



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT
OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS

Spittin' & Drummin'

MISSISSIPPI WILD TURKEY REPORT

2012



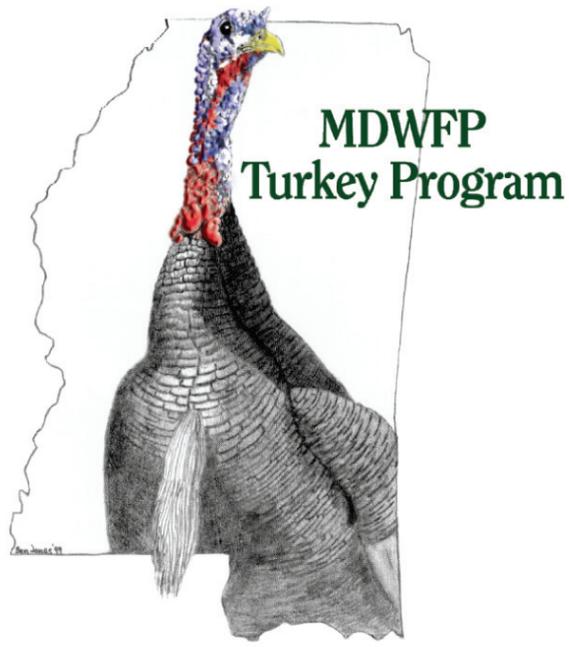
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Spittin' & Drummin'

2012 MISSISSIPPI
WILD TURKEY REPORT



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

Acknowledgements

IT IS ONCE AGAIN TIME TO TAKE TO THE SPRING woods in pursuit of the wild turkey gobbler! We are very excited about the 2012 season, and are glad to be able to share the 2012 Mississippi Wild Turkey Program Report *Spittin' and Drummin'* with each of you! I want to take this opportunity to thank each of you that helped our program develop this report. I want to especially thank Adam Butler, our Wild Turkey Program Leader. Adam is passionate about Mississippi's wild turkey resource, and his dedication to turkey conservation has helped move our program forward during these past few years. Several MDWFP employees have assisted the wild turkey program during the past year. Special thanks are due to Scott Edwards, Jim Willcutt, Ashley Gary, Alan Mumbower, Susan Myers, Shannon Chunn, and Tasha Jordan for assistance with many turkey projects. Thanks to Ron Seiss for his sage advice on all aspects of turkey conservation! Thanks are also due to Wildlife Bureau Chief Ed Penny and Assistant Chief Chad Dacus for their leadership and assistance given to our program. Thanks to the Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation for all that they do to support turkey hunters and turkey conservation in our State! If you are not a member of this organization, please consider joining today. I particularly want to thank all of the turkey hunters, especially those who cooperate with the MDWFP to collect data for the Spring Gobbler Hunter Survey. Finally, special thanks go to



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my family - Kris, Brannon, and Eric continue to do so much to support me, and put up with those times when work calls for me to be away. 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!

Dave Godwin
MDWFP Turkey Program Coordinator

THE PHOTOGRAPHY WORK OF **STEVE GULLEDGE** of Bruce, Mississippi is featured again this year in *Spittin' and Drummin'*. Steve has generously shared his professional photographs for use in this publication for the past several years, and his work makes *Spittin' and Drummin'* a much better publication. Steve is a long-time volunteer with the NWTF and an avid turkey hunter, and his passion for the wild turkey, his eye for detail, and his understanding of the turkey hunter's perspective helps create photographs that are snapshots into the daily routines of the game bird we all love. Many thanks to Steve for sharing his beautiful photographs with us for use in this year's publication! To learn more about Steve Gulledge's photography, visit his website at www.stevegulledgephotography.com.



IT IS WITH GREAT SATISFACTION THAT THE MDWFP Wild Turkey Program produces this *Spittin' & Drummin'* Turkey Report each spring, but we could not bring this compilation together alone. There are many who deserve thanks in making this report possible. Of those, the most critical are the turkey hunters who voluntarily collect data through the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey, and thereby make this glimpse of the State's turkey resource possible. At the MDWFP, numerous individuals help support the Wild Turkey Program and its work. Kourtney Wong has done an impressive job the last few years in making our "Turkey Book" look good. Ben Sessums has also always been an instrumental piece of the publication process. Jason Price's technological wizardry allows us to store and process data much more efficiently. Tosha Jordan's administrative assistance is invaluable; without her oversight we would definitely be lost. The brunt of turkey data entry was shouldered by just a few individuals this past year and so special thanks go to Jim Willcutt, Ashley Gary, Shannon Chunn, Tosha Jordan, and Susan Myers for undertaking this arduous task. Since the last publication of *Spittin' and Drummin'*, leadership of the MDWFP Wildlife Bureau has changed hands. Ron Seiss, whose dedication to the wild turkey has been unsurpassed for the last two and a half decades, passed on his role of Chief of Wildlife to Ed Penny. We look forward to continued progress in wildlife conservation under Ed, and would like to thank both of these gentlemen, along with new Assistant Chief of Wildlife Chad Dacus, for their support, vision, and leadership over the last



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year. Our partners at the Mississippi State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation deserve special thanks for their continued support; the MDWFP-NWTF relationship is truly a special one. Scott Cumbest, Marc Measels, and Luke Lewis shared the responsibility of composing the NWTF's Magnolia Turkey Talk section of this report, and their efforts are appreciated. And as always, I'd like to thank the majestic wild turkeys of Mississippi, for all that they add to my life.

Adam Butler
MDWFP Turkey Program Leader

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**A PITTMAN-ROBERTSON
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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.



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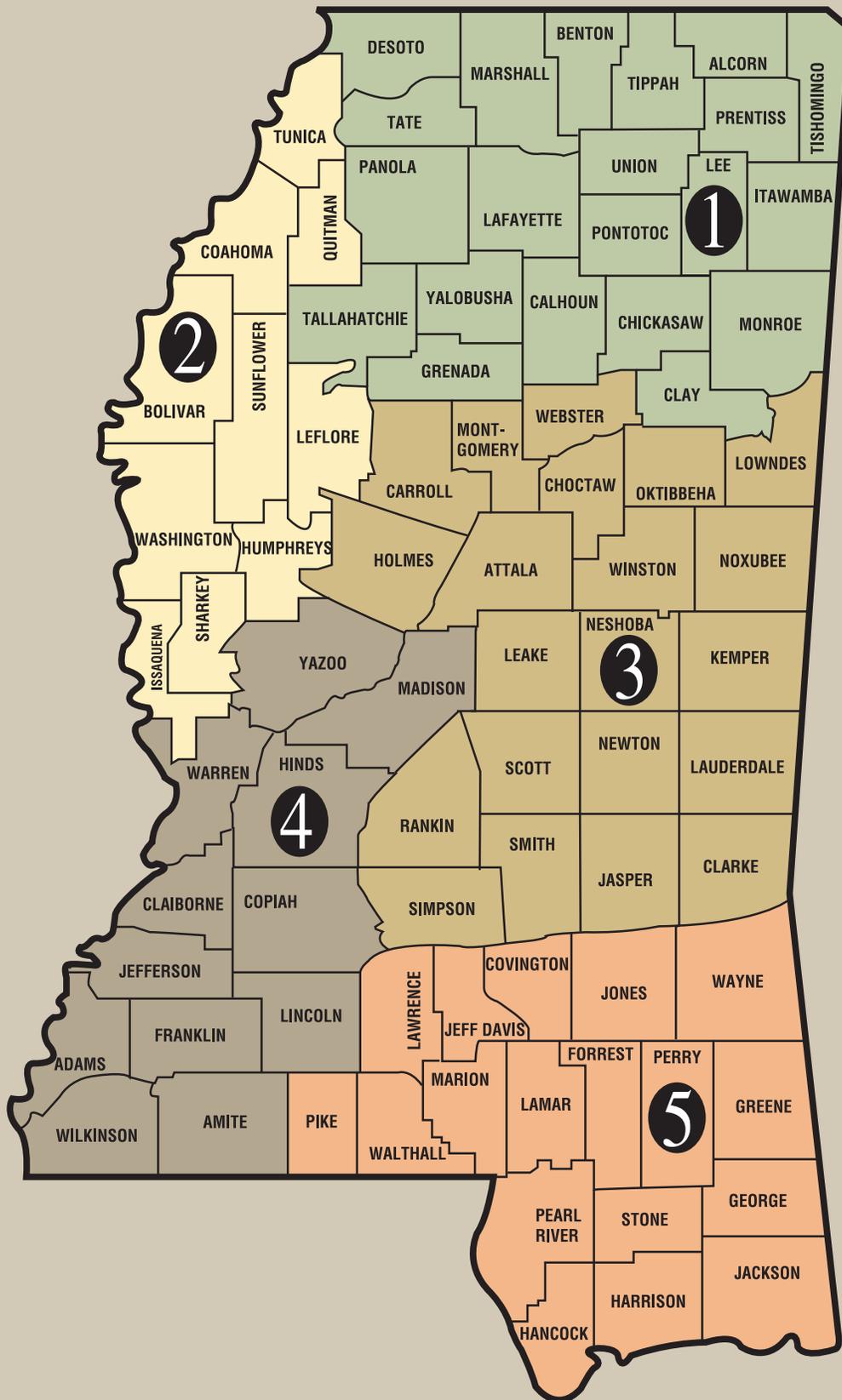
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Table of Contents

MDWFP Turkey Regions Map	ii
Introduction	1
Habitat Management	2
How are Turkeys in My Neck of the Woods?	7
Mississippi Wild Turkey Population Statistics	8
2011 Summer Brood Survey Results	10
Statewide	14
Turkey Region 1: North MS	16
Turkey Region 2: Delta	18
Turkey Region 3: East-central MS	20
Turkey Region 4: Southwest MS	22
Turkey Region 5: Southeast MS	24
Join Our Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey Team	26
Turkey Trivia	28
Magnolia State Turkey Talk	31
Long Beards & Curved Spurs: Mississippi Wild Turkey Records	51
Top Scoring Typical	52
Top Scoring Non-Typical	53
Longest Beard	53
Heaviest	54
Longest Spurs	55
National Records: Eastern Wild Turkey	55
Fall Turkey Hunting in Mississippi	57
Wild Turkey Research in Mississippi	59
Wildlife Management Areas	63
Ways I Can Help Conserve Mississippi's Wild Turkey	77
Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey Application	79
Wild Turkey Disease Mortality Form	81
MS Wild Turkey Records Registration Form	83
2012 Turkey Report Evaluation	85

MDWFP Turkey Regions





2012 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!

Need Advice Managing Your Property for Turkeys?

WITHOUT A DOUBT – TURKEYS, LIKE OTHER wildlife species, are dependent on quality habitat for survival. With proper habitat management, land managers and hunters can improve the quality of their property for wild turkeys and, hopefully, increase their turkey population and hunting opportunities!

The MDWFP offers free technical guidance to landowners and property managers to help them achieve their management objectives for a variety of wildlife species, including wild turkey, bobwhite quail, white-tailed deer, waterfowl, and small game. Biologists within the Wild Turkey Program and Private Lands Habitat Program routinely visit private properties with landowners to help in developing management plans designed to reach wildlife and habitat goals. These management plans

often include summaries of the landowner's objectives, descriptions of current habitat types (e.g., pine plantations, hardwood forests, open fields, agriculture fields, etc.), specific management recommendations to improve current habitat types, and supporting informational materials. Typically, biologists encourage landowners to manage their habitats by thinning trees, prescribed burning, disking, planting native grasses, and creating forest openings – plus many other management activities that are property-specific. When possible, biologists help landowners identify cost-share assistance opportunities for the management practices they prescribe.

If you are interested in receiving technical guidance with wild turkey management on your property or hunting club, please contact the MDWFP Wildlife Bureau at 601-432-2199!



Well-maintained fire lanes, like this one planted in white clover, serve as great turkey brood-rearing habitat.



Prescribed fire is an excellent way to promote quality wild turkey habitat in thinned pine stands.



Biologists frequently host field days for landowners on showcase properties to highlight good habitat management results that benefit wild turkeys.

Sculpting the Ideal Turkey Woods: Timber Management for Wild Turkeys



Steve Cullledge

THE SCIENTIFIC NAME FOR THE EASTERN WILD turkey, *Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*, can be loosely translated to mean “fowl of the forest.” As the name implies, Eastern wild turkeys are dependent upon healthy forests for their survival and well being, and there is no shortage of forested landscapes in Mississippi. In fact, over 65% of Mississippi’s land base is timbered, and these resources serve as one of our state’s greatest financial boons, annually pumping an estimated \$17 billion into the statewide economy.

Over 70% of the state’s timberlands are owned by nonindustrial private landowners, which place private lands at the center of this commerce. Consequently, forest management decisions made on private lands not only help shape our state’s forest products industry, but also have a tremendous impact on the welfare of wildlife populations, particularly wild turkeys. Decisions on when and how to harvest timber, as well as management actions that are taken or ignored during the long process of growing timber, can mean the difference between thriving wildlife populations, or landscapes of little habitat value. This article will provide an overview of the essential components of ideal “turkey woods”, and also offer recommendations that may assist you in making forest management decisions.

Pulling All the Pieces Together

A look around Mississippi reveals turkey populations existing in a wide variety of forest settings, from landscapes that are intensively managed for pine production, to vast expanses of bottomland hardwoods, and even regions comprised largely of agricultural fields or pastures. However, wild turkeys have dy-

namic needs that change with the seasons, and as a result, the aforementioned landscapes cannot often meet all the demands of the birds throughout the year. On the other hand, areas in which all these different habitats are intermixed provide the variety needed for populations to thrive.

This high level of landscape “diversity” does not happen by accident; it requires thorough planning AND management. Creating the ideal turkey landscape begins by identifying a landowner’s management goals, and then planning forestry activities so that they enhance, rather than impede, these objectives. Developing a wildlife management plan in consultation with a forester and wildlife biologist is a great first step that can serve as a road map to guide future management activities.

If turkey habitat is a primary objective, then forest management must paint the previously described picture of diversity. Harvests and reforestation should be planned strategically. Clear-cuts are utilized by wild turkeys for the first few years of growth, but eventually these areas become too thick, and movements are restricted until the new stand is old enough to be thinned. Therefore, final harvest operations should be well dispersed in both time and space, so that areas in the earliest stages of forest growth are not adjacent to one another, which affords greater turkey space-use across the landscape. During the harvesting process, Streamside Management Zones along creeks and streams should leave at least 100 feet of uncut timber on either side of stream channels to provide travel corridors and winter foraging areas. Furthermore, uneven-aged management practices should be employed where feasible, so that the habitat bottleneck created by clear-cutting can be minimized.

Creation and retention of fields and openings is also critical when molding the ideal turkey landscape. A good way of accomplishing this without losing large acreages of timber production is by planning to “daylight” roads. Daylighting refers to the creation of wide shoulders along interior roadways. These areas are allowed to grow into grassy plant communities that increase interspersion of openings and diversify the landscape. Prior to logging, it may also be important to identify areas that are well-suited for conversion into permanent wildlife openings or food plots. These areas should be evenly distributed across a property so that turkeys are never more than a short walk from open space. In landscapes that are dominated by large pastures or agriculture, corridors of hardwoods or pines may need to be planted to break up fields and provide connectivity between forest stands.

Seeing the Forest from the Trees

With a clear picture of the ideal landscape blueprint in mind, the next step in creating prime turkey woods is making stand-level management decisions. These are the choices that will make or break turkey utilization of your property; the structure and composition of the plant communities within a stand are the key factors that dictate habitat selection by the birds, and these are variables that can be controlled through mid-rotation management, timber stand improvements, and harvesting. The type, age, and condition of each timber stand will dictate what actions are most appropriate.



Steve Gulledege

Pine Stands

Pine is the dominant timber type across much of Mississippi, and many pine stands begin as plantations. As previously mentioned, pine plantations offer some value as habitat during the first few years after planting; however, this time period is short-lived. Once the young stand reaches canopy-closure, scant groundcover exists, and the area holds little value for turkeys and other wildlife. For most sites in Mississippi, pine stands are able to receive their first thinning between 12-18 years of age. This marks a major turning point in the life of the stand, and turkey use typically increases dramatically following thinning.

Wild turkeys are not as dependent upon thick vegetation as other game birds, however, nesting hens and young poults do need concealment from predators. To promote the groundcover that they prefer, timber thinnings should open the canopy enough to provide adequate sunlight along the ground. Targeting a 70 ft²/acre basal area is a good tradeoff between timber production and wildlife cover. Basal area is

a forestry term that is used to describe the density of the stems (i.e. trees) that remain after a harvest operation; it represents the total cross-sectional area of all the stems in a stand measured per unit of area (most often expressed per acre). Subsequent thinnings should occur whenever tree crowns grow thick enough to shade and suppress understory growth.

The decision of when to conduct the final harvest is also an im-

What's So Special about Longleaf Pine?

LONGLEAF PINE WAS HISTORICALLY THE DOMINANT tree species across the southern half of Mississippi. In fact, longleaf forests once comprised an estimated 90 million acres across the Southeast. Natural longleaf forests can be described as open, park-like stands, in which frequent, low intensity fires maintain a rich herbaceous and grassy understory, providing ideal habitat for game birds like wild turkey and bobwhite quail. Unfortunately, this incredible resource has been neglected, so that today it occupies less than 3 percent of its original extent.

Why should landowners choose to replant longleaf on appropriate sites? Consider the following:

- **Fire tolerance** – Prescribed fire can be applied to longleaf at younger ages than other pine species, giving you the ability to manage for nesting, brooding, and foraging cover for wildlife at all life-stages of the stand.
- **High-value lumber products** – In today's slumping pulpwood and saw timber markets, longleaf is particularly attractive due to the high proportion of trees that can be harvested for poles – a niche that may increase the value of your stand by more than 50 percent.
- **Flexibility of management** – Natural regeneration of longleaf can be promoted to create a diversity of available product classes, thereby accommodating a variety of management options.
- **Growth form** – Longleaf trees grow in a tighter, less branched form than other species of pine. This avoids the canopy-closure stage prevalent in many developing pine stands, and the increased sunlight develops a lush plant community that provides food and cover for wildlife.
- **Security** – Because longleaf is native to the uplands of the Southern Coastal Plain, it evolved in the face of onslaughts by hurricanes and tornadoes, and consequently is well-suited to survive these natural disasters.

portant consideration for wild turkeys. Generally speaking, longer rotations are favorable for turkeys because they increase the length of time in which stands remain usable to the birds. For turkeys, rotations should be extended to >30 years when economically feasible. Once final harvests have occurred, the decision regarding what species to replant should be well-thought if turkey habitat is an objective. For many landowners south of Interstate 20, longleaf pine should be considered on appropriate sites. Longleaf provides several habitat advantages over more commonly planted pine species due to management options that can be compatible with its growth.

Of all the management activities used to enhance turkey habitat in pine woods, none are more important than incorporating

prescribed burning. Prescribed fire reduces undesirable understory vegetation and promotes plants that are beneficial for food and cover. The exact length of time between prescribed burns can vary depending upon site and stand conditions. On poor-quality sites, or in densely stocked stands, fire intervals of 3-4 years may be sufficient to maintain a desirable understory. However, in stands with open canopies or on highly fertile soil, this rotation may need to be as short as 18 to 24 months. This may be particularly true in areas where waxy-leaved species such as yaupon, myrtle, or gallberry can quickly dominate the understory.

Step-by-Step

1 *Without active management, many pine stands often become so thick that valuable food and cover plants in the understory are shaded out and turkey use is impeded.*



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2 *Thinning is the first step toward improving habitat conditions.*



MDWFP

3 *The resulting stand is more open, and increased amounts of sunlight will penetrate to the ground and stimulate growth of valuable food and cover plants.*



NWTF

4 *Prescribed fire is then applied to promote and maintain desirable plants.*



MDWFP

5 *The resulting stand contains a lush understory that provides excellent nesting and brooding conditions, while remaining open enough that turkey movements are not restricted.*

Hardwoods

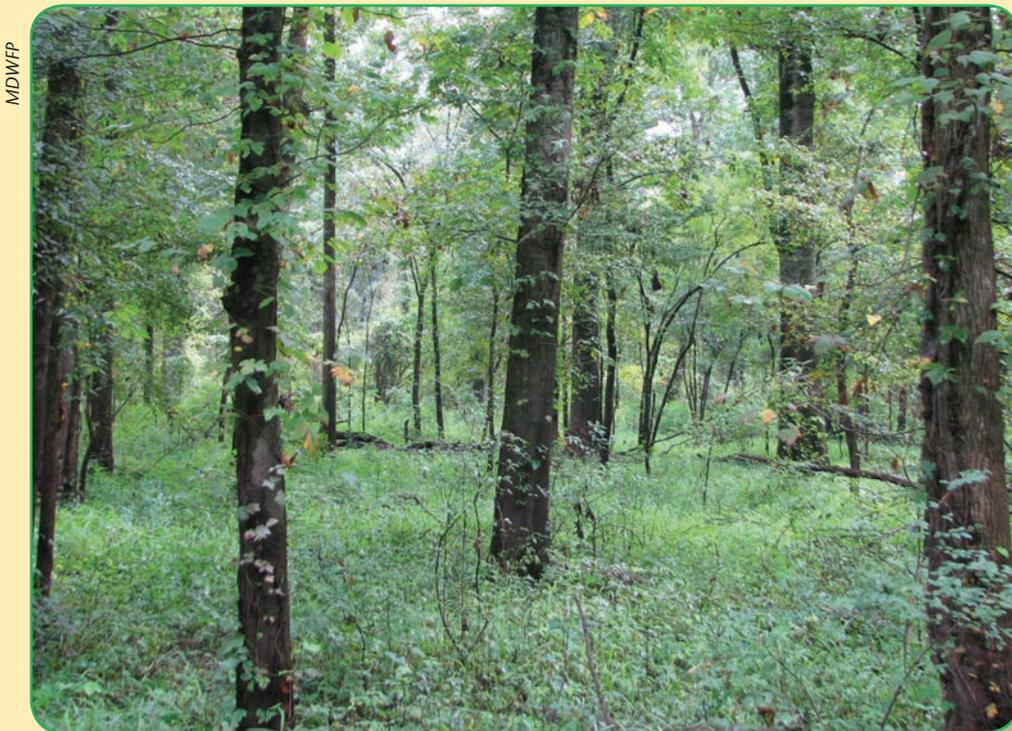
Hardwoods are important food producers for wild turkeys, and hardwood stands are heavily utilized by turkeys throughout the year, particularly in the fall and winter. The hard mast and fruits of oaks, pecans, beech, cherry, hackberry, and tupelo gum are all relished foods that sustain turkeys throughout the year. When turkeys are your priority, stands comprised of these species should be retained; converting these areas to other timber types is a cardinal sin of turkey management!

Although open hardwood stands are beautiful to behold (for aesthetic reasons), they often lack essential turkey habitat components. As with pine woods, these deficiencies can be addressed through proper forest management, although the approach may need to be more delicate. In hardwoods, multiple selective thinnings can promote nesting/brooding cover and food availability, while also expanding product classes, species diversity, and seedling regeneration within the stand. Under this approach, harvest operations should be both well-planned and purposely timed, with improvements to the vigor of the stand the overarching goal guiding the specific objectives of each cutting. This regime, often referred to as “wildlife forestry,” is a form of uneven-aged management that ensures the stand’s future through natural regeneration rather than artificial replanting. Hardwood stands are uniquely suited to this management scenario because of their ability to re-sprout

profusely from stumps and seed sources. When applied correctly, managing hardwoods in this fashion maximizes wildlife habitat diversity within the stand, while providing an income source to the landowner by allowing for periodic harvests of wood products. Additionally, the successive improvement cuts accommodate a variety of management options and objectives, thereby avoiding the need to implement practices that might be detrimental to turkeys and other wildlife.

