

2010

Mississippi Wild Turkey Report

Spittin' & Drummin'



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS

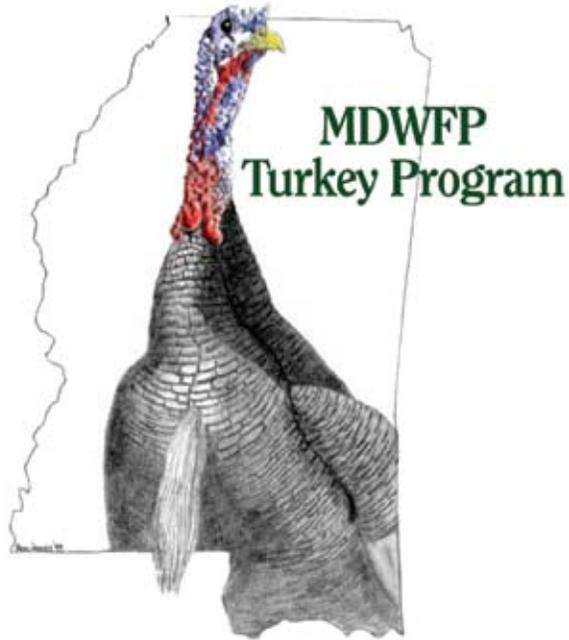
Take a Walk on the 'Wild' Side...

(of the Web, that is.)



FOR COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION ABOUT MISSISSIPPI'S WILD TURKEY

population and other wildlife, visit our website at www.mdwfp.com. On the home page, you can click 'Wildlife & Hunting' and then select 'Turkey Program' to visit our turkey page!



Spittin' & Drummin'

2010 MISSISSIPPI
WILD TURKEY REPORT



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

Acknowledgements

THANKS TO ALL MISSISSIPPI TURKEY HUNTERS, YOUR PASSION FOR THIS GREAT BIRD IS AN inspiration to me and makes working with this program a real pleasure. I never tire of visiting with fellow members of “The Tenth Legion” to discuss Mississippi turkey issues. Special thanks are due to all of the turkey hunters who participate in the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey (SGHS)—your assistance is invaluable to us. If you are not participating in this important survey, please consider starting this spring! I want to thank the Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation for all they do to support our program and benefit wild turkeys in the Magnolia State. I owe Assistant Wildlife Bureau Chief, Ron Seiss, sincere thanks for his support, assistance, and friendship. Many individuals have made significant contributions to the MDWFP Wild Turkey Program during the past year. First, I owe Adam Butler a heartfelt thank you for all of his hard work. Adam’s passion for Mississippi’s wild turkey population, his work ethic, and his abilities have made him an important addition to our agency and to turkey conservation in Mississippi. Dene Smith entered and validated the private land data from the 2009 SGHS, and has helped the Wild Turkey Program with numerous projects over the years—her assistance is greatly appreciated! Thanks to Marnia Hazlewood and Susan Myers for entering all of the WMA turkey data from spring 2009. Thanks to the MDWFP Wildlife Technical Staff for assistance with various turkey tasks during the past year. Special thanks are due to Scott Edwards, Jim Willcutt, and Ashley Gary for significant contributions to this program. Jason Price has helped on many occasions with data analysis and reporting, and has been very important to this program for many years!

During the past year, the MDWFP spent a significant amount of time and effort trapping wild turkeys for research and restoration purposes. Many MDWFP employees spent long hours on this front, sitting in turkey blinds, setting up trapping equipment, and transporting captured birds. The list of those employees who went above and beyond the call of duty to help make this project successful is very long, and I want each person who helped to know that their hard work is sincerely appreciated.

Kourtney Wong handled graphic design and layout duties for this report, and we truly appreciate all of her hard work in making our report look so good! Cindy Clark has helped with graphic design duties for past reports, and I thank Cindy for all she has done for us as well. Steve Gullede has once again allowed the MDWFP to use his beautiful wild turkey pictures for this publication. We are greatly indebted to Steve for this opportunity. His pictures of Mississippi wild turkeys make this report come to life and are much appreciated.

During the past year, MDWFP/NWTF Cooperative Biologist Joe Koloski accepted a position for the U.S. Forest Service in Alabama. Joe was a pleasure to work with during his stay in Mississippi, and was very effective in his efforts to benefit turkeys here in the Magnolia State. I consider Joe a close personal friend, and wish him and his family the very best in their new life in Alabama. He will be greatly missed! Currently, Luke Lewis of Ruston, Louisiana, is serving Mississippi as NWTF Regional Biologist. We welcome Luke back to this role, and look forward to working with him on turkey projects.

Finally, I owe a very special thank you to my family. Kris, Brannon, and Eric often are asked to make sacrifices so that I can work on turkey program tasks. Without their love and support, I would not be able to be successful in any effort. I appreciate all they do for me each day!

Dave Godwin

MDWFP Turkey Program Coordinator



THE MDWFP WILD TURKEY PROGRAM IS GREATLY indebted to **Steve Gullede** of Bruce, Mississippi. Steve is a forester by trade, but his passions include turkeys, turkey hunting, and photography. Steve has served as President of the Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, and continues to serve on that group’s Board of Directors. Steve has once again allowed us to use his work for this publication, and these pictures help transform this report into something special. For more information on Steve’s work, go to www.stevegulledephotography.com.

WORKING IN THE WILD TURKEY PROGRAM FOR THE MDWFP HAS BEEN A DREAM-COME-TRUE, but the work itself would merely be a job if it weren't for the camaraderie and support of my incredible coworkers in the Wildlife Bureau—all of whom exhibit passion for Mississippi's natural resources. Their hard work makes each year's *Spittin' & Drummin'* report possible. Jason Price always deserves special recognition for his continual efforts to streamline our data processing and analysis. Kourtney Wong is new to the '10 version of *Spittin' & Drummin'*, and her graphic design creativity, along with Steve Gullede's incredible photography, has made this year's edition visually stunning. Dene Smith and Tosha Jordan in the Jackson office are invaluable in keeping the wheels of the Turkey Program turning smoothly. I would also like to thank Joe Koloski, who left the Turkey Program during the previous year, for his dedication to wildlife conservation in Mississippi. Joe, your presence is definitely missed. The volunteers of the Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation also deserve recognition for the money they raise for conservation of the wild turkey and our hunting tradition. The brunt of the information that is published in *Spittin' & Drummin'* would not be possible without the hundreds of turkey hunters who voluntarily collect data through the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey each season. Finally, I'd like to thank the majestic birds themselves; wild turkeys never cease to captivate and amaze me—there is little doubt that my life is richer as a result.

Adam Butler
MDWFP Turkey Program Leader

IT IS MY SINCERE PRIVILEGE TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK AND SERVE AS YOUR REGIONAL biologist for the members of the Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. It is almost surreal to have a second chance to work with many of you who I met and served with in 1999. Having the opportunity to come back to work for the National Wild Turkey Federation and be involved with the many Hunting Heritage Super Fund Projects on state and federal lands, Acorns for Wildlife program, and with the Mississippi State Chapter volunteers has truly been a blessing. We all share the same common bond of our love for watching that gobbler strut or the thrill of his gobble on a spring morning. To know we as a team have made the effort to improve our state's habitat for the wild turkey and other wildlife makes all the effort in our fund raising worthwhile. I certainly appreciate the untold hours many of the Mississippi volunteers put in hosting youth and handicap hunts. The articles and stories shared already this year make me certain we are passing on the tradition the NWTf holds dear. I encourage all of us as volunteers to "reload" and dedicate ourselves to a local banquet as we enter the 2010 fundraising season. While many of you have done so much for the wild turkey over the years, there is still so much opportunity to do more and continue to improve opportunity on public and private land in our state. Thank you for time and effort to support this wonderful tradition of hunting we hold dear. We are living in the best of times for the wild turkey, let's take care of them! Best of luck to all of you this spring!

Luke D. Lewis
NWTf Regional Biologist

**FEDERAL AID IN
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**A PITTMAN-ROBERTSON
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This report is produced by the Technical Guidance Project, the Statewide Wildlife Development Project, and the Statewide Wildlife Investigations Project and is primarily funded by Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration.

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MDWFP Turkey Regions

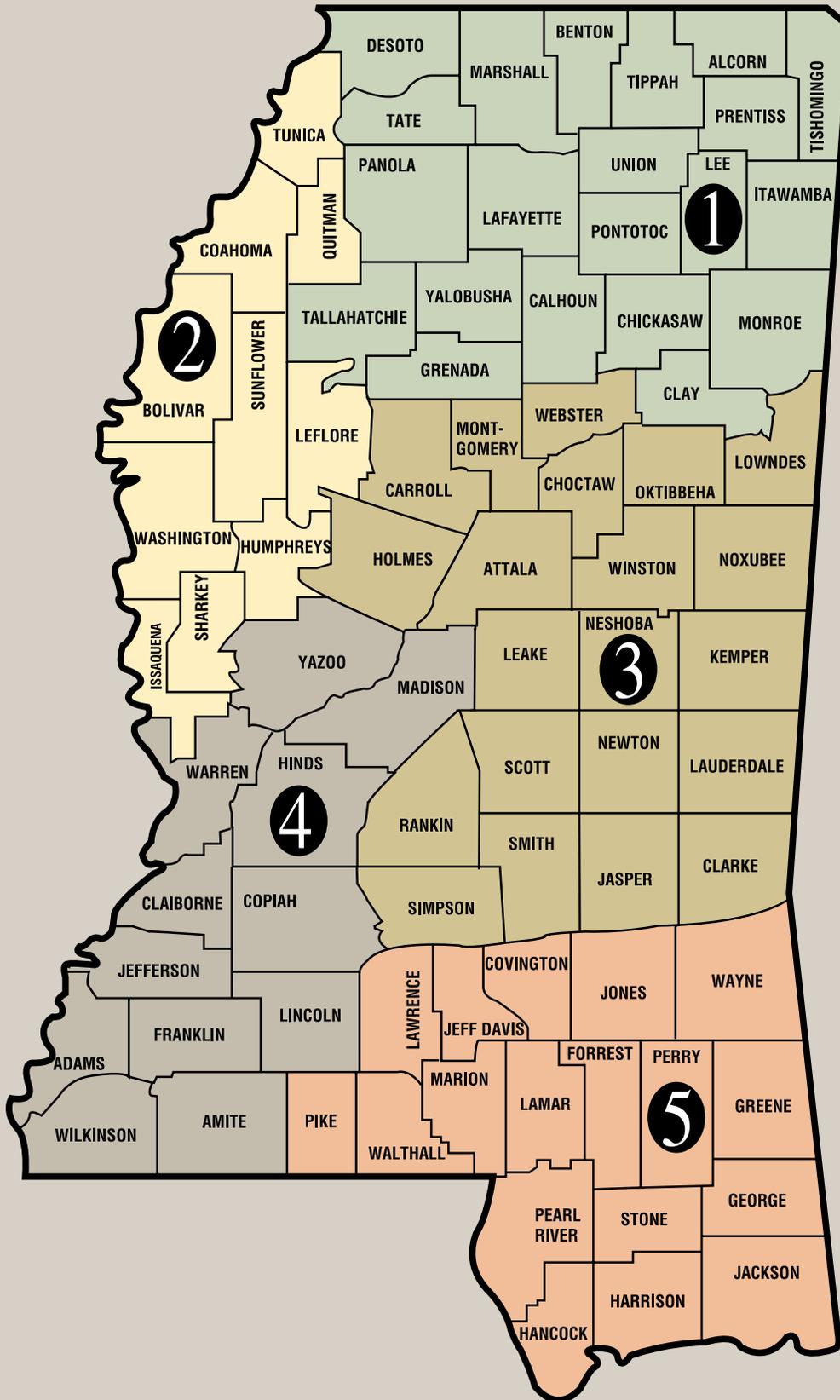




Photo by Steve Gullede

2010 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. You will find applications to participate in the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey and to join the NWTf in this report.

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!



