest was well below average. No doubt low nest success during previous years and poor weather early during the 2012 season contributed to the down year. Poor hunter compliance with check station requirements may have been an issue as well. For more information about this WMA, contact the WMA regional headquarters at 662-453-5409.

Marion County WMA

By Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

Marion County WMA, located southeast of Columbia, is comprised of 7,200 acres owned by the State of Mississippi. The WMA consists mainly of fire-maintained longleaf pine stands with mixed pine-hardwood stands along the creeks and drains. Numerous permanent openings throughout the WMA are managed for native vegetation and supplemental plantings. Prescribed burns are conducted annually on Marion County WMA to improve nesting and brood rearing habitat for wild turkeys.

During the 2012 turkey season, Marion County WMA accrued 376 hunter-days, and 18 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Marion County WMA, contact the WMA headquarters at 601-736-0066.

Mason Creek WMA

By Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

The 27,272-acre Mason Creek WMA is located within the Desoto National Forest in Greene County. The area is a mix of fire-maintained pine stands and scattered creeks and drains. Periodic timber thinning and prescribed burning conducted by the U.S. Forest Service benefit wild turkeys on Mason Creek WMA.

During the 2012 turkey season, Mason Creek WMA accrued 594 hunter-days, and 15 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Mason Creek WMA, contact the regional WMA headquarters at 601-598-2323.

Nanih Waiya WMA

By Amy C. Blaylock, WMA Biologist

Nanih Waiya WMA consists of 8,064 acres in the upper Pearl River Basin and was acquired for Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway wildlife mitigation purposes. It is located approximately 5 miles northeast of Philadelphia in the northeastern corner of Neshoba County. This area has approximately 35 miles of riverine habitat which contains numerous oxbow lakes, old river runs, and natural cypress sloughs. Many impoundments and marshes have been created by beaver activity. Minimal amounts of rainfall can cause severe flooding on the area.

Turkey season on Nanih Waiya WMA is the same as statewide, but the bag limit is restricted to 2 adult gobblers. During the 2012 turkey season, a total of 64 hunter-days of effort were reported with 5 birds being harvested. For more information on Nanih Waiya WMA, contact the WMA Regional Office at 662-724-2770.

Natchez State Park

By Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

Natchez State Park consists of approximately 3,425 acres located in Adams County near Natchez. The park consists mainly of upland mixed pine/hardwoods. Approximately 2,200 acres of the park is open to limited youth turkey hunting. Hunters are allowed only by special permit through a random drawing held each spring.

These youth hunts resulted in 30 hunter-days and 2 harvested birds during the 2012 turkey season. For more information on Natchez State Park, contact the park office at 601-442-2658.

Okatibbee WMA

By Amy C. Blaylock, WMA Biologist

Okatibbee WMA consists of approximately 6,883 acres on Okatibbee Lake that has been designated for Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway wildlife mitigation purposes. The area consists mostly of mixed oak, pine, and hickory mature forests. Okatibbee WMA is located 8 miles northeast of Meridian, mostly in Lauderdale County with portions extending into Kemper County.

Hurricane Katrina and subsequent isolated storms have damaged or destroyed much of the mature bottomland habitat. Timber damage opened many of the previously closed canopy stands and resulted in a flush of woody and shrub early successional species. Some of the mature, upland pine stands have been thinned and burned.

The turkey season dates are the same as statewide, but the bag limit is restricted to 2 adult gobblers. During the 2012 turkey season, Okatibbee WMA accrued 82 hunter-days, and 7 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Okatibbee WMA, contact the WMA Regional Office at 601-737-5831.

Old River WMA

By Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

Old River WMA, located in Pearl River County near Poplarville, is owned by the State of Mississippi. It is a mix of bottomland hardwoods and few upland areas covering over 15,000 acres in the Pearl River Basin.

During the 2012 turkey season, Old River WMA accrued 220 hunter-days, and 14 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Old River WMA, contact the regional WMA headquarters at 601-736-0066.

Pascagoula River WMA

By Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

Pascagoula River WMA, located in George and Jackson Counties, is owned by the State of Mississippi. It is a mix of bottomland hardwoods covering over 37,000 acres of the Pascagoula River Basin.

