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OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS

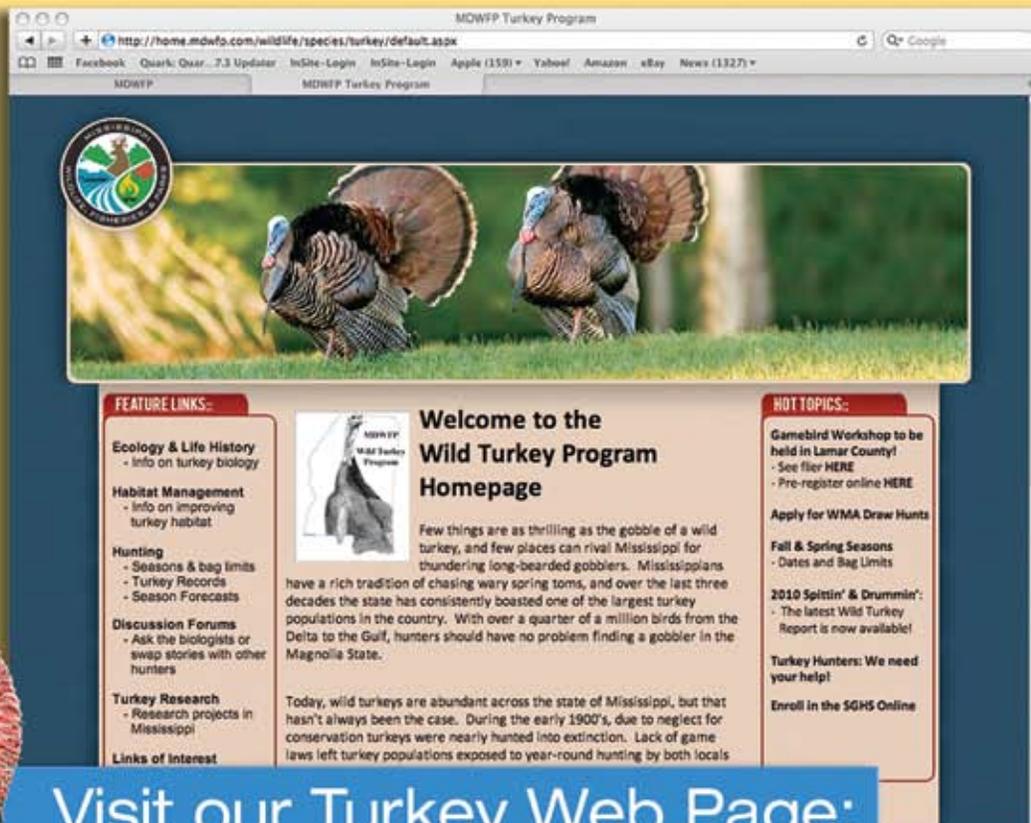
2017



Spittin' & Drummin'

MISSISSIPPI WILD TURKEY REPORT

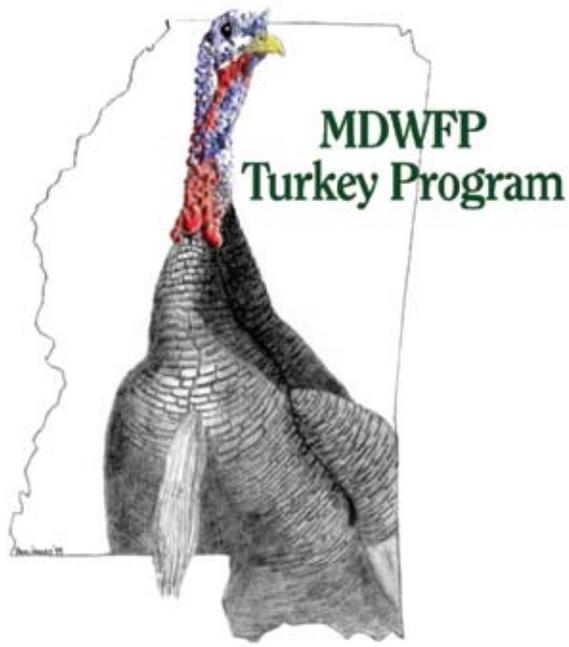
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Spittin' & Drummin'

2011 MISSISSIPPI
WILD TURKEY REPORT



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Acknowledgements



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AS WE PREPARE FOR THE UPCOMING SPRING GOBBLER SEASON, we are excited to be able to share the 2011 Mississippi Wild Turkey Program Report *Spittin' and Drummin'* with you. I want to personally take this opportunity to thank each of you that make this report possible, and everyone who is involved with wild turkey conservation in Mississippi! Foremost, I want to extend a sincere thank you to my partner, Adam Butler. Adam's passion for wild turkeys, hard work, and dedication to turkey conservation continues to be an inspiration to me! Several MDWFP employees have assisted the wild turkey program during the past year. We thank Kourtney Wong for a great job designing this annual turkey program report. Special thanks are due to Scott Edwards, Jim Willcutt, Ashley Gary, Alan Mumbower, Susan Myers, and Tosha Jordon for assistance with many turkey projects. Ms. Dene Smith retired from the MDWFP this year after many years of service; the Wild Turkey Program owes Ms. Dene a great debt of gratitude for her many years of assistance. Marnia Hazlewood also retired this year after several years with the agency; she enjoyed wild turkeys and worked hard to support our program for many years. At the time of this writing, Marnia was struggling with some serious health concerns, and our thoughts and prayers are with her and her family as she battles illness. Wildlife Bureau Chief Ron Seiss laid the groundwork for much of what we do in the wild turkey program, and has been a huge asset to us in our turkey management efforts. I want to thank the Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation for all that they do to support turkey hunters and turkey conservation in our State! Special thanks goes to Joe Wood and Luke Lewis who continue to do so much to support turkey conservation in Mississippi. I 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 my family - Kris, Brannon, and Eric, who do so much for me and support me 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 our State's wild turkey resource this spring!

Dave Godwin
MDWFP Turkey Program Coordinator



MANY OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS USED IN THIS PUBLICATION WERE taken by **Steve Gulledge** of Bruce, Mississippi. For the past several years, Steve has generously shared his fantastic turkey photographs to help make *Spittin' and Drummin'* a sharper looking publication. Steve is a long-time volunteer with the NWTF and an avid turkey hunter. His passion for this grand game bird is clearly reflected in his quality photographs, which take us from our living rooms and place us directly into the daily lives of the wild turkey. We sincerely appreciate Steve's willingness to help us with this project again this year. He is a friend, a conservationist, and a card-carrying member of "The Tenth Legion." To learn more about Steve Gulledge's photography, visit his website at www.stevegulledgephotography.com.



EACH YEAR, THERE ARE NUMEROUS PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT THE conservation work of the MDWFP Wild Turkey Program and the publication of our annual *Spittin' & Drummin'* report. Foremost among these are the legion of Mississippi turkey hunters who voluntarily collect data contained within this report. The passion that this group exhibits toward their quarry gives meaning to the work that the Wild Turkey Program attempts to accomplish each year, and the information they provide is an invaluable glimpse into every corner of our State's "turkey woods." The volunteers of the Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation deserve special acknowledgement for all that they do to ensure that the shouts of wily old Toms will always ring throughout the woods of the Magnolia State. The NWTf recently added another addition to Mississippi's turkey conservation team in Mr. Luke Lewis, and it has been my pleasure to have the opportunity to work with him over the past year in his capacity as NWTf Regional Biologist. The MDWFP staff supports the Wild Turkey Program in numerous ways, and we could not nearly be as effective without the strength of our coworkers. Special recognition is due to Tosha Jordan, Kourtney Wong, and Jason Price for all that they do to assist us in compiling this annual report. The vision and leadership of Larry Castle and Ron Seiss within the Wildlife Bureau have been essential in growing our program. Finally, I would also like to express personal appreciation to Dave Godwin, the Wild Turkey Program Coordinator, for helping steer my professional development into a more knowledgeable and effective wildlife biologist.

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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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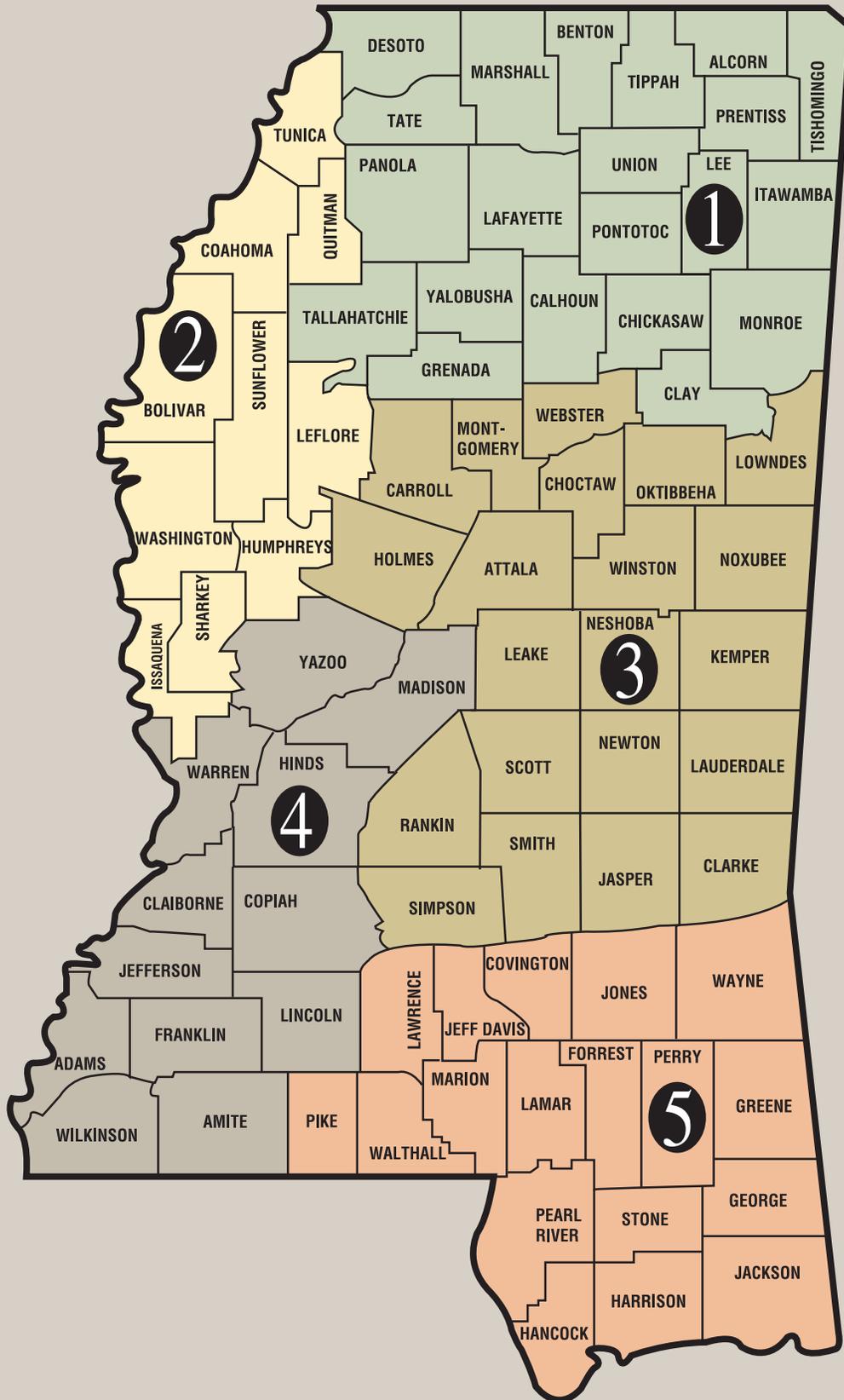
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MDWFP Turkey Regions



Steve Cullledge



2011 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!

Habitat Management Technical Guidance Available for Mississippi Private Landowners

MANY PRIVATE LANDOWNERS ARE INTERESTED IN MANAGING THEIR LANDS TO BENEFIT WILD TURKEYS. Turkeys, like all wildlife species, are dependent on their 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 the Private Lands Habitat Program routinely make site visits with landowners to help them develop management plans designed to reach their property management 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!

MDWFP



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

MDWFP



Biologists work with landowners to plant native warm-season grasses to improve habitat for wild turkey, bobwhite quail, and other wildlife.

MDWFP



A well-managed hardwood forest provides excellent wild turkey habitat and makes for an exciting spring gobbler hunt!



Steve Gulledge

HOW ARE TURKEYS IN MY NECK OF THE WOODS?

Mississippi Wild Turkey Population Statistics

Based on Spring Gobbler Hunting and Brood Surveys

THE SPRING GOBBLER HUNTING SURVEY (SGHS) WAS INITIATED IN 1996 TO PROVIDE THE MISSISSIPPI Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) biological information about the state's wild turkey resource. Each year, cooperating hunters record information about their spring gobbler hunts. The database obtained from this survey assists the MDWFP in monitoring populations and making management decisions in the best interest of the turkey resource and turkey hunters. The Agency appreciates the data collection efforts and comments from all individual hunters and hunting clubs who participate in the SGHS. All turkey hunters, regardless of their ability or experience, are encouraged to participate. This is an opportunity to be directly involved in the conservation and management of the wild turkey in Mississippi. An application for participation in the SGHS is provided in this report.

Private land data from the 2003 – 2010 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.



Steve Gullede

Reproduction

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

Turkey Observations

Turkey observations are classified as gobblers, jakes, hens or unknowns. Observation rates are reported as the average number of gobblers, jakes or hens seen during 100 hours of hunting. Total observations combine all turkeys seen, including unknowns.

Observation rates provide indices to sex ratios, gobbler age ratios, population size and population trends. Jake observations reflect the recruitment of males into the population from the previous year's hatch and provide an index to the potential number of 2-year-old gobblers in the population during the next spring turkey season.



Steve 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.



Steve Gullede



Steve Gullede



Steve Gullede

Kyle Marable



The Hatch 2010

Summary of the Annual MDWFP Wild Turkey Brood Survey

THE MDWFP AND ITS COOPERATORS COLLECT DATA EVERY JUNE, JULY, AND AUGUST ON TURKEY broods. This dataset is a means to gauge the year's reproductive output, 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.

Annual reproductive output by wild turkeys is affected by a variety of factors, and spring weather patterns play a key role. It has been theorized that wet, cool conditions during the nesting and early brood-rearing periods can decrease hens' chances of success by increasing nest depredation events, and lowering the survival of young poults. The nesting season of 2010 saw very favorable weather conditions for turkey reproduction. During April and May, the time period of peak incubation, most of Mississippi experienced successive high-pressure systems with little rainfall, which increased the odds of success for nesting hens. As spring progressed into summer, rain showers were frequent enough to maintain the lush vegetation needed to produce abundant insect populations that are required by freshly hatched turkeys for growth and survival. The combination of these patterns resulted in good to excellent hatches across the majority of the Magnolia State, as confirmed by the MDWFP's brood survey data, and ancillary reports from around the region.

Assessments of the hatch based on data gathered over the summer can be found below, given as statewide and regional averages.

Statewide

Poults/Total Hens: 1.78
Nest success: 41%
Average brood size: 4.34

After the worst nesting season on record in 2009, most of the Mississippi experienced a much improved turkey hatch during 2010, and the observed Poults Per Hen (PPH) ratio was slightly above the 5-year average. Nearly all of the state south of Interstate 20, as well as most of the Delta, reported excellent reproduction which should yield increases to local populations (*Figure 1*). Reproduction throughout most of the rest of the state appeared to have been adequate to maintain stable populations. Nest success statewide averaged 41%, and the average brood size was 4.3 poults per brood, nearly double that of 2009.