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In Memory

This report is dedicated to John Taylor (1948-2009). Longtime Area Manager of Choctaw WMA, John was passionate about wild turkeys, turkey hunting, and helping turkey hunters. John worked for many years with MDWFP, U.S. Forest Service, and NWTf staff to improve turkey habitat on his WMA. John's love for the *King of Game Birds* was an inspiration to many of us. He will be greatly missed.

Turkey Management Assistance Available for Mississippi Private Landowners

HOW DO I MANAGE MY PROPERTY FOR WILD TURKEYS?

There is no doubt that turkeys, like many other 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!

Photo by Steve Cullledge



Managed roadsides provide excellent nesting, brood rearing, and foraging habitat for wild turkey.

Photo by MDWFP



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

Photo by Wes Burger



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



Photo by Steve Gullede

Don't Blame Predators for Poor Turkey Habitat

By Adam Butler, Turkey Program Biologist

MOST TURKEY HUNTERS WOULD AGREE THAT WILD TURKEYS ARE ONE OF THE WARIEST GAME SPECIES in the woods. It is this cautious tendency that makes them such a challenge to pursue, and is the primary reason that so many hunters leave the turkey woods shaking their heads in defeat and confusion each spring. While it may sometimes seem as if the birds possess supernatural powers, their suspicious nature can be attributed to the host of threats with which they are surrounded. Even before they hatch, turkeys face a gauntlet of potential predators—nearly everything in the woods likes to eat turkeys or their eggs. This leads many landowners who desire higher turkey populations to conclude that a reduction in predators is all that is needed to turn their property into a slice of turkey heaven, but is this the right approach?

Although popular opinion may suggest otherwise, adult turkey survival is relatively high in most years. Research in Mississippi has suggested that <10% of adult gobblers are lost to “natural” causes outside of the hunting season. Predation rates upon hens are somewhat higher, but most hen mortality occurs during the nesting and brood rearing period; few hens are usually lost from July–March. It is earliest days of a turkey’s life that are the ones in which they are the most susceptible to predators. In some years, nearly 8 out of 10 poults will not live past their second week. After that critical juncture, they gain the ability to fly, and survival begins to steadily increase.

The most significant type of predation affecting turkey populations is depredation of turkey nests. The suite of predators that dine on turkey nests is broad, and is comprised of everything from crows to armadillos. Perhaps the most notable of this group are the raccoon, skunk, and opossum. On average, between 40 and 60% of all turkey nests will be eaten before they are hatched, thus most predator control programs typically attempt to target this group with the goal of increasing nest success within a particular area.

Despite the well-meaning intentions of predator control programs, the effectiveness of this tool is a topic that has been debated in the scientific literature since the infancy of the wildlife management profession. Although some studies have shown that predator control can increase turkey populations, others have suggested that even the most intensive predator control programs may only result in limited, short-lived success. This can largely be attributed to the extremely complex relationship between predators and their prey. In many instances, removal of one predator may invite another, or the few individuals that remain after trapping will have much higher reproductive outputs to compensate for the temporary decline in the population. The bottom-line is that predator control must be intensive, large-scale, and continuous to even show minimal positive results, and this level of input is neither economical nor logistically feasible for most landowners.

So is there nothing that can be done to decrease predation? Not exactly—you just have to be willing to think outside the “predator problem” box and realize that there are very few feasible options available to deal directly with predators. However, there are many things that can be done to minimize predation.

As already stated, turkeys are one of the wariest creatures in the woods because they face threats at every turn. They have dealt with these dangers for eons and have still managed to survive because they are uniquely adapted to overcome the threat of predation when given the right conditions. Landowners with an interest in turkeys will receive far better results by focusing their efforts on providing the birds with all the elements they need to gain an advantage over predators, rather than attempting to get rid of the predators themselves. This is why habitat management is important! When a property is managed with turkey habitat in mind, birds will have all the means necessary to detect, avoid, and evade predators.

Photo by Adam Butler



So what sort of habitat puts the odds for survival in favor of turkeys? The answer will vary depending on where turkeys are within their annual cycle. Nesting hens need dense vegetation near the ground that will keep them concealed. Likewise, young turkeys need low-growing, lush vegetation that allows them to forage without being exposed. For adults, timber stands should not be so dense that the birds are unable to scan for potential danger. Creative interspersions of these habitat types can minimize the amount of travel required for the birds to meet their needs, which will further reduce exposure to predators. All of these elements are important parts of a turkey habitat management plan, and all of them can be addressed through specific management practices.

So keep in mind, the first step toward increasing turkey numbers is recognizing that quality habitat—rather than fewer predators—is most often all that is needed for the birds to thrive. If you are interested in learning more about how you can improve turkey habitat on your property, please contact Adam Butler at 601.695.6795 or butler.mdwfp@gmail.com.

“Even before they hatch, turkeys face a gauntlet of potential predators—nearly everything in the woods likes to eat turkeys or their eggs.”



Photo by 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. Hunters may also apply online at www.mdwfp.com/turkey.

Private land data from the 2002–2009 SGHSs are presented graphically in the following statewide and regional summaries. The remainder of this introduction describes how the data were collected and summarized, along with important points to consider during interpretation. Most parameters are expressed as an average number per every 10 or 100 hours of hunting. Standardizing values by a specific number of hours hunted allows the rates to be compared among regions and years even though hunter effort varies.

Reproduction

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

Turkey Observations

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



Photo by Steve Gullede



Photo by Steve Gullede

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.

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.



Photo by Steve Gullede



Photo by Steve Gullede

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 that are 3-years-old have spur lengths of one inch-1.25 inches, and birds with spurs greater than 1.25 inches are considered 4-years-old or older. Monitoring spur length distribution should reflect changes in gobbler age structure over time. If age structure is increasing, a higher percentage of 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.



Photo by Brian Jackson

2009 Summer Brood Survey

MONITORING MISSISSIPPI'S TURKEY POPULATION IS ONE OF THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MDWFP Turkey Program. Understanding trends in reproduction, and their subsequent effect on population growth or decline, is a critical aspect of this duty. Therefore, wildlife officials with the MDWFP conduct surveys each summer to estimate turkey reproduction around the state. This survey is conducted each June, July, and August, and allows the MDWFP to gauge regional turkey reproduction. Turkey reproductive output is estimated using a ratio of the total number of poults seen to the total number of hens seen. This number, known as "Poults per Total Hens" is an all-encompassing reproductive index because it considers successful hens, unsuccessful hens, and poult survival within a single value. Research has indicated that a poults per total hen ratio near 2.0 is needed to maintain stable turkey populations. Values above 2.0 poults per total hen typically result in turkey population growth, while values below 1.8 may indicate that the following spring's population will be diminished.

The summer of 2009 marked the 15th year that the MDWFP has conducted its annual brood survey. A total of 1,063 broods from 2,874 hens were observed across the Magnolia State. The following sections break down "The Hatch" on both a statewide and regional basis.

Statewide

Poults/Total Hens: 1.08
Nest success: 37%
Average brood size: 2.93

While some areas of the state seemed to have very good reproduction (*Figure 1*), when viewed as a whole, data suggests that Summer

2009 resulted in the worst turkey reproductive output since the inception of the MDWFP Summer Brood Survey. The observed poults/total hen ratio was an abysmal 1.08, which was significantly lower than the 1.65 observed in 2008, and well below the 5-year average. Statewide nest success was 37%, which is relatively low, and the average brood size was 2.93 poults per brood, down substantially from 3.53 poults per brood in 2008.

Region 1: Northeast

Although data from Calhoun and Pontotoc Counties indicated portions of those areas may have had a good hatch, the overall average for Northeastern Mississippi was very low. This region

of the state has had very poor reproduction over the last 5 years, and no relief occurred during 2009. The 0.94 poults/ total hens observed was barely half that observed during 2008.

Poults/Total Hens: 0.94
Nest success: 35%
Average brood size: 2.68

Region 2: Delta

For the second year in a row, the Mississippi River flooded much of the Delta until uncharacteristically late into the spring. Similar to 2008, this curtailed nesting attempts by hens, and resulted in almost no reproduction from turkeys within the region. There were only 0.39 poults observed per total hens, and the region's nest success, at 21%, was only slightly better than last year. Flood waters also may have limited access to quality brood habitat, thus lowering poult survival, which was reflected in low brood size averages across the region.

Poults/Total Hens: 0.39
Nest success: 21%
Average brood size: 1.90

Region 3: East Central

The piney-woods of East Central Mississippi experienced one of their best hatches in years during 2008, but the same cannot be said of 2009. The poult/total hen ratio was very low at

Poults/Total Hens: 1.16
Nest success: 40%
Average brood size: 2.90

1.16. The average brood size was also substantially lower (2.90 poults per brood) than what was observed in the region during 2008.

Region 4: Southwest

The southwestern corner of the state appears to be the only bright spot of the 2009 hatch. Although the region's average—1.52 poults/total hens—may only be deemed as mediocre, this

Poults/Total Hens: 1.52
Nest success: 44%
Average brood size: 3.45

seemingly low average is a result of poor reproduction from the counties in the northern portion of the region. Brood data and

ancillary reports indicate that counties in the southern and western portions of the region had excellent hatches (**Figure 1**). Adams, Amite, Franklin, Hinds, Lincoln, and Warren counties all had poult/hen ratios above 3.0, which can be considered

extremely good reproduction. Additionally, Region 4 also had the highest average brood size in the state, at 3.45 poults/brood, which is another indicator of outstanding reproduction.

Region 5: Southeast

The hatch has been good for the last two years in Region 5, but as with most of the rest of the State, reproduction dipped substantially during summer 2009. The overall regional average was only 1.07 poults/total hen, although some sections of the region may have fared somewhat better. Those counties adjacent to Louisiana in the southwest, and those bordering Alabama in the east appeared to have had better reproduction than the regional average. Poor nest success across the region may have been somewhat offset by good poult survival; the region's average brood size was the second highest in the State at 3.39 poults/brood.

Poults/Total Hens: 1.07
Nest success: 32%
Average brood size: 3.39

Photo by Brian Jackson



Properties that manage for quality nesting and brood rearing habitat will nearly always put more poults on the ground than properties that lack these features, and will therefore be better able to weather years when reproduction is regionally low.