During the 2012 turkey season, Pascagoula River WMA accrued 431 hunter-days, and 8 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Pascagoula River WMA, contact the WMA headquarters at 601-947-6376.

Pearl River WMA

By Amy C. Blaylock, WMA Biologist

Pearl River WMA, consisting of 6,925 acres owned by the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District, is located in Madison County. The habitat on the area consists of upland pines and bottomland hardwoods. Major tree species on the area are: water oak, willow oak, Nuttall oak, ash, sweetgum, cypress, and loblolly pine. The youth and handicapped area offers turkey hunting opportunity on almost 1,000 acres of mature forests. Nearly 5,000 acres are available for public hunting. There are 14 food plots and managed openings located throughout the area. Turkey hunting is open to the public during the statewide season. During the 2012 turkey season, there were 93 hunter-days of turkey hunting with 1 bird harvested. For more information on Pearl River WMA, contact the WMA Regional Office at 601-469-1918.

Red Creek WMA

By Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

Red Creek WMA is a 23,000-acre WMA located within the Desoto National Forest in Stone and George Counties. Akin to Little Biloxi WMA, the area is a popular draw for many coastal residents. Red Creek WMA consists of fire-maintained pine stands with scattered creeks and drains. Periodic timber thinning and prescribed burning is conducted by the U.S. Forest Service to the benefit of the area's wild turkeys.

During the 2012 turkey season, Red Creek WMA accrued 445 hunter-days, and 10 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Red Creek WMA, contact the WMA headquarters at 601-598-2323.

Sandy Creek WMA

By Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

Sandy Creek WMA, located near Natchez in Adams and Franklin Counties, is a 16,407-acre WMA within the Homochitto National Forest. The WMA consists mainly of bottomland hardwood forests along the Homochitto River, and mixed pine-hardwood

forests in the uplands. Scattered permanent openings across the WMA are maintained with native vegetation and supplemental plantings.

In order to reduce the hunting pressure during the early season, hunting during the first two weeks of the season is limited to permitted hunters who applied for the special draw period and were randomly selected. During the 2012 turkey season, Sandy Creek WMA accrued 605 hunter-days, and 30 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Sandy Creek WMA, contact the regional WMA headquarters at 601-277-3636.

Sardis Waterfowl WMA

By Brad Holder, WMA Biologist

Sardis Waterfowl WMA is a 3,016 acre area located in Lafayette County, northwest of Oxford. The area consists of upland mixed hardwoods, loblolly pine plantations, managed openings, old fields, and wetlands. Prescribed burning, diskng, establishing supplemental forages, herbicides, and occasional timber harvest are tools used to provide habitat for wild turkey on the area. Sardis Waterfowl is cooperatively managed by MDWFP and the Sardis Lake Corps of Engineers.

Sardis Waterfowl WMA offers hunting opportunity to youth through permit-only hunts. During the 2012 season, 18 hunter-days and 3 harvested birds were reported. For more information about this WMA, contact the WMA regional headquarters at 662-487-1946.

Shipland WMA

By Jackie Fleeman, WMA Biologist

Shipland WMA is located along the Mississippi River in Issaquena County approximately 45 miles north of Vicksburg. The 3,500 acre WMA was established in 1982 on land purchased from The Nature Conservancy. This is the only WMA to lie within the lands between the Mississippi River and the main line river levee, known as the Batture. The area is classified as bottomland hardwood, but the habitat varies across the WMA from a 60-acre sand field grassland, to forests of oaks, pecan, and sugarberry, as well as low wet areas of willow trees and buttonbush. In the last 10 years, several types of logging operations were conducted on the area to improve the habitat for wildlife. WMA personnel also plant winter and summer food plots and maintain permanent openings to provide additional food for wildlife.

Due to the impacts of recent flooding on the turkey population on this area, there was no turkey hunting on Shipland WMA during 2012. For more information on Shipland WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-873-9331.