Region 1: Northeast

At 1.43 PPH, the regional average for the Northeast was relatively low, although much of the northwestern portions of the region did appear to have good reproduction. Nest success for the region was on pace with the statewide average, and poult survival was relatively high at 3.53 poults per brood. However, this region has experienced poor reproduction over the last 5 years, including a very low 2009 hatch; therefore, these numbers may not translate into noticeable population increases.

Poults/Total Hens: 1.43
Nest success: 40%
Average brood size: 3.53

Region 2: Delta

Poults/Total Hens: 2.00
Nest success: 39%
Average brood size: 5.17

After several years of late-spring floods in the Delta, conditions finally improved during 2010. Although the 2.0 PPH observed this spring was not on par with the incredible Delta hatches of 2005-2007, it should be more than sufficient to allow populations to rebound from the previous successive years of extremely low reproduction. The Delta led the state in poult survival with an astounding 5.17 poults per brood.

Region 3: East Central

Reproductive output around Region 3 was spotty during 2010. Areas in and around Bienville National Forest in the south and Tombigbee National Forest and Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge in the north (*Figure 1*) appeared to have had good reproduction, but other areas of the region were lower. Overall,

Poults/Total Hens: 1.69
Nest success: 38%
Average brood size: 4.51

the PPH average, at 1.69, was below the region's 5-year average, although poult survival did appear to be quite high.

Region 4: Southwest

The southwestern corner of the state was the only area of the state with a good hatch in 2009, and it appears that the region

surpassed that performance in 2010 with one of its best hatches of recent memory. The observed 2.34 PPH was the second highest average on record for the region since the MDWFP began collecting brood data in 1994. This successful reproduction was fueled by outstanding nest success, as over half of all hens observed were seen with poults, coupled with high poult survival at 4.47 poults observed per brood. The next few springs should produce some memorable outings for turkey hunters in Region 4.

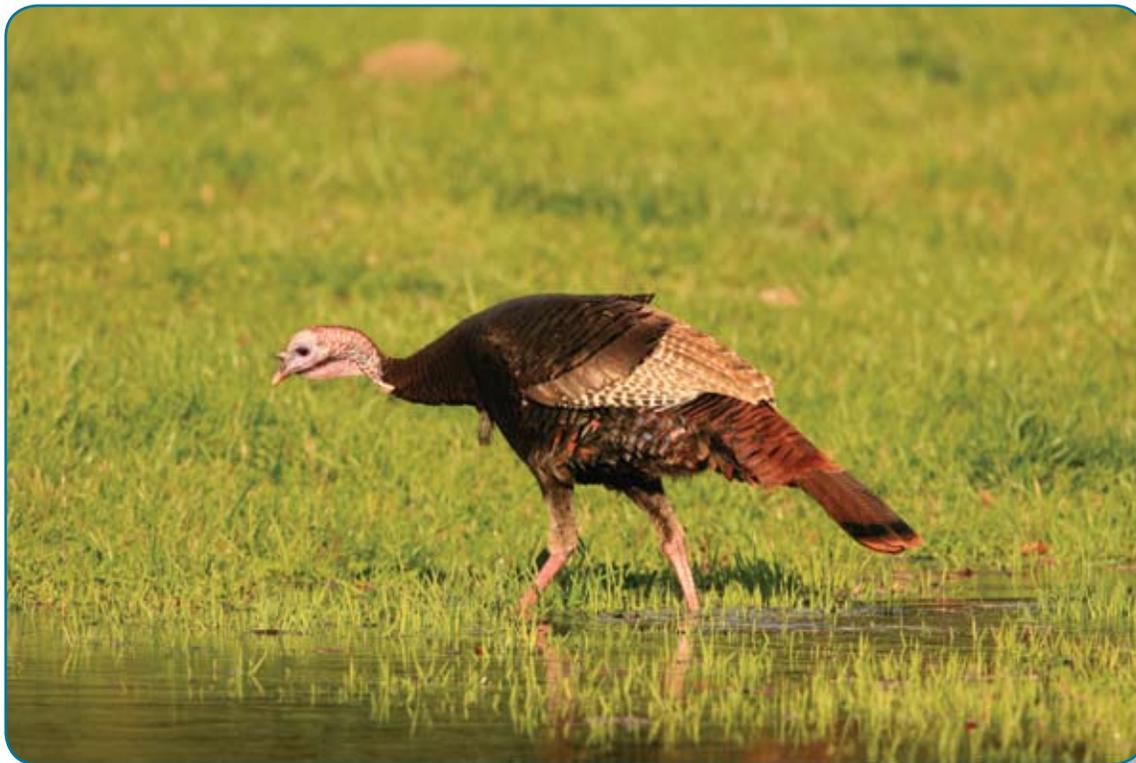
Poults/Total Hens: 2.34
Nest success: 52%
Average brood size: 4.47

Region 5: Southeast

Similar to Region 4, data from Southeast Mississippi suggested that this region experienced excellent turkey reproduction in 2010. Regionally, the PPH index averaged an exceptional 2.02, and some of the highest PPH ratios recorded in the state were tallied in Covington, Forest, Perry, Stone, George, and Jackson Counties (*Figure 1*). Brood survival was also exceptional in the piney-woods of the Southeast, with brood size averaging 4.67 poults per successful hen.

Poults/Total Hens: 2.02
Nest success: 43%
Average brood size: 4.67

Steve Cullledge



Hunters across most of the southern portions of Mississippi should see a dramatic increase in jakes during 2011 as a result of a good hatch during the summer of 2010.

Gobbler-to-Hen Ratio

In addition to poult 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. If more gobblers survive the season and are carried over into the summer, the gobbler-to-hen ratio increases. 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. During 2010, there were approximately 0.47 gobblers seen for every hen observed statewide (*Figure 2*); meaning that observations of hens were twice as common as observations of gobblers. This is the second straight year that this ratio has declined, and this figure is well below the metric's 5-year average. This drop could be explained by either an increase in the percentage of gobblers that were harvested during the spring season of 2010, or by an increase in hen survival during the spring and early summer, which is plausible considering the excellent nesting and brood-rearing conditions that were experienced across much of the state this year.

Conclusions

During 2009, much of Mississippi's turkey populations were dealt a severe blow by widespread reproductive failures. However, things improved greatly in 2010, and most of the state seemed to experience reproduction that was adequate to maintain stable populations, with some areas producing outstanding hatches that should result in population increases. Over two-thirds of all counties reported poult to hen ratios that were at or above the level needed to ensure healthy populations. This reproductive success came on the heels of favorable spring nesting conditions and early summer conditions that assured sufficient food resources for growing poults. Data gathered in Mississippi suggesting that the 2010 nesting season was largely a success has also been corroborated regionally from similar surveys conducted in our neighboring states.

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 local area 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.

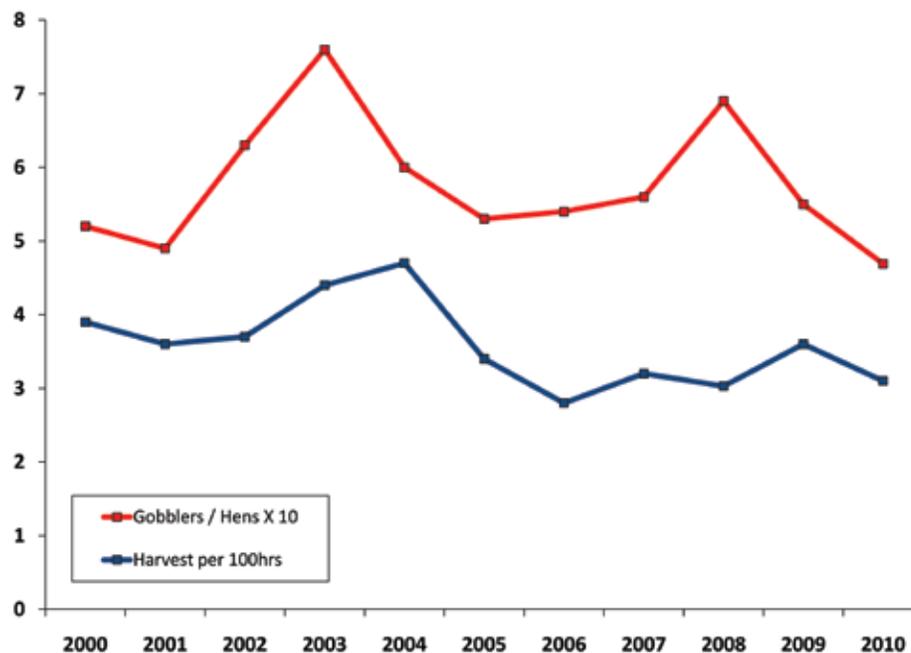


Figure 2: Comparison of the ratio of gobblers seen per hen (x 10) from the summer brood survey and subsequent change in harvest rates, 2000–2010.

Statewide

STATEWIDE PRIVATE LAND DATA WERE COLLECTED DURING THE 2010 season by hunting clubs and individual hunters participating in the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey.



Reproduction

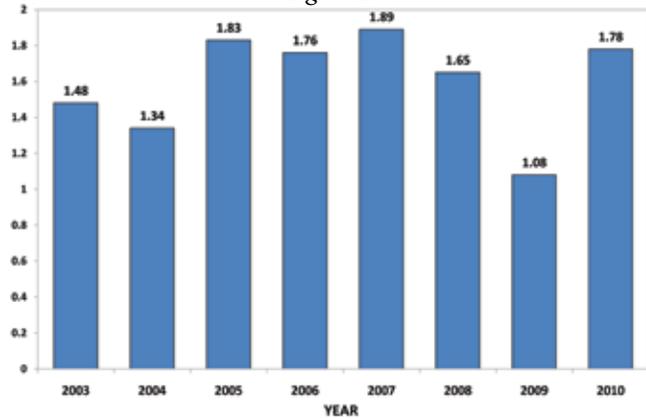
During the 2010 brood survey period, a total of 1,841 hens were observed across the Magnolia State. Of these hens, 757 (41%) successfully produced at least one poults. A total of 3,285 poults were observed, and average brood size was 4.34 poults which was up significantly from 2009. The average number of poults per total hens was 1.78 (Figure 1), which was also significantly higher than the record low observed in 2009. 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. More favorable weather conditions during spring and summer of 2010 resulted in increased reproduction for every region of the State compared to 2009.

Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Statewide harvest rates were lower than those reported in 2009. On average, hunters harvested 3.1 gobblers for every 100 hours hunted (Figure 2). Over the past 8 years, harvest rates have averaged 3.6 gobblers per 100 hours hunted. The age structure of harvested turkeys in 2010 was similar to that observed in recent years. Of the gobblers harvested, 51% were 3+ year-old toms with spur lengths of greater than one inch (Figure 3), and 12% had "limb-hanging" spurs greater than 1.25 inches. Forty-eight percent of the birds harvested were in the 2-year old age class with spurs between 0.5" and 1.0", which was up slightly from 45% recorded in 2009.

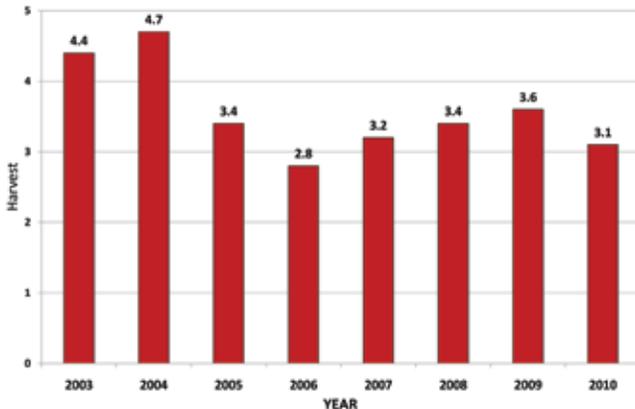
Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1



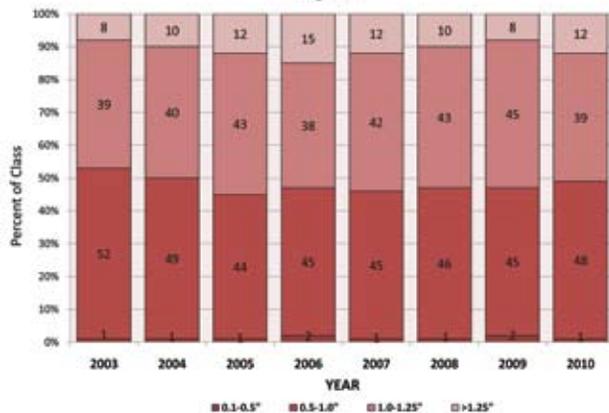
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

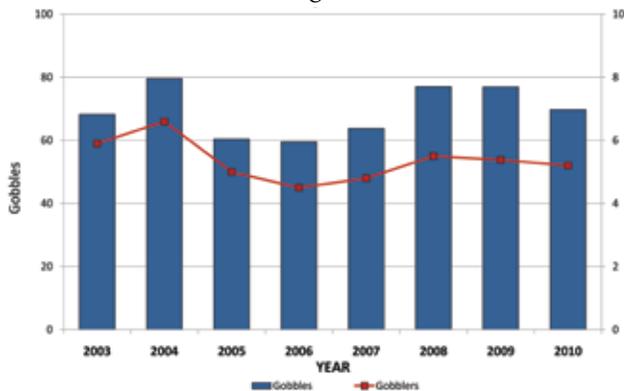


Gobbling Activity

During 2010, seasonal gobbling activity was slightly lower than observed during 2009, with hunters hearing an average of 5.2 gobblers and 69.7 gobbles for every 10 hours of hunting (Figure 4). The number of gobblers and gobbles heard was highest during the fifth week of the regular turkey season (Figure 5), with gobbling activity exhibiting a bell-shaped curve when charted throughout the season.

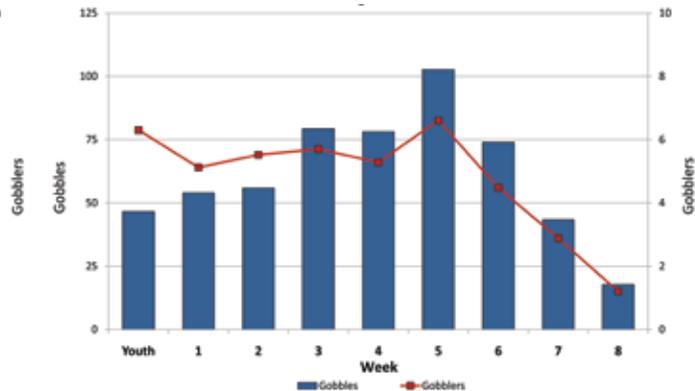
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

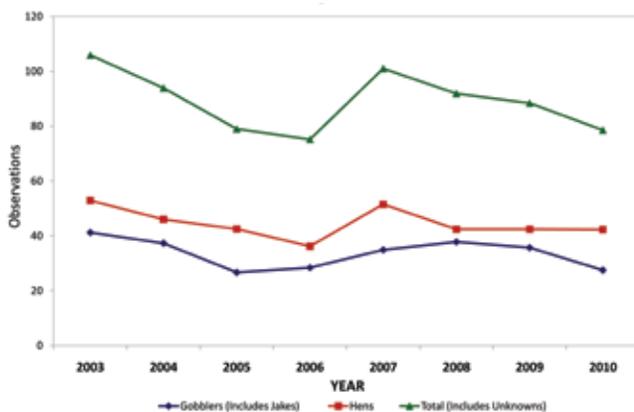


Turkey Observations

During the 2010 season, hunters observed an average of 18.2 adult gobblers, 9.3 jakes, 42.3 hens and 8.7 unknowns for every 100 hours of hunting (Figure 6). Overall, total turkey observations in 2010 were down slightly from 2009. Jake observations (9.3 per 100 hours) were significantly lower than observations from 2009 (Figure 7).