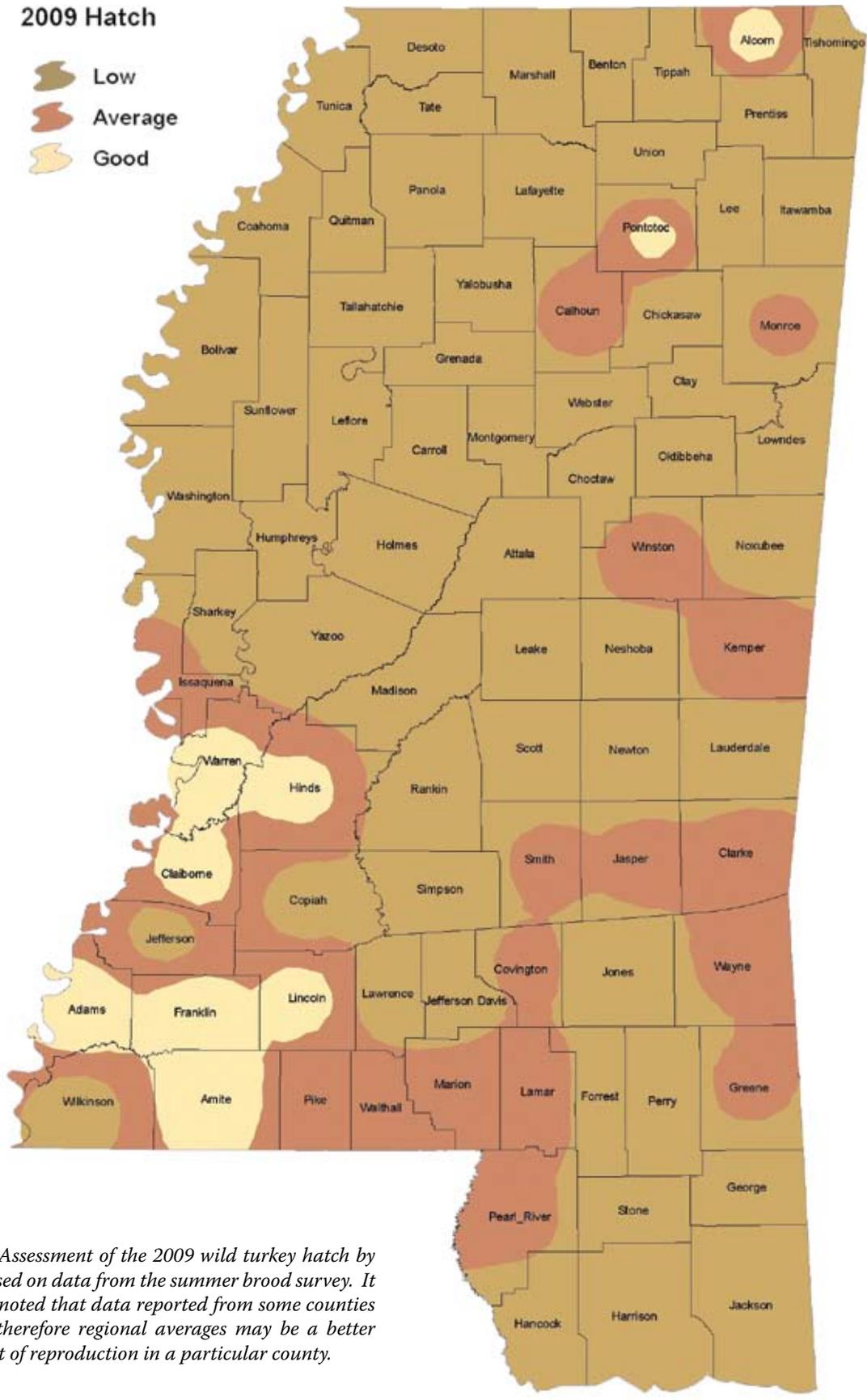


Figure 1: Assessment of the 2009 wild turkey hatch by county based on data from the summer brood survey. It should be noted that data reported from some counties was low; therefore regional averages may be a better assessment of reproduction in a particular county.

Gobbler-to-Hen Ratio

In addition to poults and hens, cooperators for the annual brood survey 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 increases, harvest rates for the following season tend to also increase. During the 2009 Brood Survey, there were approximately 0.55 gobblers seen for every hen observed statewide (*Figure 2*), which was down slightly from 2008, and may indicate that harvests will decline during the 2010 spring season. However, the decline may not be dramatic, as the 2009 gobbler-to-hen ratio is near the statewide 5-year average.

Conclusions

Wild turkeys, like all wildlife, are at the mercy of Nature's cycles. As a result, annual reproduction by turkey populations is highly variable, due to the variety of environmental factors that can potentially influence the outcome of nesting attempts. During 2009, weather conditions during the peak nesting period were not ideal for reproductive success. April and May were filled with frequent rain events, and this typically spells disaster for nesting hens. Biologists believe that scenting conditions for nest predators are amplified when nesting hens are continually inundated by rain showers, i.e., wet hens produce more scent than do dry hens. Additionally, wet springs may reduce poult survival as young turkeys are not able to thermoregulate their body temperatures, and can be subjected to high mortality rates when exposed to extreme weather conditions.

Although reproduction was quite low in most regions of the State, hunters should not be overly concerned with a single year of bad reproduction. The reproductive biology of turkeys is designed to compensate for years of poor reproduction and, generally, turkey populations need only one year of good reproduction every 3-4 years to ensure long-term stability. Additionally, Mississippi's harvest framework, which does not allow the harvest of first-year gobblers by adult hunters, helps to alleviate the effects of poor reproductive years by promoting the carry-over of that segment of the population.

Finally, readers should also be aware that summaries given in this section are just that—summaries. The hatch on a particular piece of property may or may not have been reflective of its region's average. Properties that manage for quality nesting and brood rearing habitat will nearly always put more poults on the ground than properties that lack these features, and will therefore be better able to weather years when reproduction is regionally low.

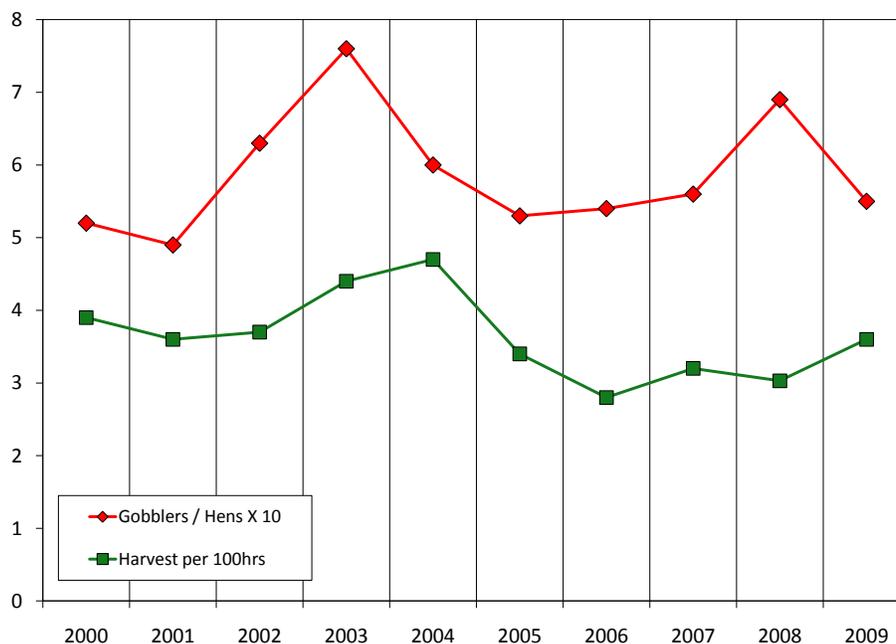


Figure 2: Comparison of the ratio of gobblers seen per hen (x 10) from the summer brood survey and subsequent change in harvest rates, 2000–2009.

Statewide

STATEWIDE PRIVATE LAND DATA WERE COLLECTED DURING THE 2009 season by more than 60 hunting clubs and more than 700 individual hunters participating in the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey.



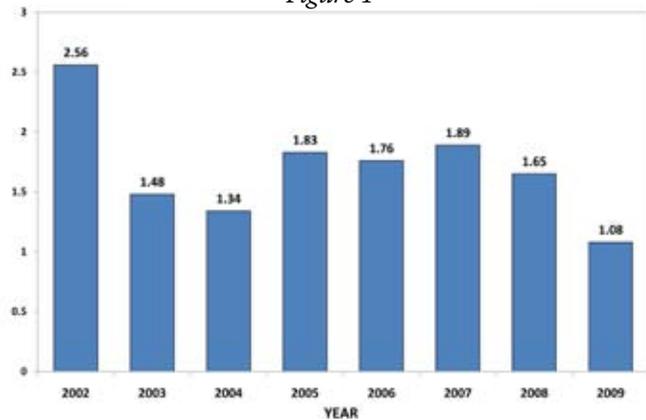
Reproduction

During the 2009 brood survey period, a total of 2,874 hens were observed across the Magnolia State. Of these hens, 1,063 (37%) successfully produced at least one pout. A total of 3,115 poults were observed, and average brood size was 2.93 poults which was down from 2008. The average number of poults per total hens was just 1.08 (Figure 1), which is the lowest Statewide hatch on record. During the past 8 years, poults per total hens statewide has averaged 1.70 poults, and has ranged from a high of 2.56 poults in 2002 to a low of 1.08 poults in 2009.

While there were a few bright spots for turkey reproduction during 2009 (for example, some portions of Southwest Mississippi reported decent reproduction) the Statewide picture was relatively bleak compared to past years. Many regions, including the areas along the Mississippi River, Big Black River, and other major drainages, were directly impacted by flooding during the 2009 turkey nesting season. Many other areas were likely indirectly impacted by heavy rain events during the peak of turkey nesting.

Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

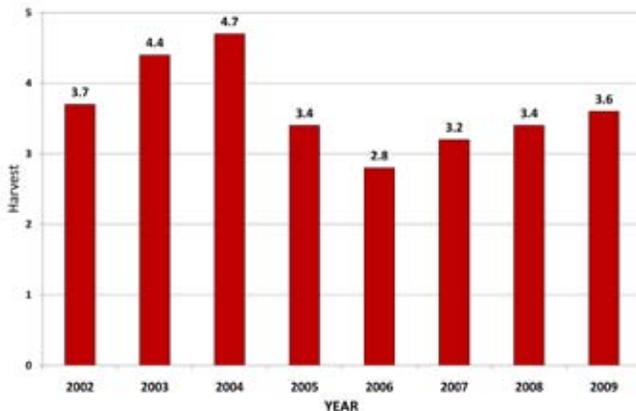


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

The 2009 season showed another slight increase in harvest rates. On average, hunters harvested 3.6 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 2009 was similar to that observed in recent years. Of the gobblers harvested, 53% were 3+ year-old toms with spur lengths of greater than one inch (Figure 3), and 8% had “limb-hanging” spurs greater than 1.25 inches. Forty-five percent of the birds harvested were in the 2-year old age class with spurs between 0.5” and 1.0”, which was comparable to 46% recorded in 2008.

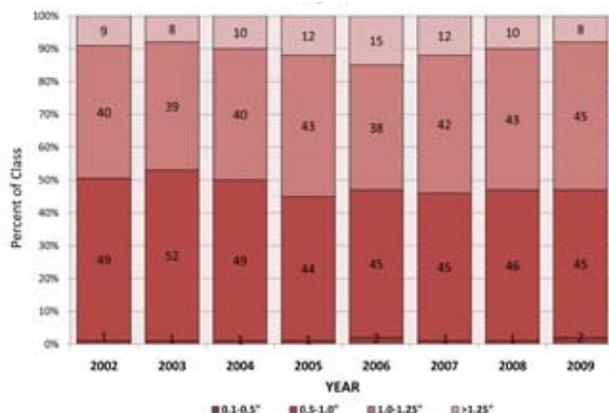
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

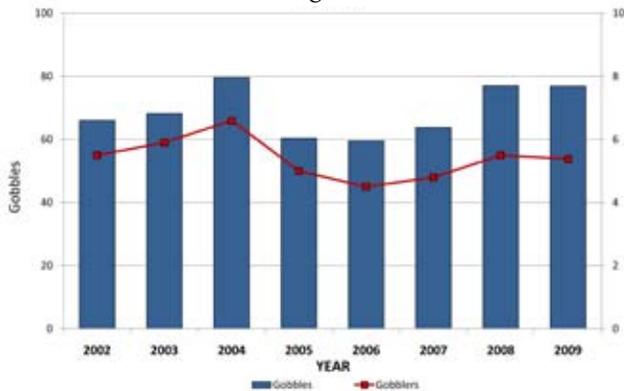


Gobbling Activity

During 2009, seasonal gobbling activity was very similar to 2008, with hunters hearing an average of 5.4 gobblers and 77.0 gobbles for every 10 hours of hunting (Figure 4). The number of gobblers heard was highest during the first week of the regular turkey season, while gobbles heard peaked during weeks 4 and 5 of the regular season (Figure 5).