Getting Help

Incorporating wildlife needs into timber management planning can be a daunting task, but there is no reason to go at it alone. The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks provides free on-site technical guidance to landowners on all aspects of habitat enhancement, including forest management for wildlife, so assistance in developing your property’s wildlife management plan is only a phone call away. If you would like to request a visit from a wildlife biologist to your property or hunting club, contact the MDWFP at (601) 432-2199. For more information on timber management for turkeys, including guidelines for prescribed burning, wildlife forestry, and other habitat improvement topics, go to the MDWFP Wild Turkey Program website at www.mdwfp.com/turkey.



Hardwood stands with a diverse understory can provide quality habitat for wild turkeys throughout the year.



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. We appreciate 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 2004 – 2011 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 poults are considered successful. Hens without poults are considered unsuccessful and either did not attempt to nest, abandoned their nest, lost their nest to predation or human disturbance or had no poults survive. Average brood size is the total number of poults divided by number of successful hens and is an index to poults survival. "Poults per total hens" is defined as the number of poults observed divided by total number of hens seen. "Poults per total hens" is the most practical reproductive index because it considers successful hens, unsuccessful hens and poults survival.



Steve Gullede

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 Gullede

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 at least 3 years old have spur lengths of one inch or longer. 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.



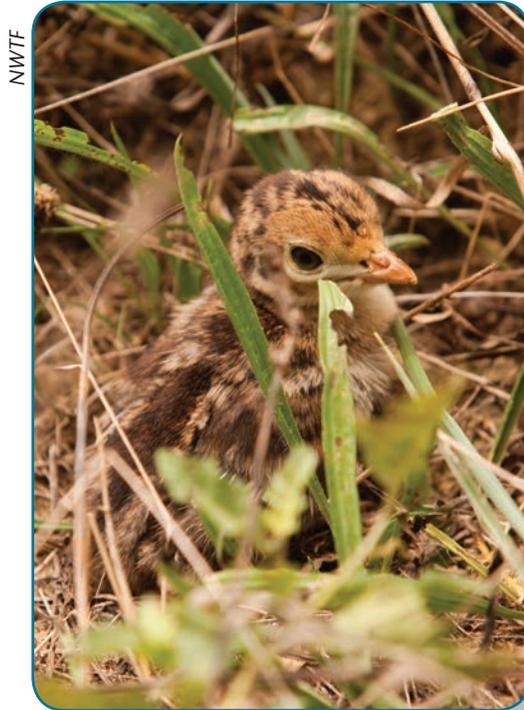
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Steve Gullledge



2011 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 poults 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 poults 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. Weather patterns during the spring of 2011 were favorable for

nesting, however, as spring transitioned into summer, many regions of Mississippi experienced extreme weather-related impacts on turkey reproduction. In the Delta, a historic and unusually late spring flood curtailed nesting attempts for most hens. Concurrently, the rest of the state, particularly portions of southern Mississippi, was experiencing extreme conditions at the opposite end of the spectrum. May and June brought drought and excessively high daily temperatures. These extremes coincided with the time of peak hatching for wild turkey nests. Wild turkey poults cannot effectively regulate their internal body temperatures for their first several weeks of life and during this time mortality can occur due to exposure. Additionally, drought conditions can severely depress insect numbers, which are the sole food source for turkeys during their first month of life. Southern Mississippi experienced more excessive conditions than did the central and north portions of the state.

The combination of these weather extremes, coupled with a population weighted heavily toward yearling hens (which nest less often than adults), yielded conditions which contributed to below average turkey reproduction for most areas of Mississippi during 2011. However, significant regional variation in reproductive output was observed – some areas fared much better than others. Assessments of the hatch based on data gathered over the summer can be found below, given as statewide and regional averages.

Statewide

Poult/Total Hens: 1.45
Nest success: 38%
Average brood size: 3.79

Per Hen (PPH) index was well below its 5- and 10-year average. Overall, 38% of hens were seen with a brood, which was similar to last year, however, the average brood size dropped by nearly 12% from 2010, suggesting that overall declines in reproduction may have been fueled by low poult survival.

Region 1: Northeast

Turkey reproduction parameters in Northeastern Mississippi were nearly identical to last year and can best be described as relatively low. Nest success for this region was similar to the Statewide average, however, the Poults Per Hen index was low, at 1.37 PPH, likely as a result of low average brood size. Although portions of this region, especially southern counties, did experience a

Poult/Total Hens: 1.37
Nest success: 40%
Average brood size: 3.40

good hatch, turkey reproduction throughout most of the region did not appear sufficient to translate into regional population gains.

Region 2: Delta

For the third time in the previous four years, the Mississippi River flooded much of the low lying areas of the Delta during the height of the spring nesting season. Due in part to the already suppressed regional populations, the number of turkey

During 2011, turkey reproduction across most of Mississippi dropped significantly from the strong hatch of 2010, and at 1.45, the Poults Per Hen (PPH) index was well below its 5- and 10-year average. Overall, 38% of hens were seen with a brood, which was similar to last year, however, the average brood size dropped by nearly 12% from 2010, suggesting that overall declines in reproduction may have been fueled by low poult survival.

observations recorded during the brood survey period were insufficient to determine reproductive indices for regional turkey reproduction. However, ancillary reports indicate that areas impacted by flooding during the spring of 2011 likely experienced little to no reproduction, while a moderate hatch may have been produced outside the flood zone.

Poult/Total Hens: N/A
Nest success: N/A
Average brood size: N/A

Region 3: East Central

Turkey numbers in East Central MS have been strong for the past several years, and the 2011 hatch was likely sufficient to maintain that trend. The hatch was good throughout the area, and Region 3 led the state in all reproductive categories. The overall Poults Per Hen (1.88), percent of hens observed with broods (45%), and average brood size (4.19) were all indicative of reproduction levels that should fuel population increases across the region.

Poult/Total Hens: 1.88
Nest success: 45%
Average brood size: 4.19

Region 4: Southwest

Region 4 posted one of its best hatches on record during 2010, and with such a high proportion of the population composed of younger age-classed hens, a decline in overall reproductive output for 2011 was expected.

Data from the brood survey suggested that only one-third of all hens in the region successfully hatched a nest, and the average brood size was down significantly from the previous year, these two factors translated into a meager 1.04 Poults Per Hen for the region.

Poult/Total Hens: 1.04
Nest success: 32%
Average brood size: 3.22

the average brood size was down significantly from the previous year, these two factors translated into a meager 1.04 Poults Per Hen for the region.

Region 5: Southeast

Similar to Southwest MS, Region 5 experienced a very good hatch in 2010, but followed it up this past summer with below average reproductive figures. Although reproduction in Lamar, Forrest, and Perry counties appeared much better than the regional average, most of Southeast MS saw very little turkey reproduction, with slightly less than 1

in 4 hens successfully hatching a nest.

Poult/Total Hens: 0.82
Nest success: 23%
Average brood size: 3.54



Steve Cullledge

Turkey reproduction may have suffered in portions of Mississippi due to the relatively large percentage of the population that was composed of year-old hens. Yearling hens nest less often than older birds, and their nesting attempts tend to be less successful.

2011 Hatch

- Low
- Average
- Good

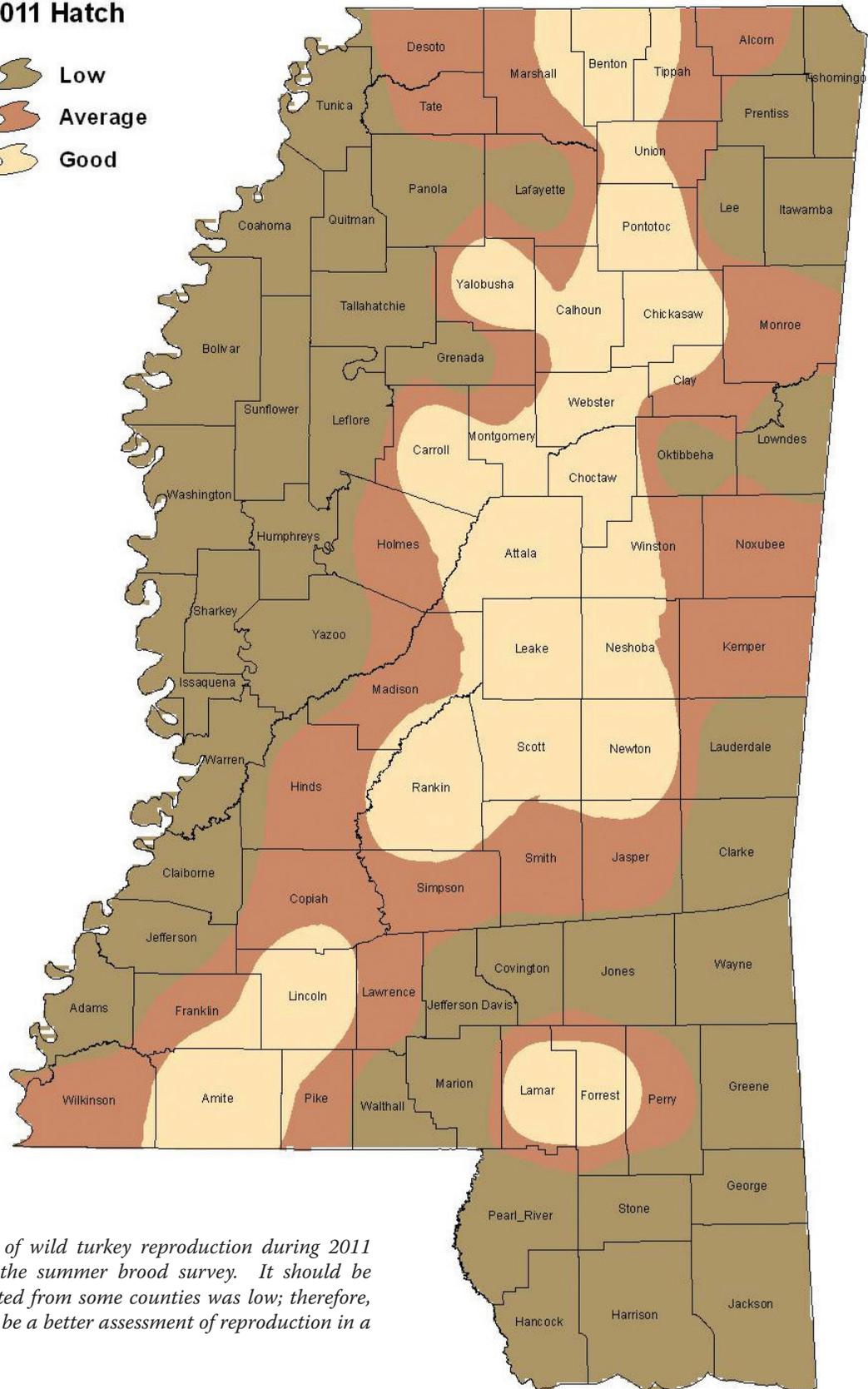


Figure 1: Assessment of wild turkey reproduction during 2011 based on data from the summer brood survey. It should be noted that data reported from some counties was low; therefore, regional averages may be a better assessment of reproduction in a particular county.

Gobbler-to-Hen Ratio

In addition to poults and hens, 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. In previous years, 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). After two years of trending downward, the gobbler-to-hen ratio increased during the summer of 2011, indicating that more gobblers had survived the spring turkey season and will likely be carried over and available for harvest during 2012. This upward spike comes on the heels of a very good 2010 hatch, which increased the numbers of jakes that were protected during the 2011 season and will be carried over for hunters in 2012.

Conclusions

The amount of reproductive success exhibited by a wild turkey population can vary widely from spring-to-spring, and the last three years in Mississippi has been a testament to this phenomenon. During an exceptionally wet spring and summer in 2009, wild turkey reproduction suffered heavily, and the MDWFP brood survey tallied the lowest reproductive indices on record for much of the state. Two years ago, during the spring and summer of 2010, favorable spring nesting conditions yielded an excellent turkey hatch.



Steve Gulleddge

In many areas of the state Poults to Hen ratios were higher than they had been in several years. This past spring, environmental conditions – drought, extreme heat, and flooding in the Delta – coupled with a female population that was largely composed of young, inexperienced hens yielded low reproduction for much of Mississippi. As always, reproductive success tended to vary by region, and during the summer of 2011, rainfall patterns correlated well with turkey reproduction. With the exception of the Delta, in which reproduction was curtailed due to floodwaters, those areas of Mississippi that were hardest hit by drought suffered the greatest setbacks in turkey reproduction. Other areas, such as portions of Northern and Eastern Mississippi, in which minuscule amounts of precipitation were able to ensure adequate bugging grounds, did maintain the conditions needed to produce decent numbers of young turkeys.

Readers should be cautioned that the regional averages and summations that have been given in this report are simply that – summaries. The hatch on any particular piece of property or locale may or may not be reflective of its region's average. Certain areas may have experienced reproduction 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 poults need for survival will rarely experience good turkey reproduction, regardless of spring weather conditions.

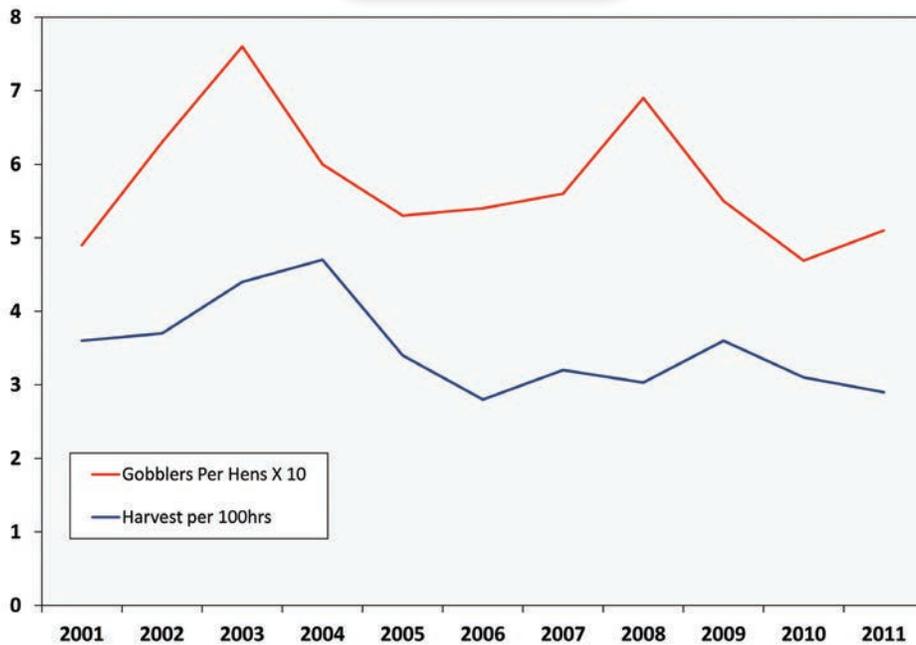


Figure 2: Comparison of the ratio of gobblers seen per hen (x10) from the summer brood survey and subsequent change in harvest rates, 2001 – 2011.

Statewide

STATEWIDE PRIVATE LAND DATA WERE COLLECTED DURING THE 2011 season by more than 50 hunting clubs and approximately 500 individual hunters participating in the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey.



Reproduction

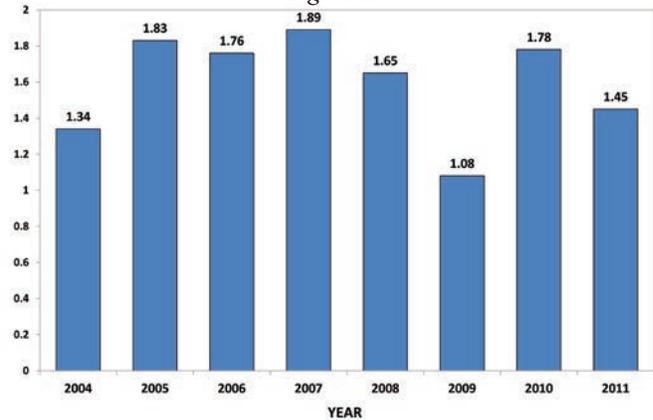
During the 2011 brood survey period, a total of 1,882 hens were observed across the Magnolia State. Of these hens, 723 (38%) successfully produced at least one poult. A total of 2,738 poults were observed, and average brood size was 3.79 poults which was down significantly from 2010. The average number of poults per total hens was 1.45 (Figure 1), which was down from 1.78 observed in 2010. During the past 8 years, poults per total hens statewide has averaged 1.60 poults, and has ranged from a high of 1.89 poults in 2007 to a low of 1.08 poults in 2009. While we observed considerable regional variation within the 2011 hatch, most regions of our State saw reproductive parameters decline during this year.

Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Statewide harvest rates were slightly lower than those reported in 2010. On average, hunters harvested 2.9 gobblers for every 100 hours hunted (Figure 2). Over the past 8 years, harvest rates have averaged 3.4 gobblers per 100 hours hunted. The age structure of harvested turkeys in 2011 was somewhat older than that observed in recent years. Of the gobblers harvested, 56% were 3+ year-old toms with spur lengths of greater than one inch (Figure 3), and 15% had spurs greater than 1.25 inches. Forty-three percent of the birds harvested were in the 2-year old age class with spurs between 0.5" and 1.0", which was down from 48% recorded in 2010.

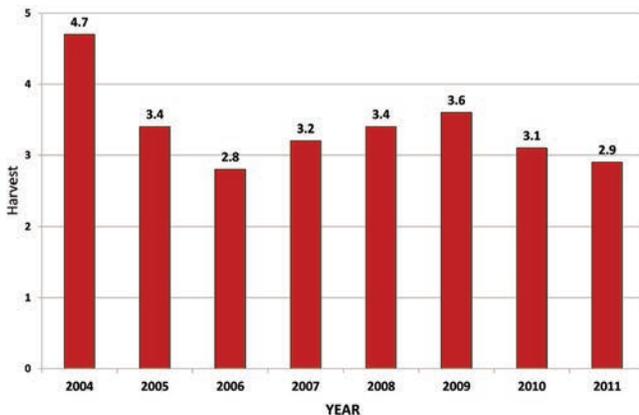
Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1



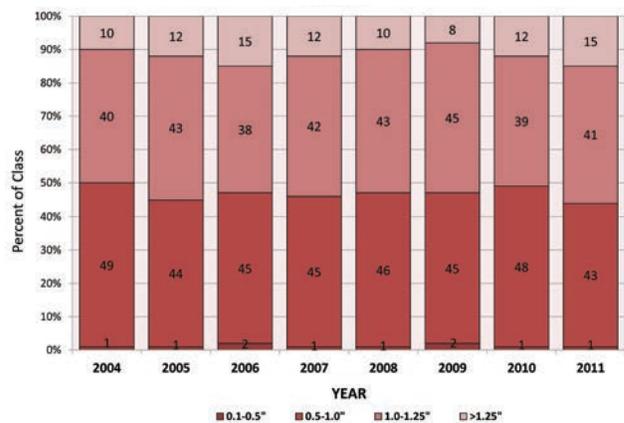
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

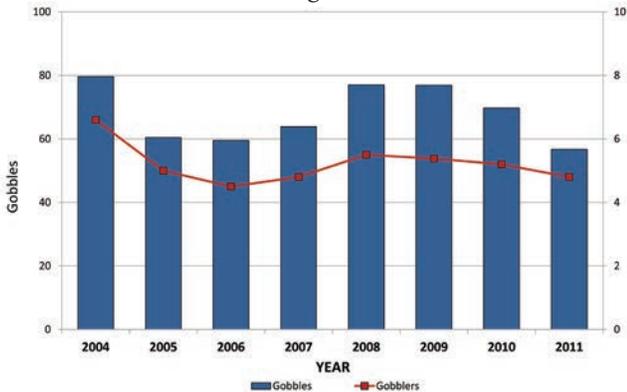


Gobbling Activity

During 2011, seasonal gobbling activity was slightly lower than observed during 2010, with hunters hearing an average of 4.8 gobblers and 56.7 gobbles for every 10 hours of hunting (Figure 4). The number of gobblers heard was highest during the second week of the regular turkey season (Figure 5), with a secondary peak during week 4. The number of gobbles heard was highest during week 4. In general, gobbling activity was low during the early portion of the 2011 season for most regions.

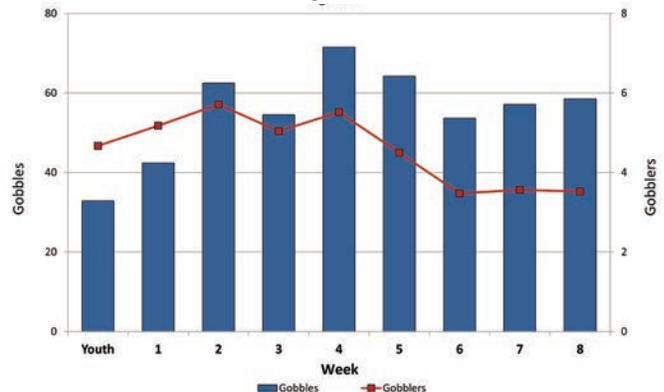
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

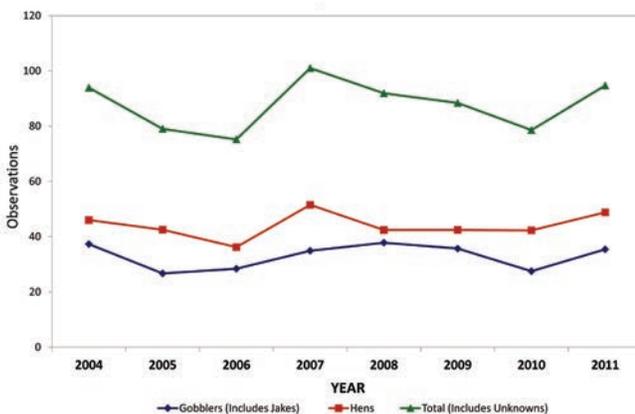


Turkey Observations

During the 2011 season, hunters observed an average of 16.7 adult gobblers, 18.8 jakes, 48.8 hens and 10.4 unknowns for every 100 hours of hunting (Figure 6). Overall, total turkey observations in 2011 were higher than observed during 2010. Jake observations (18.8 per 100 hours) were significantly higher than observations from 2010, and were the highest in recent history (Figure 7).

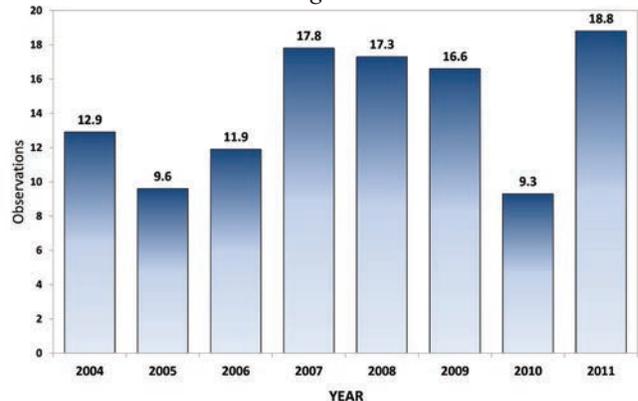
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

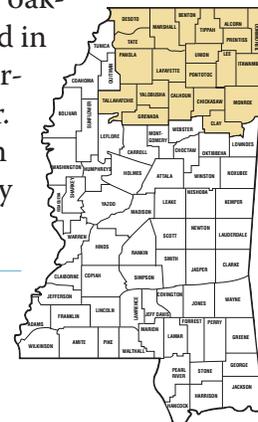


2012 Season Forecast

The 2012 spring gobbler season should be an exciting time for Mississippi turkey hunters! Our brood survey results indicate that 2010 was a good hatch year statewide, and increased jake observations from the 2011 season certainly support that deduction. Hunters statewide should expect to encounter more 2-year old gobblers which should equate to increased gobbling activity and higher harvest rates. 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.