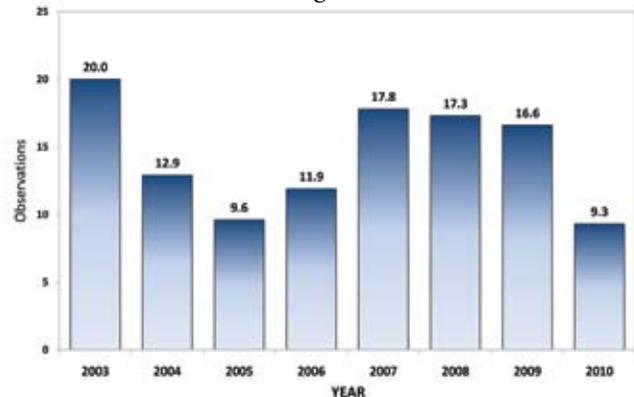
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

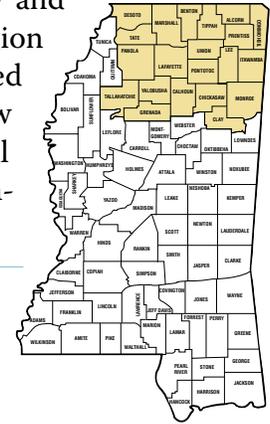


2011 Season Forecast

Our Statewide forecast includes both good news and bad news. First, the good – the 2010 hatch was one of the best in several years for much of the state, so there should be plenty of jakes in the woods this spring. But the bad news is that those birds will not be legal for adult hunters until next year, and the 2011 season should be pretty tough for much of Mississippi due to a generally poor hatch 2 years ago. Nesting conditions during the spring of 2009 were pretty unforgiving for incubating hens, and the effects showed in terms of low brood numbers in 2009 and low jake observations during the 2010 season. Additionally, summer surveys indicate that gobbler carryover from the 2010 season dipped for a second consecutive year, suggesting that fewer older age class birds will be around this spring. All this evidence implies that both harvest rates and gobbling activity will likely drop as a result of fewer available mature gobblers, and many Magnolia State hunters can expect a relatively challenging spring season in 2011.

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.

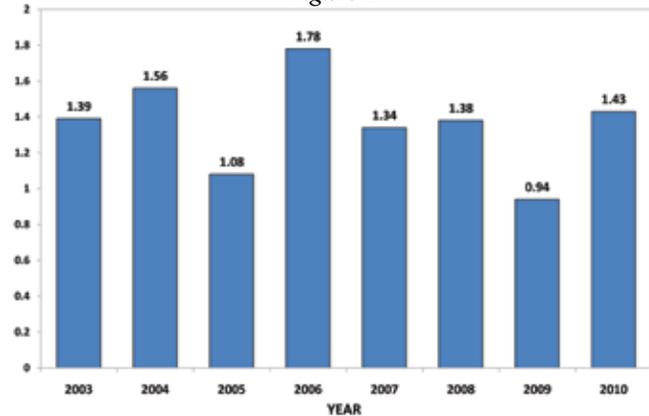


Reproduction

During 2010, brood survey results observed in Region 1 were once again the lowest in the State. However, the 1.43 poults per hen observed during 2010 was an increase from 2009 (*Figure 1*). Region 1 has seen relatively low reproduction for the past several years, compared to other regions of the State. A total of 647 hens were observed, of which 261 (40%) successfully raised at least one poult. Successful hens had an average brood size of 3.53 poults, an increase from 2.68 poults per brood observed in 2009.

Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

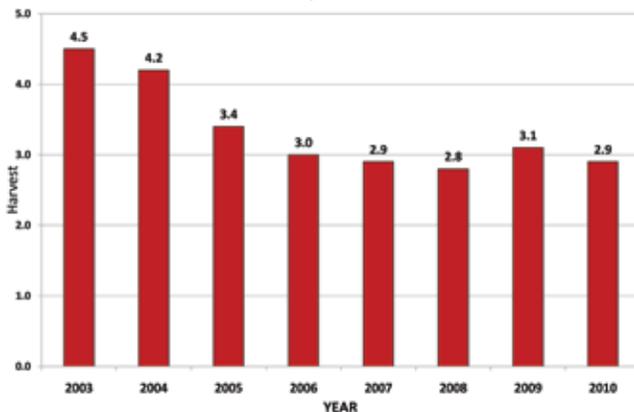


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Hunters harvested 2.9 gobblers for every 100 hours of hunting during the 2010 season, which was down slightly from the 2009 season (*Figure 2*). The percentage of 2-year old birds in the harvest increased significantly to 51% in this region (*Figure 3*). Forty-nine percent of the harvested birds were at least 3-years old with spurs greater than 1.0 inch.

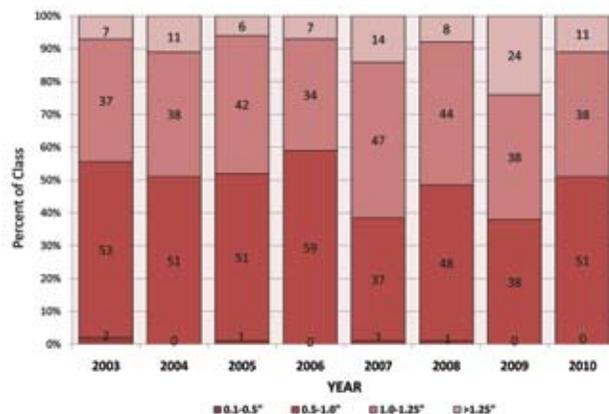
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

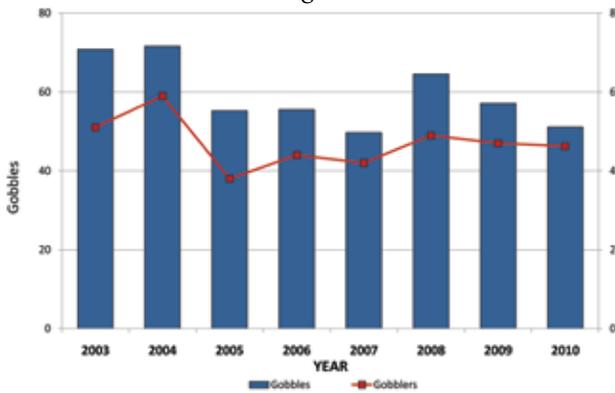


Gobbling Activity

During the 2010 season, hunters heard an average of 4.6 gobblers gobble 51.1 times for every 10 hours hunted (*Figure 4*). Gobbling activity was down slightly from the previous year for Region 1. While the number of individual gobblers heard was unusually high during the youth week, overall gobbling activity tended to peak during week 5 of the 2010 season (*Figure 5*).

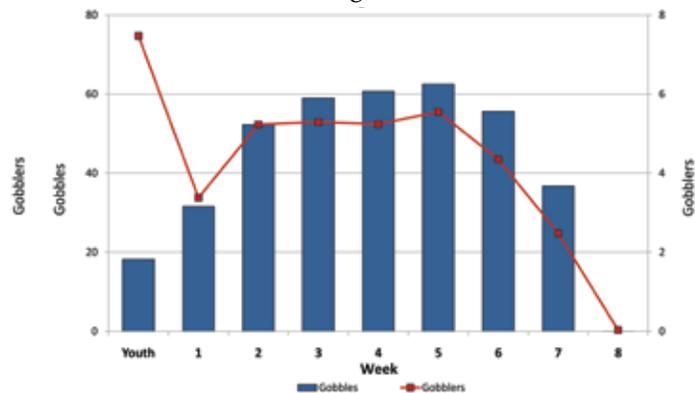
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

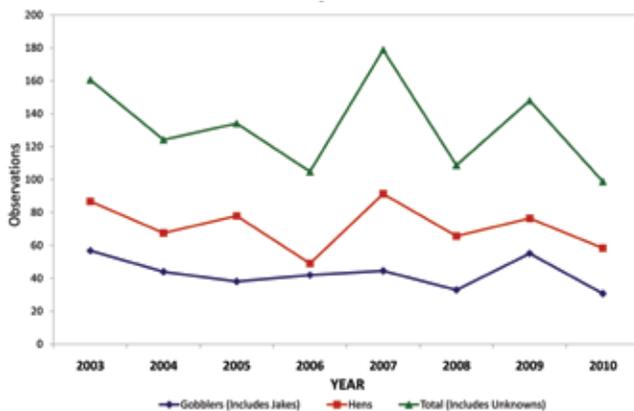


Turkey Observations

Turkey hunters observed an average of 98.8 turkeys per 100 hours hunted in 2010 (*Figure 6*) which was down from 2009. Jake observations (11.7 per 100 hours) were also down sharply in 2010 (*Figure 7*).

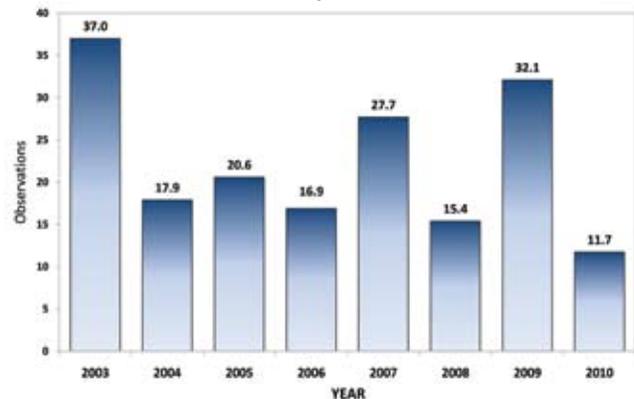
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

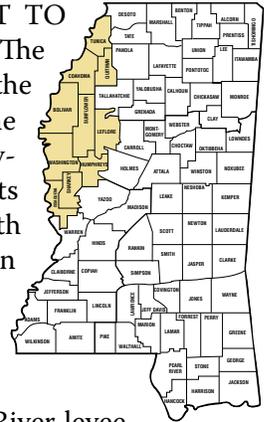


2011 Season Forecast

The 2009 hatch was not kind to most of this region. In fact, the regional average of 0.94 poult per hen was the lowest in the state with the exception of the Delta. Jake observations also took a substantial dip last season. Therefore, hunters in most of the state's northern counties should expect to encounter fewer two-year old gobblers during the 2011 season, and a recent history of relatively low reproduction is not favorable for a carry-over of older age-class birds.

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.



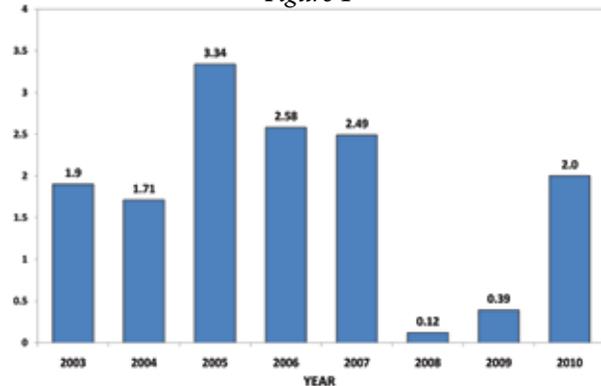
Region 2 is unique in that most of the turkey habitat in the interior Delta is on public lands (national forest, wildlife management areas, and wildlife refuges) and the vast majority of the private land habitat is located in the batture lands west of the Mississippi River levee. Therefore, data from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

Following 2 straight years when flood waters significantly impacted turkey reproduction throughout most of Region 2, the observed 2.0 poult per total hen was a significant improvement for this region (*Figure 1*). A total of 75 hens were seen, with 29 (39%) of them successfully producing at least 1 poult. Average brood size was 5.17 poults per successful hen, which was much higher than 2009 for this region.

Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

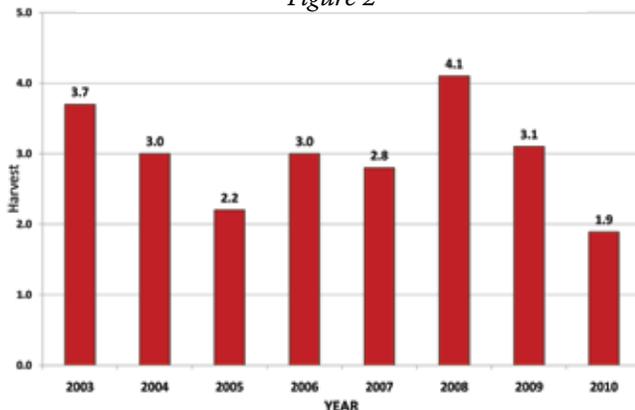


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

During the 2010 season, an average of 1.9 gobblers was harvested for every 100 hours of hunting (*Figure 2*), which was down significantly from the 2009 season following 2 poor hatch years. Approximately 62% of the gobblers harvested in Region 2 were at least 3 years old (*Figure 3*), with 16% having spurs over 1.25 inches in length. Thirty-eight 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.

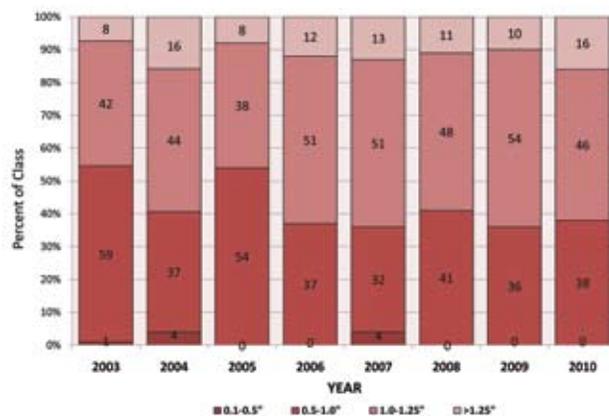
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

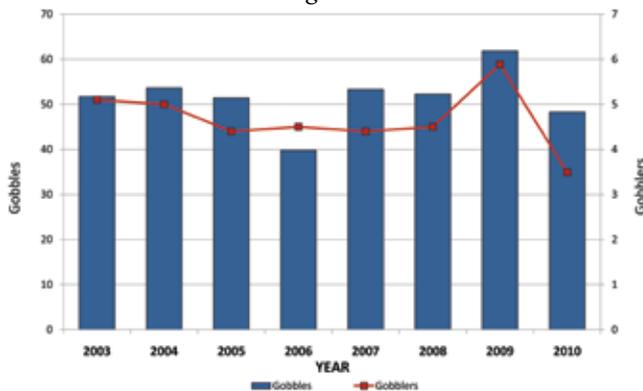


Gobbling Activity

Gobbling activity for 2010 was lower than that recorded in 2009 for Region 2 (*Figure 4*). Hunters in this region heard an average of 3.5 gobblers and 48.3 gobbles per 10 hours of hunting. The number of gobblers heard peaked in week 3 and the highest number of gobblers were heard during week 6 of the spring season (*Figure 5*).

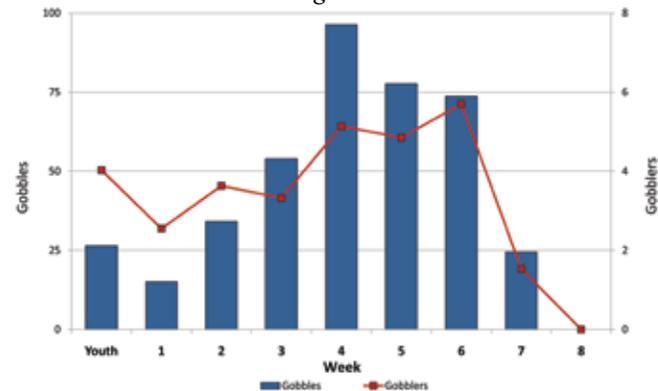
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

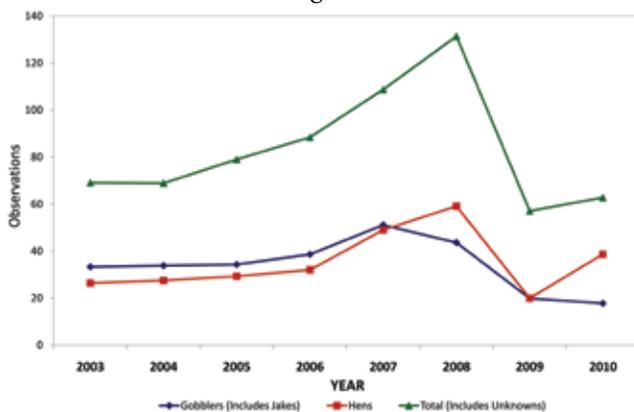


Turkey Observations

Overall turkey observations were up from the previous year slightly during 2010, but were still well below the long-term average for this region. Hunters saw an average of 62.8 birds per 100 hours of hunting (*Figure 6*). Jake observations also increased slightly to 6.1 per 100 hours in 2010 (*Figure 7*).