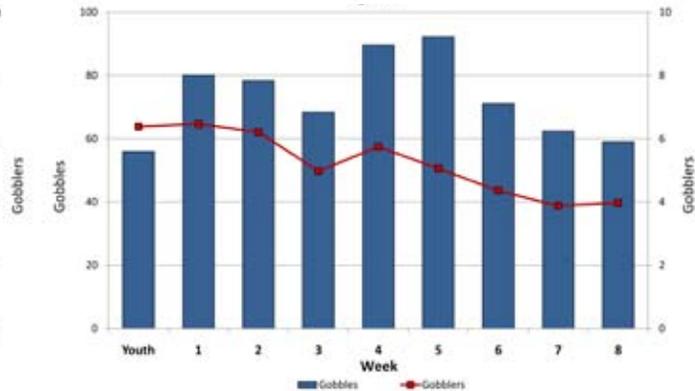
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

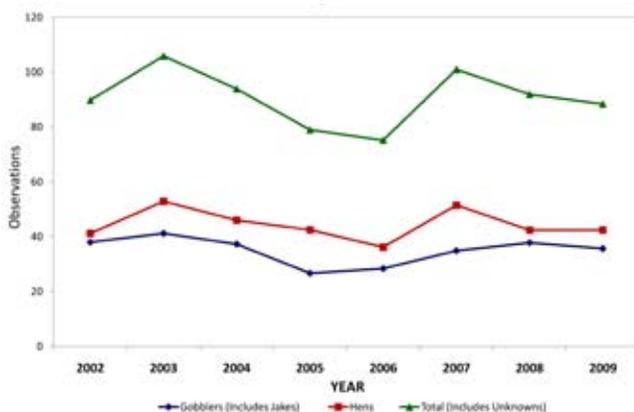


Turkey Observations

During the 2009 season, hunters observed an average of 18.9 adult gobblers, 16.6 jakes, 42.4 hens and 9.4 unknowns for every 100 hours of hunting (Figure 6). Overall, total turkey observations in 2009 were down slightly from 2008. Jake observations (16.6 per 100 hours) were slightly lower than observations from 2008 (Figure 7).

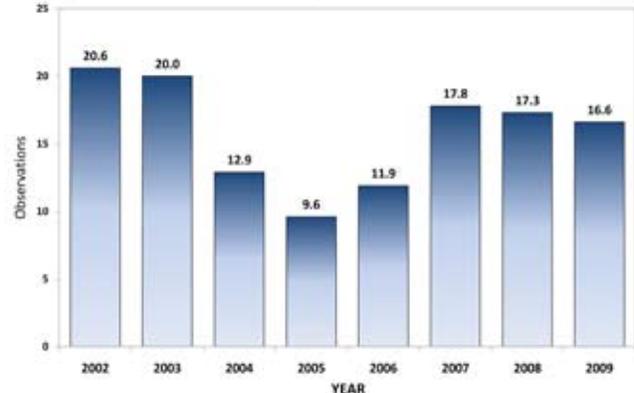
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7



Statewide 2010 Season Forecast

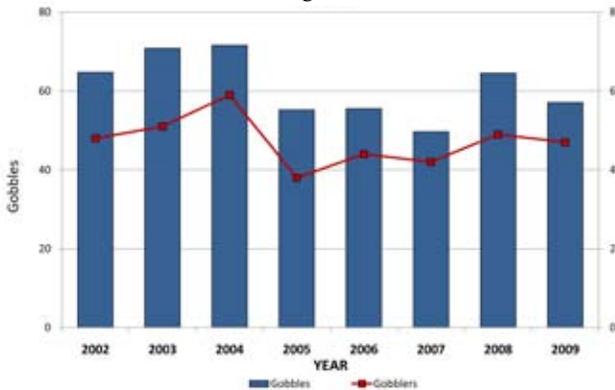
The number of 2-year-old gobblers we expect to see during the spring season is an important factor to consider when forecasting turkey hunting success. Two-year-old birds tend to gobble more and can be more susceptible to harvest than older gobblers. Based on the brood survey data from 2008, and the jake observation data from 2009, Mississippi turkey hunters can expect the number of 2-year-old gobblers Statewide in 2010 to be slightly lower than observed in 2009. Poor reproduction observed throughout most of Mississippi in 2009 will likely have a negative impact on the number of turkeys seen during the upcoming season, but this factor should not have a significant impact on harvest until the 2011 season. As usual, we do anticipate regional variance in turkey populations and hunting success, and we will address regional forecasts in the coming pages.

Gobbling Activity

During the 2009 season, hunters heard an average of 4.7 gobblers gobble 57.1 times for every 10 hours hunted (Figure 4). Gobbling activity was down slightly from the previous year for Region 1. The number of gobblers heard peaked week 4 of the regular season, and the number of gobbles heard peaked in weeks 4 and 7 of the regular hunting season (Figure 5).

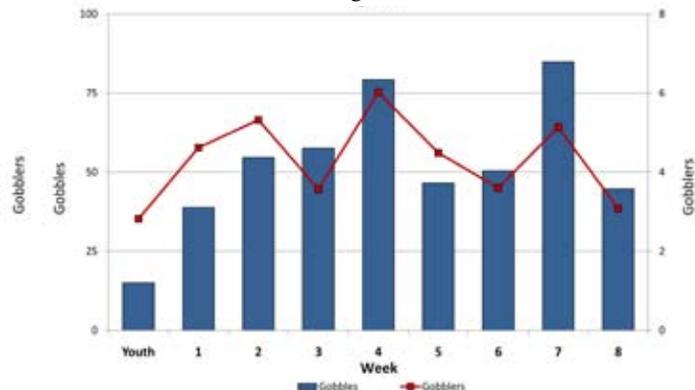
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

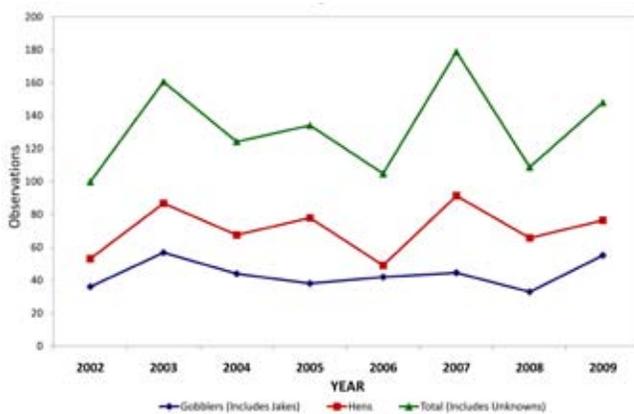


Turkey Observations

Turkey hunters observed an average of 148.0 turkeys per 100 hours hunted in 2009 (Figure 6) which was up from 2008. Jake observations (32.1 per 100 hours) were also up significantly in 2009 (Figure 7). However, these figures could be influenced by the limited sample size of 2009 hunter observations for Region 1.

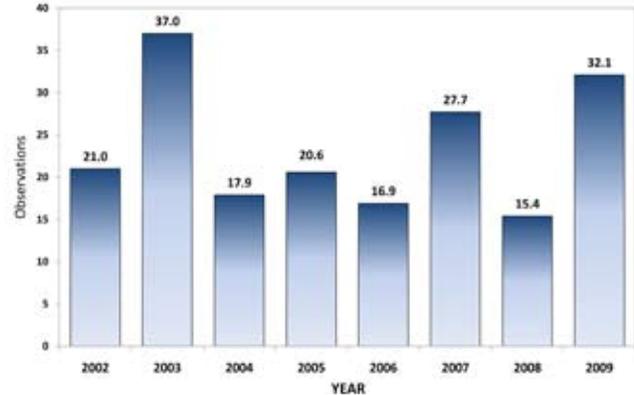
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

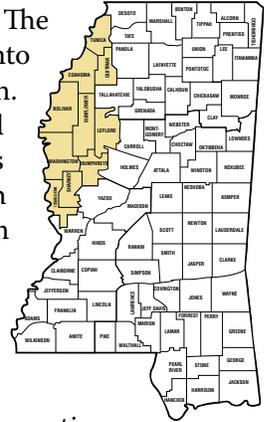


2010 Season Forecast

Based on limited hunter observations for this region, jake numbers seemed to be very high during 2009 spring season. However, brood survey data, which is the most consistent data source we have for this region, indicate that turkey reproduction was similar for Region 1 during 2007 and 2008. We believe that Region 1 hunters should expect to encounter numbers of 2-year old gobblers in 2010 that are similar to those observed during the 2009 season.

Turkey Region 2

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



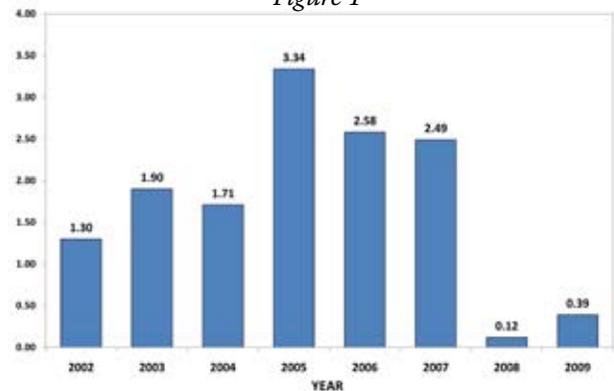
Region 2 is unique in that most of the turkey habitat in the interior Delta is on public lands (national forest, wildlife management areas, and wildlife refuges) and the vast majority of the private land habitat is located in the batture lands west of the Mississippi River levee. Therefore, data from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

Reproduction

Flood waters significantly impacted turkey reproduction in Region 2 for the second straight year during 2009. Following a record low of 0.12 poult per total hen in 2008, 0.39 poult per total hen was observed during 2009 (Figure 1). A total of 97 hens were seen, with only 20 (21%) of them successfully producing at least 1 poult. Average brood size was 1.90 poult per successful hen, which was slightly higher than 2008 for this region.

Poult Per Total Hens

Figure 1

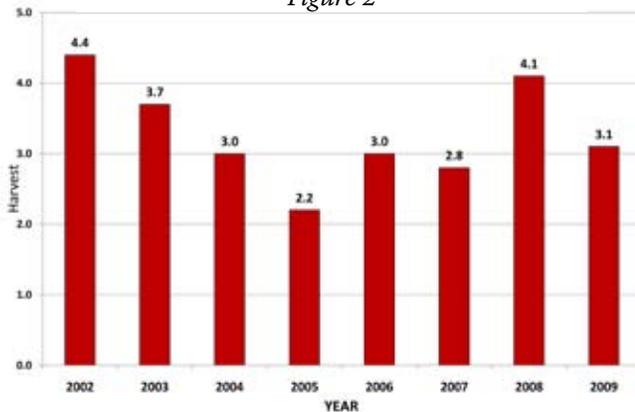


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

During the 2009 season, an average of 3.1 gobblers was harvested for every 100 hours of hunting (Figure 2), which was a down from the 2008 season. Harvest rates in Region 2 have ranged from 2.2 gobblers per 100 hours hunted in 2005 to 4.4 gobblers per 100 hours in 2002, and have averaged 3.3 during the past 8 seasons. Approximately 64% of the gobblers harvested in Region 2 were at least 3 years old (Figure 3), with 10% having spurs over 1.25 inches in length. Thirty-six 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.

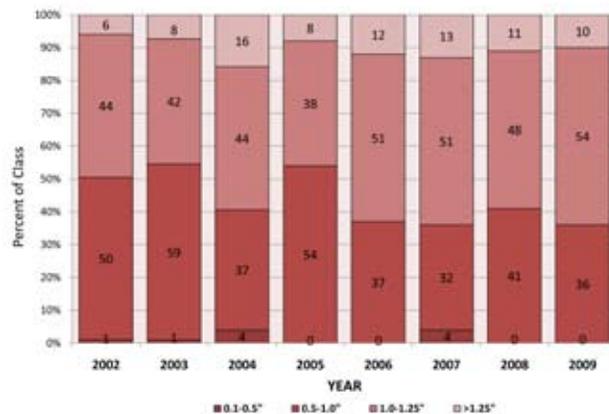
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

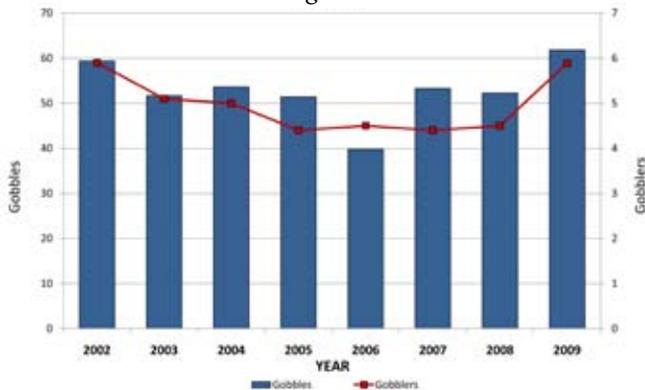


Gobbling Activity

Gobbling activity for 2009 was higher than that recorded in 2008 for Region 2 (Figure 4). Hunters in this region heard an average of 5.9 gobblers and 61.9 gobbles per 10 hours of hunting. The number of gobblers heard peaked in week 4 and the highest number of gobblers were heard during in youth week (Figure 5).