Stoneville WMA

By Jackie Fleeman, WMA Biologist

Stoneville WMA is a 2,500 acre parcel located in Washington County approximately 5 miles north of Leland. Stoneville WMA is owned by Mississippi State University and is located on the Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Delta Branch Experiment Station in Stoneville. This area is dominated by bottomland hardwood stands of varying age classes, with some mature timber stands scattered throughout the area.

There were no hunter-days and no harvested birds were reported for the 2012 turkey season. For more information on Stoneville WMA, contact the Central Region Office at 601-859-3421.

Sunflower WMA

by Jackie Fleeman, WMA Biologist

Sunflower WMA is approximately 60,000 acres located entirely in the Delta National Forest, which is owned by the U.S. Forest Service. The area is located in Sharkey County, about 10 miles east of Rolling Fork. Sunflower became a WMA in 1955. Sunflower is entirely bottomland hardwood forest, and the stands vary in age from regeneration areas to mature forests. Major tree species on the area are: water, willow, overcup, and Nuttall oaks, ash, sugarberry, sweetgum, and cypress. There are in excess of 200 acres of food plots and managed openings on the area.

Due to the impacts of flooding on the turkey population on this area, turkey hunting was limited on Sunflower WMA during the 2012 season. Turkey season was from April 9 – May 1. Turkey hunting is by permit only during the first part of turkey season. After the second weekend, turkey hunting is allowed without permits. Sunflower WMA accrued 120 hunter-days during the 2012 turkey season, and 14 harvested birds were reported. Turkey numbers vary from year to year because frequent springtime flooding limits the ability of turkeys to successfully nest and raise broods on the area. For more information on Sunflower WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-828-3456.

Tallahala WMA

By Amy C. Blaylock, WMA Biologist

The 28,120 acres of Tallahala WMA are part of the Bienville National Forest, and are found throughout Jasper, Newton, Scott, and Smith Counties. The area is primarily composed of two major habitat types. The first is the pine and mixed pine-hardwood uplands that are scattered throughout the area. The second are the vast bottomland hardwoods that bisect the area along the Tallahala and Quarterliah Creeks.

Tallahala WMA was the site of one of the longest running turkey research projects in the southeastern United States. From the early 1980s through the late 1990s Mississippi State University conducted numerous studies on Tallahala WMA to better understand turkey biology. Today, many management practices are still conducted that benefit turkeys. As with many National Forest lands, the pine timber stands are on long rotations and are burned on three-year rotations. The endangered Red Cockaded Woodpecker is the primary objective for this type of management, but turkeys benefit because these practices improve nesting and brood rearing habitat.

In order to reduce the hunting pressure during the early season, hunting during the first several days of the season is limited to permitted hunters who applied for the special draw period and were randomly selected. During the 2012 turkey season, Tallahala WMA accrued 1,112 hunter-days, and 48 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Tallahala WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-469-1918.

Tuscumbia WMA

By Brad Holder, WMA Biologist

Tuscumbia WMA is located in Alcorn County, 2 miles northwest of Corinth. The area comprises 2,600 acres and consists primarily of abandoned agricultural fields and forested wetlands along with some old fields in the small upland portion. The area is comprised of 2 separate units. The northern unit (1,400 acres) is mainly permanent water, shrub-scrub, and wetland forests, which is not easily accessed and provides little turkey habitat. The southern unit (1,200 acres) has mostly abandoned agricultural fields, 7 waterfowl impoundments, and some upland old fields. Both units experience frequent flooding in the winter and spring months. Turkeys have only recently begun to move onto the area from adjacent private property. There are very limited areas on either of the 2 units to turkey hunt. Neither unit has good year-round turkey habitat.

Tuscumbia WMA offers an early spring gobbler season to youth hunters in addition to the open spring gobbler season. During the 2012 season, 92 hunter-days and 6 harvested gobblers were reported for youth and open turkey seasons. For more information about Tuscumbia WMA, contact the WMA regional headquarters at 662-487-1946.

Twin Oaks WMA

By Jackie Fleeman, WMA Biologist

Twin Oaks Wildlife Management Area is located southeast of Rolling Fork. It is comprised of approximately 5,700 acres of bottomland hardwood forest. The major tree species found include water, willow, overcup and Nuttall oak, sweetgum, sugarberry, and ash. Twin Oaks WMA is owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and managed by the MDWFP under a cooperative agreement. Approximately 200 acres are managed as food plots or permanent openings.