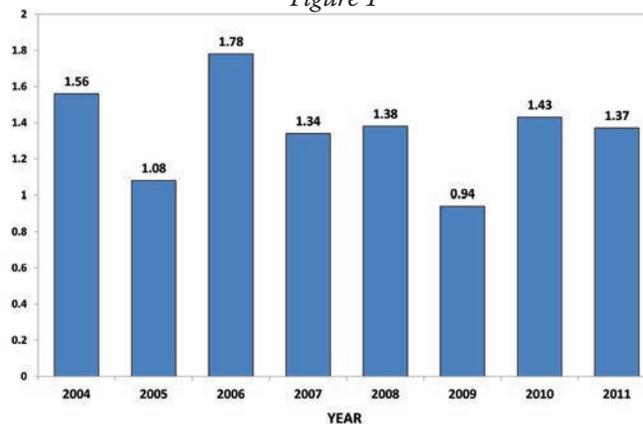


Reproduction

During the 2011 brood survey, we observed 1.37 poults per hen in Region 1 which was similar to the 1.43 observed in 2010 (Figure 1). Compared to other regions, Region 1 has seen relatively low reproduction during recent years. However, during 2011 reproduction was higher in this region than observed in many portions of the State. A total of 556 hens were observed, of which 223 (40%) successfully raised at least one poult. Successful hens had an average brood size of 3.40 poults, which was similar to brood size observed in 2010.

Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

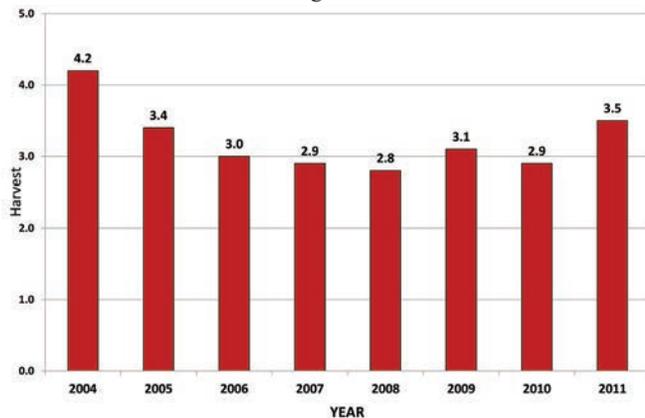


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Hunters harvested 3.5 gobblers for every 100 hours of hunting during the 2011 season, which was up from the 2010 season (Figure 2). Age structure of harvested birds was similar to 2010, with 54% of the birds falling into the 2-year old age class (Figure 3). Forty-four percent of the harvested birds were at least 3-years old with spurs greater than 1.0 inch.

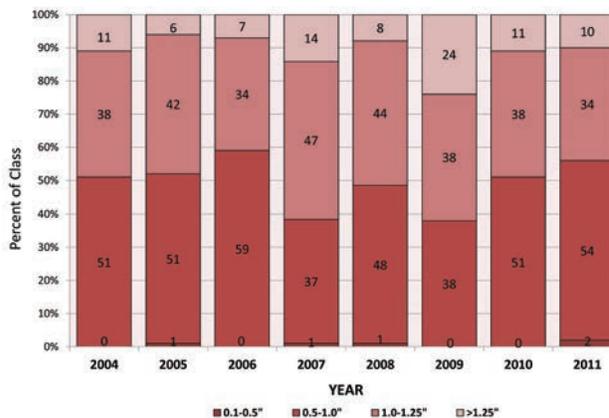
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

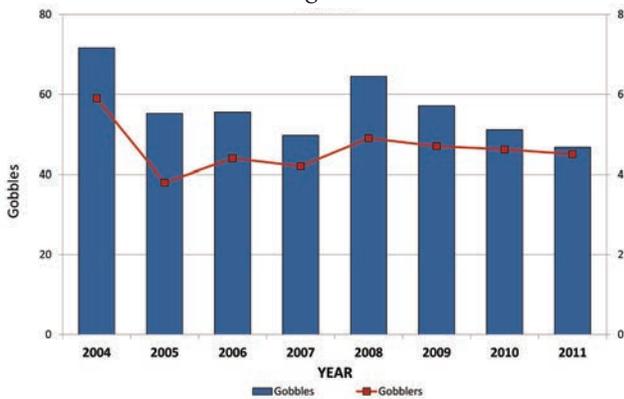


Gobbling Activity

During the 2011 season, hunters heard an average of 4.5 gobblers gobble 46.7 times for every 10 hours hunted (*Figure 4*). Gobbling activity was down slightly from the previous year for Region 1. The number of gobblers heard was highest during the youth week, and gobblers heard peaked during weeks 2 and 4 during the 2011 season (*Figure 5*).

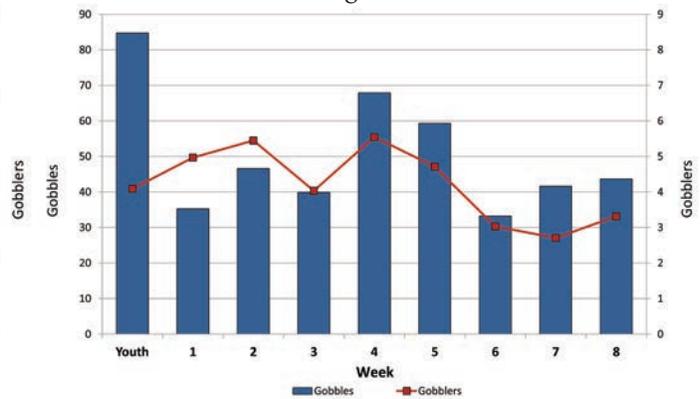
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

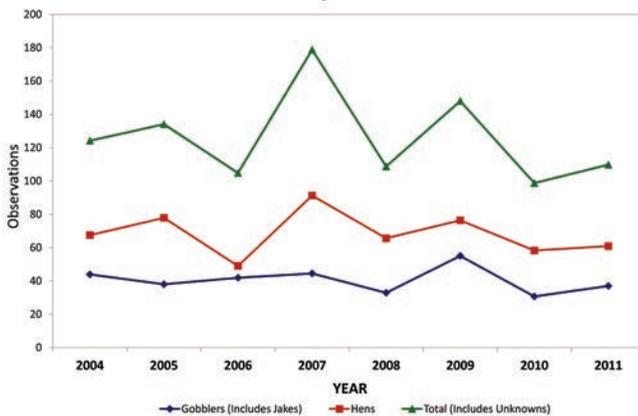


Turkey Observations

Turkey hunters observed an average of 109.8 turkeys per 100 hours hunted in 2011 (*Figure 6*) which was up from 2010. Jake observations (19.7 per 100 hours) were up significantly in 2011 (*Figure 7*).

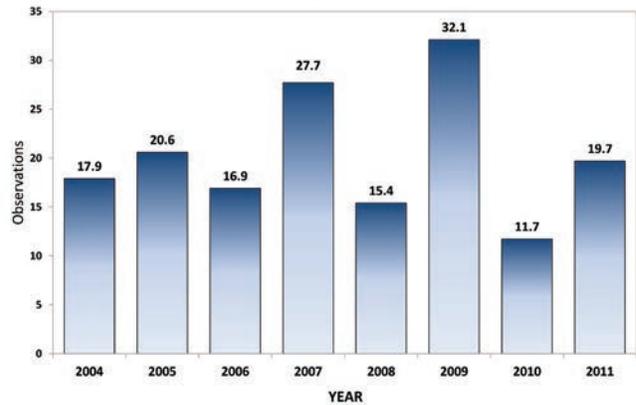
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

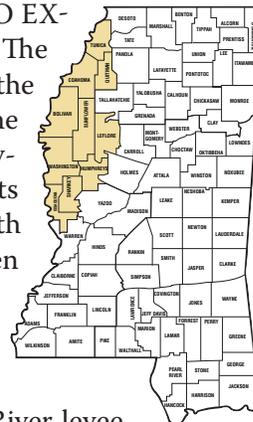


2012 Season Forecast

The 2010 hatch was significantly better than the hatch in 2009. Hunters also observed significantly more jakes during the 2011 season. Therefore, we expect hunters in Region 1 to encounter a greater number of 2-year old gobblers during the 2012 season. Success rates in this region should be higher than we observed during the 2011 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.



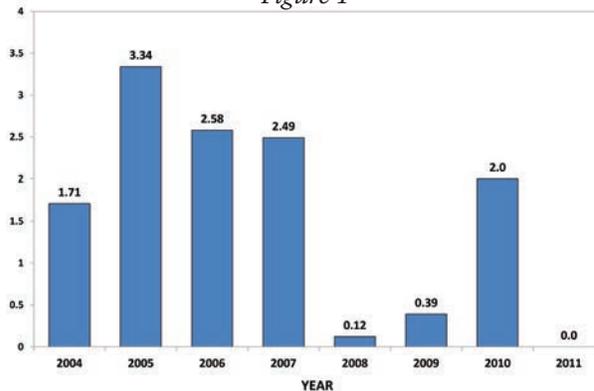
Region 2 is unique in that most of the turkey habitat in the interior Delta is on public lands (national forest, wildlife management areas, and wildlife refuges) and the vast majority of the private land habitat is located in the batture lands west of the Mississippi River levee. Therefore, data from 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

Once again in 2011, flooding was a major issue impacting turkey reproduction in Region 2. In fact, flood waters have now significantly limited turkey reproduction in this region during 3 of the past 4 summers (2008, 2009, and 2011). The impact of the historic flood of 2011 was so significant that we observed 0.0 poults per total hen during our brood survey (*Figure 1*). We know that some reproduction did occur in the region during 2011, but the number of broods was too low to be detected by our brood survey. We did receive some ancillary reports of some reproduction in the region, particularly from re-nesting attempts.

Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

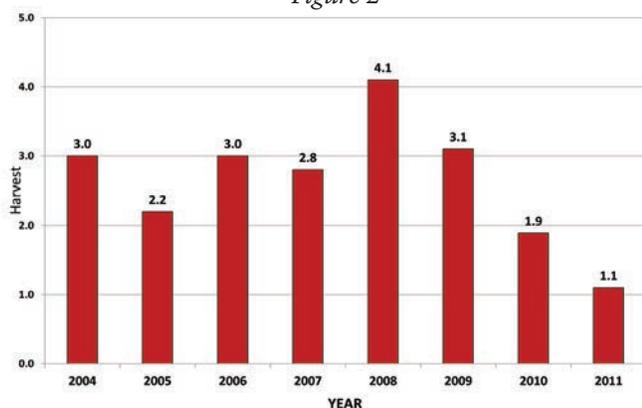


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

During the 2011 season, an average of 1.1 gobblers was harvested for every 100 hours of hunting (*Figure 2*), which was down from 2010, and continued a downward trend related to recent low reproduction in this region. Over half (55%) of the

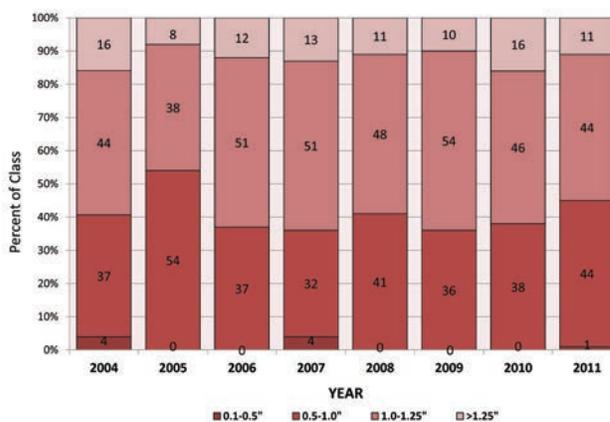
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3



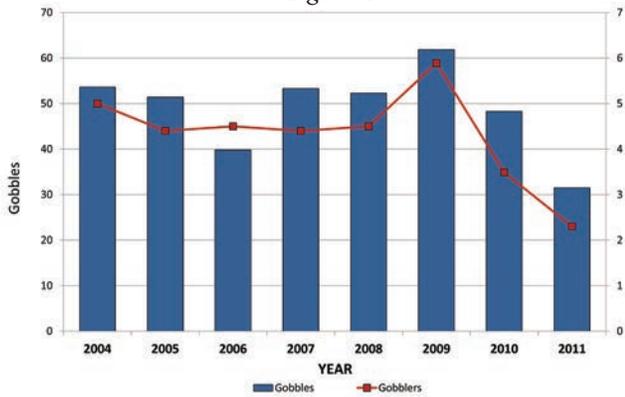
gobblers harvested in Region 2 were at least 3-years old (*Figure 3*), with 11% having spurs over 1.25 inches in length. Forty-four percent of the birds harvested in Region 2 were in the 2-year old class with spurs between 0.5 and 1.0 inch long.

Gobbling Activity

Gobbling activity for 2011 was lower than that recorded in 2010 for Region 2 (*Figure 4*). Hunters in this region heard an average of 2.3 gobblers and 31.5 gobbles per 10 hours of hunting. The number of gobblers heard peaked in week 4 and the highest number of gobblers were heard during youth week of the spring season (*Figure 5*).

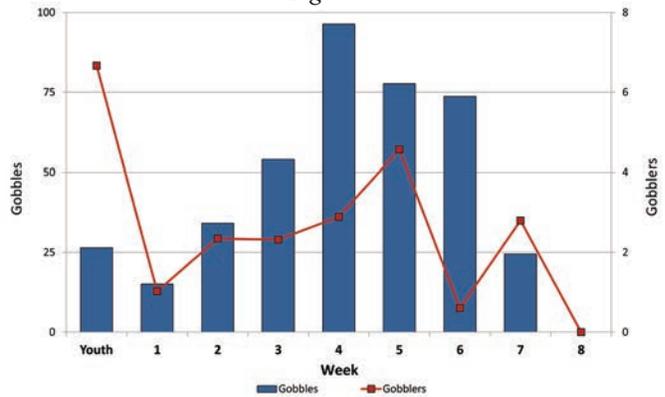
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

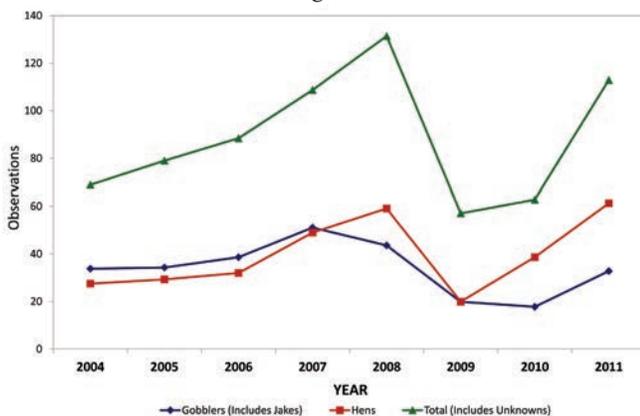


Turkey Observations

Overall turkey observations were up significantly from the previous year during 2011, which was expected following a decent hatch in 2010. Hunters saw an average of 112.9 birds per 100 hours of hunting (*Figure 6*). Jake observations also increased significantly to 24.6 per 100 hours in 2011 (*Figure 7*).

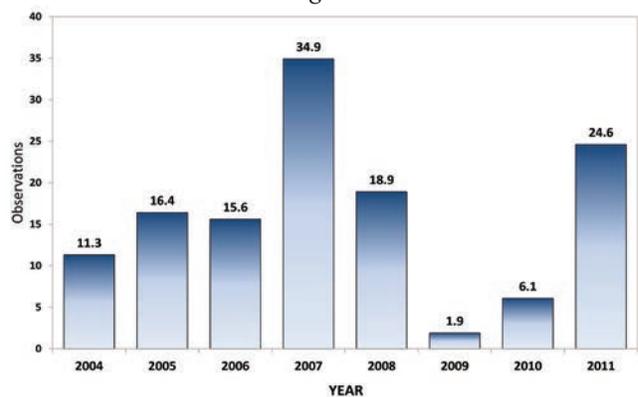
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

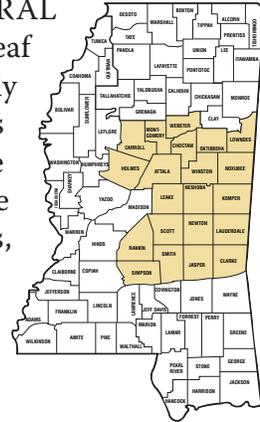


2012 Season Forecast

The good hatch in 2010 should mean an increase of 2-year old gobblers throughout the Mississippi Delta. However, hunters in this region will have the unique experience of hunting a population that is heavily skewed to a single age class. The negative impacts of flood waters on turkey reproduction during 3 of the past 4 years have resulted in declining turkey populations throughout most of this region. We expect jakes and gobblers 3-years of age and older to be scarce during the 2012 season.

Turkey Region 3

REGION 3 IS THE 21 COUNTY AREA LOCATED IN EAST-CENTRAL Mississippi. The two major forest types in this region are loblolly-shortleaf pine, which occurs on the drier 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.

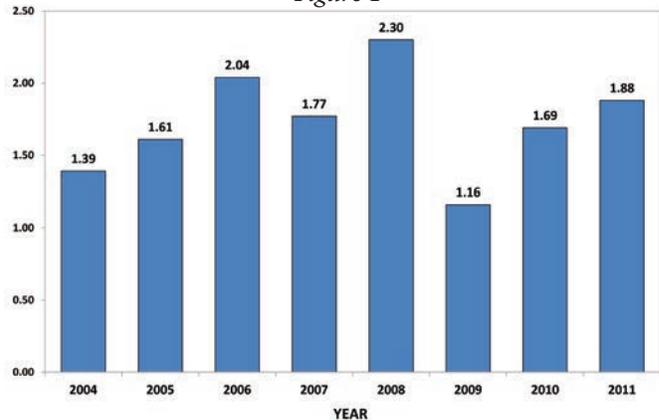


Reproduction

An average of 1.88 poults per total hen was recorded for Region 3 (Figure 1) which was up from 2010. This was the only region of Mississippi to observe higher turkey reproduction in 2011 than in 2010. A total of 804 hens were seen in this region during the 2011 brood survey and 361 (45%) of the hens successfully produced at least one poult. Average brood size was 4.19 poults per successful hen, which was down slightly from 2010.

Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

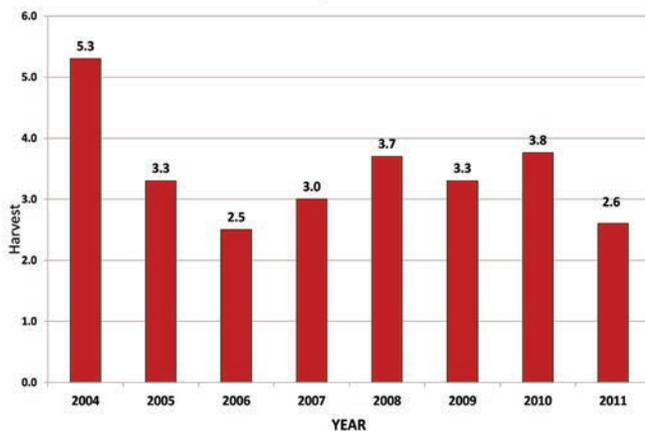


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Hunters harvested 2.6 gobblers per 100 hours of hunting in Region 3 during 2011 (Figure 2) which was down from 2010. Thirty-six percent of harvested gobblers were considered 2-year old birds with spurs of 0.5 to 1.0 inches, while 61% were considered at least 3-years old (Figure 3).

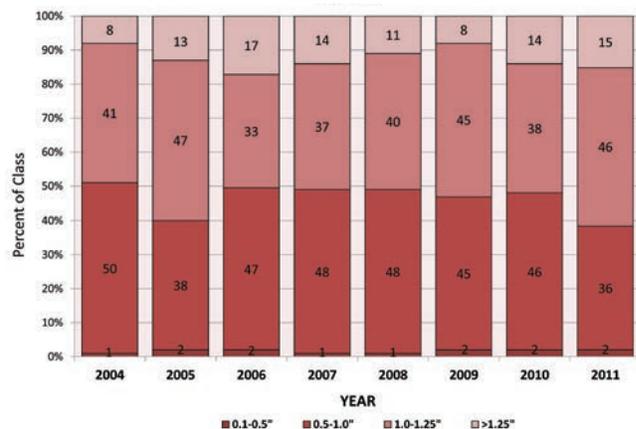
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

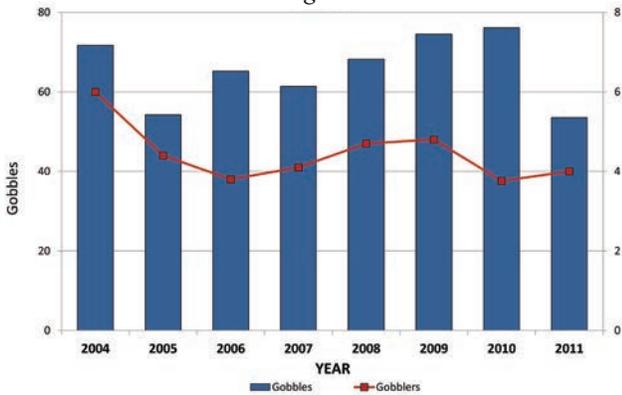


Gobbling Activity

During 2011, hunters heard similar numbers of gobblers (4.0) but fewer gobbles (53.5) per 10 hours of hunting (*Figure 4*). Gobbling activity peaked in this region during the middle of the spring season, with hunters hearing the most gobblers during week 4, and the most gobblers in weeks 2 and 4 (*Figure 5*).

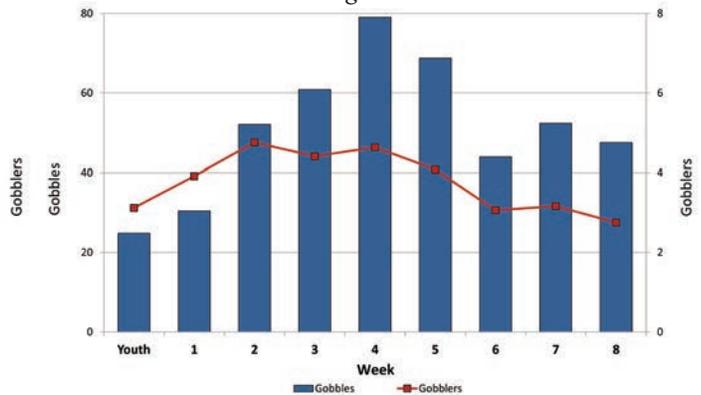
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

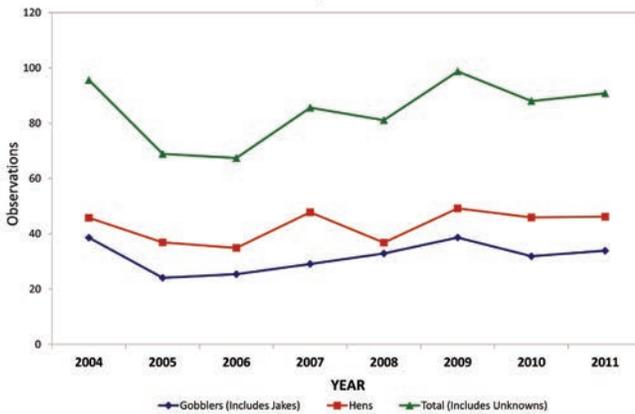


Turkey Observations

Hunters averaged observing 90.8 turkeys per 100 hours hunting during the 2011 season (*Figure 6*), which was similar to 2010. Jake observations increased significantly to 17.6 per 100 hours hunting (*Figure 7*).