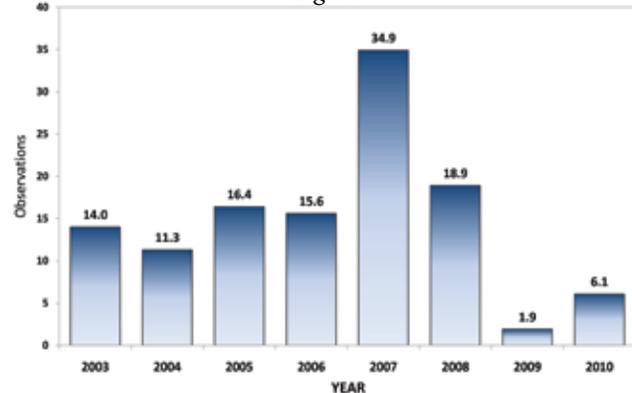
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

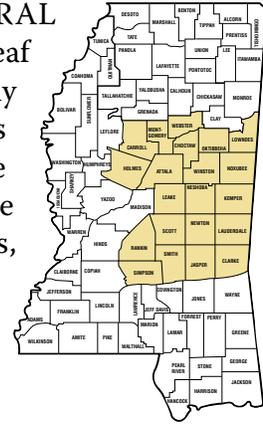


2011 Season Forecast

Both brood data and jake observations suggest that spring flooding of the MS River and other drainages has impacted turkey reproduction significantly in the Delta during recent years. Hunters should expect a relatively low number of mature gobblers throughout most of this region during the 2011 season. There will be some local exceptions in areas less impacted by spring flooding the past 2 years. The good news is that 2012 figures to be much better for most of Region 2, and an optimistic look forward may be the best thing that many Delta hunters will have going for them in 2011.

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.

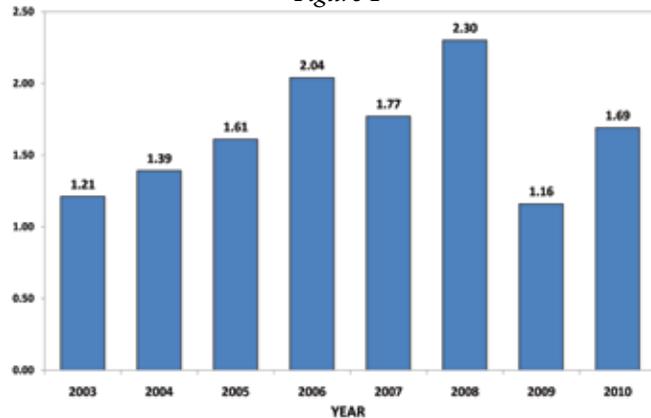


Reproduction

An average of 1.63 poult per total hen was recorded for Region 3 (Figure 1) which was up from 2009. A total of 562 hens were seen in this region during the 2010 brood survey and 211 (38%) of the hens successfully produced at least one poult. Average brood size was 4.51 poult per successful hen, which was also up from 2009.

Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

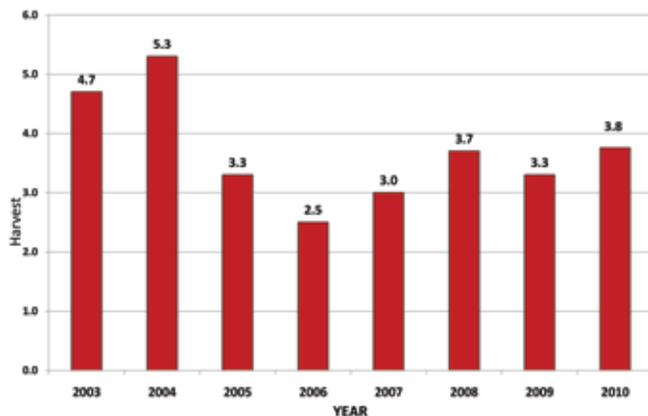


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Hunters harvested 3.8 gobblers per 100 hours of hunting in Region 3 during 2010 (Figure 2) which was up from 2009. Forty-six percent of harvested gobblers were considered 2-year old birds with spurs of 0.5 to 1.0 inches, while 52% were considered at least 3-years old (Figure 3).

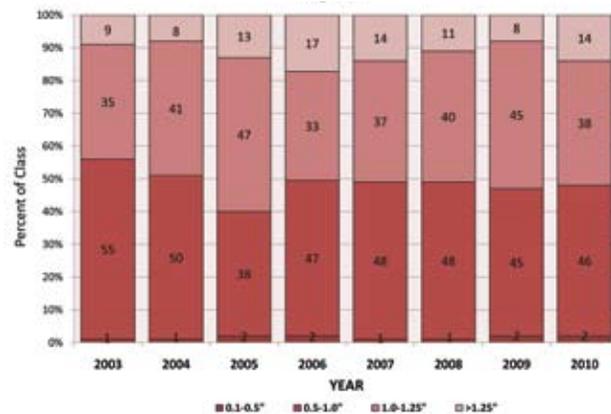
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

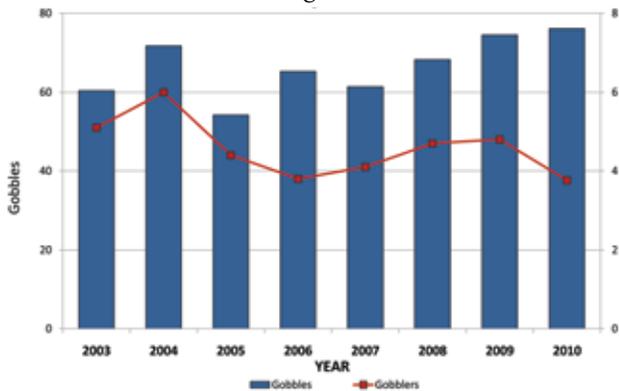


Gobbling Activity

Gobbling activity trends were mixed for this region in 2010, with hunters hearing fewer gobblers (4.8) but more gobbles (74.5) per 10 hours of hunting (Figure 4). Gobbling activity peaked in week 5 of the spring season (Figure 5).

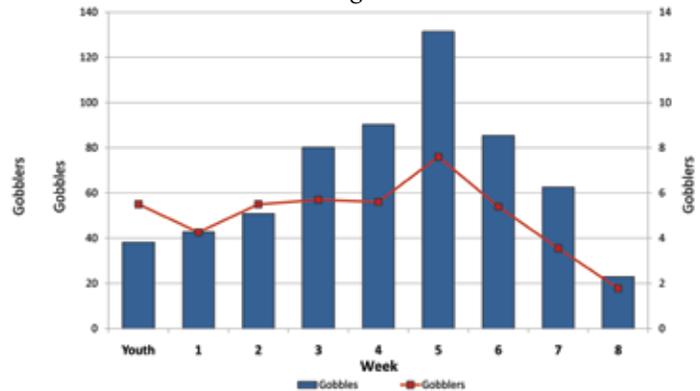
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

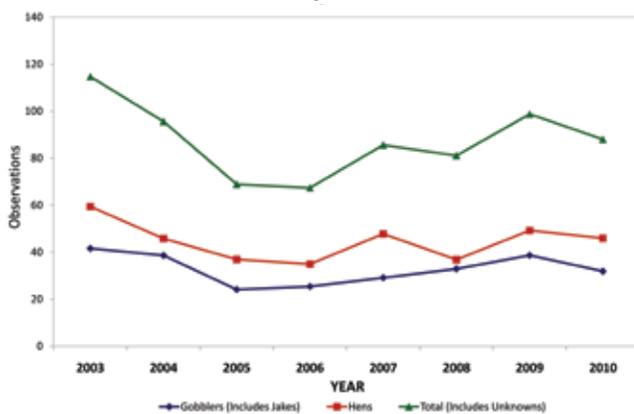


Turkey Observations

Hunters averaged observing 88.0 turkeys per 100 hours hunting during the 2010 season (Figure 6), which was down from 2009. Jake observations decreased sharply to 9.1 per 100 hours hunting (Figure 7).

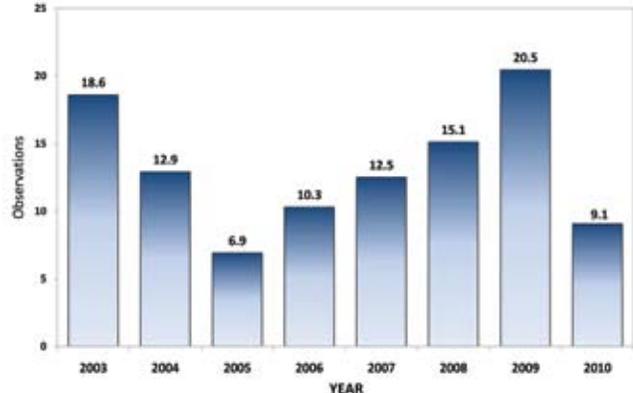
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7



2011 Season Forecast

Turkey populations in portions of east-central Mississippi steadily increased over the last several years, but that growth spurt may have finally stalled. Region 3 had the best reproduction in the state during 2008, but was down substantially to 1.16 poults per hen in 2009. As expected, jake observations were up significantly in 2009, but declined sharply during the 2010 season. This year, hunters should expect fewer 2-year olds in the flock, but hunting may still be good as a result of carryover from older age classes.

Turkey Region 4

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

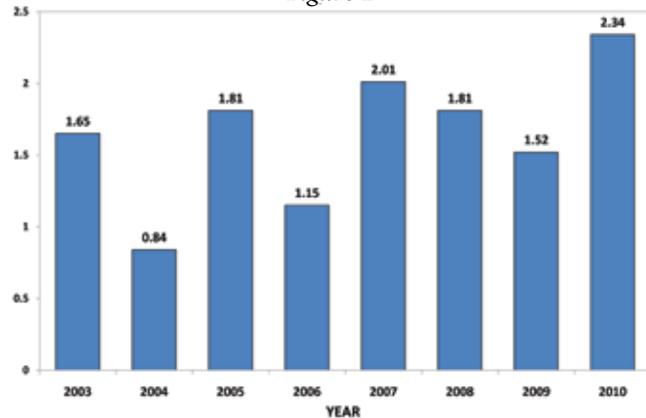


Reproduction

A total of 2.34 poults per total hens was observed for Region 4 during the 2010 brood survey (*Figure 1*) which was up significantly from 2009, and once again represented the highest regional hatch statewide. Fifty-two percent of the hens observed successfully reproduced, and average brood size was 4.47 poults for Region 4.

Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

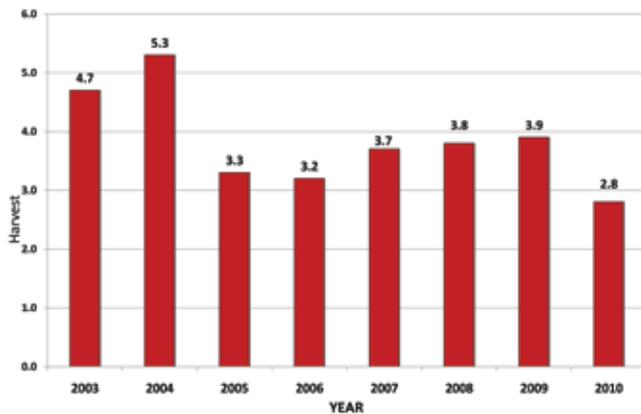


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Region 4 turkey hunters harvested 2.8 gobblers per 100 hours of hunting in 2010 (*Figure 2*) which was down from 2009. 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 lower than 2009.

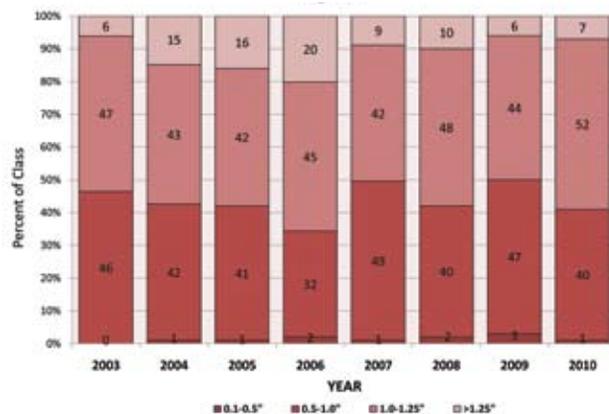
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

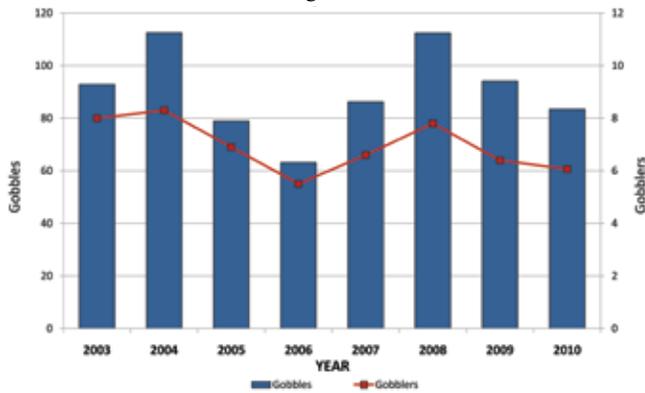


Gobbling Activity

Gobbling activity for Southwest Mississippi declined in 2010 (*Figure 4*) as hunters heard 6.1 gobblers and 83.4 gobbles 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 week 5 of the season (*Figure 5*).

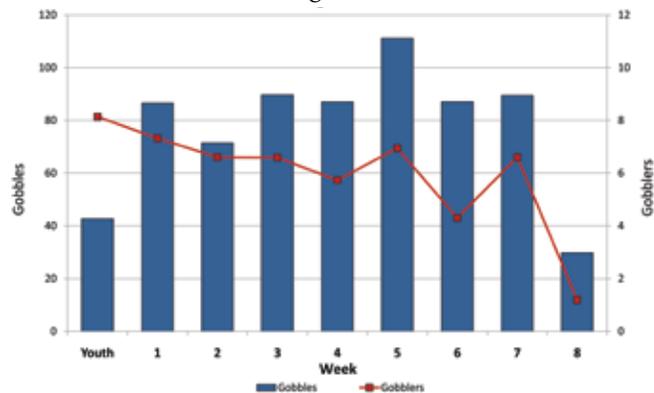
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

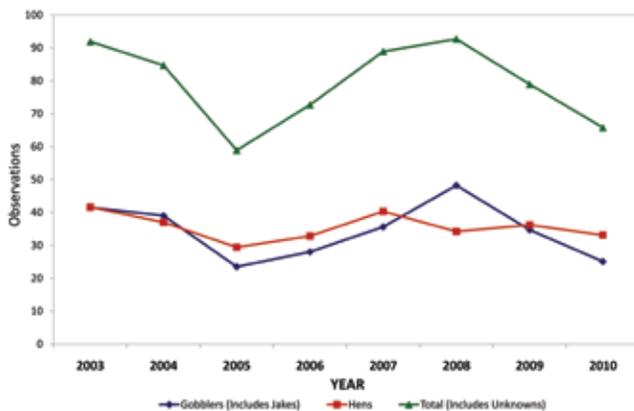


Turkey Observations

Turkey hunters observed 65.8 turkeys per 100 hours of hunting in 2010 (*Figure 6*) which was a decrease from 2009. Hunters observed 9.4 jakes per 100 hours hunting (*Figure 7*) which was a lower than the 14.2 observed in 2009.