Due to the impacts of flooding on the turkey population on this area, turkey hunting was limited on Twin Oaks WMA during the 2012 season. Turkey season was from April 9 – May 1. Turkey hunting on Twin Oaks WMA is by permit only throughout the entire season. During the 2012 turkey season, Twin Oaks WMA accrued 30 hunter-days, and 3 harvested birds were reported. Turkey numbers vary from year to year because frequent springtime flooding limits the ability of turkeys to successfully nest and raise broods on the area. For more information on Twin Oaks WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-873-2495.

Upper Sardis WMA

By Brad Holder, WMA Biologist

Upper Sardis WMA is a 42,274 acre area located within the Holly Springs National Forest in Lafayette County near Oxford. Personnel from the MDWFP, Holly Springs National Forest, and Sardis Lake Corps of Engineers, cooperatively manage Upper Sardis WMA. The area is heavily forested with variably-aged stands of loblolly and shortleaf pine and mature upland and bottomland hardwoods. Some managed openings, old fields, and 2-3 year old clearcuts exist and provide additional turkey habitat. U.S. Forest Service personnel continue to burn designated forest stands annually. Natural forest disturbances from tornadoes in 2008 and 2010 impacted approximately 3,000 acres. Artificial and natural vegetation disturbances continue to provide additional cover and food for wild turkeys and other wildlife.

Upper Sardis WMA offers an early spring gobbler season to youth hunters. In an effort to increase hunt quality, the first two weeks of the regular spring season are permit-only. After that, Upper Sardis WMA is open to all hunters for the rest of the season. During the 2012 season, 1209 hunter-days and 78 harvested gobblers were reported for youth, permit-only, and open turkey seasons. For more information about this WMA, contact the WMA regional headquarters at 662-487-1946.

Ward Bayou WMA

By Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

Ward Bayou WMA is a 13,234-acre parcel of bottomland hardwoods with limited uplands nestled within the Pascagoula River Basin in Jackson County. Many of the low-lying areas are boat accessible through navigable waters off the main river channel. Hunting access is often dependent upon rainfall and river levels.

Ward Bayou WMA offers limited youth turkey hunting opportunities through a drawing system. These youth hunts resulted in 47 hunter-days and 2 harvested birds for the 2012 turkey season. For more information on Ward Bayou WMA, contact the WMA headquarters at 228-826-1012.

Wolf River WMA

By Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

Wolf River WMA, located in Lamar and Pearl River counties near Poplarville, consists of 10,801 acres owned by Weyerhaeuser Company. The WMA consists of various-aged pine plantations interspersed with minor stream bottoms. Scattered permanent openings across the WMA are maintained with native vegetation and supplemental plantings.

During the 2012 turkey season, Wolf River WMA accrued 610 hunter-days, and 19 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Wolf River WMA, contact the regional WMA headquarters at 601-736-0066.

Yockanookany WMA

By Amy C. Blaylock, WMA Biologist

Yockanookany WMA is a 2,379 acre area located in Attala County approximately 12 miles east of Kosciusko. The Yockanookany River splits the WMA and frequently overflows its banks. Bottomland hardwoods provide acorns during fall and winter. Openings are managed to provide additional habitat for wild turkeys and other wildlife species. Habitat conditions continue to improve on the area with creation of additional wildlife openings, and were made possible in part by the National Wild Turkey Federation. Future timber management and creation of wildlife openings will provide additional food and cover for wild turkeys and other wildlife species. Yockanookany WMA offers an early spring gobbler season to youth hunters, and the first two weeks of the regular spring season are by permit only. During spring 2012, 1 gobbler was harvested on this area during 31 hunter-days of effort. For additional information on this WMA, contact the WMA Regional Office at 662-272-8303.