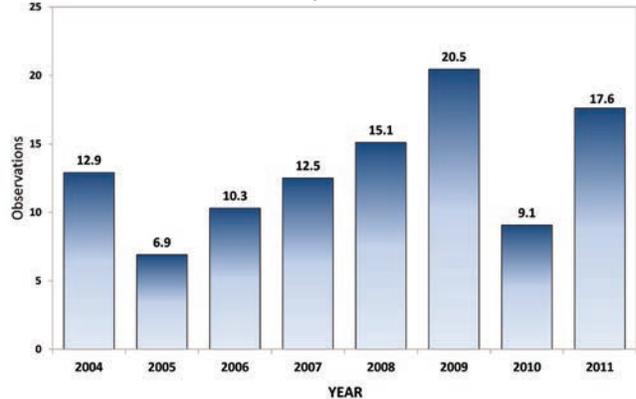
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

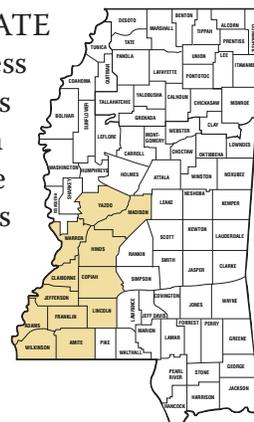


2012 Season Forecast

Following a lackluster hatch in 2009, Region 3 had better reproduction in 2010. Jake observations during the 2011 spring season were nearly twice as high as those recorded in 2010. We expect to see a sharp increase in the number of 2-year-old gobblers encountered in this region during the 2012 hunting season which should result in higher success rates for 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.

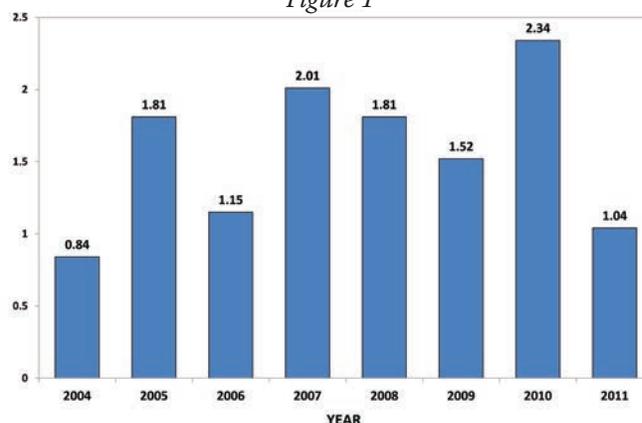


Reproduction

A total of 1.04 poult per total hens were observed for Region 4 during the 2011 brood survey (*Figure 1*) which was down significantly from 2010, and much lower than long-term average for this region. Thirty-two percent of the hens observed successfully reproduced, and average brood size was 3.22 poult for Region 4, both down from 2010.

Poult Per Total Hens

Figure 1

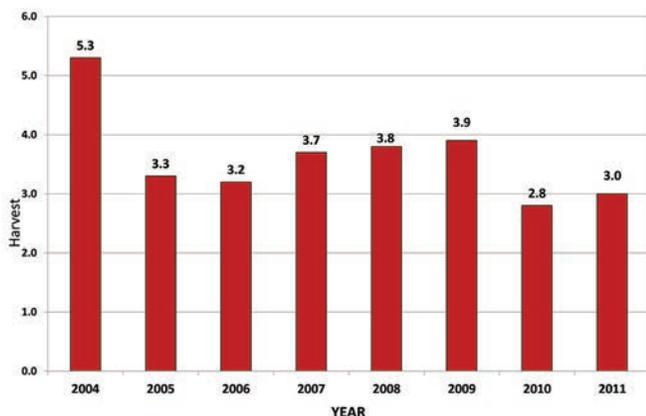


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Region 4 turkey hunters harvested 3.0 gobblers per 100 hours of hunting in 2011 (*Figure 2*) which was up slightly from 2010. The percentage of older gobblers (with spurs at least 1-inch long) was 59% (*Figure 3*) while the percentage of 2-year old birds in the harvest was 40%, which was very similar to 2010.

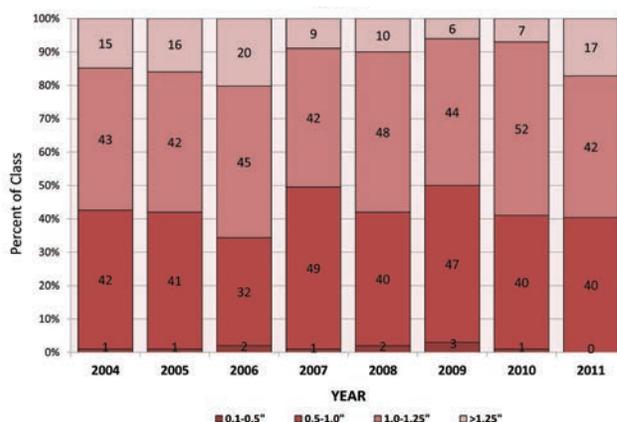
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

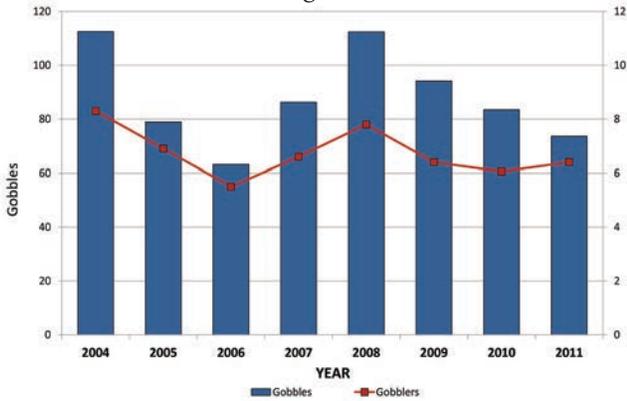


Gobbling Activity

Gobbling activity for Southwest Mississippi was relatively stable in 2011 (Figure 4) as hunters heard more gobblers (6.4) but fewer gobbles (73.6) per 10 hours of hunting. The number of gobblers heard in this region peaked during youth week, while the number of gobbles heard was highest during weeks 2 and 7 of the season (Figure 5).

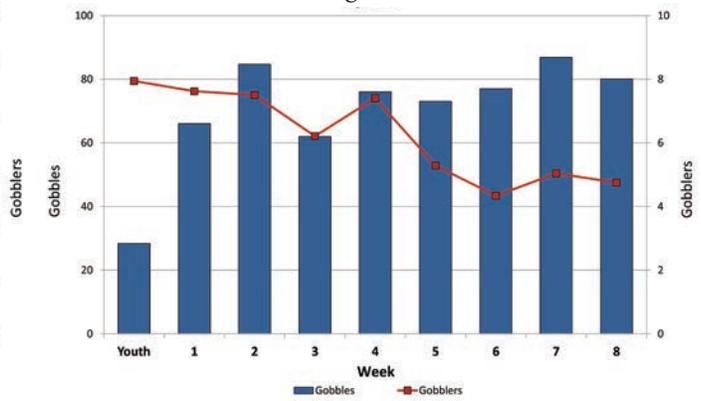
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

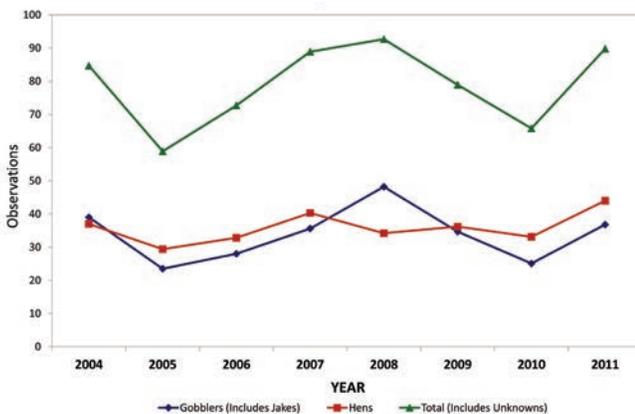


Turkey Observations

Turkey hunters observed 89.8 turkeys per 100 hours of hunting in 2011 (Figure 6) which was up from 2010. Hunters observed 18.9 jakes per 100 hours hunting (Figure 7) which was up significantly from the 9.4 observed in 2010.

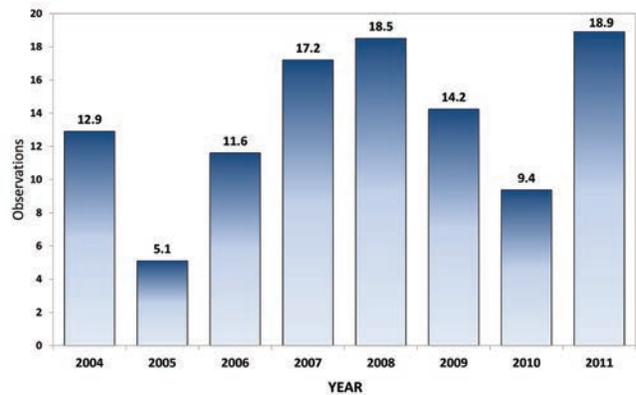
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

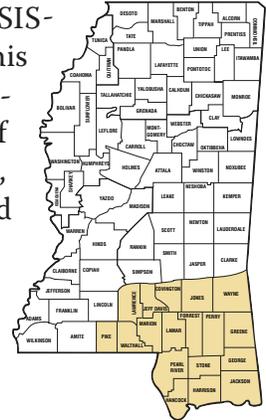


2012 Season Forecast

Like most of Mississippi, Region 4 enjoyed a good hatch in 2010, and jake observations during the 2011 spring season were approximately twice as high as recorded the previous year. Hunters in Region 4 should expect to find plenty of 2-year old gobblers to chase during the 2012 season! In fact, Region 4 enjoyed solid turkey reproduction from 2007 through 2010, and has been a regional hotspot for turkey hunters in recent years. The only bad news from Region 4 would be that turkey reproduction was finally low in 2011. While there were some local exceptions within the region, the hatch was down throughout much of Southwest Mississippi in 2011, and we would expect that hunters will encounter fewer jakes there in 2012.

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.

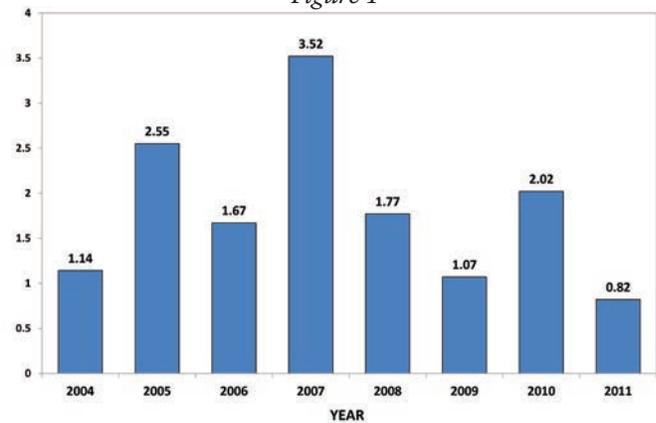


Reproduction

A total of 0.82 poults were observed per hen during the 2011 brood survey (*Figure 1*), which was down significantly from a decent hatch during 2010 in Region 5. A total of 23% of the hens observed successfully reproduced, and average brood size was 3.54 poults, both down from 2010.

Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

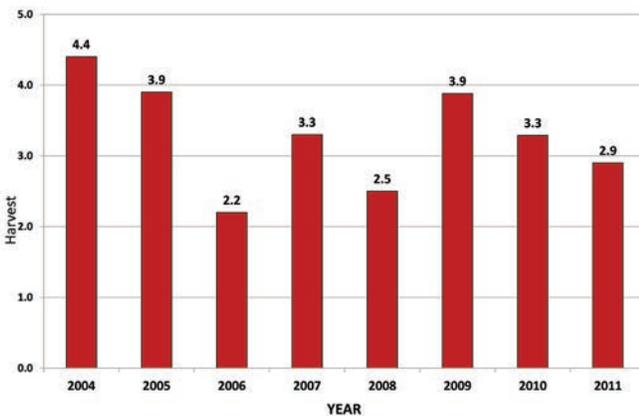


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Region 5 hunters harvested 2.9 gobblers per 100 hours of hunting in 2011 (*Figure 2*) which was down from 2010. Forty-eight percent of the birds harvested had spurs between 0.5 and 1.0 inches, while 52 percent had spurs longer than 1 inch (*Figure 3*).

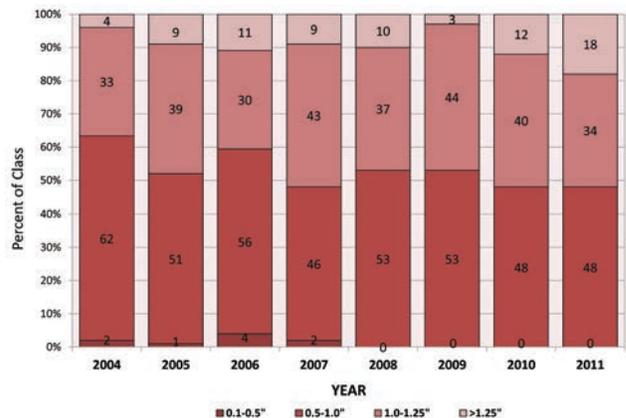
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

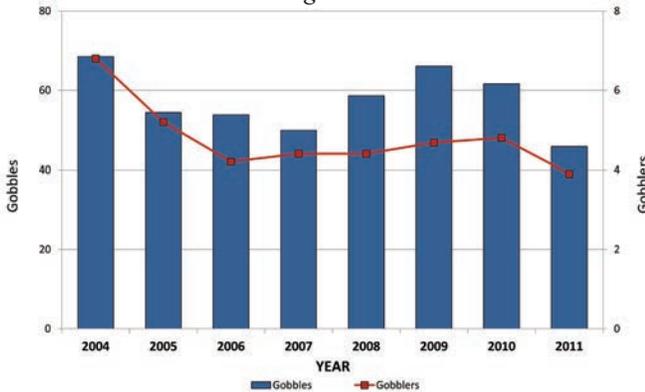


Gobbling Activity

During 2011, hunters in this region heard 3.9 gobblers and 45.8 gobblers per 10 hours, which was down from 2010 (Figure 4). The number of gobblers heard peaked during week 2, while the number of gobblers heard was highest in week 3 (Figure 5).

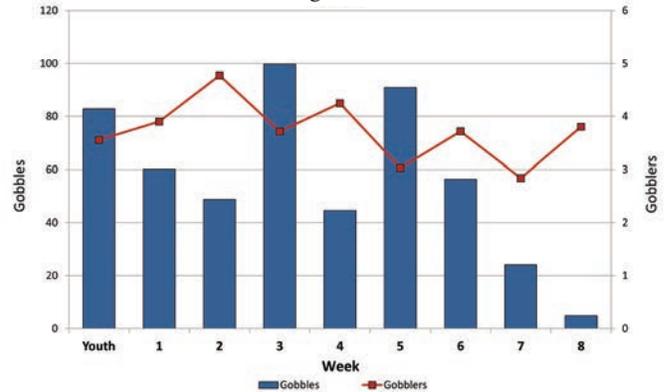
Gobblers & Gobblers Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobblers Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

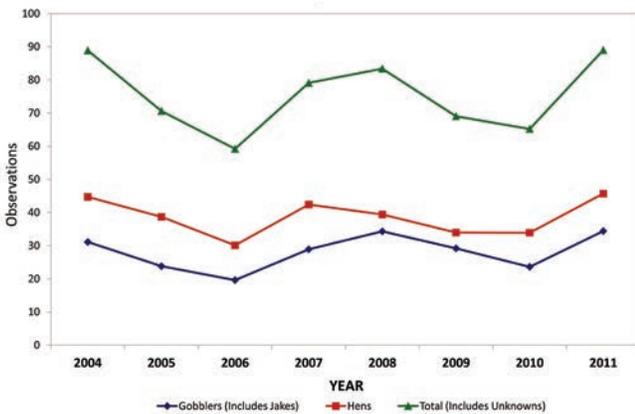


Turkey Observations

Total turkey observations increased during 2011 to 89.0 birds per 100 hours hunting (Figure 6) following a good hatch in 2010, and jake observations were 18.8 per 100 hours which was up significantly from 2010 (Figure 7).

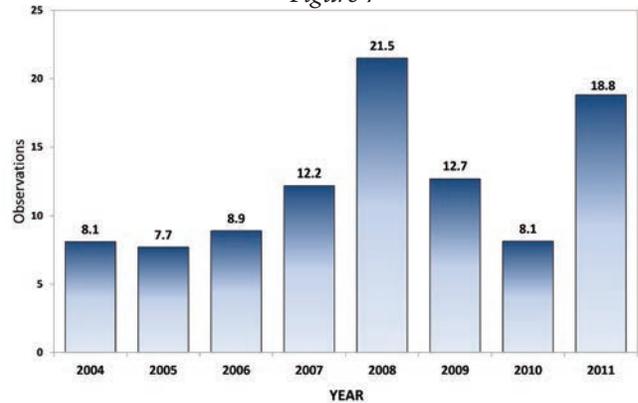
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7



2012 Season Forecast

Region 5 hunters should expect an increase in the number of 2-year old gobblers they find during the 2012 season. This should result in increased gobbling activity and harvest rates since 2-year old birds tend to be more vocal and susceptible to harvest. While the 2010 hatch was good in Region 5, the hatches were lower in 2009 and 2011. Overall numbers of turkeys observed in this region will likely decline during the 2012 season.

Join Our Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey Team

A quick & easy way for hunters to contribute to the conservation & management of turkeys in Mississippi.

Steve Cullledge



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

- A complimentary copy of *Spittin' & Drummin'*, the MDWFP Turkey Program's annual report, will be sent to you. 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.
- Participants will receive SGHS decal, provided by the Mississippi Chapter of the NWTf.

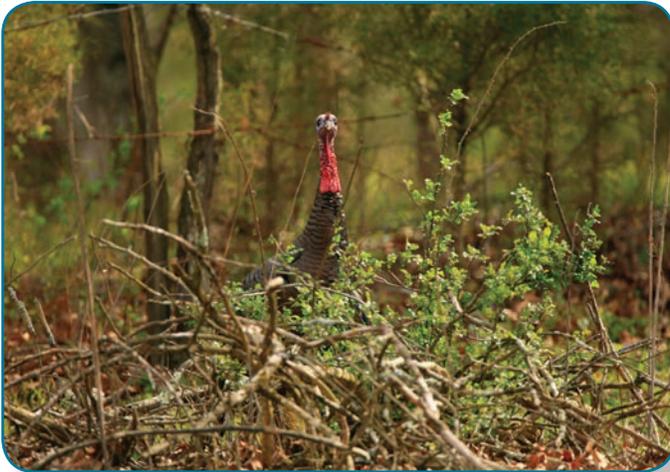


How can I Participate?

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.

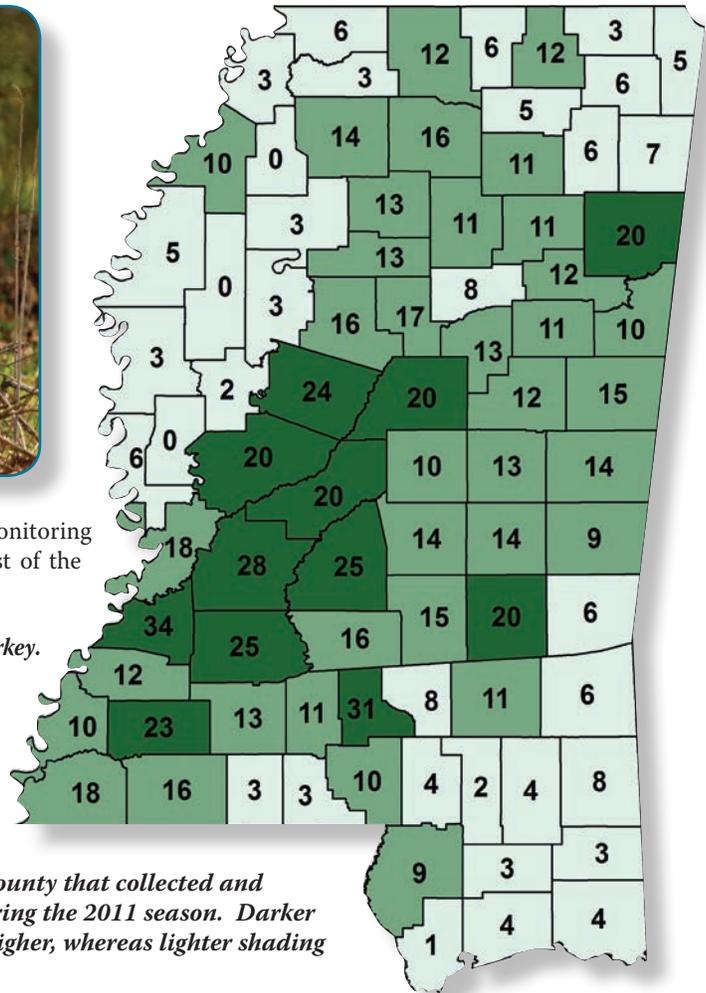
If you have never participated in the SGHS, but would like to become involved, please fill out and return the application on page 79 or contact one of the MDWFP Turkey Program biologists listed in the acknowledgements section. You can also apply at www.mdwfp.com.

Steve Cullledge



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.

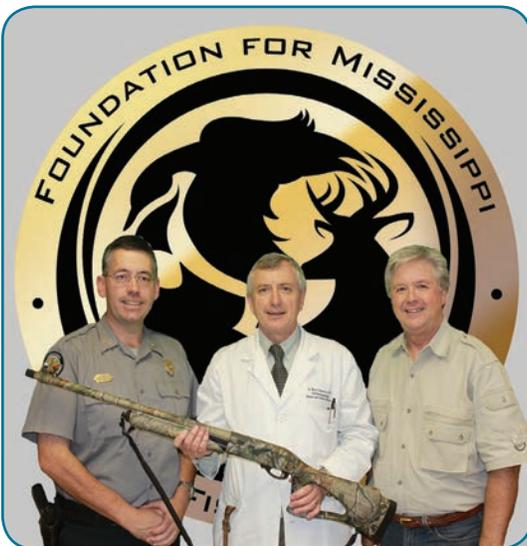
New SGHS Participants can enroll online at www.mdwfp.com/turkey.



This figure displays the number of participants in each county that collected and returned data for the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey during the 2011 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 Raffle Shotgun Continues in 2012

MDWFP



Dave Godwin (left), MDWFP Wild Turkey Program Coordinator, and Clark Gordin (right), Executive Director of the Foundation for Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, present a new shotgun to Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey raffle winner, Dr. Ron Cannon of Brandon (center).

IN AN EFFORT TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN THE SGHS, THE MDWFP has partnered with the Mississippi Chapter NWF and the Mississippi Foundation for Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks to conduct a shotgun raffle for survey participants. During 2011, 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 2011.

Dr. Ron Cannon of Brandon won the general drawing and received a Remington 870 Super Mag courtesy of the Foundation for Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. The referral drawing winner was Mr. Tom McAlpin, of Magee, 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 2012 thanks to the generosity of our partners!