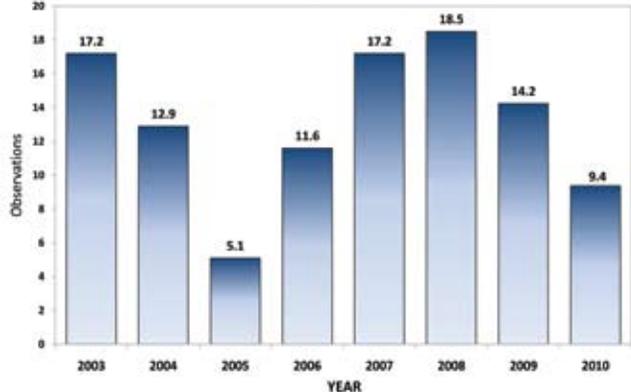
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7



2011 Season Forecast

The 2009 hatch in Region 4, while down from 2008, was still the best in the state at 1.52 poults per total hens, and areas west of I-55 exhibited the highest reproduction. Overall jake observations during the 2010 season declined, but in general, this region of the State has become a consistent producer over the past several years, and hunter success rates in Southwest Mississippi should remain among the best in the State.

Turkey Region 5

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

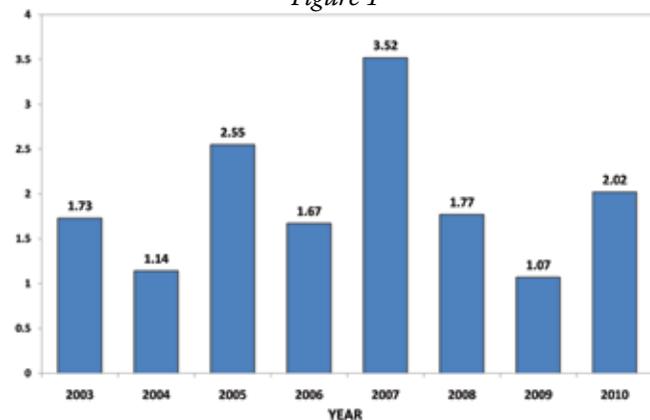


Reproduction

A total of 2.02 poults were observed per hen during the 2010 brood survey (*Figure 1*), which was up from 2009 in Region 5. A total of 43% of the hens observed successfully reproduced, and average brood size was 4.67 poults.

Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

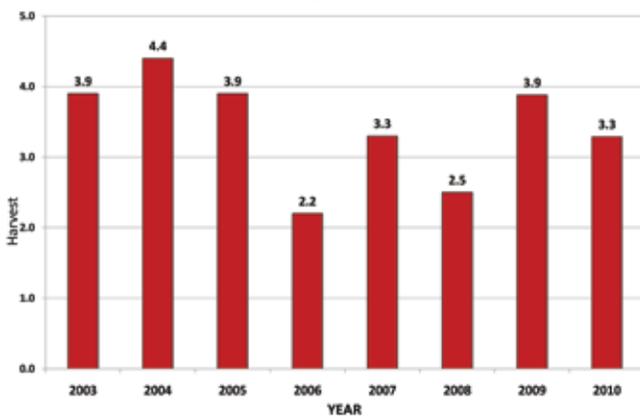


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Region 5 hunters harvested 3.3 gobblers per 100 hours of hunting in 2010 (*Figure 2*) which was down from 2009. 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*).

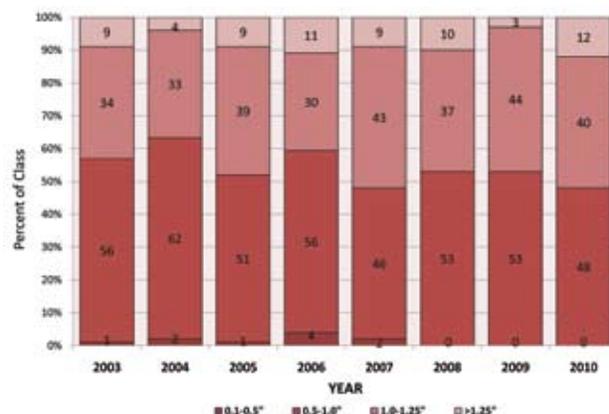
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

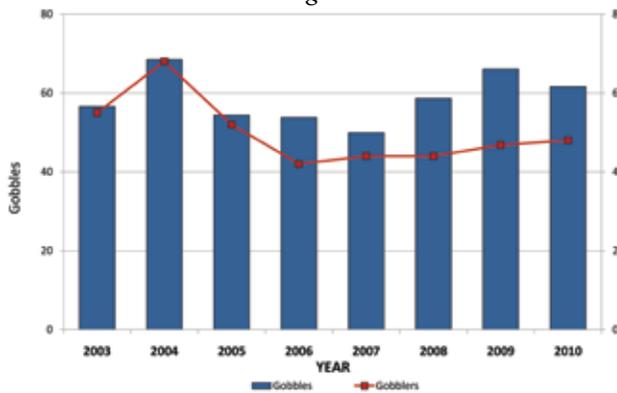


Gobbling Activity

During 2010, hunters in this region heard 4.8 gobblers and 61.6 gobbles per 10 hours, which was similar to 2009 (Figure 4). The number of gobblers heard peaked during youth week, while the number of gobbles heard was highest in weeks 3 and 5 (Figure 5).

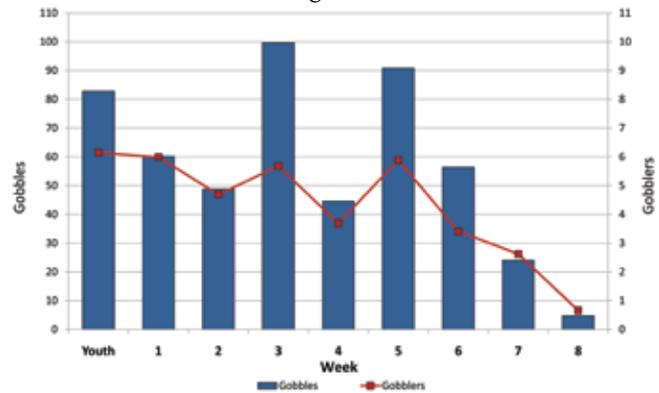
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

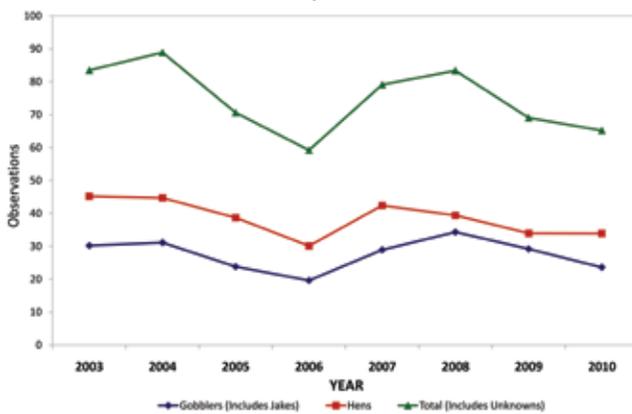


Turkey Observations

Total turkey observations decreased slightly in 2010 to 65.2 birds per 100 hours hunting (Figure 6), and jake observations were 8.1 per 100 hours which was down from 2009 (Figure 7).

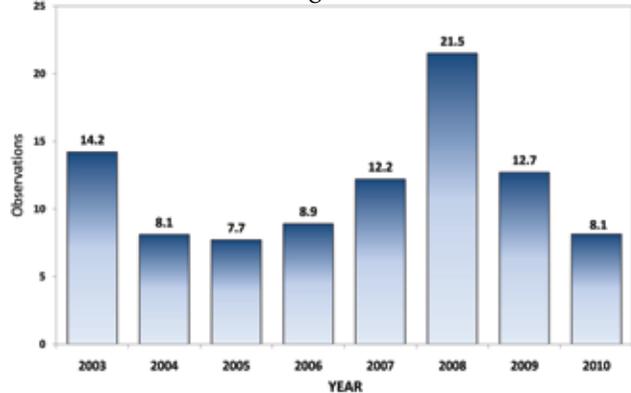
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7



2011 Season Forecast

Like most of the state, turkey reproduction in this region trended downward in 2009. This dip was mirrored by a decline in jakes during the 2010 season. Turkey populations in the Southeastern piney woods have declined since 2008, and while the overall population should be up in 2011, due to a good hatch last summer, hunters should expect success rates to drop this spring as fewer hard gobbling two-year olds will be encountered.

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.

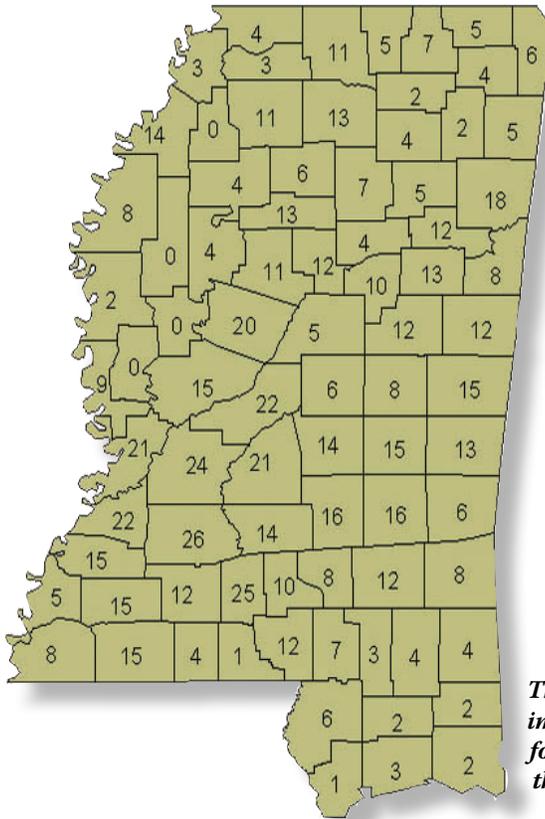


SGHS participants will receive a decal provided by the Mississippi Chapter NWTF.

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 65 or contact one of the MDWFP Turkey Program biologists listed on page i. You can also apply at www.mdwfp.com/turkey. Your efforts



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

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



Steve Gullede

This figure displays the number of participants in each county that collected and returned data for the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey during the 2010 season.

Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey Participant Shotgun Raffle

In an attempt to increase participation in the SGHS, the MDWFP has partnered with the Mississippi Chapter NWTf and the Mississippi Foundation for Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks to conduct a shotgun raffle for survey participants. During 2011, we will raffle 2 shotguns. The first drawing will be open to all hunters who return useable data by May 15th, and the second drawing will be for those hunters who enlist at least one new SGHS participant in 2011.

Scott Edwards



SGHS participant M.L. McKee of Oxford, Mississippi won the SGHS Shotgun Raffle sponsored by the Mississippi Foundation for Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks.

Turkey Trivia

Interesting Facts from the 2010 Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey

Hunter Effort

- Data was collected from 7,056 turkey hunts by 404 SGHS participants.
- A total of 20,517 hours of turkey hunting were recorded in the survey. This was approximately a 15% increase from 2009.
- 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 1,100 individuals that received the SGHS data collection booklet, approximately 37% returned data to the MDWFP.
- Proportionally, the first week of the season had the highest hunting effort. Almost 19% of all hunting effort (total hours hunted) occurred during the first week of the regular season (March 13 – 19). Week 3 (March 27 – April 2) had the second highest amount of participation with 17% of the overall effort.
- Most hunting effort took place during the early morning. Fifty percent of all hours hunted occurred before 8AM. Thirty-two percent of all hunting hours were during the mid-morning between 8AM and 12PM. The remainder of hunting effort, approximately 17%, occurred during the afternoon.
- The average turkey hunt lasted 2 hours and 55 minutes.

Gobbling Activity

- Hunters averaged hearing 5 gobblers and 70 gobbles for every 10 hours hunted.
- Both gobblers and gobbles heard per 10 hours hunted during 2010 were near the 5-year statewide average for those categories.
- Region 4 led the state in both gobblers and gobbles heard per 10 hours hunted.
- Hunters averaged hearing 1.5 gobblers per outing. The maximum number of birds heard was 19 individuals by a hunter in Region 4 on March 15th.
- Both the number of gobblers and total gobbles heard peaked during the 5th week of the season (April 10 – 16) at almost 7 gobblers and 103 gobbles heard per 10 hours hunted. This was the highest amount of statewide gobbling activity recorded within a single week in the 14 year history of the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey.
- Statewide, the highest number of individual gobblers heard per unit of effort for any specific day occurred on opening day, March 13th, on which nearly 10 gobblers were heard per 10 hours hunted. The highest amount of gobbling activity heard per unit of effort for any specific day occurred on April 13th on which over 140 gobbles were heard per 10 hours hunted.
- Afternoon gobbling peaked during the fourth week of the season (April 3 – 9) in which almost 20 gobbles were heard per 10 hours hunted. During that week, afternoon gobbling comprised 10% of the overall daily gobbling activity.

Observations

- For every 10 hours hunted, hunters saw an average of 8 turkeys, including approximately 2 adult gobblers, 4 hens, 1 jake, and 1 unknown.
- Hen observations were highest during Youth week (March 6 – 12) at nearly 9 hens observed per 10 hours hunted. Hen observations during the regular season were highest during opening week (March 13 -19) at almost 6 hens observed per 10 hours hunted.
- Gobbler observations per 10 hours hunted was also highest during the Youth week at nearly 3 gobblers observed per 10 hours hunted. During the regular season, gobbler observations were highest during week 2 (March 20 – 26) at approximately 2 gobblers seen per 10 hours hunted.
- The sex ratio of turkeys observed was 1.5 hens per gobbler. This was a 0.25 hen per gobbler increase in this ratio over 2009, and the trend corresponds well to increases in a similar ratio calculated from the 2009 and 2010 summer turkey observation surveys.

Harvest

- It took nearly 11 hunts for most hunters to harvest a gobbler.
- The average hunt in which a gobbler was harvested lasted 1 hour 56 minutes, which was nearly an hour less than the overall average hunt.
- Harvesting a gobbler took the least amount of time during the Youth week, in which the average successful hunt only lasted 1 hour 21 minutes.
- Harvest per unit of effort was highest during the final week of the season, in which approximately 4 gobblers were harvested per 100 hours hunted. Harvest per unit of effort was lowest during the Youth week in which only 1 gobbler was harvested per 100 hours hunted.
- The highest harvest per unit of effort for any particular day occurred on the final day of the season, May 2nd.
- Harvest was proportionally highest during the opening week of the season, in which 19% of the total birds harvested were taken. Week 3 (March 27 – April 2) had the second highest proportion of harvest and accounted for 18% of all gobblers taken.
- Proportionally, nearly 71% of the overall harvest occurred between daylight and 8AM. Almost 13% of the overall harvest occurred from 8AM until Noon, and the remainder of the harvest, 16%, occurred from Noon until fly-up.
- Harvest per unit of effort was highest during the early morning. Hunters averaged harvesting approximately 5 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 almost 4 gobbler harvests per 100 hours hunted. The mid-morning hours of 8AM – Noon where 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 3 in which hunters averaged 3.8 gobblers bagged per 100 hours hunted.
- Statewide, the top 5 counties for harvest per unit of effort were all located within the East-Central portion of the state and included Jasper, Lauderdale, Neshoba, Smith, and Winston (based on counties with at least 250 total hours recorded in the SGHS).