Steve Gulledge

Ways I Can
Help Conserve
Mississippi's
Wild Turkey

Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey Application

THE 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: _____

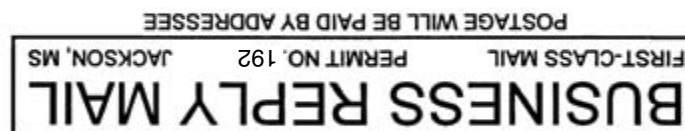
Forested Acres: (including food plots) _____

Estimate Total Number of Hunters Anticipated on this Property During the Turkey Season: _____

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



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES AND PARKS
1505 EASTOVER DRIVE
JACKSON, MS 39211-9940



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Wild Turkey Disease Mortality Form

THE MDWFP IS DOCUMENTING WILD TURKEY MORTALITY CAUSED BY DISEASE. MONITORING disease mortality will provide information to assess the impacts of disease and to better manage the wild turkey resource. Sportsmen can play an important role by reporting sick or dead turkeys and assisting the MDWFP with obtaining birds for examination. If you find any sick or dead wild turkey, please follow the procedures listed below. If you are unable to collect the carcass, reporting details about the dead birds will provide valuable information. Also, please contact the MDWFP if you observe or have previously observed a sharp decline in a local turkey population.

■ **Handling Turkeys:** Sick turkeys may be submitted alive if they can be humanely restrained for transport. Carcasses should be cooled as soon as possible by refrigeration or by putting the bird on ice in a cooler. It is best not to freeze the turkey and to submit the bird as soon as possible. If the turkey cannot be obtained by the MDWFP within 48 hours, it can be frozen as long as necessary.

■ **Contacting the MDWFP:** Contact Turkey Program Coordinator Dave Godwin at 662.325.5119 as soon as possible. If are unable to contact Dave Godwin, please call the Jackson Office at 601.432.2199 or contact your local MDWFP District Office.

■ **Recording Information:** Please record the following information and submit this form with the turkey.

Name: _____

Address: _____

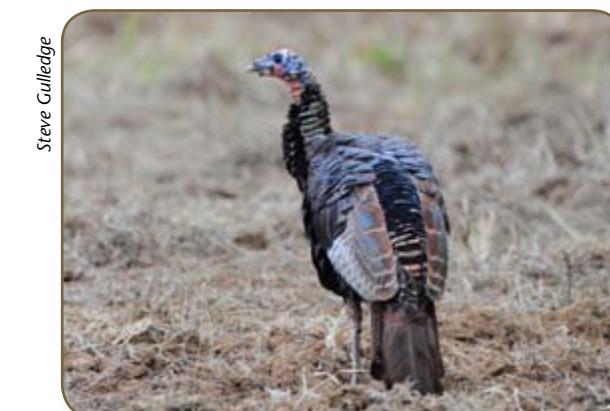
Phone: (Home) _____ (Office) _____

Date Turkey(s) Found: _____

Location (county and nearest town): _____

Description of Turkey(s) When Found: _____

Additional Comments: _____



Wild turkey with avian pox lesions.



Mississippi Wild Turkey Records Registration Form

Hunter's Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____ (Work) _____ (Home)

Hunting License Number: _____

■ How to measure your turkey: Weight should be measured to the nearest ounce on certified scales. Beards are measured in $\frac{1}{16}$ inch increments from the center point of the beard's base where it attaches to the skin to the end of the longest bristle that is fully attached to the skin. Spurs are measured in $\frac{1}{16}$ inch increments along the outside center of the spur from the point at which the spur protrudes from the scaled leg skin to the tip of the spur.

**Weight of Turkey (in pounds and ounces): _____

Total Beard Length (measure in $\frac{1}{16}$ inch increments): _____

For multiple beards: Beard 1: _____ Beard 2: _____ Beard 3: _____

Beard 4: _____ Beard 5: _____ Beard 6: _____

Spur Length (measure in $\frac{1}{16}$ inch increments): Left: _____ Right: _____

Date of Harvest: _____ County of Harvest: _____

■ Certification by Hunter: I hereby certify that the above information is correct and that I harvested this wild turkey in the spirit of fair chase and in compliance with all applicable wildlife laws. I further certify that this turkey was a wild and free-ranging bird, was not confined by any artificial barrier, and was not released for the purpose of commercial hunting.