Trey McAlpin displays the Remington shotgun his father, Tom McAlpin (center), won in the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey referral drawing. Pictured with the McAlpins are Adam Butler (left), MDWFP Wild Turkey Program biologist and Bob Spell (right), Past President of the Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Turkey Trivia

Interesting Facts from the 2011 Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey

Hunter Effort

- Data was collected from 7,829 turkey hunts by 490 SGHS participants.
- A total of 20,517 hours of turkey hunting were recorded in the survey. This was an approximate 11% increase from 2010.
- Turkey Region 3 had the highest level of hunter participation in the SGHS, while Turkey Region 2 had by far the lowest.
- Of the nearly 1,300 individuals that received the SGHS data collection booklet, approximately 38% returned data to the MDWFP.
- Proportionally, the first week of the season had the highest hunting effort. Almost 21% of all hunting effort (total hours hunted) occurred during the first week of the regular season (March 12 – 18). Week 2 (March 19 - 25) had the second highest amount of participation with 15% of the overall effort.
- Most hunting effort took place during the early morning. Forty-seven percent of all hours hunted occurred before 8AM. Thirty-nine percent of all hunting hours were during the mid-morning between 8AM and 12PM. The remainder of hunting effort, approximately 14%, occurred during the afternoon.
- The average turkey hunt lasted 2 hours and 56 minutes.

Gobbling Activity

- Hunters averaged hearing just under 5 gobblers and 57 total gobbles for every 10 hours hunted. This amount of gobbling act-

ivity was near a 10-year low.

- Region 4 led the state in gobbling activity, with over 6 gobblers and 74 gobbles heard for every 10 hours hunted.
- Hunters averaged hearing 1.4 gobblers per outing. The maximum number of birds heard was 16 individuals by a hunter in Region 4 on March 17th.
- The number of gobblers heard peaked during the second week of the season (March 19-25), at just under 6 gobblers heard per 10 hours hunted.
- Total gobbling activity peaked during the 4th week of the season (April 2-8) at approximately 72 gobbles heard per 10 hours hunted. This was only 70% of the total gobbling activity heard during the gobbling peak of the 2010 season.
- The day with the highest number of individual gobblers heard per unit of effort, was March 20th, on which hunters statewide averaged hearing approximately 8 gobblers heard per 10 hours hunted.
- Statewide, the highest amount of gobbling activity heard per unit of effort for any specific day occurred on April 13th on which 114 gobbles were heard per 10 hours hunted. Interestingly, this was the same date on which the highest amount of gobbling activity occurred during the 2010 season.
- The date on which individual gobblers were the most vocal, as measured by total gobbles divided by individual gobblers heard, occurred on April 29th, on which an average of 21 gobbles were heard for each individual gobbler.
- Gobbling peaks for daily time periods differed throughout the season. Early morning (Daylight-8AM) and late morning (8AM-Noon) gobbling activity peaked during the fourth week of the season (April 2-8), whereas afternoon (Noon-Dusk) gobbling rates peaked during the sixth week of the season (April 16-22).
- The top five counties with the highest average number of gobblers heard per 10 hours hunted were all located in Turkey Region 4 and included Claiborne, Jefferson, Adams, Hinds, and Warren (based on counties with at least 250 total hours recorded in the SGHS).
- Warren, Madison, Montgomery, Adams, and Hinds counties were the top five counties for total gobbling activity heard per 10 hours hunted (based on counties with at least 250 total hours recorded in the SGHS).

Observations

- For every 10 hours hunted, hunters saw an average of 10 turkeys, including approximately 2 adult gobblers, 5 hens, 2 jakes, and 1 unknown. These numbers were above the 10-year average for each category.
- Hen observations peaked during Youth week (March 5 - 11) at over 9 hens observed per 10 hours hunted. Hen observations during the regular season peaked during opening week (March 12 - 18) at almost 7 hens observed per 10 hours hunted.
- Gobbler observations per 10 hours hunted was also highest during the Youth week at slightly over 4 gobblers observed per 10 hours hunted. During the regular season, gobbler observations were highest during week 4 (April 2-8) at near 4 gobblers seen per 10 hours hunted.
- The sex ratio of turkeys observed was 1.4 hens per gobbler. This was slight decline in favor of gobblers from the previous year.

Harvest

- On average, it took nearly 12 hunts for most SGHS hunters to harvest a gobbler. This was a slight increase from the previous year, and corresponds well to the decline in harvest rates observed in the statewide data.
- Successful turkey hunts usually concluded sooner than unsuccessful ones. The average hunt in which a gobbler was harvested lasted 2 hours 10 minutes. The average unsuccessful turkey hunt lasted 3 hours 7 minutes.



Steve Cullledge

Steve Cullledge



- Harvesting a gobbler took the least amount of time during the second week of the season (March 19-25), in which the average successful hunt only lasted 1 hour 50 minutes. Harvesting a gobbler took the longest during the sixth week of the season (April 16-22), in which the average successful hunt lasted 2 hours and 38 minutes.
- Harvest per unit of effort was highest during the Youth season (March 5-11) in which 3.5 gobblers were harvested per 100 hours hunted. During the regular season, harvest per unit of effort was highest during week 4 (April 2-8) in which approximately 3.4 gobblers were harvested per 100 hours hunted. Harvest rates were lowest during the sixth week of the season (April 16-22) in which only 2.4 gobblers were harvested per 100 hours hunted.
- Harvests per unit of effort for any particular day were highest on March 6th, during the Youth season, and April 5th, during the regular season, on which approximately 5 gobblers were harvested per 100 hours hunted during both days.
- Harvest was proportionally highest during the opening week of the season, in which 20% of the total birds harvested were taken. Week 4 (April 2-8) had the second highest proportion of harvest and accounted for 17% of all gobblers taken. Approximately 50% of the total reported harvest occurred prior to April 1st.
- Proportionally, nearly 73% of the overall harvest occurred between daylight and 8AM. Almost 17% of the overall harvest occurred from 8AM until Noon, and the remainder of the harvest, 11%, occurred from Noon until fly-up.
- Harvest per unit of effort was highest during the early morning. Hunters averaged harvesting over 4 birds per 100 hours hunted between daylight and 8AM. The second highest harvest rate occurred during the time period from Noon until fly-up, when hunters averaged 2 gobbler harvests per 100 hours hunted. The mid-morning hours of 8AM – Noon were the least successful time of day; hunters only averaged 1 harvest per 100 hours hunted during that time period.

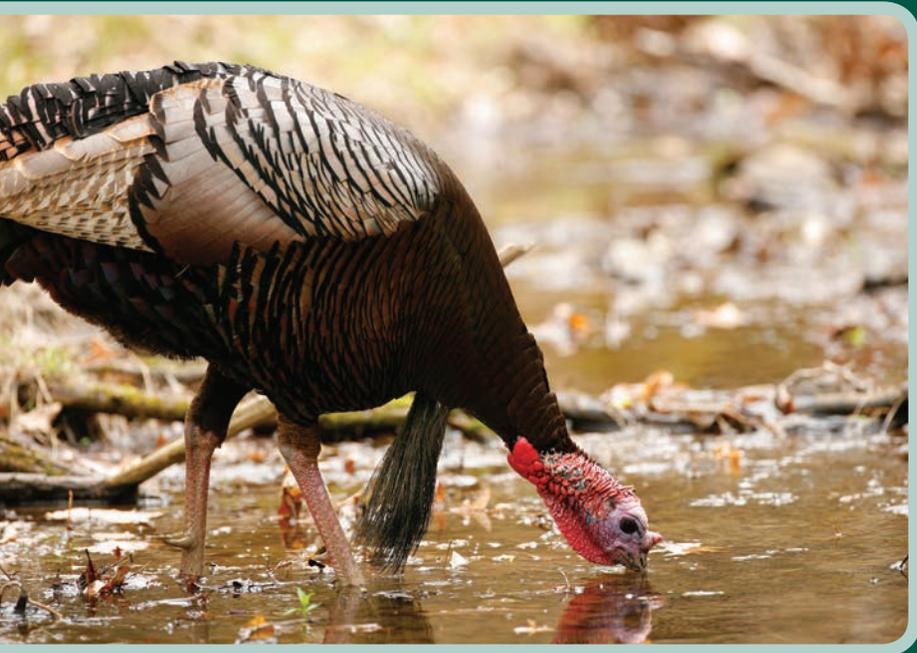
- Harvest rates were highest in Region 1 in which hunters averaged 3 gobblers bagged per 100 hours hunted. Harvest rates were lowest in Region 2 in which hunters averaged harvesting just a single gobbler per 100 hours hunted.
- Statewide, the top 5 counties for harvest per unit of effort were Leake, Amite, Panola, Neshoba, and Marshall (based on counties with at least 250 total hours recorded in the SGHS).
- Only 7% of all SGHS hunters reported calling greater than three birds to the gun during 2011, however, these hunters accounted for a higher percentage of the overall harvest (26% of total harvest), than did the 65% of hunters that either were unsuccessful or harvested just a single gobbler.

Gobbler Characteristics

- Two-year-old gobblers represented a greater proportion of the harvest than any other age class, accounting for 43% of the overall harvest.
- Only 3 birds out of every 20 harvested sported spurs ≥ 1.25 inches.
- The average spur length for adult gobblers was slightly less than 1 inch (0.82”).
- Approximately 11% of gobblers had beards ≥ 11 inches.
- The average beard length for adult gobblers was approximately 9.6 inches.
- Approximately 2% of gobblers were reported as missing one or both spurs.



Steve Cullledge



Steve Gulledge

Magnolia State Turkey Talk



MISSISSIPPI CHAPTER

NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION

President's Message

IT HAS BEEN AN HONOR TO SERVE AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE MISSISSIPPI CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL Wild Turkey Federation. I truly believe that the NWTF is the greatest conservation organization on the national, state, and local levels. The success of our Chapter during this past year would not have been possible without the volunteers of the great state of Mississippi, who have unselfishly devoted their time, energy, and resources.

I want to share a turkey related experience I encountered on Mother's Day, May 8th, 2011. The day before, a landowner friend of mine was about to bush hog an area of his property. As he was walking down an old logging road near a briar patch, a hen turkey flew off nearby from the ground. He then observed a nest with nine eggs which belonged to this turkey hen. Fortunately, this friend called me and I told him to please not bush hog that area until the nesting season had ended. He agreed to wait provided that I would bush hog that area for him. The next day I took a photo of this nest because I had never seen one before with eggs. I contacted Dave Godwin to learn more about turkey nesting activity.



Turkey nest saved from the bush hog.

Dave gave me great advice. He first told me to stay away from the area. He stated that a hen will usually lay 12-14 eggs at the rate of about one per day over a two week period. Once she starts sitting, the hen will stay on this nest day and night for twenty eight days. The hen will only leave for very short periods of time during the day for eating and bodily functions. If all goes well, the poults will emerge and the hen will soon lead them to nearby areas to find bugs and other food. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of these young poults will survive to become adults due to the many predators in the woods.

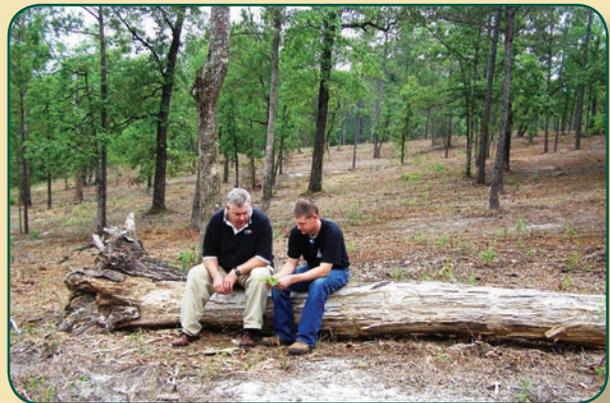
This visual life experience helped me understand the extreme importance of nesting and brood habitat that we have learned from biologists with the MDWFP, NWTF, and other conservation partners. I thought it was an appropriate experience to have observed on Mother's Day.

It has been a real pleasure to serve as your President for the past two years, and I thank you for allowing me to be a part of this great organization!

Sincerely,

Scott Cumbest, President
Mississippi Chapter, NWTF

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



Scott Cumbest (left) and NWTF Regional Biologist Matt Brock during a 2011 site visit.

Mississippi Regional Biologist Update

BY THE TIME MANY OF YOU MISSISSIPPI TURKEY HUNTERS READ THIS PUBLICATION YOUR ATTENTION and interest for the 2012 spring turkey season will be in full swing. As always, I too am excited about the arrival of the new spring with trees greening up, dogwoods blooming, and turkeys strutting and gobbling. Our Lord knew how to motivate outdoorsmen through nature and His creation!

As I write this message to all of you, I can't help but reflect on my 15 years as a volunteer, and 8 years of working for the NWTF; on how blessed we are to enjoy each spring, and what the wild turkey does in stirring our souls. Mississippi is fortunate to have an abundance of turkeys to hunt. Our state has struggled along the Mississippi River in the last several years with poor hatches due to flooding, but I can't help to believe that across the south, and all over the United States, turkey hunters are living in the best of times.

We have a lot to be thankful for and good reasons to continue supporting the NWTF as you all have done as chapter volunteers and members. The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) has committed staff with two full time dedicated turkey biologists that eat, sleep, and breathe helping the wild turkey and its associated habitat.

The future in the Mississippi Delta for turkey expansion into habitat currently being enhanced through hardwood restoration on farmland under WRP and CRP is something for everyone to look forward to within the next 10-15 years as the timber matures. Working on our state WMA's and partnering with the USFS and other agencies provides thousands of public acres for Mississippi sportsmen to enjoy. Your Mississippi Chapter continues to work closely with MDWFP to spend dollars on habitat enhancement, and with USFS on stewardship agreements for improving habitat for wild turkeys.



submitted by Luke Lewis

A Wild Turkey Nesting and Brood Rearing Area sign displaying the successful partnership between the USFS, MDWFP, and NWTF.

In 2011, the Mississippi Chapter NWTF supported \$5,500 in local and state scholarships through 14 local chapters in Mississippi. During 2011, our Mississippi NWTF Chapter supported habitat projects, JAKES youth and Wheelin' Sportsmen events, spring chufa and fall clover seed subsidy cost share programs for members, game violation rewards, NWTF education boxes for teachers and students, and landowner field days. You can read more about these events in the following pages.

Each year the state chapter is dedicated to informing and educating Mississippi NWTF members about how your dollars are spent by partnering with the MDWFP on their great turkey publication, *Spittin' and Drummin'*. The Mississippi Chapter of NWTF partners with MDWFP to include a Chapter newsletter in each

issue of *Spittin' and Drummin'* and to deliver a copy of this publication to every adult NWTF member in the State! Many thanks goes out to the MDWFP biologists, communications staff, and support personnel for their time and financial support to partner with our Mississippi NWTF Chapter to get this great information out to our hunters and supporters each year. Our state chapter also produces a great brochure each year about our annual accomplishments with professional photos by our own board member, Steve Gullede. Thanks to Steve for his hard work on this informative brochure!

Your Mississippi NWTF board of directors is a very dedicated group of people, committed to putting your volunteer dollars to work for the wild turkey in Mississippi. I would ask that as you support your local chapter in 2012 with your NWTF membership, dollars, and time that we all consider why we are a turkey hunter. We have seen the restoration of the wild turkey in Mississippi, and the national population has increased to over 7 million birds, but there is still much to do and support.

Turkey Talk

Spittin' & Drummin'

I'd like to challenge you to think about how we can take our conservation support to the next level. Now that we have turkeys, we need to take care of the habitat they live in. The Mississippi NWTF Chapter continues to support managing our public lands for optimum habitat, as well as educating private landowners about how to make their property better. Support of field days, agency landowner cost share programs, conservation grants, and stewardship agreements with agencies will be the methods to move the wild turkey forward.

One of the biggest challenges we face as hunters is recruitment into our hunting heritage. That is why the state board is committed to supporting our youth, women, and disabled segments of our population. Bringing on a new generation of turkey enthusiasts outside the traditional hunter is imperative! That is why you will see our efforts dedicated toward working with our kids, women, disabled, and new groups like the Boy Scouts of America.

As I close, I wish each one of you a fun and safe spring turkey season. Take time to appreciate that we are living in the best of times for the wild turkey, but we need to take care of the land and encourage new hunters and new people in our support for what we do for the wild turkey. Take time to take your dad, son, or someone new to the woods to experience nature and the gobble of the wild turkey. Thanks for your support of the National Wild Turkey Federation and remember our mission for this organization - *"The NWTF is dedicated to the conservation of the wild turkey and preservation of our hunting heritage."* Have a great spring!

Luke D. Lewis
NWTF Regional Biologist



Luke Lewis (left) and his 83 year-old dad after a successful Texas turkey hunt.



2011 Mississippi State Super Fund Expenditures

Scholarships	
14 Local Chapter Scholarships.....	\$3,500.00
1 State Scholarship	\$1,000.00
Education	
2011 Mississippi Turkey Brochure (8,000 copies).....	\$2,500.00
2011 Spittin' & Drummin' Publication – Mailed to Membership (3,338 copies).....	\$9,973.88
55 Wild Turkey Education Boxes for MS Teachers.....	\$4,426.59
Decals for MS Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey	\$726.06
Hunting Heritage	
MS Regional Biologist Support 2011	\$10,000.00
Hunting Heritage Foundation	\$500.00
United States Shooting Sports	\$500.00
4-H Shooting.....	\$2,500.00
Bianchi Council- Boy Scouts of America Shooting Facility.....	\$3,000.00
Outreach Events	
Pike-Amite JAKES Event.....	\$500.00
2011 MS State Wheelin' Sportsmen Deer Hunt for Youth.....	\$5,000.00
Smith County Wounded Warrior Hunt	\$250.00
Partner Field Days	
MDWFP/Purvis, MS/Game bird Seminar	\$583.75
MS Prescribe Fire Council Meeting.....	\$500.00
MS Wildlife Society Meeting.....	\$250.00
Mississippi Superfund Projects - WMA's, Seed Subsidy, Rewards, etc.	
Theodore Mars WMA Herbicide Spraying	\$6,240.00
Spring Chufa Member Mail Out	\$1,849.64
Spring Chufa Subsidy.....	\$5,385.60
Fall Clover Seed Member Mail Out.....	\$2,239.60
Fall Clover Subsidy	\$2,283.91
Reward Payment - Turkey Case.....	\$250.00
Total Super Fund Dollars Spent in 2011	\$63,959.03



2011 Mississippi NWTf Grants and Partnerships

USFS Mason Creek WMA Stewardship Agreement.....	\$364,435.00
Mississippi NRCS Longleaf Pine Initiative Grant.....	\$46,866.40
Mississippi NRCS Conservation Initiative Grant.....	\$4,800.00
NRCS Operation Oak - MS Acorns for Wildlife Support.....	\$5,000.00
Boy Scout Grant	\$500.00
Mississippi Youth Participation Initiative Grant	\$5,000.00
Total Grants and Partnerships	\$426,601.40

THE MISSISSIPPI CHAPTER OF NWTf HAS FINANCIALLY supported a NWTf regional biologist position for the last four years. The NWTf national office has placed an emphasis on delivering dollars back to individual states through grants, stewardship contracting, national initiatives, and partnership agreements. It is important to be accountable for dollars raised by Mississippi NWTf chapter volunteers, and to tell the story of how we can leverage Super Fund dollars to deliver more conservation to the ground.

The dollars shown in the above grants and stewardship agreements in 2011 reflect on-the-ground habitat projects, landowner incentive programs, research, and grants administered by the Mississippi NWTf regional biologist, Mississippi state and federal agency partners, and NWTf partners for the benefit of the wild turkey in Mississippi. A total of \$426,601.40 was generated to benefit Mississippi landowners, public land habitat, and our future hunting heritage. For every Mississippi Super Fund dollar spent, \$7.53 dollars was leveraged to help the wild turkey in our state!



Luke Lewis

A wildlife opening installed at Mason Creek WMA through the Stewardship Agreement.

Mason Creek WMA Stewardship Agreement National Forests of Mississippi



Luke Lewis

Tadpoles using a vernal pond on Mason Creek WMA.

IN OCTOBER OF 2011, THE NATIONAL WILD TURKEY Federation wrapped up a year-long partnership agreement with the Chickasawhay Ranger District within the National Forests of Mississippi by completing a stewardship contract on Mason Creek Wildlife Management Area.

The project included harvesting 10 designated 5 acre openings and cleaning up approximately 19 acres of southern pine beetle spots as wildlife openings to enhance turkey and quail populations, improve hunter success ratios, habitat for the gopher tortoise and red-cockaded woodpecker, improve forest health in young pine stands, and restore beneficial native ecosystems for amphibians and various pollinator species.

The Stewardship Agreement project began in the fall of 2010

with timber being removed by a local logger on 50 acres and 14 different local contractors benefiting from goods (timber) and services (work) derived during the project to restore and improve habitat on the Mason Creek WMA. Forest Stewardship is a tool used by the U.S. Forest Service to leverage existing funds through timber receipts to improve forest health to meet land management needs by the national forest.

This exchange of goods for services through timber receipts must implement on-the-ground projects, such as removing vegetation to promote healthy forests or reduce wildfire hazards, restoring watershed areas, and restoring wildlife and fish habitat.

Contract Value: \$364,435

Total Goods: \$158,865

\$95,375 (timber cut for this contract)

\$63,490 (retained stewardship funds from other contracts)

Total Services: \$205,570

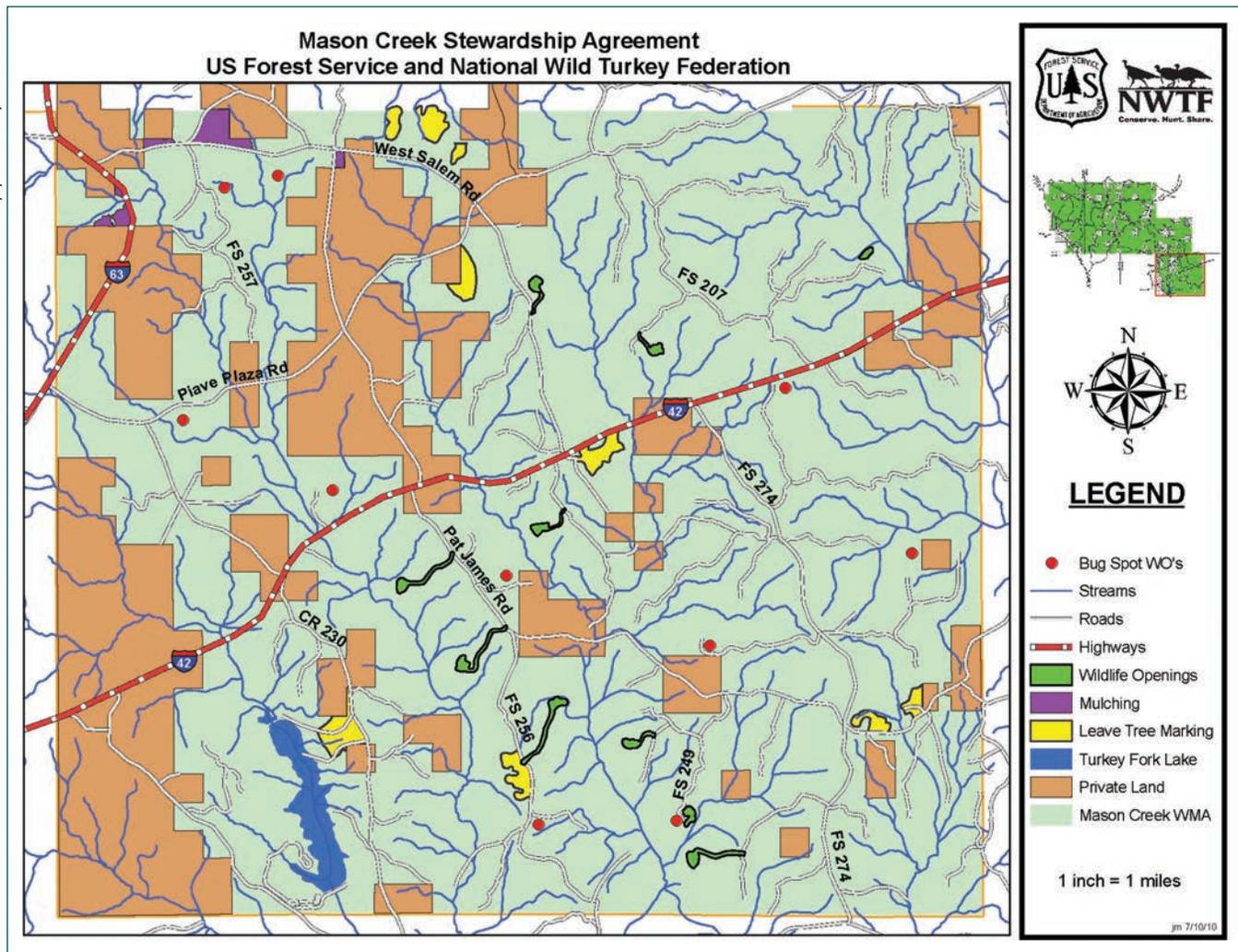
\$170,915 (forest restoration)

\$34,655 (partner contributions)

Accomplishments:

- Constructing wildlife openings (20)
- Establishing native warm season grasses (75 Acres)
- Constructing ephemeral ponds (10)
- Harvesting timber (45 acres for wildlife openings)
- Reducing cogongrass (3 acres on power lines)
- Installing disked fire lanes (9 miles)
- Preparing timber sales
- Mechanically treating fuels (105 acres)
- Establishing fall cover crop (50 acres)

Map provided by the USFS



Mason Creek WMA map showing the location of management activities conducted through the Stewardship Agreement in 2011.