Gobbler Characteristics

- Two-year-old gobblers represented a greater proportion of the harvest than any other age class, accounting for 48% of the overall harvest.
- Less than 1 bird out of every 10 harvested sported spurs ≥ 1.25 inches.
- The average spur length for adult gobblers was slightly less than 1 inch. The longest spur reported was nearly 1.69 inches.
- Approximately 7% of gobblers had beards ≥ 11 inches.
- The average beard length for adult gobblers was approximately 9.6 inches. The longest beard reported tallied 12.5 inches.
- Approximately 3% of gobblers were reported as missing one or both spurs.
- Older, “limb hanger” birds tended to be taken later in the season. The median date of harvest for gobblers with spurs ≥ 1.25 inches was April 19th, which was nearly two and a half weeks later than the median date of harvest for all other gobblers.

Steve Gullledge





Steve Gulledge

MAGNOLIA STATE TURKEY TALK



MISSISSIPPI CHAPTER NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION

President's Letter

THE MISSISSIPPI CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION IS TRULY A MAGNIFICENT organization. It is a true non-profit organization that is governed by a group of Board of Directors, who reside throughout the State. The Board meets at least three times per year to discuss and adopt projects to promote the existence of the wild turkey, promote habitat and conservation practices, and to protect our hunting heritage. These Board members do not receive any payment during their term, nor are they reimbursed for their traveling expenses. The Board meetings can be attended by any member of the Mississippi Chapter.

Throughout Mississippi, there are 60 local chapters which have annual Hunting Heritage Superfund Banquets. The purpose of these banquets is to promote membership and to raise revenue through auctions, raffles, and other fundraisers.

The Local Chapter Committee members are also volunteers. These Committee members devote many hours and days to make certain that their banquets are a success.

The Board of Directors have the duty and responsibility to wisely spend the net revenue raised from the local banquets. There are many projects that are submitted to the Board each year, and tough decisions must be made on which projects should be funded.

I want to sincerely thank every NWTF member for being a part of this volunteer team! Together, we can continue to promote membership and increase revenue at local banquets so that we can continue to fund more projects for the benefit of the wild turkey.

I extend a personal invitation to everyone to become a member of the NWTF and attend a local chapter event. If you would like additional information regarding the NWTF, please visit NWTF.org or you may access the Mississippi website at www.nwtfchapter.org/mississippichapter.

Sincerely,

Scott Cumbest, President
Mississippi Chapter, NWTF

A Message from Your Regional Biologist

GREETINGS, MISSISSIPPI NWTF VOLUNTEERS AND TURKEY HUNTERS! Anticipation of another spring season is approaching fast. Like many of you, I am looking forward to opening day and hunting my favorite game species. What a great year we had for support of the wild turkey in Mississippi! Working with my good friends Dave Godwin and Adam Butler (turkey biologists with the MDWFP), other agency professionals, the Mississippi Chapter NWTF Board of Directors, and many volunteers, we have accomplished so much to help the turkey in our state.

From what I am hearing, I have reason to be optimistic about the abundance of turkeys recruited from our hatch last spring. If weather cooperates, we should all enjoy our hunting this spring. As I have visited many state WMAs, the U.S. Forest Service Ranger Districts, and spoken to a lot of private landowners, everyone is talking about seeing young turkeys! That is a good indication that mother nature provided better conditions last spring and summer to add to our existing turkey population.

During the last year, the Mississippi Chapter of NWTF collaborated with many of our partners such as the Mississippi Forestry Commission, Mississippi Wildlife Federation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Natural Resource Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Resource Council & Development, and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to address many conservation issues facing our state in the management of our wildlife resources.

Your Mississippi Chapter of NWTF State Board is managing and leveraging chapter dollars raised at the NWTF Super Fund Banquets better than ever by allocating dollars for habitat projects, high school scholarships, youth hunts, turkey rewards, and various education events throughout the state. During 2010, nearly \$65,000 was spent in Mississippi and the Chapter approved a 2011 budget of approximately \$81,000 for related conservation activities.

During 2010, seven Super Fund projects were approved for state WMAs in addition to funding assistance for a research project with Mississippi State University on restoring turkeys to Delta habitats. We partnered with the USFS on the Chickasawhay Ranger District with an ongoing \$100,000 "Stewardship Agreement" on the Mason Creek WMA. Our Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Deer Hunt, funded in part by a Youth Participation Initiative grant from the MDWFP, was again a huge success in many locations across the state with 80 deer being taken. Our State Chapter continues to support local and state youth college scholarships each year and numerous outreach and education programs.

The Mississippi State Chapter is also proud to announce that more than one-half million dollars will be available through the NWTF National Projects and multiple partners such as NRCS, USFWS, MDWFP, Boy Scouts of America, USFS, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to provide funding for on-the-ground projects, on both public and private lands. Habitat projects on state and federal land, landowner field days, programs for youth, and longleaf pine restoration will be the highlights for 2011 work in Mississippi.

We have a lot going on that should make you proud! As responsible as our Mississippi State Board is with funds generated from the NWTF banquets, without your support each year at our events and the time many of you voluntarily provide, the NWTF and all its programs could not function.

It is very enjoyable to work with professionals from all our partner agencies, the Mississippi Chapter Board, and the volunteers I have met over the years. Our common passion is love for the wild turkey and the friendships born through this passion will last for a lifetime. I wish all of you lots of gobbling this spring wherever you pursue this crafty bird!

Luke D. Lewis
NWTF Regional Biologist



Mississippi Chapter NWTf: 2010 Project Highlights

Youth Programs

NWTF



Local chapters hosted 5 JAKES Events.

State & Local Scholarships

Steve Gulleddge



Twenty-five \$250 scholarships were awarded to graduating high school seniors by local chapters and one \$2000 scholarship was awarded a state winner.

Wheelin' Sportsmen & Women in the Outdoors

Cliff White Chapter



Hosted 93 youngsters at State Deer Hunt for Youth with Disabilities & Cliff White Chapter Events.

Hosted one Women in the Outdoors Event.



NWTF

Hunting Heritage

Contributed \$3,500 to:

- 4-H Shooting Sports
- USSA
- Hunting Heritage Fund

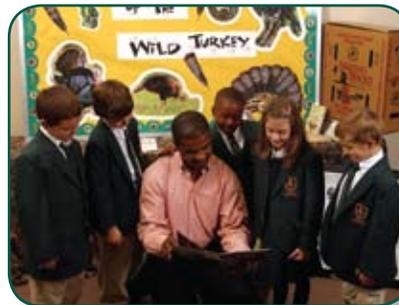
Education & Information

NWTF



Contributed \$5,000 to National Archery in the Schools Program

NWTF



"Wild About Turkeys" Education Boxes: Provided award winning boxes for local schools and teachers attending the Teacher Conservation Workshop.

Steve Gulleddge



Hosted booth at the Wildlife Extravaganza

Steve Gulleddge



Supported one Wild Turkey Woodlands Field Days for Private landowners and the public.

Education & Information (cont'd)

Steve Gulleedge



- Produced & distributed 8,500 2009 MS Chapter Update brochures.
- Maintained MCNWTF website, www.nwtfchapter.org/mississippichapter

MDWFP



Provide funding for turkey trapping & radio tagging in Miss. Delta

Public Land Habitat Enhancement

MDWFP



Provide funding for understory removal on Malmaison WMA

- Purchased chemical sprayer for Tuscumbia WMA
- Purchased herbicide for Marion County WMA for cogon grass control
- Purchased herbicide treatment for invasive species control on Theodore A. Mars WMA

MDWFP



Purchased prescribed burn equipment for Charles Ray Nix WMA

Private Land Habitat Enhancement

Steve Gulleedge



- The Fall Seed Subsidy Programs provided wildlife seed at a reduced cost for Miss. NWTF members to plant openings.
- Mississippi's Acorns for Wildlife Initiative. Improves habitat for wild turkeys, deer & other species.

Law Enforcement Projects

Steve Gulleedge



Purchased & distributed reward signs

- Made 4 reward payments
- Made Conservation Officer of the Year Awards

Other Projects

- *NWTF Regional Biologist support*
- *Attended Commission on Wildlife meetings*
- *Served on board of Mississippi Wildlife Federation*
- *Provided funding for decals for Miss. Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey*

Working for the Wild Turkey!

The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) supports scientific wildlife management on public, private and corporate lands as well as wild turkey hunting as a traditional North American sport. To that end, NWTF volunteers in Mississippi and their local chapters hosted 65 Hunting Heritage Super Fund banquets in 2010 to raise money for the NWTF.



MDWFP

Where does the money go?

Money generated at these banquets is used at the national, state, and local levels for projects that directly or indirectly benefit wild turkeys and turkey hunting. Each state's Hunting Heritage Super Fund dollars are used on conservation and education projects within that state. Nationally, more than \$306 million dollars have been spent to uphold hunting tradi-



Steve Gullede



Steve Gullede

tions and conserve more than 13.9 million acres of wildlife habitat. In addition to state Super Fund dollars, some of the money raised at banquets is spent on projects that have national or regional significance such as research grants, national outreach programs, and regional habitat improvement projects.

Mississippi Chapter NWTF 2010 Hunting Heritage Super Fund Expenditures

Mississippi Chapter Hunting Heritage Super Fund expenditures have totaled **\$1,561,949** since 1991, which is when our non-profit organization began spending money raised in the state on projects for wild turkey conservation and preservation of the turkey hunting tradition. In 2010 that figure was **\$64,739!**

Listed below are project categories for 2010 and the amount spent on each.

<u>Project</u>	<u>Expenditure (%)</u>
Habitat Enhancement on public & private lands	\$17,107 (27%)
Education & Information	\$14,096 (22%)
JAKES Programs, & Scholarships	\$13,750 (21%)
Law Enforcement	\$536 (1%)
Other	
NWTF Biologist.....	\$10,000 (15%)
WITO/Wheelin' Sports Youth	\$5,250 (8%)
Hunting Heritage Programs	
4-H Shooting, USSA, & HHF	\$4,000 (6%)
2010 TOTAL	\$64,739
SINCE 1991	\$1,561,949

How does the Super Fund Work?

Each state chapter has established a Hunting Heritage Super Fund Projects Committee to initiate, develop, and approve Super Fund Projects. In MS, the committee consists of MD-WFP wildlife biologists, MCNWTF officers, NWTF Regional Directors, and NWTF Regional Wildlife Biologist. Projects may be recommended by local chapters, state or federal agencies, or individual NWTF members. Projects that are approved by the committee are prioritized & presented to the MCNWTF board for final approval.

Information Compiled by Steve Gullede.

2010 NWTF Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Hunt a Huge Success!

THE MISSISSIPPI CHAPTER OF NWTF HELD ITS most recent Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Deer hunt on November 12-14, 2010. This annual event is based out of Bass Pro Shop in Pearl and can only take place with the many volunteers that give of their property, talents, and time. Wheelin' Sportsmen is an outreach program of the National Wild Turkey Federation and offers outdoor recreational opportunities to people with disabilities.

The youth deer hunt is in its 5th year and has touched the lives of more than 300 youth and their families. The hunt is a huge undertaking for the committee members and volunteers involved, with many hours of meetings and boots-on-the-ground hard work. Joe Wood, Regional Director for NWTF and hunt founder/coordinator, said he is glad to see that the hunt has been accepted by the outdoor community and thanks all of the businesses and people that make this event possible.

Each year, participants were welcomed to Bass Pro Shops with banners flying and many activities to make the event special. After the Friday evening check in and a trip to the Magnolia Pistol and Rifle Club to get a safety briefing and sight-in rifles, the participants were treated to a special banquet at Trustmark Park, home of the Mississippi Braves minor league baseball team. The opening banquet is a great time of fellowship for hunt participants and families, as this may be the only time the entire group is together and everyone enjoyed a great meal provided by Outback Steakhouse. A special thank you goes out to Ben Jones for coordinating the meals for the weekend.

At the banquet, each hunt participant received a soft sided cooler full of prizes provided by Bass Pro Shop, Mississippi Braves, Primos Game Calls, M&M Graffix, Preston Pitman Game Calls, Wildlife Energy Drinks, B and J Distributing, and many other vendors. The evening ended with participants connecting with their hunt guide for the weekend which included



A couple of bucks from Belle Island hunting club.



Mark Wallace holds the rack of Trey Ordoyne while Dan Robinson and Bill Poole get the story on his successful hunt.



Dan Robinson gets the full story from hunt participant Matthew Johnson about his hunt with Shane Easterling with Dogwood Outdoors.

Jimmy Primos takes a few minutes and looks over Hannah Graham's pictures from her weekend.



Destin Ware being interviewed by Mark Wallace at Sunday morning service.

over 45 hunting lodges and properties throughout central Mississippi.

The 2010 hunt hosted over 80 hunters ranging from the ages 6-17 years old. To accommodate this amount of hunters along with their families takes a virtual army of volunteers. Over 200 volunteers gave their entire weekend to make the hunt a success and help the 80 hunters harvest a total of 58 deer!

Those participating in the activities in Jackson were not the only ones affiliated with the hunt. Simultaneously on Friday night, there were satellite events and hunts held in Laurel, Natchez, and DeKalb. These satellite hunts allow participants that cannot make the trip to Jackson the opportunity to be a part of the special hunt weekend. Each satellite host created their own dinner and their participants received the same prize bags as the Jackson participants.

This special weekend can only happen with the blessings of the Mississippi legislature and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks. This special designated weekend is only granted for the NWTF hunt participants and affiliates. The MDWFP really knocked it out of Trustmark Park this year, so to speak!

Chad Dacus, MDWFP Deer Program Coordinator, and his team not only coordinated landowner participation, but also undertook the task of setting up all participant entries via the MDWFP web site. Having the ability for hunt participants to go online and register was a valuable addition that not only streamlined the process but gave hunt coordinators the ability to electronically file and catalog each hunter. Joe Wood, Regional Director for NWTF, said, "With the hunt growing every year, we have to work smarter and the staff of the MDWFP definitely covered all the bases this year and should be highly commended for their hard work."

After hunting all day Saturday, the weekend culminated Sunday afternoon with a testimony time giving every hunt participant a chance to take the microphone and tell about their weekend. Dogwood Outdoor Ministries wrapped up the service as only they can with a funny but poignant message. After the testimonies and church services, participants were treated to a pizza and ice cream party sponsored by Mazzio's Pizza and Yarnell's Ice Cream.

For more information on the annual Wheelin' Sportsman youth deer hunt, contact Joe Wood at 601-613-8675. For more information about NWTF's Mississippi Chapter of Wheelin' Sportsmen, contact Wheelin' Sportsmen State Coordinator Mark Wallace at 601-772-9132.



Preston Pittman (left), Adam Whiteley (hunt participant) and Jimmy Primos discuss how good of a guide Preston was for Adam.



Jimmy Primos has a little fun with Adam Whiteley as he tries to convince Adam to say he is a better guide than Preston Pittman.



Taylor Sheppard is all smiles talking about her hunt with Dan Robinson.

Cliff White Chapter Participates in 2010 NWTF Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Hunt



Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Hunt Participants at Adventure Lodge near Laurel, MS.

THE CLIFF WHITE CHAPTER PARTICIPATED IN the 2010 NWTF Wheelin' Sportsmen 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 second year for this hunt, which was again held at Adventure Lake near Laurel.

Hunt Coordinator, Tommy Walters, welcomed thirteen hunters, their families, and a host of volunteers to the lodge at Adventure Lake shortly before lunch on Friday, November 12, 2010. 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 nine hunters being successful on the morning and/or evening hunts. When not hunting, most of the youngsters kept busy fishing for monster hybrid bream in the waters of Adventure Lake. There were also some very nice bass caught, and a few crappie. By the end of the day, there were a lot of tired hunters and volunteers. After supper, more entertainment followed around the campfire with music and just good 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 as hunters 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, and Jeremy Walters.