Hunter's Signature: _____ Date: _____

**Turkeys weighing over 21 pounds must be weighed to the nearest ounce on certified scales. Turkeys with a weight of over 21 pounds, spurs greater than 1.25 inches or beard length greater than 12 inches must be witnessed by a current employee of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks.

Signature of MDWFP Employee: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Mail to: Wild Turkey Records / 1505 Eastover Dr. / Jackson, MS 39211



Wild Turkey Records
1505 Eastover Drive
Jackson, MS 39211

Place Stamp Here

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2013 Turkey Report Evaluation

THE STATEWIDE TURKEY PROGRAM CONTINUALLY STRIVES TO IMPROVE THE ANNUAL TURKEY report. Your input is important and will be considered when preparing future reports. Please complete this evaluation and return it to the MDWFP according to mailing instructions on back of the form. Comments may also be provided by contacting Wild Turkey & Small Game Program Coordinator Dave Godwin at 662.325.5119 or dgodwin@cfr.msstate.edu.

1. Please rate the following turkey report sections:

2013 MISSISSIPPI WILD TURKEY REPORT

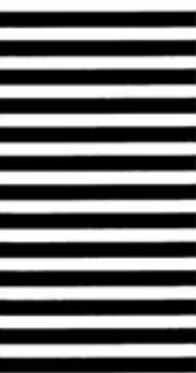
Please Circle Your Rating
Poor Neutral Excellent

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ <i>How are Turkeys in My Neck of the Woods?</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ■ <i>Magnolia State Turkey Talk</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ■ <i>Long Beards & Curved Spurs:
Magnolia State Turkey Records</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ■ <i>Ways I Can Help Conserve Mississippi's Wild Turkey</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

2. What kind of articles and subject matter would you like to see in future reports?
-
-
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3. Please provide any ideas you may have that could improve future reports:
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1505 EASTOVER DRIVE
JACKSON, MS 39211-9940

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Take a Walk
on the **WILD** Side...
(of the Web, that is!)

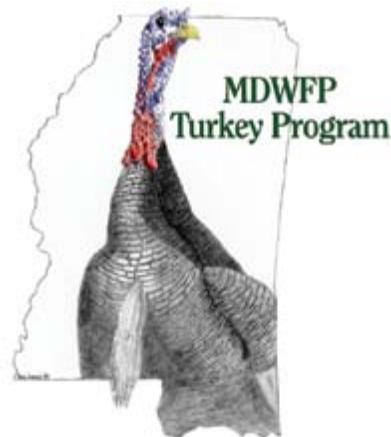
The screenshot shows the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks website. The main header features the state of Mississippi and the text "Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks". The navigation menu includes links for Home, Contact Us, Calendar, Wildlife & Hunting, Fishing & Boating, License, State Parks, Museum, Administration, and Law Enforcement. The "Wildlife & Hunting" section is currently active. A sub-menu for "Wild Turkey Program" is open, listing various programs like WMAs, Deer Program, Turkey Program, Alligator Program, Waterfowl Program, Black Bear Program, Quail Program, Squirrel Program, Dove Program, Rabbit Program, Nuisance Wildlife, Furbearer & Trapping, Private Land Habitat, Wildlife Research, Falconry Program, GIS Program, and FAQ's. To the right, there is a "Featured Topics" sidebar with links to Hunting Seasons & Limits, Weekly Duck Migration, Weekly Waterfowl Reports, Food Plots, Fully Enclosed Deer Stands, and Magnolia Records. Below the sidebar, a large image of a wild turkey is displayed with the caption "Visit our Turkey Web Page: mdwfp.com/turkey".

Everything you want to know:

- Habitat & Biology
- Hunting Forecasts
- Land Management Tips
- Turkey Research Projects
- Spittin' & Drummin' Reports
- And much more!

MS Chapter NWTF
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Starkville, MS 39759

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**The 2013 Mississippi Wild Turkey Report is a
cooperative effort between the MDWFP Turkey Program
and the Mississippi Chapter of the NWTF.**



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