From the beginning of the project we saw turkeys using the cleared openings and roads within all the wildlife openings. The cover crop of wheat, oats, and clover provided various species of wildlife food and cover this spring. In April of 2011, we seeded and culti-packed native warm season grasses, forbs, and legumes that will provide cover, food, and habitat for pollinator species of insects. To the turkey hunter, these openings are just what the doctor ordered for the WMA by improving long term brood and nesting cover for wild turkeys, while improving overall habitat diversity for all wildlife.



One of the wildlife openings on Mason Creek WMA planted with native warm season grasses.

The Mississippi NWTF biologist time managing the Mason Creek WMA Stewardship Agreement counted as match money (\$7,600) toward the stewardship agreement and in return the project received over \$364,000 in on-the-ground habitat improvement across the landscape. Multiple partners and collaborators participated with this project and many local contractors benefited from work related jobs created. As turkey hunters and the general public review the list of accomplishments mentioned above, you can see many acres of land were improved for multiple species of wildlife.

Key Partners:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks

- Laurel Chapter, Garden Club of America
- University of Southern Mississippi
- Quail Unlimited
- Southeast Mississippi Power Association
- Mississippi Power
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Mississippi Chapter, National Wild Turkey Federation

This is a great example of how to partner, collaborate, and leverage dollars to do landscape-level wildlife habitat enhancement. With all the national forests in Mississippi, stewardship agreements allow for the opportunity to manage forests, reduce fuel loads, improve landscape for wildlife species such as wild turkeys, and address control of invasive species. Look for more great improvements to be accomplished on the Mississippi National Forests in the next few years. The Forest Service has the authority from Congress until September 30, 2013 to enter into stewardship contracting projects up to 10 years in length. As conservationists, please urge your congressman to vote to keep this tool as part of the U.S. Forest Service's ability to help better manage the resources in our forests, including the wild turkey.



MDWFP, U.S. Forest Service, NWTF personnel, and others are learning about habitat improvements at a Stewardship Field Day at Mason Creek WMA.

Mississippi NRCS Grant Supports the Longleaf Pine Initiative

THE MISSISSIPPI NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) signed two grant agreements with the National Wild Turkey Federation in 2011 to help support the restoration of longleaf pine within the historical range in Mississippi. At one time there were 90 million acres of longleaf pine from East Texas to Virginia. Today only 3.8 million acres exist in the entire southeast.

The NRCS announced a national **Longleaf Pine Initiative** in January 2011 through the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) and entered into an agreement for the next 18 months

with the NWTF to conduct 269 landowner site visits and 14 landowner field days in 7 southeastern states. Those states are North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. NWTF regional biologists in Mississippi will conduct 50 site visits and develop management plans along with conducting two landowner field days by June 30th, 2012. One field day has already been completed in Stone County, MS in September of 2011 with 80 people in attendance.

The landowner site visits are free and are to be conducted on historical longleaf pine soil sites in south Mississippi. Long-

leaf ranged north into the Homochitto National Forest and is found in both southeast and southwest Mississippi. Interested landowners who would like a NWTF biologist to provide a wildlife/forestry plan under the American Tree Farm guidelines should call Luke Lewis, NWTF regional biologist at 318-423-7777 or contact him by email at llewis@nwtf.net.

Luke has stated to landowners interested in restoring longleaf to their property that "Longleaf restoration is one of the most exciting practices I have seen in my 30 plus years of wildlife management and providing consulting to landowners." Fire on the property once the trees are established is the key to providing optimum

Luke Lewis



Landowner field day at the J.B. Brown property in Stone County, MS.

wildlife habitat and a diverse plant community. This type of management is for individuals that are willing to extend their timber management to 40-50 years of maturity, while providing awesome benefits to turkey, deer, quail, songbirds, and butterflies. Once landowners understand the benefits of longleaf pine to wildlife, and how these trees survive some very stressful conditions nature throws at you, most individuals fall in love with establishing, growing, and managing this tree species. Luke Lewis has coined a slogan he lives by "Longleaf and Longbeards, A Match Made in Heaven." Give him a call if you're interested and see if this restoration opportunity is right for you.

National Wild Turkey Federation Makes Every Day Arbor Day

FOR VOLUNTEERS, SPONSORS, AND PARTNERS OF the National Wild Turkey Federation, planting trees is a year-round conservation effort that reaches beyond Arbor Day celebrations.

The NWTF's Longleaf Restoration Partnership is just one example of working to improve wildlife habitat and the environment through planting trees. Thanks to a \$1.0 million grant from the Southern Company and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the NWTF is helping restore 8,300 acres of longleaf pine ecosystems in the southeast U.S. during the next three years.

Longleaf forests provide important habitat for wild turkeys, red-cockaded woodpeckers, bobwhite quail, gopher tortoises, and a stunning diversity of plants – over 900 species – half of

which are considered rare. Restoring this longleaf habitat will help increase populations of many threatened and endangered species, including 26 plant species and seven wildlife species, to longleaf pine ecosystems. To the turkey hunter, this improved habitat for longleaf pine is premium brood habitat and nesting cover for wild turkeys.

The Longleaf Legacy grant program was launched in 2004 and is the largest conservation funding partnership for longleaf pine between a public agency and private corporation. Southern Company and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation each contribute \$500,000 annually to this 10 year partnership.

A previous \$1.3 million grant from Southern Company and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has already helped NWTF restore more than 11,000 acres of longleaf in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi since 2007.

Bianchi Shooting Sports and Boy Scouts of America

THE MISSISSIPPI CHAPTER OF NWTF AND THE Bianchi Council of the Boy Scouts of America are entering into a partnership to enhance shooting facilities at the Meridian, MS base scout camp. The financial assistance is dedicated to support shooting sports for the young men and women in Mississippi and Alabama. The Mississippi Chapter is committing \$6,000 per year for 5 years to develop rifle,

shotgun, and archery venues for a total of \$30,000 of support. Ken Kercheval, area director for the Bianchi Council stated, "Without partners like the Mississippi Chapter of NWTF, the Boy Scout council in our community could not provide the opportunity to open these kinds of doors to future outdoorsmen and community leaders."

The Bianchi Boy Scout Council has 2,000 scouts participating

Turkey Talk

Spittin' & Drummin'

Ken Kercheval



Gage Leifried of Troop 40 at Camp Bianchi.

in their region that encompasses six counties in east central Mississippi and west central Alabama. These young men are taught skills such as outdoors, survival, camping, water sports, conservation, and hunting and fishing.

The NWTF partnered with the Boy Scouts of America in 2010 in six states to support hunter education and created a Conservation Badge for scouts to achieve. It encompasses four disciplines which are shotgun skeet shooting, 22 rifle shooting, archery, and conservation education. The ultimate goal of the badge is to introduce young men to the shooting sports and earn their state hunter safety certificate required by Mississippi law to hunt. 2011 was the first year Mississippi participated in the Conservation Challenge badge on Camp Warren Hood and Camp Bianchi and is now part of 18 states involved with this program.

Scott Cumbest, current Mississippi Chapter NWTF President expressed "How wonderful a facility the Bianchi Council is to introduce and educate our young people about safe shooting." The Meridian community and Okatibbee Chapter have been strong supporters of this initiative. The Mississippi Chapter realizes that this council is not only introducing people to safe use of guns, but allows scouts and a guardian to participate in fall deer hunts on the 400 acre facility. NWTF biologists have previously provided technical assistance through the NRCS to restore longleaf pine on the scout property, with education emphasis to teaching the young men about the conservation value of this ecosystem.

Matt Brock



Boy scouts on the rifle range at Camp Warren Hood.

Jacob Follin shooting at the Camp Bianchi facility.



Ken Kercheval

Jeff Smith (left) giving shooting lessons to Jackson Kercheval at the Camp Bianchi facility.



Ken Kercheval

Matt Brock



A group of leaders and boy scouts working towards their Conservation Challenge badge at Camp Warren Hood.

2011 Mississippi NWTF Scholarship Winner



Dr. Jerry King presents the 2011 NWTF state scholarship to William Sanford. From left are William's parents, Pat and Wanda Sanford, William, and Dr. King.

WILLIAM SANFORD, A SENIOR AT COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL, won the 2011 Mississippi Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation scholarship for \$2,000 after receiving the local NWTF chapter's Brad Griner Memorial Scholarship \$500 award. Dr. Jerry King, chairman of the Mississippi Chap-

ter NWTF state scholarship committee presented Sanford with the scholarship. The NWTF state organization funds the scholarship program in cooperation with the national organization and the local chapters. The NWTF scholarship is intended to insure the development of dedicated conservationist for the future. The applicants are judged on their scholastic

achievements, leadership abilities, community involvement, and commitment to conservation. Congratulations William!

For more information on the NWTF scholarship, please see the information below.

NWTF Scholarships and Guidelines

THE MISSISSIPPI CHAPTER OF THE NWTF ALONG with many of the local chapters throughout the state offer scholarships to high school seniors. The local chapters normally award a \$250 scholarship to the outstanding applicant from their area. This winner is automatically entered in the pool for the Mississippi Chapter scholarship of \$2,000. The state winner is then eligible to compete for the \$10,000 national scholarship.

For eligibility requirements, please visit the NWTF JAKES scholarship website (<http://www.nwtf.org/jakes/xtreme/scholarships.html>). You will also find more information about the scholarship process along with the required application that must be used when submitting your scholarship application.

As with any scholarship application, there are certain guidelines that must be followed and dates in which the applications must be submitted. The following guidelines should be followed carefully when applying for the NWTF scholarships:

Download a scholarship application from the website above or Google NWTF Scholarship Application and follow the instructions carefully. You must complete all parts of the application and submit it to your local NWTF chapter by **January 1st** of each year to be considered for the \$250 local chapter scholarship. The local committee will then select their winner.

The local committee is also responsible for submitting their local chapter scholarship winner's application to the Mississippi Chapter scholarship committee no later than **January 31st** each year. The applications must be sent to:

Jerry King
MS NWTF Scholarship Committee
119 First East Street
Sumrall, MS 39482

Make sure the application is complete before submitting it to the state scholarship committee. **Any applications received that are incomplete or after the deadline will not be considered.** The winner of the Mississippi NWTF scholarship will be submitted for the national scholarship before **March 1st**.

All checks to the local, state, or national winners should be made out to the local winner and the educational institution that they will be attending. Any chapter that wants reimbursement for the local chapter scholarship of \$250 should submit their request to Jerry King at the address above. The request should be in the form of a copy of a cancelled check or a completed copy of the local chapter scholarship application winner. For more information, contact your local chapter president, one of the NWTF regional directors, or any member of the Mississippi Chapter board of directors.

6th Annual Wheelin' Sportsmen Deer Hunt

ON NOVEMBER 11, 2011 THE NATIONAL WILD Turkey Federation hosted the 6th Annual Wheelin' Sportsmen Deer Hunt for Youth with Disabilities with the help of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks and other partners.

The weekend was kicked off at Bass Pro Shop in Pearl, MS with registration and field activities on the grounds. The children and their families could participate in crossbow shooting, a fishing rodeo with Sherry Hazelwood from MDWFP, an inflatable shooting range, and a virtual hunting game provided by MDWFP. Also, the participants were able to sight their rifles in or perfect their shot at the Magnolia Rifle and Pistol Club shooting range with MDWFP law enforcement officers.

The evening events at the Mississippi Braves Stadium consisted of a meet and greet with the band Crossin' Dixon. The children and their families lined up and waited anxiously to meet Jason Miller, Charlie Grantham, and Brandon Hyde. Smiles could be seen for miles as they took their pictures with the band. Dinner for over 400 people was served at five o'clock donated by Outback Steakhouse. Roughly at 5:30, Crossin' Dixon took the stage for a wonderful performance and a time of singing and dancing by the participants. To close their show, Santa Clause came into the crowd on a Bad Boy Buggy to Crossin' Dixon's smash hit, "Southern Comfort." The crowd went wild!! Santa handed out goody bags filled with items donated by Bass Pro, Primos, MDWFP, Mossy Oak, Longleaf Camo, NWTF, Mississippi Braves, and gift cards to Outback Steakhouse. By

Turkey Talk

Spittin' & Drummin'

seven o'clock, the hunters and their families were on the road with their landowners and guides for a good night's rest for an early morning hunt.

On Saturday, all participants woke early to a beautiful fall morning. Deer were moving! Over 60 deer were harvested across Mississippi by 91 disabled hunters.

This was a good day! Some of the deer harvested were bucks any hunter would have been proud to harvest!! Ten hunters took their first deer through this event.

Sunday was a day to brag! The hunters, their families and all the guides/landowners came back to Trustmark Park for testimonials. All participants were given the opportunity to speak to the crowd on their adventures.



Crossin' Dixon band members autographed Patrick's photo.

The landowners/guides were also given an opportunity to speak on the weekend. In a crowd of tough men, there was not a dry eye in the house!! A pizza party donated by Mazzio's Pizza was held after the testimonials. From there a worship service by Magnolia Outdoors was shared with the group. We all gave thanks to the Lord for the awesome weekend we had.

This event would not have been possible without the support of our sponsors! Thank you to everyone for the generous donations: the Campbell Group of Meridian (\$6,058.44);

Mississippi Chapter of NWTF (\$5,000); Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks Youth Program Initiative Grant (\$4,300); Mr. Tom Rhoden (\$2,500); Greater Jackson NWTF Chapter (\$2,500); MDWFP Law Enforcement Officers' Association (\$2,000); and the Oral and Facial Surgery Center of Flowood (\$1,000). A big thank you also goes to: Vann's Deer Processing, Bozeman Farms, Steven Rimmer, Jim Johnston, Joe Mac Hudspeth, Yazoo County NWTF Chapter, Mississippi Wildlife Federation, Carroll County NWTF Chapter, Calvert Company, Specialty Metals, Tommy Hedglin, Peco Processing, and Pender's Carpet Care.

For more information about the Wheelin' Sportsmen hunt and to see more excellent photos of happy, successful hunters, please look on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/#!/MS.Wheelin.Sportsmen>



Santa made a special trip from the North Pole to distribute bags of goodies to all the Wheelin' Sportsmen participants.



Madison with his first deer.



Lynsey with a dandy buck harvested at Old River.



William with a fine doe harvested during the Wheelin' event.



Sarah with her buck and the girls at Rhoden farms.



Austin showing off his doe taken at Sherman Hill.

Hurley Youth Gets a Hunt of a Lifetime*

*Reproduced with permission by Cherie Chesser

By: Sandra Cochran, The East Central/Vancleave Link News

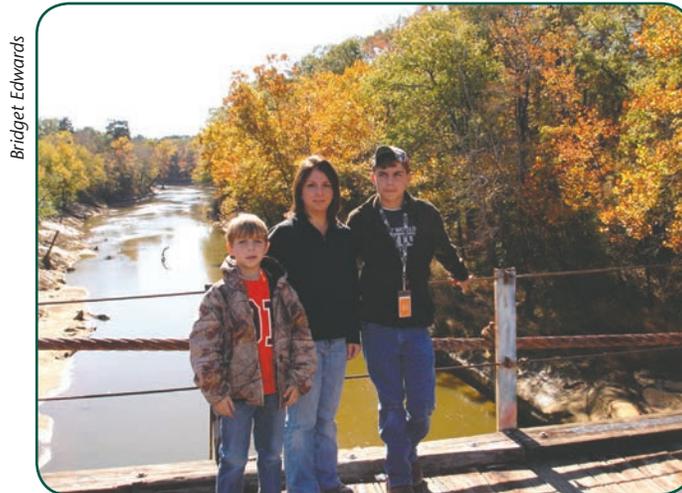
WAYLON MOSS WAS BORN 13 YEARS AGO ON NOVEMBER 24, 1998 WITH SPINA Bifida. His mother, Bridget Edwards, was told that he may never walk. At three-days-old, Waylon underwent major surgery to correct the lesion on his back. Since that surgery, Waylon has had two other major surgeries and numerous outpatient surgeries.

Despite the doctor's warning that he may never walk, Waylon took his first steps at 14-months-old. Shortly after beginning to walk, Waylon's love for hunting and shooting began. He loves shooting his shotgun, rifles, pistol and his new bow. He also enjoys trapping animals and tanning hides. Waylon is also a member of the Jackson County 4-H Shooting Club. "He loves to hunt squirrel, rabbit, raccoon, deer, hog and hopes to hunt turkey next season," said his mom, Bridget.

Waylon's mom read about the Wheelin' Sportsmen Hunt on the Mississippi Department of Wildlife and Fisheries website and applied for him to go. He was chosen to hunt at Kearney Farms in Flora, with the property manager, Chuck Boyer. "We were really blessed to be chosen for Kearney Park, Chuck was so friendly!" said Bridget.

The guide for Waylon's hunt was George Barry. Barry was paralyzed in a hunting accident years ago, and is a former certified instructor for the 4-H Shooting Sports and is also a gunsmith. During free time between hunts, Barry taught Waylon how to reload his ammunition. Later in the hunt, Waylon harvested a deer with one of the .270 rounds that he had reloaded himself. "George said he was impressed with Waylon's hunting skills and gun safety," said Bridget.

During the course of the weekend, Waylon had the opportunity to harvest a button buck, a doe and a 6-pointer.



Bridget Edwards

Waylon Moss (right) with his mom, Bridget Edwards, and his younger brother Wyatt.



Bridget Edwards

Waylon on the range before his 2011 Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth hunt.



Bridget Edwards

Waylon Moss with his guide George Barry at the 2011 Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth hunt.



Bridget Edwards

Waylon Moss with his 6-point harvested during the 2011 Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth hunt at Kearney Farms in Flora.

2011 Cliff White Chapter NWTF Wheelin' Sportsmen Handicapped Youth Hunt

THE CLIFF WHITE CHAPTER PARTICIPATED IN the 2011 NWTF Wheelin' Sportsmen Handicapped Youth Hunt in south Mississippi in November. This hunt was one of several satellite hunt events in conjunction with the main event based out of Jackson. This is the third year for this hunt which was held at several hunting locations near Laurel. The hub of all activities was the Jenkins Farm just outside of Laurel.

Hunt Coordinator, Tommy Walters, welcomed twenty three participants, their families, and a host of volunteers to the huge barn and kitchen at the Jenkins Farm before lunch on Friday. After lunch, the hunters were given instruction in gun and general hunter safety by local Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks officers. They then sighted in their guns and headed for the woods for the first hunt. After the evening hunt, everyone enjoyed a generous supper and some early evening entertainment, including a fireworks display, and then headed off to bed. The weekend had started off on a high note and the anticipation level was high for the next day's events to be more of the same.

Saturday was a full day, with several hunters being successful on the morning and/or evening hunts. Some of the participants did not hunt, but instead spent a lot of time fishing for

big hybrid bream in the waters of Adventure Lake. By the end of the day, there were a lot of tired hunters and volunteers. After supper, more entertainment followed around the propane heaters with good music and fellowship.

On Sunday morning, a hearty breakfast was once again served and Gary Cockrell brought an inspirational and challenging devotion to officially close out the weekend's events. By mid-morning everyone had packed up and the hunt was over, but not the memories. Just as last year, there were new friendships forged, along with memories and blessings that will last for a lifetime.

Those who participated in this year's event were Grant Carter, Dylan Robinson, Jonathan Smith, Kaylee Langley, John Isaac Howell, Sydney Loper, Zach Miles, David Moss, Blake Savell, Nicole Simmons, Brittany Simmons, Zach Thornton, Jeremy Walters, Jackson Jerrel, Ethan Windham, Daphne Roney, Emilee Williams, Joseph Riley, Deion Arrington, Josey Bunch, David Klauk, Madison Manning, and Lacy Jones.

A very special thank you is extended to Mr. Bill Jenkins, owner of Jenkins Farm, for the use of his facility for the weekend. Thank you is not enough for all of the volunteers. From the organizers, land owners, sponsors, guides, cooks, musicians,

donors, and overall helpers, enough cannot be said for all that was done to make this event the success that it was. There is not room to list all of the names of volunteers and donors, but thank you again to all!

Bruce West
Chapter President
Cliff White Chapter NWTF

submitted by Bruce West



The Cliff White Chapter of the NWTF hosted 23 hunters and their families at the Jenkins Farm outside Laurel. Pictured are the hunters, families, and numerous volunteers.

Singing River Chapter Participates in 2011 Men's Expo

MEMBERS OF THE SINGING RIVER CHAPTER had an exhibit table and conducted a turkey calling

seminar at the First Baptist Church in Vancleave, Mississippi on September 17, 2011. Local members in attendance were Corey Diaz, Wayne Smith, Charles Busby, Scott Cumbest, and Dale Gill. This event was also attended by Billy Ray Young, a State Board Member from the Stone County Chapter. The all day Expo was attended by hundreds of outdoor enthusiasts. The local chapter displayed information about the wild turkey and NWTF. They also displayed many turkey calls and demonstrated turkey calling techniques.



submitted by Scott Cumbest

Members of the Singing River Chapter at the September 17, 2011 Expo in Vancleave. Pictured from left to right: Billy Ray Young, Scott Cumbest, Charles Busby, Corey Diaz, and Wayne Smith.

2011 Dancing Rabbit Chapter NWTF Skeet Shoot

By Matt Persons, President, Dancing Rabbit Chapter NWTF

THE 2011 DANCING RABBIT CHAPTER NWTF Skeet Shoot was held at Circle M Plantation on Saturday, August 27, 2011. Over 55 shooters attended the shoot which was separated into two divisions: the Team Division and the Individual Division.

To enter the competition, shooters in the Individual Division were required a \$25 entry fee while shooters from the team division were required a \$45 entry fee per 2-shooter team. Shooters shot 5 shots each from 5 different stations at 5 different angles on the skeet range. This made for 25 shots per individual per round and 50 shots per team. Shooters not happy with the score they posted the first time were allowed to buy back in for \$15 in the Individual Division and \$25 in the Team Division. There was also a Long Shot competition set up adjacent to the skeet range. For this competition shooters stood at a predetermined location and were allowed 3 shots at long range skeet (approximately 65-70 yards). Hamburgers and chicken sandwiches were cooked on site and served as concessions by the Dancing Rabbit Chapter committee and other volunteers.