A very special thank you is extended to the owners of Adventure Lake, Jay Fenton and Neil Scrimshire, as well as their families. Without their generosity and open hearts, this event could not have happened. Thank you is not enough for all of the volunteers. From the organizers, guides, cooks, musicians, donors, and just overall general 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

Field Day at Red Creek WMA Excites Landowners

By Luke Lewis, Regional NWTf Biologist

WHEN IT COMES TO WILDLIFE BIOLOGISTS and property landowners, nothing compares to a day in the field, talking turkey and planning ways to improve habitat! One such day was September 28, 2010, on Red Creek WMA in southeast Mississippi. Plans for this event came together during the summer from a committee of partners from the Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Districts (George, Harrison, and Stone Counties), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, MDWFP, Mississippi Chapter of NWTf, Mississippi Coastal Plains of RC&D, and Natural Resource Conservation Service.

The planning committee decided to place the day's emphasis on longleaf pine restoration and management. The field day was a great success because of the professionals involved and nearly 100 people attended with 80 landowners touring the WMA. Topics covered included restoring longleaf pine, prescribed burning, managing native habitat, supplemental food plots, controlling invasive plant species, and cost-share assistance programs related to longleaf pine.

Representing the NWTf Mississippi State Board at the event were Scott Cumbest, Mississippi Chapter President, Wayne Smith, Mississippi Chapter Vice President, and Billy Ray Young, State Board Member and President of the Strong River Chapter, along with Joe Wood, NWTf Regional Di-

rector. President Cumbest noted, "You could feel the electricity and excitement of fellow turkey hunters and landowners as they began to see how turkeys and longleaf management was a match made in Heaven!"

Partnership events like this allow the Mississippi Chapter of NWTf to educate landowners in the various facets of land management for wild turkeys. I am happy to say the Mississippi State Board strongly supports these events. As we host different field days around the state, landowners will be given the chance to learn about and implement many of the cost-share programs available, or to just simply emulate some of the practices suggested by highly-regarded professionals from around the state.



A group of landowners move to one of five tour stops on Red Creek WMA.



MDWFP Turkey Biologist Adam Butler addressing a group of landowners at the Red Creek WMA Field Day.

Mississippi's Chickasawhay Ranger District Receives NWTF National Award

Submitted by Luke Lewis, Regional Biologist

THE NWTF MAKING TRACKS AWARD RECOGNIZES outstanding people and projects that incorporate conservation education, partnerships, and active wild turkey management into ecosystem management programs. Eligible projects significantly improve habitat for the wild turkey and other wildlife and help to accomplish the National Wild Turkey Federation mission.

The Chickasawhay Ranger District received the Group Habitat Management Projects Award. This award is presented to the project that best incorporates active wild turkey management into the U.S. Forest Service's ecosystem management and that significantly improves wild turkey habitat.

The District's vision had far reaching effects, not only for the National Forests in Mississippi (NFMS), but also for the agency as a whole during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Following the storm's devastation, the NFMS utilized partnerships developed through the Chickasawhay Ranger District Ecosystem Restoration Stewardship Project to produce an environmental assessment for the removal of hazardous fuels on the De Soto National Forest. During the review of Region 8's hurricane recovery efforts, U.S. Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth stated, "In Mississippi, the trust and creditability that employees had developed before the event proved to be invaluable in responding to the event."

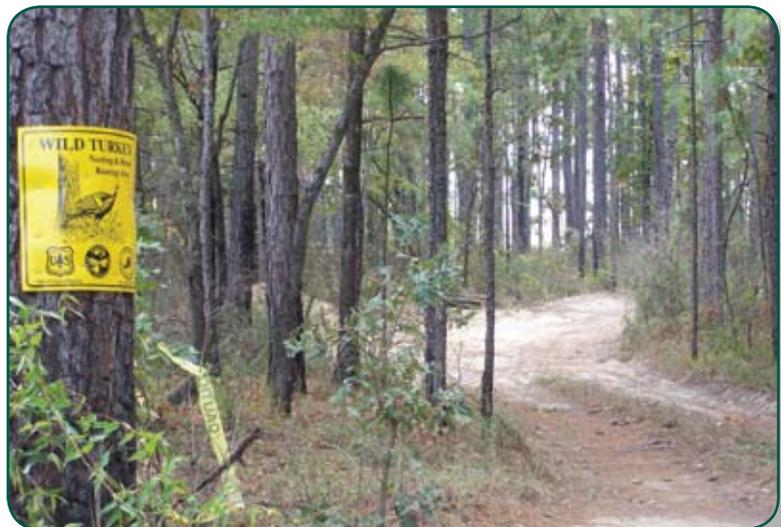
To date the Chickasawhay Ranger District has accomplished:

- 1,650 acres of commercial thinning (415 acres of which was first thinning)
- 2,650 acres of midstory reduction
- 41 acres of noxious weed eradication
- 11.7 million board feet of timber sold
- \$2.4 million of residual receipts produced (to be used for habitat enhancement in NFMS)

Integrating resource accomplishments within resource timber contracts requires teamwork from all employees on the district. This project has instilled a great sense of pride among district personnel and the public because they were able to accomplish work in a timely manner and complete a job the public wanted. By means of stewardship contracting, the district is now able to address natural resource priorities with fewer budgetary constraints.



Chickasawhay Ranger District Staff receiving the NWTF Making Tracks National Award from the NWTF (Left to Right): Robert E. Lee, District Ranger, Andy Barwick Stewardship Project Manager, Jay McClain, Forester, Jeff Gainey, MS Forest Service Recreation Manager.



Access road to timber harvest area and wildlife opening on the Mason Creek WMA Stewardship Agreement project.



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. For a complete listing of records, visit the Agency's website at www.mdwfp.com/turkey.



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	139.50	5	46.50	4/29/2008	Simpson	Bobby Tebo
6	139.26	8	52.69	3/23/1998	Scott	Richard Latham
7	137.13	6	51.69	3/24/2009	Tishomingo	Lee Oaks
8	135.72	9	52.86	4/14/2005	Tishomingo	Jerry Smith
9	134.98	5	45.50	3/24/2001	Alcorn	Mike Suiter
10	131.89	5	45.94	4/21/2001	Noxubee	Will Austin
11	130.25	5	44.25	3/24/1989	Hinds	Robbie Barlow
12	128.12	5	46.63	4/6/2008	Jefferson	Wayne Ponder II
13	126.04	5	43.07	4/14/2006	Warren	Kenneth Grogan, IV
14	125.75	5	42.38	4/3/1995	Calhoun	Walter Mitchell
15	125.69	4	38.75	4/11/1986	Noxubee	Robert E. Persons
16	124.28	6	43.14	3/15/2006	Jefferson	Bobby Hughes
17	122.86	6	43.63	3/22/2000	Tishomingo	Jeff Stephens
18	122.64	7	41.59	3/28/2003	Marion	Wade McKenzie
19	122.25	6	41.56	3/9/2008	Adams	Brandon Hebert
20	121.38	7	42.25	4/29/1989	Coahoma	Harold C. Wall

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	13.75	3/30/2002	Covington	Owen Cole
	13.75	3/27/2003	Lawrence	W.J. "Wild Bill" Smith
12	13.63	4/9/2004	Leake	Brian Terrell
13	13.50	4/10/2001	Attala	James C. Cain
14	13.06	3/25/2009	Neshoba	Tim Warren
15	13.00	4/19/1997	Neshoba	Darron Smith
	13.00	4/24/2003	Benton	Steve King
	13.00	4/8/2001	Holmes	Richard Wiman

Longest Spurs

Rank	Spur Length	Date Harvested	County Harvested	Hunter
1	1.880	4/16/2007	Lauderdale	Dr. Don E. Marascalco
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	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

D. Shumaker



Don Shumaker harvested this non-typical trophy in Pontotoc County during the 2010 spring season.

Jim Willcutt



Legally harvested Mississippi turkeys may be submitted for the Mississippi Turkey Records Program.

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

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 Gullledge

FALL TURKEY HUNTING IN MISSISSIPPI

Steve Gulledege



Fall Turkey Hunting in Mississippi

DURING 2010, 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, 2010, and included the following counties or portion of counties, on private lands with a minimum of 100 acres, and 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.

At printing time for this report, information was still being summarized for the 2010 fall season. During the 2009 fall turkey season, a total of 302 tags were issued for 133 properties. A total of 14 turkeys were reported harvested during the 2009 fall season (7 hens, 1 jake, and 6 adult gobblers). A total of 156 hunters actually participated in fall hunting during 2009, and logged 560 days of hunter-effort. Of participating hunters, 34% said that this was their first experience with fall turkey hunting. A total of 99% of the participating hunters said they would participate in the future if fall turkey hunting opportunity was available, and 91% of these hunters thought the MDWFP should expand this opportunity. When asked about their level of satisfaction with the fall hunting opportunity, the average participating hunter was very satisfied (Average rank = 1.3, with 1 = highly satisfied, and 5 = strongly dissatisfied). The MDWFP will continue to evaluate fall turkey hunting, with the goal of deciding if this is a recreational opportunity we want to make available within more regions of the Magnolia State.



Steve Gulledge

WILD TURKEY RESEARCH IN MISSISSIPPI

Research Evaluates Wild Turkey Restoration Efforts in the Mississippi Delta

By Dave Godwin, MDWFP,
Dr. Guiming Wang, and Dr. Jerrold Belant, MSU

Turkeys in the Delta?

THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA REPRESENTS THE LAST REGION OF THE MAGNOLIA STATE WITH LARGE ACREAGES not inhabited by wild turkeys. Extensive clearing of hardwood forests created expansive agricultural fields throughout much of the Delta region, often resulting in relatively poor habitat for many wildlife species, including wild turkeys. While larger forested blocks, such as Delta National Forest, and some smaller tracts with mature woods, have supported turkey populations for many years, much of the interior Delta has been unsuitable habitat. Federal conservation programs, such as the Wetland Reserve Program and the Conservation Reserve Program, have restored thousands of retired agricultural lands into wildlife habitat by planting hardwood trees and native grasses. Thus, many biologists and sportsmen have asked if more Delta areas might now be suitable for wild turkey restoration. During the past year, a cooperative research project, implemented by the MDWFP and Mississippi State University, has explored this very question, and has started to evaluate the success of wild turkey restoration in multiple areas within the Mississippi Delta.



Dave Godwin releases a wild turkey hen on a Delta study area.

Where to Release Turkeys?

We considered several factors while trying to identify potential study areas for releasing turkeys. First, we reviewed a model developed by the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) that identified potential turkey habitat in the Mississippi Delta by proximity to established, forested stands. Second, we solicited “expert opinion” information on potential turkey habitat from MDWFP and Delta Wildlife personnel who work within the Delta. Third, these two turkey habitat assessments were considered together to determine areas of greatest potential. Habitat areas adjacent to the Batture and Loess Hills, and all habitats already occupied by turkey populations were excluded from consideration. Researchers used this information to model potential Delta habitat suitability for turkey restoration.

A total of three study areas were selected for turkey release. These areas range in size from 10,000 to 20,000 acres, and are located in Quitman and Coahoma Counties in the North Delta. Study areas are characterized by a mix of mature woods, young hardwood reforestation stands (up to 20+ years old), and active agricultural fields. Based on all factors considered, researchers considered these three landscapes to represent the highest potential for turkey restoration success in the interior Delta.

Bring on the Turkeys!

The MDWFP took the lead role in trapping turkeys for this research project. During January and February 2009, a total of 107 birds were trapped on private and public lands statewide. During January and February, 2010, an additional 45 birds were added to the study. We captured turkeys using cannon nets and rocket boxes, and then transported them in specially-designed turkey transport boxes provided by the NWTf. Each bird was fitted with a radio transmitter, and released on the study areas.

Following the release of these turkeys, students from MSU have actively monitored them using radio-telemetry equipment. The students locate each turkey by listening for the unique frequency from each radio transmitter. Students record data on locations of each turkey and determine if each bird is active or not. If we suspect that a turkey is not alive, we then try to make a visual observation of the bird to determine its status. Data from this study will help us determine survival rates, movements, home range size, and reproductive success of released turkeys.

Project Status

To date, mortality of radio-tagged turkeys has been relatively high during this study, and reproduction has been relatively low. However, we have documented some successful reproduction, and researchers are learning a great deal from the released birds. During the first 2 years, a total of 7 broods were produced (1 in 2009, and 6 in 2010). As of February 2011, 61 wild turkeys were known to be on the study areas, including radio-tagged turkeys and their offspring. Researchers will continue to monitor these birds and learn more about their movements, survival rates, and the types of cover they use for nesting, brood-rearing, feeding, and loafing.

The ultimate goal of this study is to predict where turkey restoration efforts can be successful based on available, suitable habitat. Rather than us making educated guesses, we want to let the turkeys tell us what should be considered suitable habitat in the Mississippi Delta. Once we know in which types of habitat turkeys can survive, we can use aerial photography to start identifying other landscapes that might be suitable for restoration. We should also be able to make predictions on how long it might take landscapes with high acreages of very young hardwood stands to mature into suitable turkey habitat.

This project is a significant undertaking, and is only possible due to the hard work of many people. Thanks are certainly due to all MDWFP and MSU personnel who worked long hours making this project possible. Private landowners throughout Mississippi have graciously allowed us to trap turkeys on their property for use in this study. Finally, contributions from Delta Wildlife, NWTF, local landowners, and other partners have made this project possible. As we continue to move forward with this study, we will learn more about restoring wild turkeys to the Mississippi Delta. For more information on this study, visit <http://home.mdwfp.com/research>.



Justin Thayer

Adam Butler and Josh Moree capture a wild turkey hen to be released on a Delta study area.



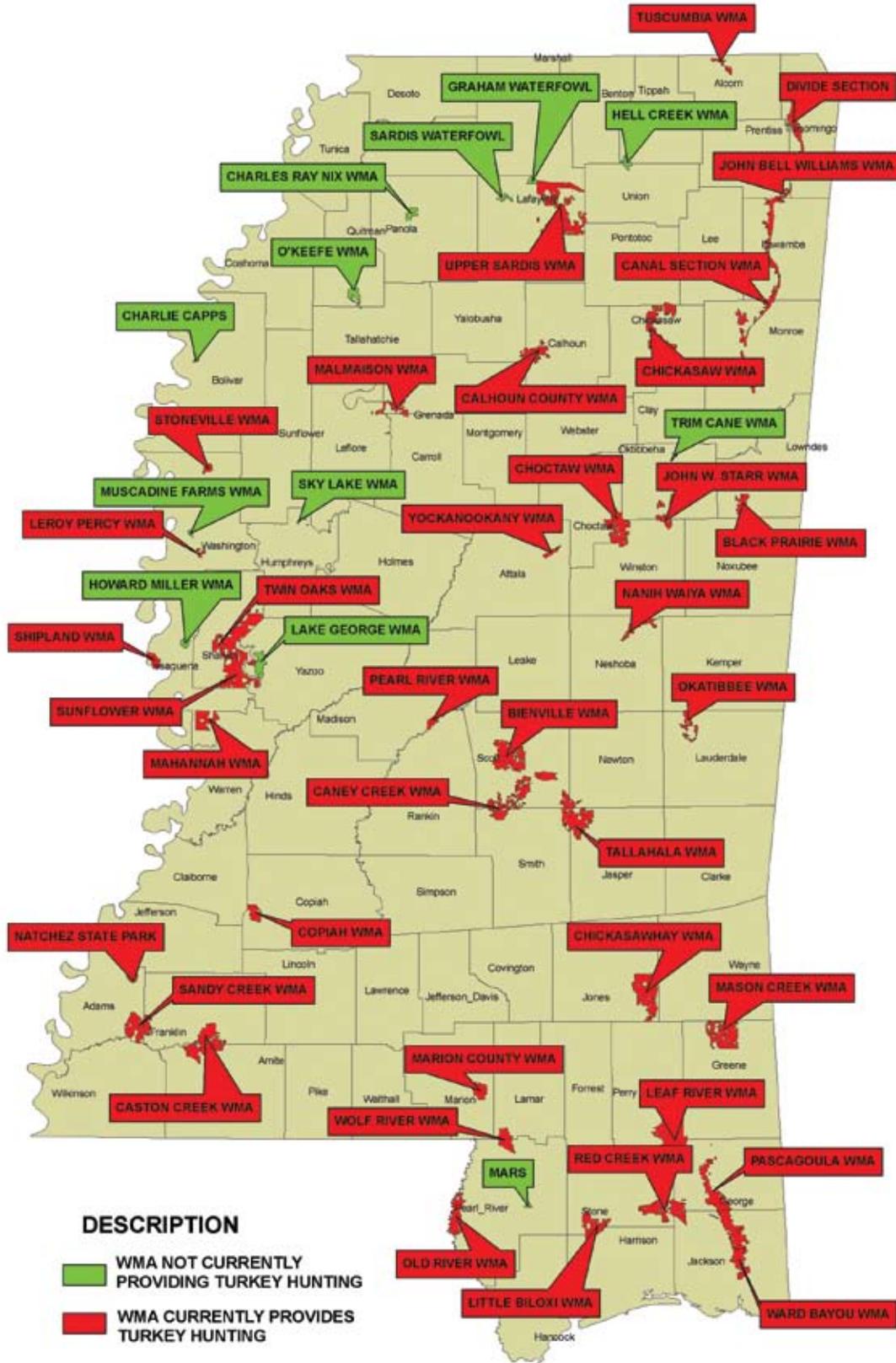
Steve Gulleledge

Radio-tagged hens are helping researchers better identify suitable brood rearing habitat in the Delta.