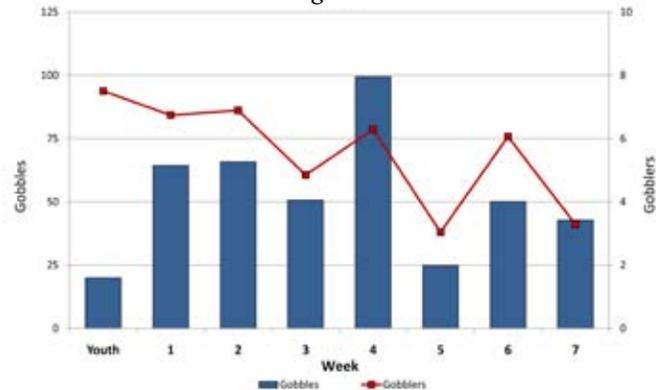
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

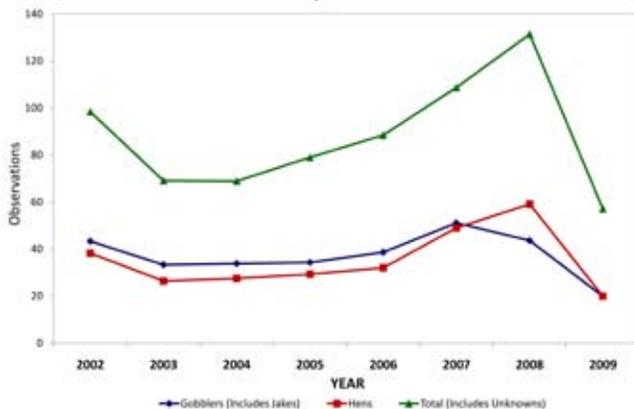


Turkey Observations

Overall turkey observations decreased sharply during the 2009 season. Hunters saw an average of 57.0 birds per 100 hours of hunting (Figure 6). Jake observations also declined significantly from 18.9 per 100 hours in 2008 down to just 1.9 per 100 hours in 2009 (Figure 7).

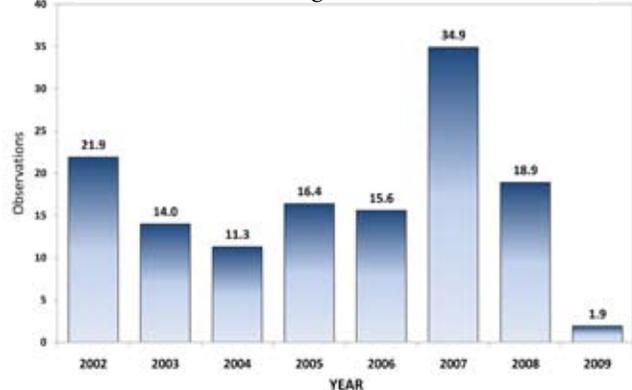
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

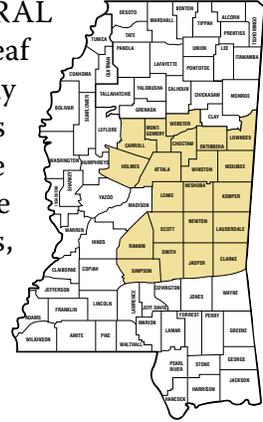


2010 Season Forecast

Two years of very poor reproduction should result in very few jakes and 2-year-old gobblers seen by Region 2 hunters during the 2010 season. Prior to 2008, Region 2 had 3 consecutive years of good reproduction. Therefore, the carryover of older gobblers might help offset the impact of poor reproduction on hunting success in some portions of this region. However, most areas in Region 2 should expect lower turkey observations and lower harvest rates during the 2010 season.

Turkey Region 3

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

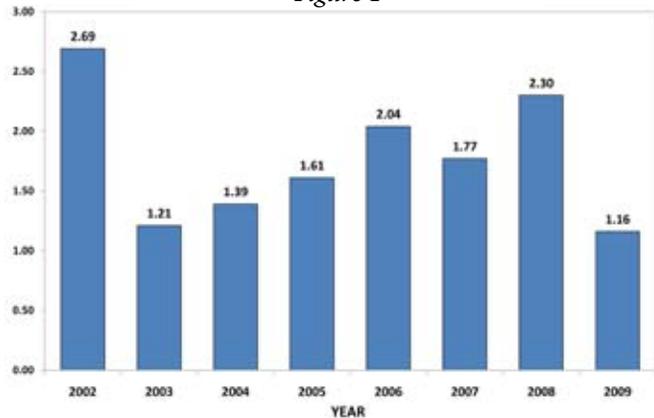


Reproduction

An average of 1.16 poult per total hen was recorded for Region 3 (Figure 1) which was the down significantly from 2008 when this region had the best reproduction in the State. A total of 1,159 hens were seen in this region during the 2009 brood survey and 463 (40%) of the hens successfully produced at least one poult. Average brood size was 2.90 poult per successful hen, which was also down from 2008.

Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

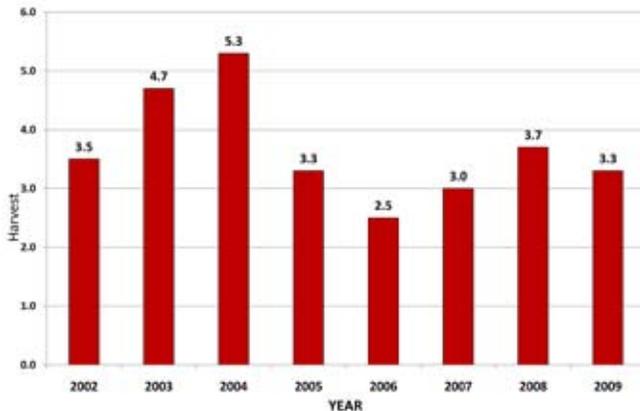


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Hunters harvested 3.3 gobblers per 100 hours of hunting in Region 3 during 2009 (Figure 2) which was down from 2008. Forty-five percent of harvested gobblers were considered 2-year old birds with spurs of 0.5 to 1.0 inches, while 53% were considered at least 3-years old (Figure 3).

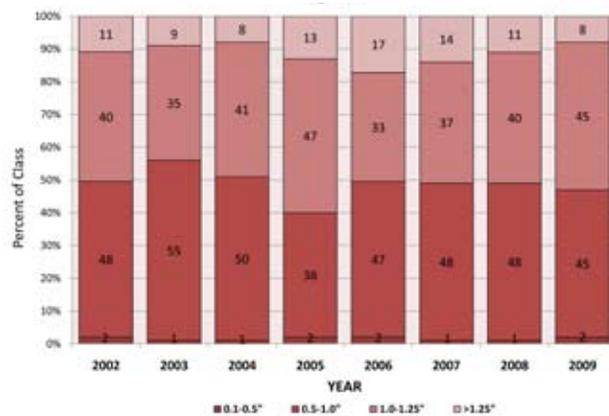
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

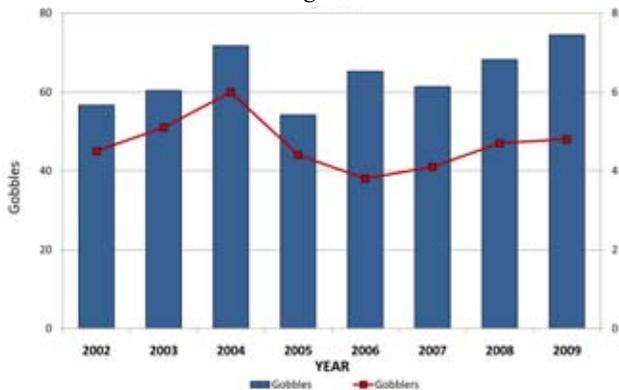


Gobbling Activity

Gobbling activity was up for this region in 2009, with hunters hearing an average of 4.8 gobblers and 74.5 gobbles per 10 hours of hunting (*Figure 4*). The number of gobblers heard was greatest during the youth week, while the number of gobbles heard peaked during week 5 (*Figure 5*).

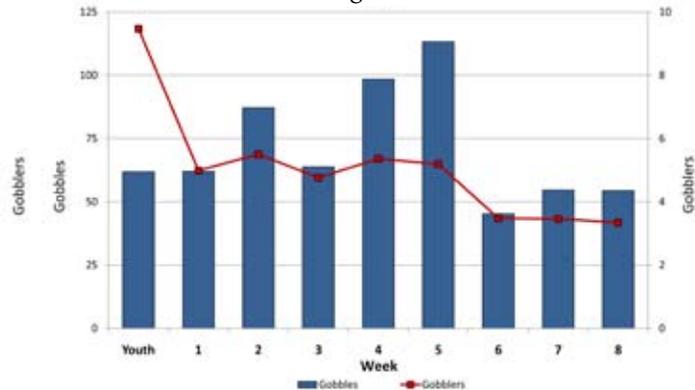
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

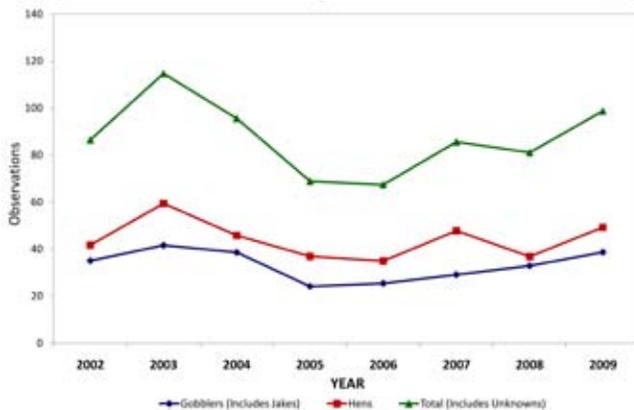


Turkey Observations

Hunters averaged observing 98.7 turkeys per 100 hours hunting during the 2009 season (*Figure 6*), which was up from 2008. Jake observations also increased to 20.5 per 100 hours hunting, which was the highest on record for this region (*Figure 7*).

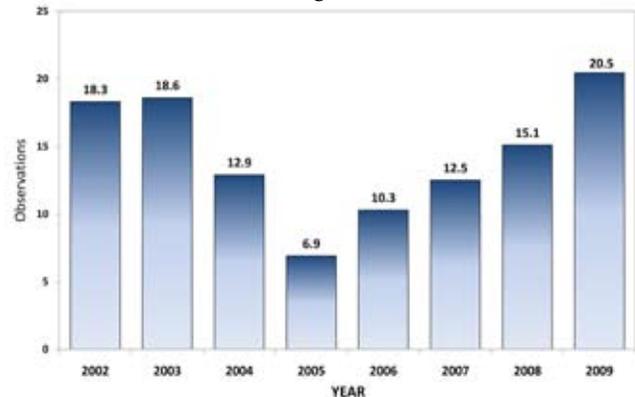
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7



2010 Season Forecast

Good brood production in 2008 and the highest jake observation numbers on record during 2009 suggest that Region 3 hunters should expect an increased number of vocal 2-year olds in the woods during the spring 2010 season. Harvest and spur length data suggest that hunters in this region might also enjoy a decent carryover of older age-class gobblers as well. Overall, the 2010 season should be a good one for hunters in east-central Mississippi.

Turkey Region 4

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

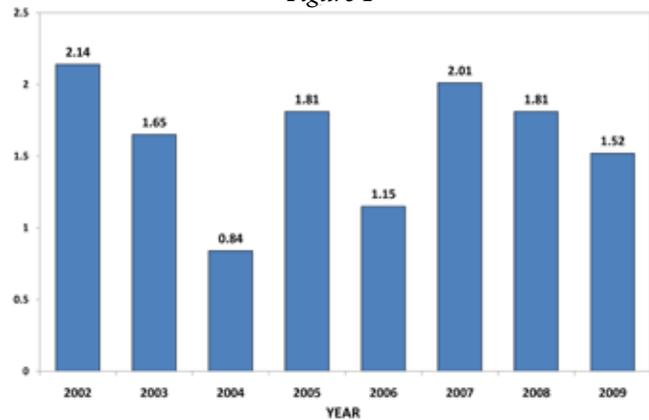


Reproduction

A total of 1.52 poults per total hens was observed for Region 4 during the 2009 brood survey (*Figure 1*) which was down from 2008, but still represented the highest regional hatch statewide in 2009. Forty-four percent of the hens observed successfully reproduced, and average brood size was 3.45 poults for Region 4.

Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

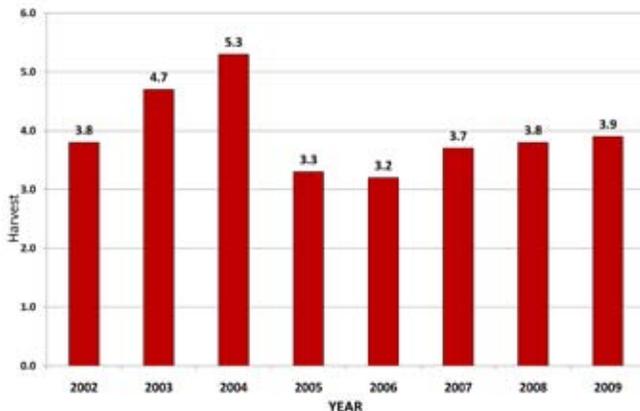


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Region 4 turkey hunters harvested 3.9 gobblers per 100 hours of hunting in 2009 (*Figure 2*) which was up slightly from 2008. The percentage of older gobblers (with spurs at least 1-inch long) was 50% (*Figure 3*) while the percentage of 2-year old birds in the harvest was 47%, which was higher than the 40% recorded in 2008.

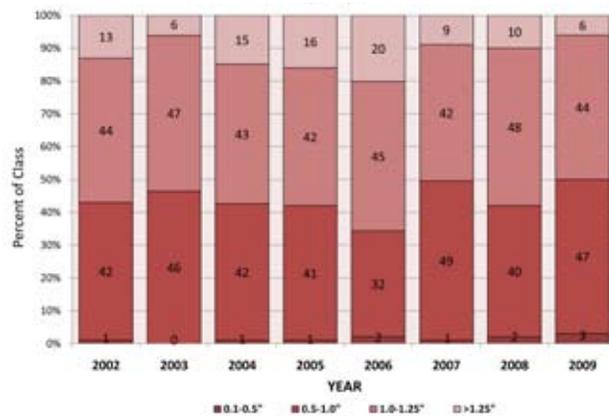
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

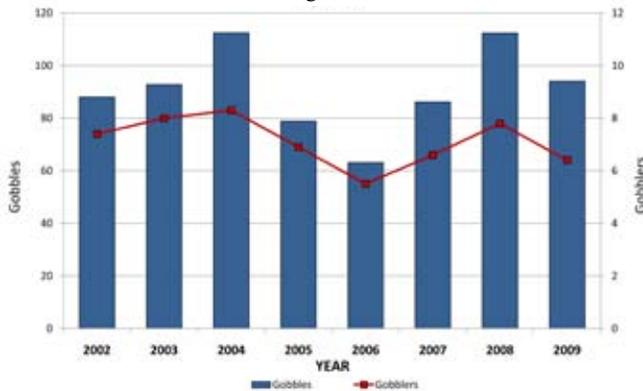


Gobbling Activity

Gobbling activity for Southwest Mississippi decreased in 2009 (Figure 4) as hunters heard 6.4 gobblers and 94.1 gobbles per 10 hours of hunting. The number of gobblers heard in this region peaked during week 1 of the season, while the number of gobbles heard was highest during week 6 (Figure 5).

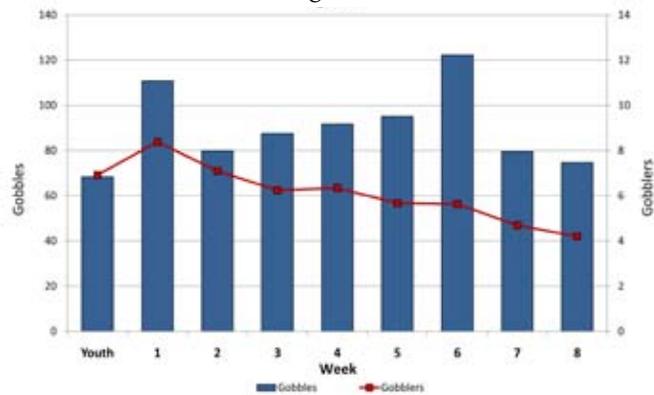
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

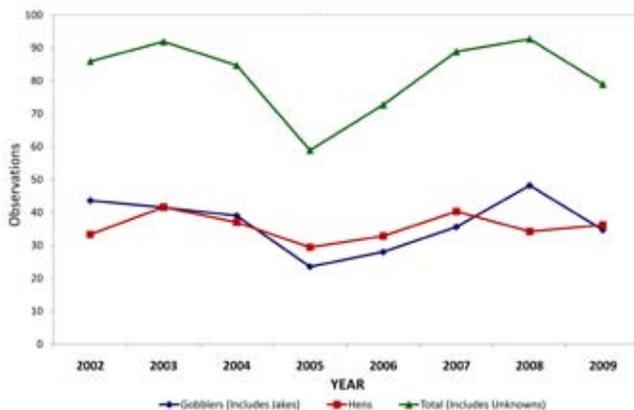


Turkey Observations

Turkey hunters observed 78.9 turkeys per 100 hours of hunting in 2009 (Figure 6) which was a decrease from 2008. Hunters observed 14.2 jakes per 100 hours hunting (Figure 7) which was a lower than the 18.5 observed in 2008.

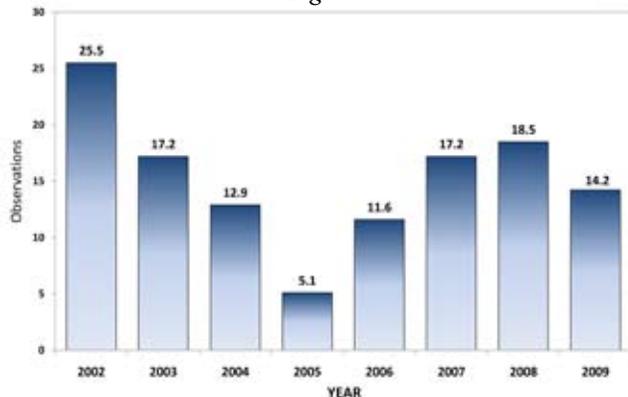
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

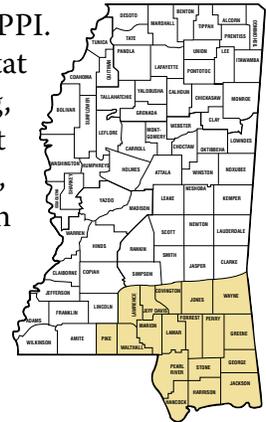


2010 Season Forecast

Hunters in Region 4 should expect to see slightly less 2-year-old gobblers during the 2010 season compared to a very good 2009 season which saw this region lead the State in gobbler harvest rates. However, many areas with moderate hunting pressure could see a fair number of 3-year-old birds carried over from a decent hatch in 2007. Overall, Region 4 hunters should expect to experience an enjoyable 2010 season, with harvest rates slightly lower than the 2009 season.

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.

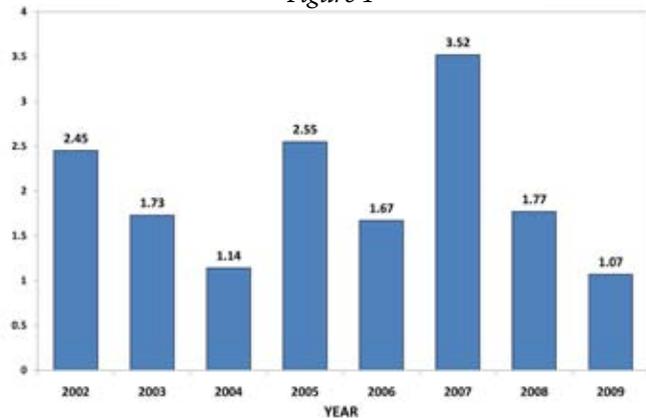


Reproduction

A total of 1.07 poults was observed per hen during the 2009 brood survey (*Figure 1*), which was down significantly from 2008 in Region 5. A total of 32% of the hens observed successfully reproduced, and average brood size was 3.39 poults.

Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

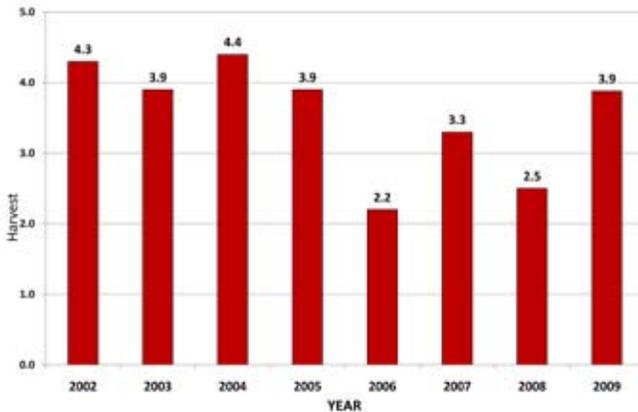


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Region 5 hunters harvested 3.9 gobblers per 100 hours of hunting in 2009 (*Figure 2*) which was up significantly from 2008. Fifty-three percent of the birds harvested had spurs between 0.5 and 1.0 inches, while 47 percent had spurs longer than 1 inch (*Figure 3*).

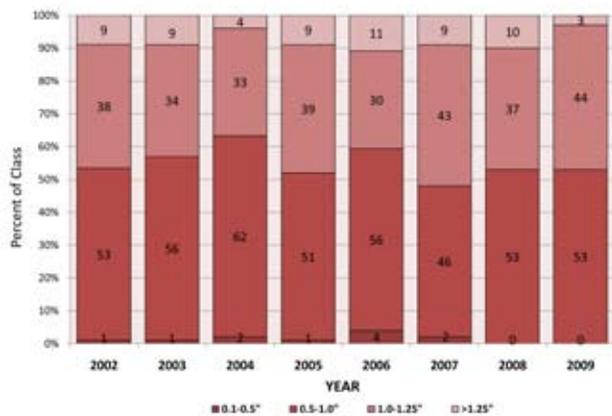
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

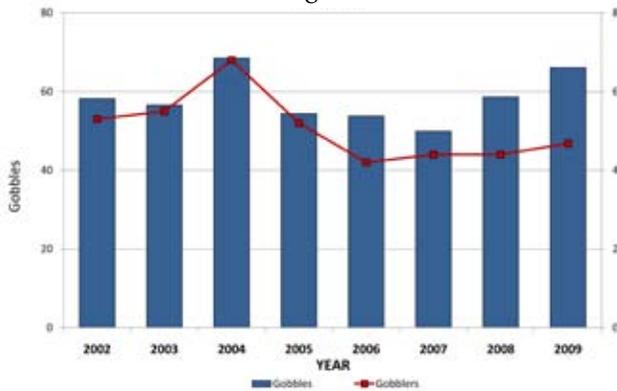


Gobbling Activity

During 2009, hunters in this region heard 4.7 gobblers per 10 hours, which was similar to 2008, and 66.1 gobblers per 10 hours which was higher than the previous year (Figure 4). The number of gobblers heard peaked during week 1 of the season, while the number of gobblers heard was highest in week 5 (Figure 5).