After the smoke cleared and the scores were tallied, trophies were awarded to the winner and first runner-up of both divisions as follows:

Team Division:

1. Randy Butler/Redmon Butler
2. Brach White/Jeff White



submitted by Matt Persons

(L to R) Dancing Rabbit Chapter President Matt Persons, Team Division Champions Redmon Butler and Randy Butler, and NWTF Representative Robert Higginbotham.



submitted by Matt Persons

(L to R) Dancing Rabbit Chapter President Matt Persons, 1st Runner-Ups from the Team Division – Brach White and Jeff White, and NWTF Representative Robert Higginbotham.

Individual Division:

1. Chandler Honnell
2. Jeff Honnell

The winner of the long shot competition was Jeff Honnell. He broke two of the three skeet thrown to come away with the win and a \$50 cash prize.

There was also a prize available for the Top Shot of the day, but this is where things got interesting. Austin Swart and Randy Butler both posted a score of 20 out of 25 broken targets in a single round. No other shooter could break the 20 mark, so a sudden death shoot off came into play. For the tie breaker, shooters were to stand, one at a time, mid-field on the range and shoot an overhead passing double. The two shooters successfully broke both skeet in the first round, taking the shoot off to round two. Swart was the first to step in the box in the second round and successfully broke the pair. Butler stepped in to try to take it to the third round and broke the first clay but was not able to get the swing on the second, and Austin Swart was crowned the Top Shot and awarded \$100 cash.

Overall, a good time was had by all who attended and to all who didn't - you missed out! So be there next year and keep your eyes peeled for the next event!

Special thanks to Ronnie Higginbotham at Circle M Plantation and to the Dancing Rabbit Chapter committee and volunteers who made this event possible.



submitted by Matt Persons

(L to R) Dancing Rabbit Chapter President Matt Persons, Individual Division Champion Chandler Honnell, Individual Division 1st Runner-Up Jeff Honnell, and NWTF Representative Robert Higginbotham. Jeff also won the Long Shot competition.



submitted by Matt Persons

(L to R) Dancing Rabbit Chapter President Matt Persons, Top Shot winner Austin Swart, and NWTF Representative Robert Higginbotham.



submitted by Matt Persons

(Standing L to R) Dancing Rabbit Chapter President Matt Persons with top finishers Randy and Redmon Butler, Chandler Honnell, Jeff Honnell, Brach White; and NWTF Representative Robert Higginbotham. Kneeling (L to R) are Jeff White and Austin Swart.

Dancing Rabbit Chapter NWTF 3D Archery Tournament

By Matt Persons, President, Dancing Rabbit Chapter NWTF

THE WEATHER IN MACON, MISSISSIPPI ON MAY 7, 2011 could not have been better for the 1st Annual Dancing Rabbit Chapter NWTF 3D Archery Tournament. Nearly 25 shooters from all over Mississippi, Alabama, and even Louisiana came to the beautiful Circle M Plantation to participate in the inaugural event. The festivities began at 8a.m. at the registration table where shooters signed up to test their skills on the 3D course set up by members of the NWTF Dancing Rabbit Chapter committee and representatives from the Mississippi Bowhunter's Association.

There were three predetermined divisions of shooters including: the forty yard maximum range "Trophy Class" which awarded trophies to first through third places; the fifty yard maximum range "Money Class" which paid cash prizes ac-

cordingly to first and second places; and a "Women's Class" which paid cash prizes accordingly to first and second places. The shooting began at 9a.m. when the first group of archers was shuttled to the first target on the range. Archers shot in groups of three or four and the shoot seemed to flow smoothly, for the most part, with very little waiting for the group ahead. There was a drink wagon that worked the range for the duration of the shoot offering archers water and various soft drinks to aid in hydration and to relieve the shooters of the burden of carrying enough water to comfortably finish the course.

When shooters finished the course and returned to the registration tent to turn in their respective scores, there were concessions available as well as raffle tickets available for NWTF items and other items donated by area businesses including

the Sports Center in Starkville, Christy Carol Jourdan in Macon, and others. There was also a print donated by the NWTf that was auctioned off. When the auction and raffle were over and the scores finalized, prizes were awarded to the winners of each division and are as follows:

Trophy Class (40 yards and under):

1. Bill Tolbert, 214
2. Shannon Harris, 211
3. Joey Regan, 202

Money Class (50 yards and under):

1. Matt Persons, 182
2. Ryan Buchanan, 181

Women's Class:

1. Mary Jane Shahine, 184
2. Jacky Buchanan, 148

We plan to have our second annual shoot within a couple of weeks of the same time next year, so keep a watch on your MBA tournament schedule and mark the date on your calendars. We hope for the 2nd Annual event to be very similar to the 1st, but next year we will add a few divisions including those to cater to traditional archers and kids as well.

A special thanks goes out to all those who aided in making the inaugural event a success including: Brandel and Jeremiah Russell from the Philadelphia Archery Club, Slade Fancher and the Sports Center in Starkville, the NWTf Dancing Rabbit Chapter committee members, raffle prize donors, and to all of those who participated.



submitted by Matt Persons

The "Trophy Class" winners are (left to right): 2nd Runner-Up Joey Regan; Champion Bill Tolbert; Matt Persons, President of the Dancing Rabbit Chapter; and 1st Runner-Up Shannon Harris.



submitted by Matt Persons

The "Money Class" winners are 1st Runner-Up Ryan Buchanan (left) and the winner Matt Persons.



submitted by Matt Persons

The "Women's Class" winners are the winner Mary Jane Shahine (left); Matt Persons, President of the Dancing Rabbit Chapter; and 1st Runner-Up Jacky Buchanan.

Photo Gallery



submitted by Robert Higginbotham

The Local East Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation – TURKEY HUNTERS CARE program donated 32 turkeys for this year's community Thanksgiving meal. Local chapter leaders want to say "Thank You" to all who attended the Wildlife and Outdoor show in October. Funds raised at that event also sponsored by the NWTf were used to supply these turkeys.

Turkey Talk

Spittin' & Drummin'

submitted by Corey Diaz



Pictured are (left to right) Corey Diaz, Garrett and Gavin Hollingsworth, and Clay Duncan. Corey and Clay guided these 12 years old twins on a successful turkey hunt in Jackson County. The turkey gobbled around 80 times before he flew down and Garrett harvested his first turkey which sported an 11 inch beard with 1 3/8" spurs.

submitted by Corey Diaz



Corey Diaz with a double bearded gobbler he harvested in 2011. It had a 10 3/4" and 10 7/8 beards with 1" spurs.

submitted by Rob Ladner



The one that got away.

Matt Brock



A couple of Boy Scouts on the archery range at Camp Warren Hood.

Marc Measells



Headed away.

Ken Kercheval



Jackson Kercheval enjoying the shooting at Camp Bianchi.

Justin Thayer



MDWFP officers Busby and Evans teaching gun safety at the 2011 Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth hunt in Laurel.

MDWFP



NWTF regional director Abby Coffman with Cameron during the Sunday morning Wheelin' Sportsmen event.

MDWFP



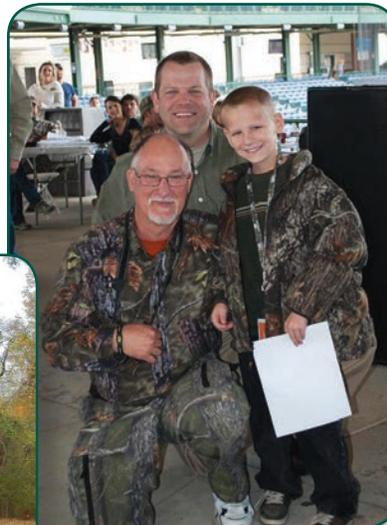
Adam (left) managed to harvest a nice doe while hunting with Preston Pittman. George Kratzschmar and Michael Blankenship are also pictured.



MDWFP

Rachael receives a high five for harvesting her first deer during the 2011 Wheelin' Sportsmen youth hunt.

MDWFP



Jacob (right) won a one of a kind turkey call from Preston Pittman (kneeling) with MDWFP biologist Chad Dacus.

MDWFP



Hunters and guides participating in the 2011 Wheelin' Sportsmen hunt at Forestaire in Yazoo County.

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.

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Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

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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 _____

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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.



Steve Gullede

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 Sutor
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

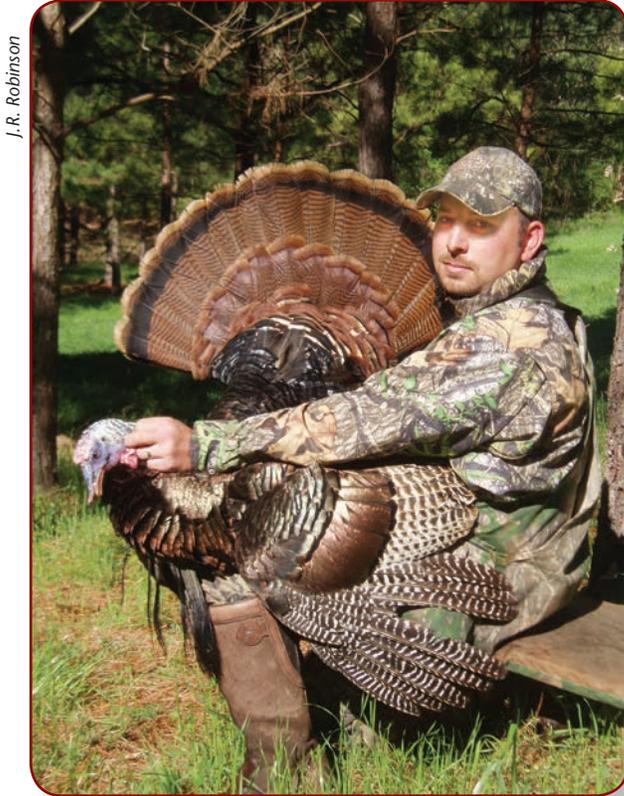
Rank	Total Score	Number Beards	Total Length	Date Harvested	County Harvested	Hunter
1	157.06	9	60.25	4/8/2010	Pontotoc	Don Shumaker
2	151.16	7	57.25	3/17/2008	Tishomingo	Jerrell Keele
3	148.30	7	52.69	3/28/2002	Amite	James R. Scheer
4	143.17	9	53.26	3/20/2000	Marion	Andy Stinger
5	141.63	6	48.99	4/12/2011	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	15.00	3/28/2003	Marshall	Carlton Gibson
5	14.75	4/4/2007	Claiborne	Dale Collins
6	14.19	4/10/2003	Monroe	Charles C. Langley
7	14.13	3/19/1989	Wilkinson	Todd Thomas D'Aquin
8	14.00	4/8/2000	Kemper	Terry Frierson
	14.00	4/15/1981	Jefferson Davis	Robert W. Polk
10	13.88	3/22/2011	Newton	Sidney Odom
11	13.75	3/30/2002	Covington	Owen Cole
	13.75	3/27/2003	Lawrence	W.J. "Wild Bill" Smith
13	13.63	4/9/2004	Leake	Brian Terrell
14	13.50	4/10/2001	Attala	James C. Cain
15	13.06	3/25/2009	Neshoba	Tim Warren
16	13.00	4/19/1997	Neshoba	Darron Smith
	13.00	4/24/2003	Benton	Steve King
	13.00	4/8/2001	Holmes	Richard Wiman

Wild Turkey Records

Spittin' & Drummin'



J.R. Robinson

Roy Robinson harvested this incredible multi-bearded gobbler during the 2011 season. The bird currently ranks 5th in the Non-Typical category.

Heaviest

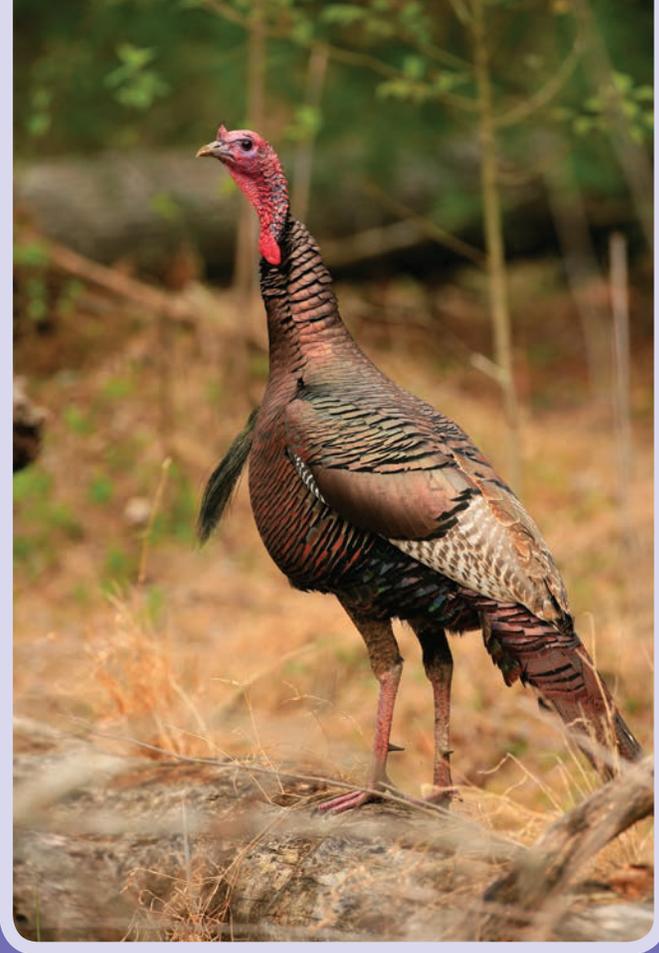
Rank	Weight	Date Harvested	County Harvested	Hunter
1	25.27	4/11/2009	Panola	Lauren K. Russell
2	25.25	3/30/2004	Newton	Hunter T. Hayes
3	25.19	3/26/2004	Neshoba	John Robb
4	24.68	4/18/2003	Copiah	Doug Borries
5	24.44	4/2/2005	Neshoba	Chad Young
6	24.00	3/16/2009	Forrest	Matthew Saucier
	24.00	3/18/2008	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 Sutor
11	23.69	3/28/2005	Prentiss	Doug Taylor Jr.
12	23.50	3/24/1990	Jefferson Davis	Danny Sinclair
13	23.38	4/8/1995	Sharkey	R. Revel Rawlings
14	23.30	3/16/2009	Washington	Anonymous
15	23.19	4/13/2000	Pearl River	J. B. Hodge
16	23.10	3/14/2010	Leake	Chris McMurry
17	23.00	4/14/2006	Holmes	Joseph Mohamed
18	22.87	3/24/2000	Choctaw	Tommy Trussell
19	22.75	3/25/1995	Tishomingo	Phil Byram
20	22.60	3/28/2002	Monroe	Derwin (Dee) Riley

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	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
8	1.625	4/23/2009	Calhoun	Derek Adams
	1.625	4/3/2008	Monroe	Tyler Hood
9	1.620		Issaquena	Skip Holifield
	1.620	4/2/2005	Alcorn	Frank Meador

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 Gulledge

Fall Turkey Hunting in Mississippi

Fall Turkey Hunting in Mississippi

DURING 2011, 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, 2011, 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.

During the 2011 fall turkey season, a total of 197 tags were issued for 109 properties. A total of 15 turkeys were reported harvested during the 2011 fall season (9 hens, 0 jakes, and 6 adult gobblers). A

total of 183 hunters actually participated in fall hunting during 2010 and logged 856 days of hunter-effort. Of participating hunters, 31% said that this was their first experience with fall turkey hunting. A total of 98% of the participating hunters said they would participate in the future if fall turkey hunting opportunity was available, and 83% of these hunters thought the MDWFP should expand fall hunting opportunity. When asked about their level of satisfaction with the fall hunting opportunity, the average participating hunter was very satisfied (Average rank = 1.7, with 1 = highly satisfied, and 5 = strongly dissatisfied).

The MDWFP has surveyed fall turkey hunters for several years to gauge attitudes and behaviors regarding fall turkey hunting in our State. For the years 2007-2010, an average of 167 hunters has spent approximately 662 man-days each year pursuing fall turkeys. Approximately 34% of all hunters each year experience fall turkey hunting for the first time. For those that have fall hunted before, they average 3.7 years of fall turkey hunting experience. Satisfaction among fall turkey hunters has been high, and nearly 98% of hunters across all years suggested that they planned to fall turkey hunt in the future if the opportunity was available to them. These hunters are supportive of seeing an expansion of fall turkey hunting opportunities in Mississippi. Across all years, approximately 88% of all hunters agreed that they would be supportive of an expansion of fall turkey hunting opportunities if the resource allowed such liberalization. However, support erodes if impacts may occur to the spring

season. Over 78% of fall turkey hunters say that they would not support an expansion of the fall turkey season if additional fall opportunities yielded adverse effects to spring hunting quality. In terms of fall season structure, hunters prefer the current contiguous season framework (72% across all years) to the previous split-season framework, however, only 25% of hunters would support a later shift in the season framework if it meant that the fall

turkey season would overlap with white-tailed deer firearms season.



Steve Gullede



Steve Gulledge

Wild Turkey Research in Mississippi

An Update on Wild Turkey Restoration Efforts in the Mississippi Delta

By Kyle Marable, Dr. Guiming Wang, and Dr. Jerrold Belant, MSU

WHILE EASTERN WILD TURKEYS ARE ABUNDANT throughout most regions of Mississippi, sustainable populations do not exist across much of the interior Mississippi Delta. Wild turkeys are generally associated with mature forested habitats which have not been abundant in the interior Delta since most of these forests were cleared to create large agricultural fields. However, efforts to restore hardwoods have been on the rise with the implementation of federal conservation programs such as the Wetland Reserve Program and the Conservation Reserve Program. This increase of young hardwood stands fueled the desire of biologists and sportsmen to test the suitability of these new habitats for wild turkeys.

The MDWFP partnered with Mississippi State University to evaluate various landscapes within the interior Delta to see if they were suitable habitat for wild turkeys. During January - February 2009, 107 wild turkeys were captured throughout Mississippi and released on study areas in Quitman and Coahoma Counties in the North Delta. During January - March 2010, an additional 59 turkeys were released in Quitman County. All of these birds were fitted with radio-transmitters, and graduate students from the MSU Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Aquaculture began tracking these birds immediately after release and continued through July 2011.

What did we find?

Habitat that is suitable for wild turkeys in the Delta is often patchy with scattered resources. We found that wild turkeys tended to move more and had larger home range sizes when using areas with scattered patches of usable habitats. This increased home range size means that turkeys have to move much greater distances to find the food and cover they need; thus, they can be more exposed to predators causing more turkeys to die. Having an estimate of how turkeys move in various landscapes in the Delta will help us to predict movement in other areas of the

region and hopefully to find areas with suitable patches of wild turkey habitat.

Survival of wild turkeys through the nesting season is critical to the success of turkey restoration and establishing a healthy population. We found spring to be the season of greatest mortality for released turkeys on our study sites, mainly since turkeys are more exposed to predation risks associated with nesting and brood-rearing activities. Turkey losses in our study were caused by bobcats, other mammalian predators, capture related stress, and unknown causes. Annual survival of released turkeys ranged from 51 - 57%. Of those turkeys that survived through a breeding season, reproduction has been low with one successful brood in 2009, six in 2010, and zero in 2011 (primarily due to expansive flooding). Even with this low reproduction, a couple of broods with 10-12 poults each year may be enough to help maintain these new populations.



Graduate Student Kyle Marable uses radio telemetry equipment to track wild turkeys in the Delta.

The Future

Research on these turkeys is ongoing, and we continue to learn more about what types of habitats the birds use for nesting, brood rearing, feeding, and roosting. We plan to use all the information we gain from these radio-tagged birds to help us develop a model to identify potentially suitable turkey restoration sites throughout the Delta. Information on how habitats are spread out, which habitats turkeys are selecting, and what specifically makes each habitat type valuable to turkeys will be used to identify areas in the Delta that provide suitable habitat for turkeys now and areas that perhaps will be ready after hardwood restoration continues for a few more years. With a continued increase of hardwood restoration acres, and with proper management of these young forests for wildlife habitat, it is clear that the interior Delta will someday be much more suitable for wild turkeys and other wildlife species associated with hardwood forests.

This project would not have been possible without many people's hard work efforts. We would like to thank the MDWFP and MSU personnel who contributed to this project. We also would not have been able to relocate and track these wild turkeys without private landowners allowing us access to their properties. This project was made possible with funding from the MDWFP, Delta Wildlife, Mississippi Chapter NWTf, local landowners, and other partners. For more information on this study, visit the Wildlife Research webpage at www.mdwfp.com/research.



MDWFP

A wild turkey hen with an attached radio telemetry backpack flies away after being released in Quitman County. Researchers will follow her movements to better understand the feasibility of wild turkey restoration in the Mississippi Delta.

Steve Gullledge





Steve Gullledge

Wildlife Management Areas

WMA Population Statistics

THE INFORMATION PRESENTED IN THIS SECTION WAS COMPILED FROM DATA COLLECTED BY PUBLIC land turkey hunters on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) throughout Mississippi. Visitors to WMAs are required to complete observation cards which are returned to check-stations at the conclusion of each hunt. From this dataset, the MDWFP obtains valuable biological information about wild turkey populations on state-managed public lands. Compliance with regulations requiring hunters to provide this data allows the MDWFP to properly manage the wild turkey resource, and provide quality recreational experiences for hunters on public lands.

The WMA data presented in the following section was collected during the 2011 spring season. Data for each parameter was collected in a manner similar to that described on pages 4-5 of this report. Most parameters are expressed as an average number per every 10 or 100 hours of hunting. Standardizing values allows parameters to be compared across regions even though hunter effort varies. For conciseness, the data has been summarized at the regional level. More information on individual WMAs can be found in the WMA narratives following this section.

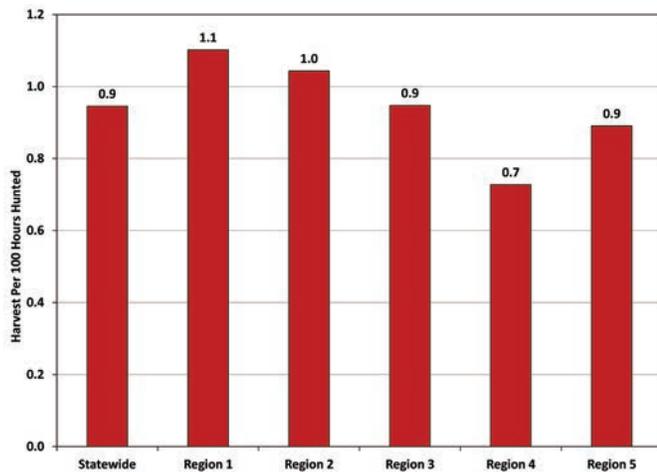
Harvest Rates & Age Structure

The average statewide harvest rate for hunters on WMAs was lower than that reported by private land hunters through the SGHS. On average, WMA hunters harvested 0.9 gobblers per 100 hours hunted in 2011 (*Figure 1*), compared to 2.9 gobblers per 100 hours harvested by private land hunters. Similar to private lands, Region 1 had the highest harvest rate in the state with 1.1 gobblers harvested per 100 hours. Harvest rates were lowest in Region 4, with only 0.7 gobblers bagged per 100 hours hunted.

Two-year-old gobblers, or those birds with 0.5-1.0" spurs comprised just over 50% of the statewide public land harvest (*Figure 2*). This percentage is 10% higher than that reported by private land hunters in the SGHS, and may be indicative of higher hunting pressure on public lands. The highest proportions of 2-year-olds in the bag occurred in Region 1 (60%), followed by Region 4 (59%). Region 2 had the lowest proportion of 2-year-olds bagged, comprising only 25% of the overall harvest, although Region 2 numbers may not be representative of the population due to low reported harvest. The proportion of "limb hanger" birds, or those with >1.25" spurs was highest in Regions 2 and 5.