Steve Gulledge

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS



Wildlife Management Areas

Offering turkey hunting opportunities near you!

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

Bienville WMA

By Scott Baker, 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 2010 turkey season, Bienville WMA accrued 725 hunter-days, and 33 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Bienville WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-537-3555.

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 2 hunters are selected for each hunt. During the 2010 season, Black Prairie WMA accrued 2 hunter-days of hunting, and 1 harvested bird was reported. For more information on Black Prairie WMA, contact the Jackson Office at 601-432-2199.

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. Some mature hardwoods exist along steep slopes and minor drains. Forest stands on the area are corporately owned and managed. Permanent openings are managed by MDWFP personnel to provide habitat for wild turkeys and other species of wildlife. Calhoun County WMA offers an early spring gobbler season to youth hunters in addition to the regular spring gobbler season which is open to all hunters. During 2010, 10 gobblers were harvested on this WMA during 187 hunter-days of effort. For more information about Calhoun County WMA, contact the area manager at 662-628-6328.

Canal Section and John Bell Williams WMAs

By Amy C. Blaylock, 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 and offers good turkey hunting. Both areas have numerous openings in the form of food plots, permanent openings, and maintained levees which attract turkeys.

During the 2010 season, these two WMAs reported 58 hunter-days during the youth week and 1,553 hunter-days during the regular season for a total of 1,611 days. There were 51 birds harvested during regular season. This was an increase from the 24 total birds harvested in 2009. For more information on these WMAs, contact the WMA manager at 662-862-2723.

Caney Creek WMA

By Scott Baker, 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 2010 turkey season, Caney Creek WMA accrued 923 hunter-days, and 40 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Caney Creek WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-537-3555.

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.

During the 2010 turkey season, Caston Creek WMA accrued 823 hunter-days, and 25 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Caston Creek WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-384-3606.

Chickasaw WMA

By Amy C. Blaylock, 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 various age class 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 using thinning and prescribed burning. Chickasaw WMA offers an early spring gobbler season to youth hunters in addition to the regular spring gobbler season. During spring 2010, 42 gobblers were harvested on Chickasaw WMA during 1,029 hunter-days of effort. This was an increase from the 23 gobblers harvested during the 2009 season. For more information on this WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-447-0141.

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 2010 turkey season, Chickasawhay WMA accrued 1,041 hunter-days, and 27 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Chickasawhay WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-344-0600.

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 hardwood 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 2010, a total of 40 gobblers were harvested on Choctaw WMA during 1,041 hunter-days of effort. This was an increase from the 25 gobblers harvested in 2009. For more information on Choctaw WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-285-6928.

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 poult.

During the 2010 turkey season, Copiah County WMA accrued 506 hunter-days, and 12 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Copiah County WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-277-3636.

Divide Section WMA

By Amy C. Blaylock, 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.

During the 2010 season, Divide Section WMA accrued 872 hunter-days, and 22 harvested birds were reported. These figures represent a slight increase in birds harvested from the 10 harvested in 2009. For more information on Divide Section WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-423-1455.

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 2010, 5 gobblers were harvested during 293 hunter-days of effort which is a decrease from the 15 gobblers harvested in 2009. 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 Area 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 2010 turkey season, Leaf River WMA accrued 1,792 hunter-days, and 33 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Leaf River WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-598-2323.

Leroy Percy WMA

By Jackie Fleeman, WMA Biologist

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

Turkey hunting is by permit only during the first part of turkey season. In the 2010 season, Leroy Percy WMA accrued 0 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 2010 turkey season, Little Biloxi WMA accrued 484 hunter-days, and 6 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Little Biloxi WMA, contact the MDWFP Wildlife Bureau at 601-432-2199.

Mahannah WMA

by Jackie Fleeman, WMA Biologist

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

Turkey hunting is by permit only throughout the entire season. The 2010 season was the second 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. Five hunters harvested no birds. 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 consistently provide abundant fall and winter hard mast. Numerous openings are managed to provide habitat for wild turkeys and other wildlife species. Future forest stand improvements will provide more cover and food for wild turkeys and other wildlife species while improving overall forest health. Malmaison WMA offers an early spring gobbler season to youth hunters. The first two weeks of the regular spring gobbler season are by permit only. After that, Malmaison WMA is open to all during the rest of the season. During 2010, 39 gobblers were harvested during 636 hunter-days of effort. For more information on this WMA, contact the area manager 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 2010 turkey season, Marion County WMA accrued 537 hunter-days, and 3 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Marion County WMA, contact the area 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 2010 turkey season, Mason Creek WMA accrued 745 hunter-days, and 12 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Mason Creek WMA, contact the MDWFP Wildlife Bureau at 601-432-2199.

Nanah Waiya WMA

By Jeff Mangrum, 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 2010 turkey season, extensive and prolonged flooding from the Pearl River negatively impacted turkey hunting on this bottom-land area. A total of 78 hunter-days for the season represented a 34% decrease in effort from the previous year. No birds were harvested. For more information on Nanah Waiya WMA, contact the area headquarters 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 al-

lowed only by special permit through a random drawing held each spring.

These youth hunts resulted in 64 hunter-days and 6 harvested birds for the 2010 turkey season. For more information on Natchez State Park, contact the park office at 601-442-2658.

Okatibbee WMA

by Jeff Mangrum, 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 2010 turkey season, Okatibbee WMA accrued 113 hunter-days, and 2 harvested birds were reported. These figures represent a 31% decrease in hunter effort from the previous year and a decrease of 4 birds. For more information on Okatibbee WMA, contact the area headquarters 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 2010 turkey season, Old River WMA accrued 181 hunter-days, and 11 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Old River WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-772-9024.

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 2008, steps were taken to begin controlling the invasion of cogongrass throughout the WMA.

During the 2010 turkey season, Pascagoula River WMA accrued 1,297 hunter-days, and 41 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Pascagoula River WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-947-6376.

Pearl River WMA

by Stephen Chandler, 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 2010 turkey season, there were 188 hunter-days of turkey hunting with 4 birds harvested. For more information on Pearl River WMA, contact the Central Region Office at 601-859-3421.

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 2010 turkey season, Red Creek WMA accrued 376 hunter-days, and 8 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Red Creek WMA, contact the area 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.

During the 2010 turkey season, Sandy Creek WMA accrued 528 hunter-days, and 11 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Sandy Creek WMA, contact the MDWFP Wildlife Bureau at 601-432-2199.

Shipland WMA

by Jackie Fleeman, WMA Biologist

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

Turkey hunting is by permit only during the first part of turkey season on Shipland WMA. During the 2010 turkey season, there were 10 hunter-days of turkey hunting with 1 bird harvested. 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 Shipland WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-873-9331.

Stoneville WMA

by Jackie Fleeman, WMA Biologist

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

On Stoneville WMA, turkey hunting is by permit only during the first part of turkey season. There were no hunter-days and no harvested birds were reported for the 2010 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. After the second weekend, turkey hunting is allowed without permits. Sunflower WMA accrued 321 hunter-days during the 2010 turkey season, and 3 harvested birds were reported. Turkey numbers vary from year to year because frequent springtime flooding limits the ability of turkeys to successfully nest and raise broods on the area. For more information on Sunflower WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-828-3456.

Tallahala WMA

By Scott Baker, 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 2010 turkey season, Tallahala WMA accrued 1,466 hunter-days, and 66 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Tallahala WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-739-3671.

Tuscumbia WMA

by Amy C. Blaylock, 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. The turkey season and bag limit are the same as the statewide season. During the 2010 turkey season, Tuscumbia WMA accrued 153 hunter-days, and 4 harvested birds were reported. These figures represent a decrease from the 6 gobblers harvested in 2009. For more information on Tuscumbia WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-284-0740.

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 108 hunter-days, and 3 harvested birds were reported. Turkey numbers vary from year to year because frequent springtime flooding limits the ability of turkeys to successfully nest and raise broods on the area. For more information on Twin Oaks WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-873-2495.

Upper Sardis WMA

By Brad Holder, WMA Biologist

Upper Sardis WMA is a 42,274 acre area located within the Holly Springs National Forest near Oxford in Lafayette County. Personnel from the Holly Springs National Forest, Sardis Lake Corps of Engineers, and the MDWFP cooperatively manage Upper Sardis WMA. The area is heavily forested with variably aged stands of loblolly pine and mature hardwoods. Generally, brood-rearing and nesting habitat conditions on the Holly Springs National Forest are poor to fair as a result of decreased disturbance within timber stands. Recent habitat improvements on the area are a product of controlled burning, conducted by the U.S. Forest Service, and natural disturbance from a tornado which impacted 2,500 acres during spring of 2008. These disturbances contin-

ue to provide additional cover and food for wild turkeys and other wildlife species. Upper Sardis WMA offers an early spring gobbler season to youth hunters. The first two weeks of the regular spring season are by permit only. After that, Upper Sardis WMA is open to all during the rest of the season. During 2010, 52 gobblers were harvested during 1,532 hunter-days of effort. For more information on this WMA, contact the area manager at 662-234-6125.

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 142 hunter-days and 5 harvested birds for the 2010 turkey season. For more information on Ward Bayou WMA, contact the area headquarters at 228-826-1012.

Wolf River WMA

by Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

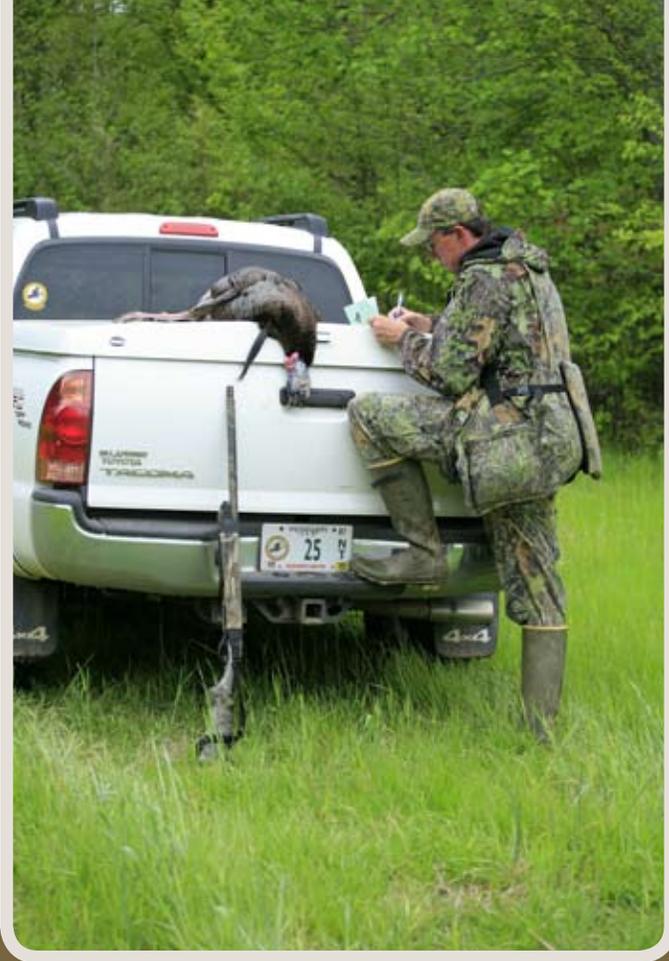
Wolf River WMA, located in Lamar and Pearl River counties near Poplarville, consists of 10,801 acres owned by Weyerhaeuser Company. The WMA consists of various-aged pine plantations interspersed with minor stream bottoms. Scattered permanent openings across the WMA are maintained with native vegetation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

During the 2010 turkey season, Wolf River WMA accrued 542 hunter-days, and 9 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Wolf River WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-795-8682.

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 2010, 0 gobblers were harvested on this area during 44 hunter-days of effort. For additional information on this WMA, call 601-432-2199.



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.

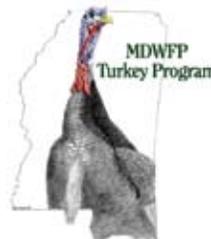
Club Name: _____

County: _____

Forested Acres: (including food plots) _____

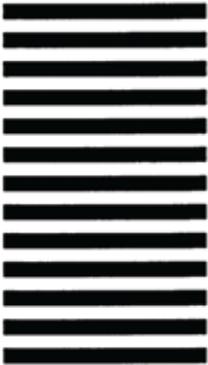
Estimate Total Number of Hunters Anticipated on this Property During the Turkey Season: _____

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





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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 $\frac{1}{16}$ inch increments from the center point of the beard's base where it attaches to the skin to the end of the longest bristle that is fully attached to the skin. Spurs are measured in $\frac{1}{16}$ inch increments along the outside center of the spur from the point at which the spur protrudes from the scaled leg skin to the tip of the spur.*

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

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

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

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

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

Date of Harvest: _____ County of Harvest: _____

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

Hunter's Signature: _____ Date: _____

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

Signature of MDWFP Employee: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

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



Wild Turkey Records
1505 Eastover Drive
Jackson, MS 39211

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2011 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:

2011 MISSISSIPPI WILD TURKEY REPORT					
	Please Circle Your Rating				
	Poor	Neutral	Neutral	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?

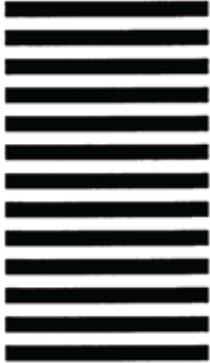
3. Please provide any ideas you may have that could improve future reports: _____

4. Do you want to receive the 2012 Mississippi Wild Turkey Report? _____

If yes, please provide your address: _____



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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

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



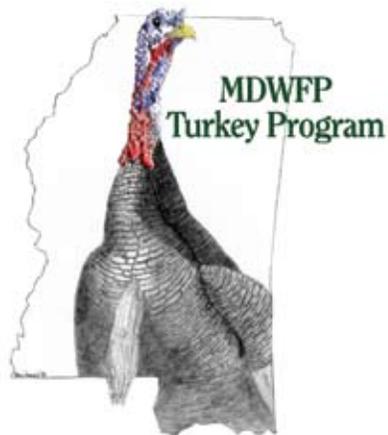
Mississippi
Chapter



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