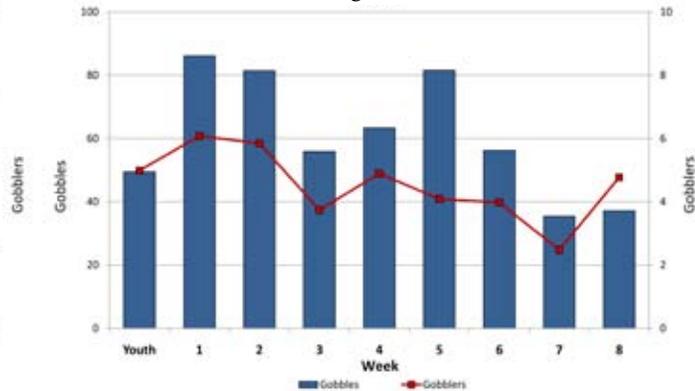
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted by Week

Figure 5

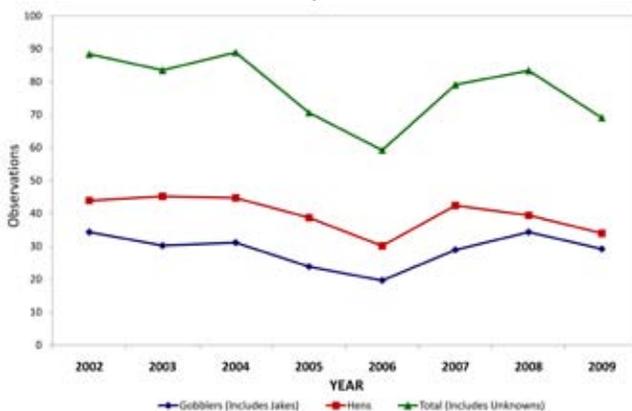


Turkey Observations

Total turkey observations decreased in 2009 to 69.1 birds per 100 hours hunting (Figure 6), and jake observations were 12.7 per 100 hours which was down significantly from a record year of 2008 with 21.5 jakes seen per 100 hours (Figure 7).

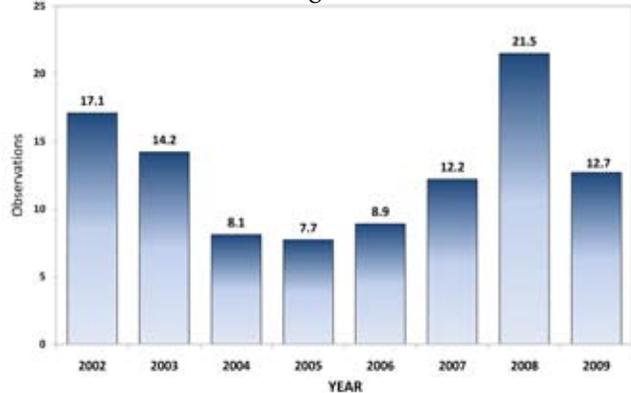
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7



2010 Season Forecast

Following a good 2009 season, Region 5 hunters will likely see fewer 2-year-olds during the 2010 Spring season. 2009 jake observations for Region 5 were lower than any region except the Delta. Hopefully, a carryover of 3-year-old birds from a great hatch in 2007 will help compensate for the reduction of hard gobbling 2-year olds in this region!



Photo by Steve Gullede

Join Our Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey Team

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

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.

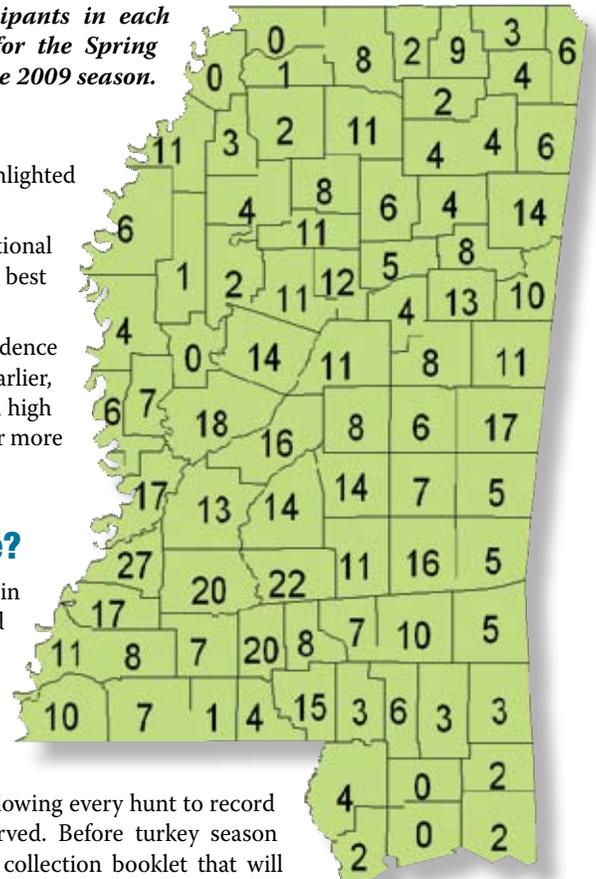
In appreciation for the collection efforts of the dedicated hunters that participate in our survey, the MDWFP shares the results with the state's sportsmen in our annual Turkey Program Report, entitled *Spittin' & Drummin'*. There are also other ways that hunters can benefit:

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 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.

This figure displays the number of participants in each county that collected and returned data for the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey during the 2009 season.

- The MDWFP will provide you with analysis of various topics that will be highlighted for you in special reports and articles.
- Management decisions of the MDWFP that directly affect your recreational opportunities as a sportsman and conservationists will be made using the best available data.
- You will become a part of our natural resource's history by gathering evidence that stands for or against questions such as should season dates be set earlier, later, or left the same? Should we allow a controlled fall season in areas with high turkey densities? Will certain regulations improve hunting quality, carry-over more gobblers, or increase gobbling activity?



How can I Participate?

If you turkey hunt anywhere in Mississippi, you are eligible and encouraged to participate. There will be absolutely no cost to you to take part in the program. The only thing that we will ask of you is to take approximately a minute or two of your time following every hunt to record information on what you observed. Before turkey season starts, we will send you a data collection booklet that will make it easy for you to document your hunting experience.

If you have never participated in the SGHS, but would like to become involved, please fill out and return the application on page 83 or contact one of the MDWFP Turkey Program biologists listed on page 1. 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.



Photo by Steve Gullede

Turkey Trivia

Interesting Facts from the 2009 Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey

Hunter Effort

- Data was collected from 6,083 turkey hunts by SGHS participants.
- A total of 17,358 hours of turkey hunting were recorded in the survey.
- Turkey Region 3 had the highest level of hunter participation in the SGHS, while Turkey Region 2 had by far the lowest.
- Approximately 20% of all hunting effort (total hours hunted) occurred during the first week of the regular season. Hunting effort declined each successive week thereafter; only 10% of all hunting effort occurred during the final week of the season.
- Most hunting effort took place during the early morning. Forty-eight percent of all hours hunted occurred before 8AM. Thirty-three percent of all hunting hours were during the mid-morning between 8AM and 12PM. The remainder of hunting effort, approximately 19%, occurred during the afternoon.
- The average turkey hunt lasted 2 hours and 52 minutes.

Gobbling Activity

- Hunters averaged hearing 5 gobblers gobbling a total of 77 times for every 10 hours hunted.
- Both gobblers and gobbles heard per 10 hours hunted during 2009 were above the 5-year statewide average for those categories.
- The numbers of gobblers heard peaked during the first week of the season at slightly over 6 gobblers heard per 10 hours hunted. Conversely, the number of gobbles heard peaked during the fifth week of the season, April 11th–17th, at slightly over 91 gobbles heard per 10 hours hunted.
- The highest number of gobblers heard per unit of effort for any specific date occurred during the Youth Season on March 13th, on which nearly 10 gobblers were heard per 10 hours hunted. During the regular season, the highest number of gobblers heard per unit of effort for any specific date occurred on March 18th and 19th on which 9 gobblers were heard per 10 hours hunted on both dates.
- The highest amount of gobbling activity per unit of effort on any specific date occurred on April 8th, on which over 158 gobbles were heard per 10 hours hunted.
- Afternoon gobbling peaked during the final week of the season in which almost 20 gobbles were heard per 10 hours hunted during the time period between Noon and Sunset.

Observations

- For every 10 hours hunted, hunters saw an average of 10 turkeys, including approximately 2 adult gobblers, 4 hens, 2 jakes, and 2 unknowns.
- The sex ratio of turkeys observed was 1.2 hens per gobbler.
- Hen observations per 10 hours hunted peaked during the first week of the season at nearly 6 hens observed per 10 hours.
- Gobbler observations per 10 hours hunted was highest during the first two weeks of the regular season at an average of 2 gobblers observed per 10 hours hunted.

Harvest

- It took an average of nearly 10 hunts for most hunters to harvest a gobbler.
- Harvest per unit of effort was highest during the Youth Season, in which approximately 5 gobblers were harvested per 100 hours hunted. During the regular season, harvest per unit of effort was highest during weeks 1 and 3, at 5 and 4 gobblers harvested per 100 hours hunted, respectively.
- The highest harvest per unit of effort on a particular day during the regular season occurred on March 16th and April 9th; on those days over 6 gobblers were harvested per 100 hours hunted.
- Although most gobblers were harvested during the first few hours following sunrise, hunters that hit the woods during the afternoon harvested birds almost as often as those that hunted in the hours before 8AM (*Table 1*), particularly if they were

able to raise a response from a gobbler. For instance, for hunts that occurred before 8AM, it took hunters on average approximately 8 hunts to harvest a gobbler. When considering pre-8AM hunts in which at least one gobble was heard, hunters harvested a gobbler for every 6 hunts. For hunts that occurred after the Noon hour, hunters on average harvested a gobbler every 13 hunts. However, if a gobbling turkey was heard during the hunt, the average number of hunts per bird harvested fell dramatically to slightly over 6—suggesting that during the course of a day, hunters have much better odds of luring a gobbling tom into range during the afternoon if a responsive bird can be found.

- Success on afternoon hunts was highest during the middle of the season. For both weeks 3 and 4, there was an average of 4 gobblers harvested per 100 hours hunted during the time period between Noon and Sunset. Harvest per unit of effort during the afternoon was lowest during the final week of the season, even though that was the week in which afternoon gobbling activity was highest.

Harvest per Unit Effort Throughout the Day

Table 1. Harvest per unit effort at three time-periods throughout the day based on Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey data in Mississippi, 2009.

	Early Morning <i>Daylight–8 AM</i>	Late Morning <i>8 AM–Noon</i>	Afternoon <i>12 PM–Sunset</i>
Overall Harvest per 100 hrs. Hunted	5.9	1.3	3.3
Harvest per 100 hrs. for Hunts on which a Bird is Heard	7.7	1.5	6.6
Avg. # of Hunts per Bird Harvested	7.6	18.0	12.4
Avg. # of Hunts per Bird Harvested for Hunts on which a Bird is Heard	5.8	14.7	6.3

Gobbler Characteristics

- Two-year-old and 3-year-old gobblers represented an equal proportion of the overall harvest at 45% each.
- Less than 1 bird in 10 sported spurs ≥ 1.25 inches.
- Only 8% of gobblers had beards ≥ 11 inches.
- Approximately 2% of gobblers were missing a spur on at least one leg. Eight adult birds were reported to not have any spurs.
- Based on the harvest data, approximately 10 adult birds out of a thousand have beards less than 7 inches.

Photo by Steve Gullede

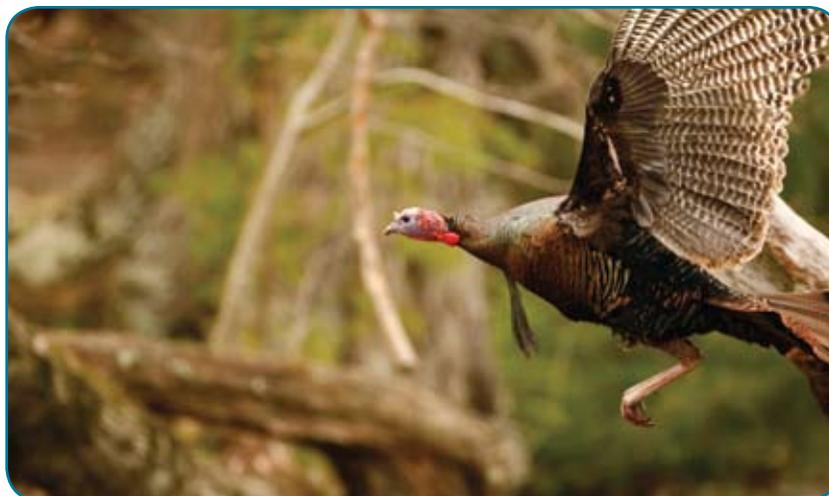


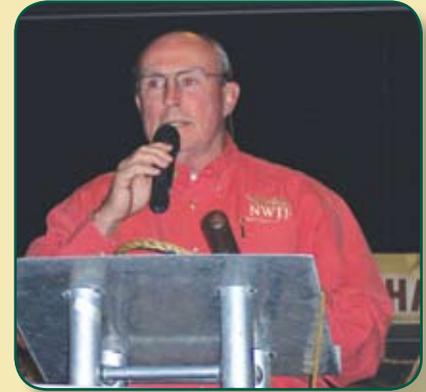


Photo by Steve Gulledge

Magnolia State Turkey Talk

It's Your NWTf!