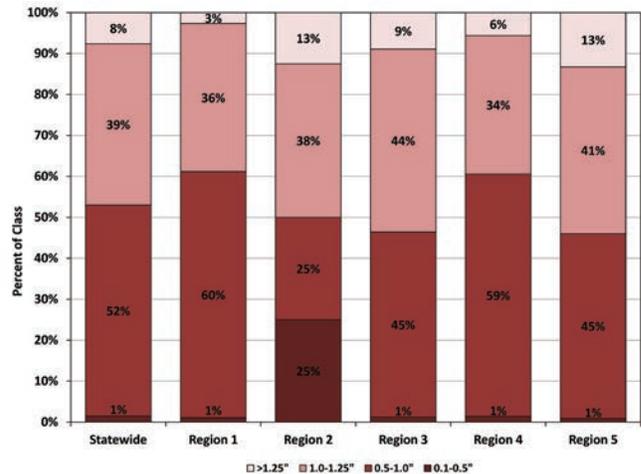
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 1



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 2



Gobbling Activity

Statewide public land hunters heard on average 1.9 gobblers and 14.9 total gobbles per 10 hours hunted (Figure 3). Region 4 hunters reported the highest number of gobblers heard, at 2.4 per 10 hours hunted, while Region 1 hunters heard the most total gobbling activity (18.4 gobblers per 10 hours hunted). Region 2 by far reported the least amount of gobbling activity and gobblers heard, at 7.5 total gobblers, and 0.8 gobblers heard per 10 hours hunted, respectively.

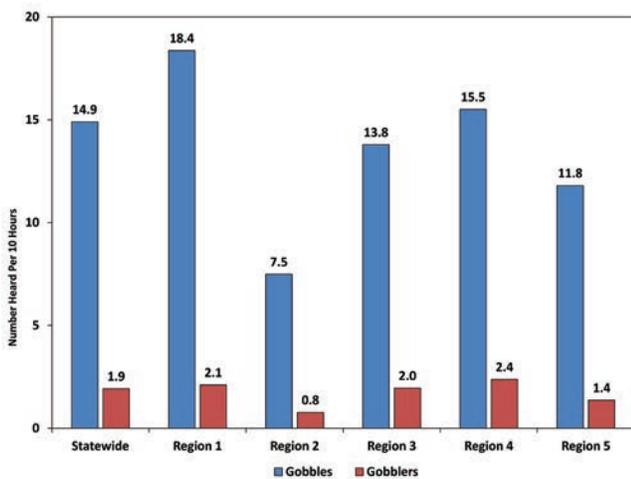
Across most regions, two peaks in the number of gobblers heard per 10 hours hunted were observed, occurring during

weeks 2 and 4 (Figure 4). The lowest number of gobblers heard tended to occur during weeks 6 or 7 for most regions, and a slight increase was seen in the final week of the season for all regions except Region 1.

Peaks in total gobblers heard per 10 hours hunted varied by region, however, in all regions except Region 2 an upswing in gobbling activity during week 4 (Figure 5). Gobbling activity in Region 2 and Region 5 both exhibited marked peaks during the final two weeks of the season. These trends differed substantially from gobbling activity observed from SGHS data, in which gobbling declined sharply near the end of the season for these regions.

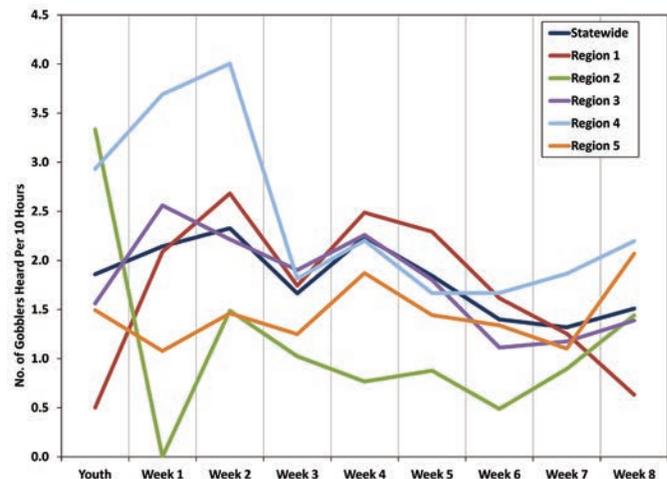
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Region

Figure 3



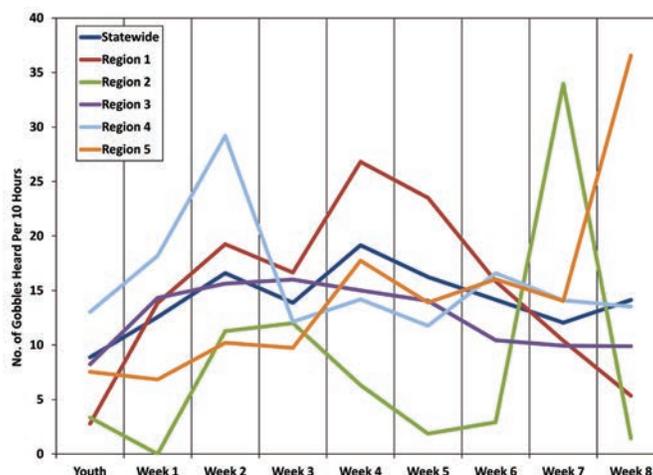
Gobblers Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week for all Regions

Figure 4



Total Gobblers Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week for all Regions

Figure 5



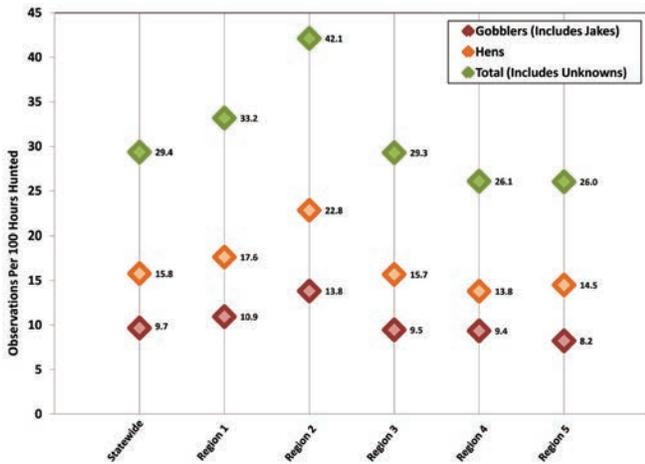
Turkey Observations

Statewide, hunters observed approximately 10 gobblers (including jakes), 16 hens, and 30 total turkeys (including unknowns) per 100 hours hunted (Figure 6). Observations per 100 hours hunted for gobblers, hens, and total turkeys tended to be highest in Region 2, followed by Region 1.

Jake observations were highest in Region 2 at 10.7 jakes observed per 100 hours hunted (Figure 7), which were over double that of the next highest, Region 1, at 5.2 jakes seen per 100 hours hunted. Observation rates were similar for all other regions.

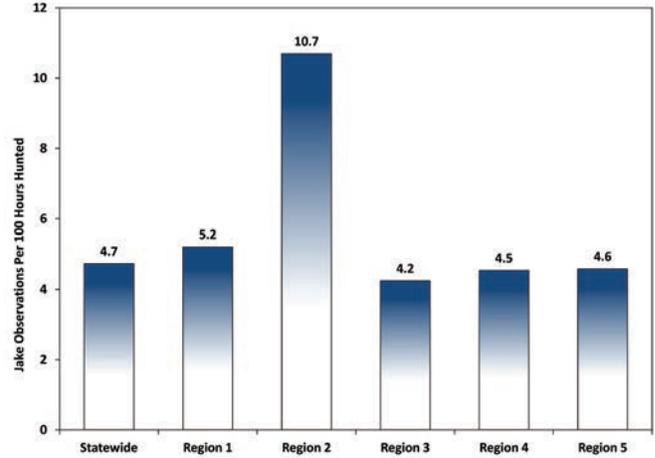
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted for all Regions

Figure 6



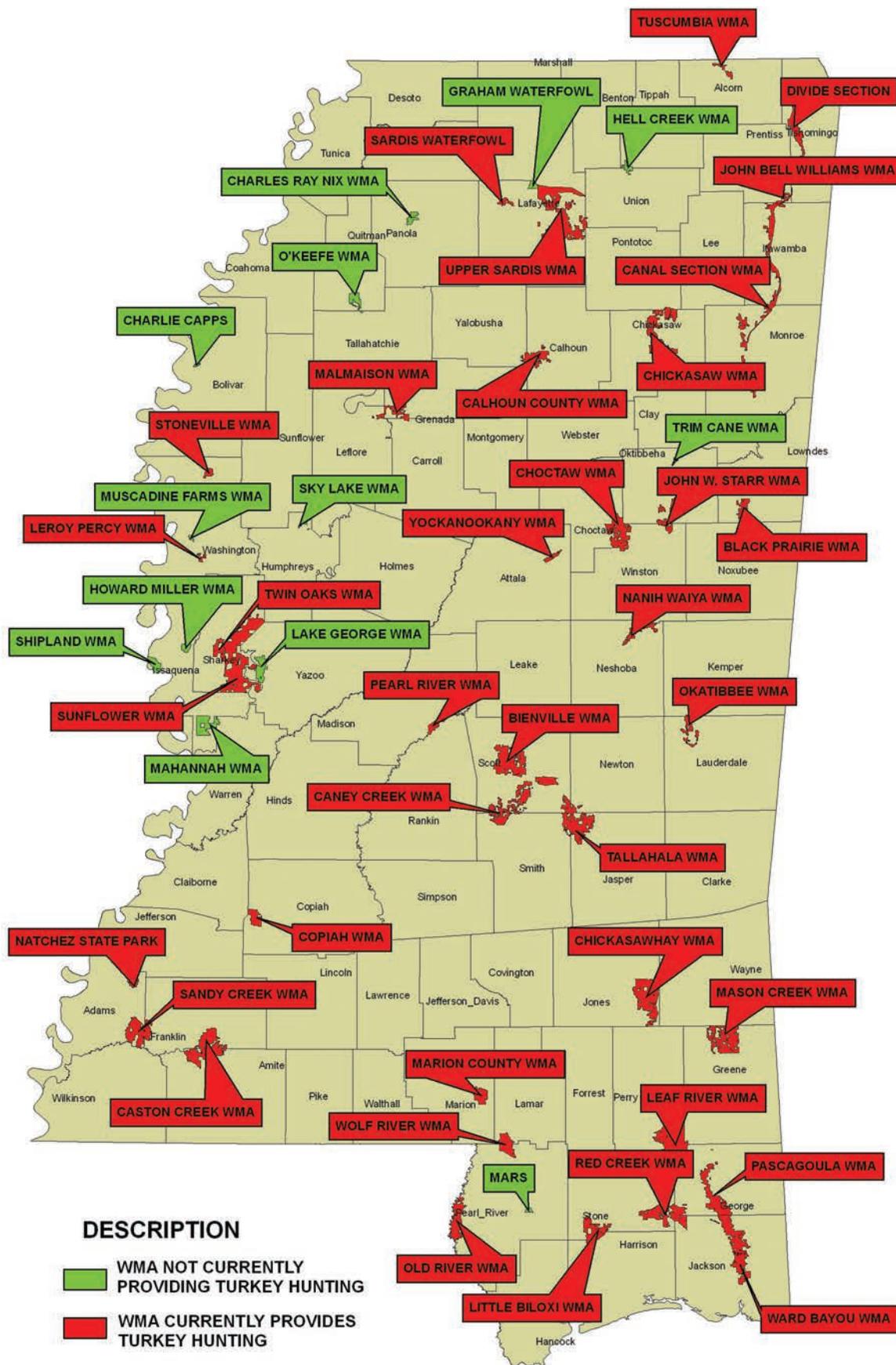
Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted for all Regions

Figure 7



Steve Gulleedge





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 interspersed 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 2011 turkey season, Bienville WMA accrued 766 hunter-days, and 27 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 2011 season, Black Prairie WMA accrued 24 hunter-days of hunting, and 4 harvested birds were 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 near Bruce in Calhoun County. The area is heavily forested with variably-aged loblolly pine stands. Forest stands on the area are corporately owned and managed. Some mature hardwoods exist along steep slopes, drains, and draws providing hardmast during fall and winter. Clear cuts are scattered throughout the area and provide some 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. In 2011, 5 gobblers were harvested on the area during 142 hunter-days of effort. Harvest and hunter-days represented a 3 year low presumably due to poor weather early in the season and a paucity of 2 year-old birds. 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 and harvest data is combined. 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. These WMAs lie in 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 in Prentiss and Itawamba counties is located just south of Hwy 4 on the west side of the Canal Section WMA. This area has both upland and bottomland forested habitat. Hardwood stands provide hardmast during fall and winter months. Both areas have numerous openings in the form of food plots, permanent openings, old fields, and maintained levees which provide critical foraging and nesting areas for wild turkeys. Use of prescribed fire has intensified 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. During the 2011 season, 1,248 hunter-days and 27 harvested gobblers were reported for youth and open turkey seasons among the two areas. 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 2011 turkey season, Caney Creek WMA accrued 926 hunter-days, and 31 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 2011 turkey season, Caston Creek WMA accrued 385 hunter-days, and 9 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 28,000 acre area located within the Tombigbee National Forest near Houston in Chickasaw County. The area is heavily forested with variably-aged loblolly pine stands and mature hardwood stands. Some permanent openings exist and are managed to provide habitat for wild turkeys and other wildlife. Annual prescribed burning conducted by U.S. Forest Service personnel helps maintain some nesting, foraging, and brood habitat on the area. Chickasaw WMA offers an early spring gobbler season to youth hunters in addition to the open spring gobbler season. During spring 2011, 35 gobblers were harvested on Chickasaw WMA during 1,008 hunter-days of effort. 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 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 2011 turkey season, Chickasawhay WMA accrued 780 hunter-days, and 20 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Chickasawhay WMA, contact the regional WMA headquarters at 601-928-4296.

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 2011, a total of 20 gobblers were harvested on Choctaw WMA during 832 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 poults.

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 2011 turkey season, Copiah County WMA accrued 222 hunter-days, and 3 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. Food plots and annually mowed soil retention levees in the disposal areas improves habitat for turkeys on this area.

Divide Section WMA offers an early spring gobbler season to youth hunters in addition to the open spring gobbler season. Youth are allowed to hunt the Jackson Camp Peninsula. During the 2011 season, Divide Section WMA accrued 677 hunter-days of effort, and 20 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 2011, 7 gobblers were harvested during 240 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 2011 turkey season, Leaf River WMA accrued 1,515 hunter-days, and 27 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Leaf River WMA, contact the regional WMA headquarters at 601-928-4296.

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 2011 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 2011 turkey season, Little Biloxi WMA accrued 476 hunter-days, and 7 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Little Biloxi WMA, contact the regional WMA headquarters at 601-928-4296.

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 water fowl 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.

Turkey hunting is by permit only throughout the entire season. The 2011 season was the third season turkey hunting was open on Mahannah WMA. Although frequent springtime flooding limits the ability of turkeys to successfully nest and raise broods on the area, it was decided there was no biological reason not to allow turkey hunting on the area using a system of limited draw hunts. Nine hunters harvested zero birds. Due to impacts of flooding on the turkey population on this area, Mahannah will be 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 hardmast. 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 2011, 12 gobblers were harvested during 551 hunter-days of effort. Harvest and hunter-days exhibited a 3 season low. Harvest was well below average. No doubt low nest success during previous years and poor weather early during the 2011 season contributed to the down year. Poor hunter compliance 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 2011 turkey season, Marion County WMA accrued 218 hunter-days, and 6 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 2011 turkey season, Mason Creek WMA accrued 551 hunter-days, and 14 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Mason Creek WMA, contact the regional WMA headquarters at 601-928-4296.

Nanah Waiya WMA

By Amy C. Blaylock, WMA Biologist

Nanah 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 Nanah Waiya WMA is the same as statewide, but the bag limit is restricted to 2 adult gobblers. During the 2011 turkey season, extensive and prolonged flooding from the Pearl River negatively impacted turkey hunting on this bottomland area. A total of 132 hunter-days of effort were reported with 2 birds being harvested. For more information on Nanah 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 42 hunter-days and 2 harvested birds for the 2011 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 2011 turkey season, Okatibbee WMA accrued 56 hunter-days, and 1 harvested bird was 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. The WMA was in the direct path of Hurricane Katrina as it roared through south Mississippi in August 2005. As a result, the WMA suffered extensive timber damage.

During the 2011 turkey season, Old River WMA accrued 239 hunter-days, and 11 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. Much of the WMA was heavily damaged by Hurricane Katrina; however, much effort has been taken to improve access and clear permanent openings across the WMA.

During the 2011 turkey season, Pascagoula River WMA accrued 137 hunter-days, and 4 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 2011 turkey season, there were 164 hunter-days of turkey hunting with 3 birds 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 2011 turkey season, Red Creek WMA accrued 296 hunter-days, and 4 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Red Creek WMA, contact the WMA headquarters at 601-928-4296.

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 2011 turkey season, Sandy Creek WMA accrued 1,007 hunter-days, and 31 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Sandy Creek WMA, contact the regional WMA headquarters at 601-432-2199.

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 hardwoods, loblolly pine plantations, managed openings, old fields, and wetlands that are managed by prescribed burning, disking, establishing supplemental forages, and timber harvest. Sardis Lake Corps of Engineers helps MDWFP manage the area.

Sardis Waterfowl WMA offers hunting opportunity to youth only and inaugural turkey hunting opportunity was offered during April of 2011. Those and future hunts are permit-only. During the 2011 season, 17 hunter-days and 5 harvested birds were reported. For more information about this WMA, contact the WMA regional headquarters at 662-487-1946.

Shiplace WMA

By Jackie Fleeman, WMA Biologist

Shiplace 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.

Turkey hunting is by permit only during the first part of turkey season on Shiplace WMA. During the 2011 turkey season, there were 5 hunter-days of turkey hunting with no birds harvested. Turkey numbers vary from year to year because frequent spring-time flooding limits the ability of turkeys to successfully nest and raise broods on the area. Due to the impacts of recent flooding on the turkey population on this area, there will be no turkey hunting on Shiplace WMA during 2012. For more information on Shiplace 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.

On Stoneville WMA, turkey hunting is by permit only during the first part of turkey season. There were seven hunter-days and no harvested birds were reported for the 2011 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.

Turkey hunting is by permit only during the first part of turkey season. Sunflower WMA accrued 193 hunter-days during the 2011 turkey season, and 9 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. Due to the impacts of flooding on the turkey population on this area, turkey hunting will be limited on Sunflower WMA during the 2012 season. 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 2011 turkey season, Tallahala WMA accrued 1,542 hunter-days, and 50 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 beaver slash. The area is comprised of 2 separate units. The northern unit (1,400 acres) is mainly permanent water and slash, which is not easily accessed and provides little turkey habitat. The southern unit (1200 acres) has mostly abandoned agricultural fields and 7 waterfowl impoundments. 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 2011 season, 82 hunter-days and 1 harvested gobbler was reported. For more information about Tuscumbia WMA, contact the WMA regional headquarters at 662-862-2723.

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.

Turkey hunting on Twin Oaks WMA is by permit only throughout the entire season. During the 2010 turkey season, Twin Oaks WMA accrued 75 hunter-days, and no 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 near Oxford in Lafayette County. 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 pine and mature hardwoods. Managed openings, old fields, and 2-3 year old clearcuts are found on the area and provide additional turkey habitat. Recent habitat improvements on the area are a product of continued use of prescribed burning, conducted by the U.S. Forest Service, and natural disturbances from tornadoes in 2008 and 2010 which affected approximately 3,000 acres. These 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. The first two weeks of the regular spring season are permit-only. After that, Upper Sardis WMA is open to all during the rest of the season. During the 2011 season, 54 gobblers were harvested during 1,368 hunter-days of effort. 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 85 hunter-days and 7 harvested birds for the 2011 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 2011 turkey season, Wolf River WMA accrued 406 hunter-days, and 9 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 2011, 1 gobbler was harvested on this area during 52 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.

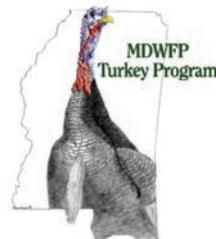
Club Name: _____

County: _____

Forested Acres: (including food plots) _____

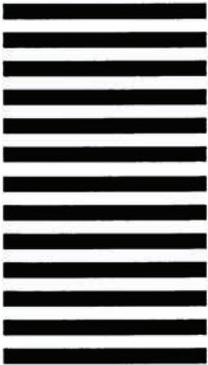
Estimate Total Number of Hunters Anticipated on this Property During the Turkey Season: _____

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





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



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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: _____

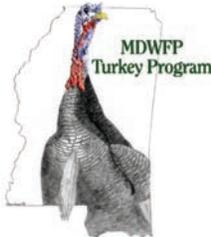
Phone: (Home) _____ (Office) _____

Date Turkey(s) Found: _____

Location (county and nearest town): _____

Description of Turkey(s) When Found: _____

Additional Comments: _____



Turkey hen with avian pox.

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 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 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 1/16 inch increments): _____

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

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

Spur Length (measure in 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.*

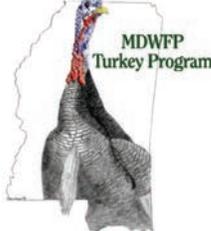
Hunter's Signature: _____ Date: _____

**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

FOLD

To mail this form, please remove it from the report by tearing or cutting along the perforation. Fold the page as indicated so the mailing address is showing. Use a small piece of transparent tape to keep the form closed during mailing. Attach a stamp where indicated. No envelope is necessary.

FOLD

2012 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:

2012 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:</i> <i>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?

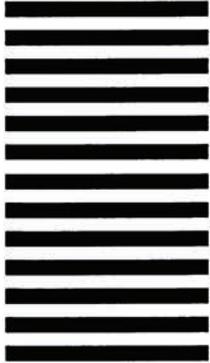
3. Please provide any ideas you may have that could improve future reports: _____

4. Do you want to receive the 2013 Mississippi Wild Turkey Report? _____

If yes, please provide your address: _____



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



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 IN THE
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BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

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FOLD



REWARD

Up to \$500 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons exceeding the turkey bag limit, baiting turkeys, or illegally killing a wild turkey in the state of *Mississippi*.

Maximum
Fine
\$500
and/or



6
Months
In Jail



Mississippi
Chapter

To report a violation contact:
TOLL FREE: 1-800-BE-SMART
(1-800-237-6278)

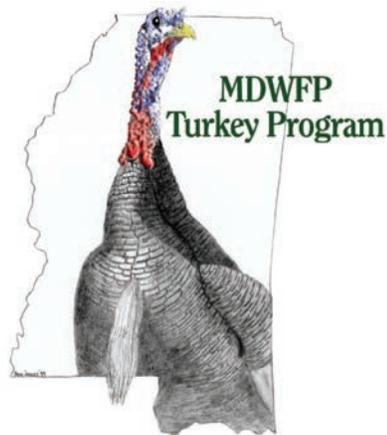
For more information on the
Mississippi Wildlife Federation
Call: 1-601-206-5703



Join The N.W.T.F. - Call 1-800-THE-NWTF

**MS Chapter NWTF
610 Hospital Road
Starkville, MS 39759**

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The 2012 Mississippi Wild Turkey Report is a cooperative effort between the MDWFP Turkey Program and the Mississippi Chapter of the NWTF.



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