2009 WAS ANOTHER GREAT YEAR, AND IT'S ALL BECAUSE SO MANY GREAT VOLUNTEERS GAVE THEIR time, energy, and efforts toward our many projects. We were involved in **conservation:** Over 30,000 native oak seedlings were put back into Mississippi ground. Projects were done on WMA's, reward signs were put up all over the State and rewards were paid, and seed was co-opted with our members for the benefit of wildlife. We were involved in **education:** JAKES Education Boxes were distributed to teachers, conservation workshops were conducted for teachers, and landowner workshops were conducted at 3 locations. We were involved with **youth:** JAKES Events were held from North Waterways to Liberty, with communities throughout Mississippi having events. The "Deer Hunt for Youth with Disabilities" was nationally recognized; the 2009 Hunt had 84 hunters with 58 deer, 6 hogs, and a coyote being harvested. The ladies weren't left out; there were several Women in the Outdoors events held. The philosophy "If you take-then you should give something back" sure fits with the MCNWTf. Many Chapters participated in the Turkey Hunters Care project by giving turkeys to the needy, along with the State Chapter donating to the 4-H Shooting Sports Program and to the Archery in the Schools Program. Nineteen Mississippi students were awarded scholarships.



Bob Spell, MCNWTf President

I've heard it said several times that the NWTf is "THE CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION-You folks are the go-to group. You get the job done." Believe me this makes me feel proud to be associated with all of you. It's your NWTf.

Our association with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks continues to be a valuable and productive partnership. THANK YOU to all of these dedicated people.

We ask that you continue to be involved: Attend a banquet, continue your membership, work on a project, purchase the MS Chapter car tag, and practice: conservation of the wild turkey and preservation of our hunting heritage.

It has been a genuine pleasure to serve as your President for the past two years. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this great movement.

Sincerely,

Bob Spell, President

Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation



Thank You, Joe

By James Bryant, Editor, Magnolia State Turkey Talk

IFIRST MET JOE KOLOSKI AT THE NWTf STATE AWARDS BANQUET IN JACKSON. I THINK IT WAS IN 2003. HE was introduced to everyone as the new NWTf Regional Biologist who would be working part-time in Mississippi. Because of our similar interests in good wildlife habitat management, we quickly became conservation partners.

Because I was employed as a forester with the Mississippi Forestry Commission, I soon invited Joe down to Bay Springs to help him learn more about the turkey habitat he would be working with in Mississippi, since he was from another state. Joe accepted my invitation, and we had a good day afield when he came down. That outing led us toward another common objective—a landowner workshop that could help owners better manage their land for wildlife.

Planning for a landowner workshop began in early 2004. In May, the event took place on the Miles Farm in Scott County. This proved to be a successful event, and I was pleased that my agency had been a significant partner in planning and conducting the workshop. In May 2005, another successful landowner workshop was held on the John Polk Farm in Jefferson Davis County. Once again, I thoroughly enjoyed working with Joe on such a worthy project.

After I retired from the Mississippi Forestry Commission in July of 2005, I continued my volunteer work for the NWTf. Joe willingly helped me with a number of wildlife conservation programs in the schools. He also helped me with a teacher workshop. At this point, I should mention that his wife, Tressie, often volunteered her time for the NWTf, too.

When Joe's employment position changed from Regional Biologist to NWTf Cooperative Biologist with the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, habitat improvements for wild turkeys began to accelerate in our state. So naturally I was disappointed in June 2009, when I found out that Joe would be moving to Alabama to work with the United States Forest Service, even though I knew he was making a good career choice for him and his family.

Joe was very professional, talented, personable, and caring, so I was very glad to have his help with the 2008 edition of Magnolia State Turkey Talk. Sometimes when speaking to a new group of people, Joe would say in reference to his last name, "I'm not from Mississippi, but I got here as quick as I could." To this I say, thank you Joe for getting to Mississippi as quick as you could because you have certainly helped improve our habitat for wild turkeys in Mississippi. Therefore, I pray that God will richly bless you and your family in your new location.

Mississippi Chapter NWTf: 2009 Project Highlights



Charles Ray Nix WMA

Habitat Projects

Seed Subsidy: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf in 2009 provided seed at a reduced cost to NWTf members including Turkey Gold Chufa for the Spring Seed Subsidy Program, and the NWTf's Strut and Rut Clover Concentrate mix for the Fall Seed Subsidy Program. This cost share of 50% to members provides an opportunity for members to plant wildlife openings on private land for wild turkeys and other wildlife.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$12,557.00



Charles Ray Nix WMA

Warm Season Grass Enhancement for Charles Ray Nix WMA: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf purchased herbicide for MDWFP to spray onto native warm season grass fields to control invasive Johnson Grass. These fields provide optimum habitat for nesting cover, brood rearing, and year round foraging for wild turkey and other game and non-game animals. The grain drills purchased in 2008 with Super Fund dollars were used to establish 800 acres of warm season grass strips into old fields maintained by fallow disking and fire.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$560.00



Malmaison WMA

Gates for Controlled Access on Malmaison WMA: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf provided materials to the MDWFP for the construction of three pipe gates for controlling access and protecting the road integrity of areas planted along old woods roads. These linear roads established with Super Fund dollars in 2008 provide openings valuable to wildlife in the mixed pine-hardwood stands found on the WMA. Walk-in use or non-motorized vehicles for hunters and other user groups is allowed.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$1,150.00

Bull Dozer Clearing Provided to Yockanookany WMA: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf provided funding to the MDWFP for the third year of this program to create 12 acres of wildlife openings for brood habitat, nesting cover, and foraging for wild turkeys and other wildlife.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$2,525.00

Outreach, Hunting Heritage & Education

NWTf Scholarship Program: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf awarded 21-\$250.00 scholarships to graduating seniors in Mississippi in 2009. A state scholarship winner was awarded a \$1,000.00 scholarship and competed for a \$10,000.00 national NWTf scholarship.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$6,500.00



Yockanookany WMA



Printing, Publishing, and Mailing of the “Spittin’ and Drummin’ Turkey Report: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf partnered with MDWFP to fund the publishing of 6100 copies of the state agency’s *Spittin’ and Drummin’ Turkey Report*. NWTf members in Mississippi were mailed 4900 copies to their residences. The MDWFP turkey report provides annual technical updates on the status of the wild turkey in Mississippi and includes an informative insert from the Mississippi Chapter NWTf about expenditures of dollars spent for the wild turkey.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$10,500.00

JAKES, WITO, Wheelin’ Sportsman’s Events/Hunts: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf hosted 5 local hunts or educational field days for Mississippi youth, women (WITO- Women in the Outdoors), and Whellin’ Sportsman that are physically challenged. These events provide an outdoor experience for individuals to learn about nature or experience a fall deer hunt or spring turkey hunt.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$2,170.00

Wheelin’ Sportsman–Deer Hunt for Youth with Disabilities: The Greater Jackson Chapter of the NWTf hosted a state Deer Hunt for Youth with Disabilities event in Jackson, MS. The MDWDP provided funding through a “Youth Participation Initiative Grant” to help support the weekend hunt for youth with disabilities. Other sponsor funding support came from Primos Game Calls, Bass Pro Shops, and the Mississippi Braves Baseball organization in Jackson, MS. These sponsors provided support to host 84 youth that harvested 60 deer during the weekend event in November of 2009.

Greater Jackson Chapter of NWTf: \$3,000.00

Total Project Contribution: \$15,000.00

Wild Turkey Woodlands Field Days: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf hosted a landowner field day at the Circle “M” Plantation near Macon, which 35 people attended. The second event hosted during the spring was at Rhoden Farms located near Johns, in which 30 landowners attended. The 65 people were enlightened as they toured these properties through demonstration of specific wildlife and forestry practices that can be implemented to improve habitat on private land. A total of 38,604 acres was represented by landowners attending the two events.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$721.28

NWTf Education Boxes: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf provided funding for the purchase and delivery of 40 education boxes for classroom teachers. Weyerhaeuser Company partnered with the state chapter to provide 40 NWTf education boxes for use in the Starkville, MS, school system. Another 53 Education Boxes were also purchased under the NWTf 5 Star Agreement and distributed to all Mississippi Chapter presidents to be used in local schools throughout the state. These boxes provide a curriculum that uses the turkey to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic to students from K-12 with messages about wild turkey history, biology, and conservation woven into the lesson plans. School teachers not only learn about the value of the wild turkey, but actually have written plans that can be intergraded into the classroom teaching.



MCNWTf Contribution: \$4,762.23

Hunting Heritage Donation: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf contributed funding to support the NWTf’s Hunting Heritage program. To date, the NWTf and its partners have invested more than \$286 million in upholding hunting traditions and conserving nearly 14 million acres of wildlife habitat. Some of the Federation’s Hunting Heritage Super Fund projects include improving wildlife habitat, supporting hunter education and providing opportunities for women, youth and people with disabilities to experience outdoor fun through outreach programs.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$500.00

4-H Shooting Sports Program: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf contributes funding annually to the MS 4-H Shooting Sports Program to provide financial support for high school students who participate in organized competitive shooting across the state with pistols and rifles. NWTf dollars go to purchasing equipment, travel, construction of facilities, and support of the 4-H Shooting Sports Program in Mississippi. Winners of this annual competition within Mississippi have an opportunity to travel to the NRA headquarters located in Raton, NM to participate in the national competition and represent our state.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$2,500.00

Law Enforcement Projects

Rewards Program: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf partnered with the Mississippi Wildlife Federation to pay rewards for information leading to the successful prosecution of individuals involved in illegal turkey hunting. Rewards were paid to 4 individuals in 2009. Rewards were paid to individuals in Monroe, Itawamba (2 rewards), and Tate counties for 2 turkeys killed out of season and 1 turkey killed while trespassing.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$701.00

Total Program Cost: \$1,402.00

Grant Projects

Acorns for Wildlife: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf has partnered over the last 6 years with the MDWFP, the Greater Jackson Chapter, and Mississippi State University Extension Service, and the NWTf national organization to provide reduced cost, high quality hardwood seedlings to private landowners in Mississippi. For the last several years, the Natural Resource Conservation Service has provided grant dollars for growing and distributing oaks to NWTf Chapters and members in the southeastern United States. This grant, which provides funding to support MDWFP efforts, comes through the NWTf national headquarters as part of the Operation Oak Initiative. The funding supports costs for acorn collection, trees grown in a nursery, publicity for the program, and cost reduction to landowners purchasing native oak seedlings and fertilize packets through the Acorns for Wildlife program.

NWTf Contribution: \$10,000.00

Longleaf Pine Restoration: The NWTf has partnered with the Southern Company and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for the third year to restore Longleaf Pine and conduct public education about the value of restoring longleaf forests in the state of Mississippi. Partnering with Georgia Pacific and their private landowners program 12 Mississippi landowners participated in the grants cost share program, and planted 2,800 acres to longleaf forest. During May of 2009, NWTf conducted a Wild Turkey Woodlands field day event with emphasis on longleaf pine in Hancock County, MS. This event hosted 38 landowners and impacted 3,666 acres of timberland where individuals attending learned about longleaf pine management and wild turkey biology.

Total Project Cost: \$54,575

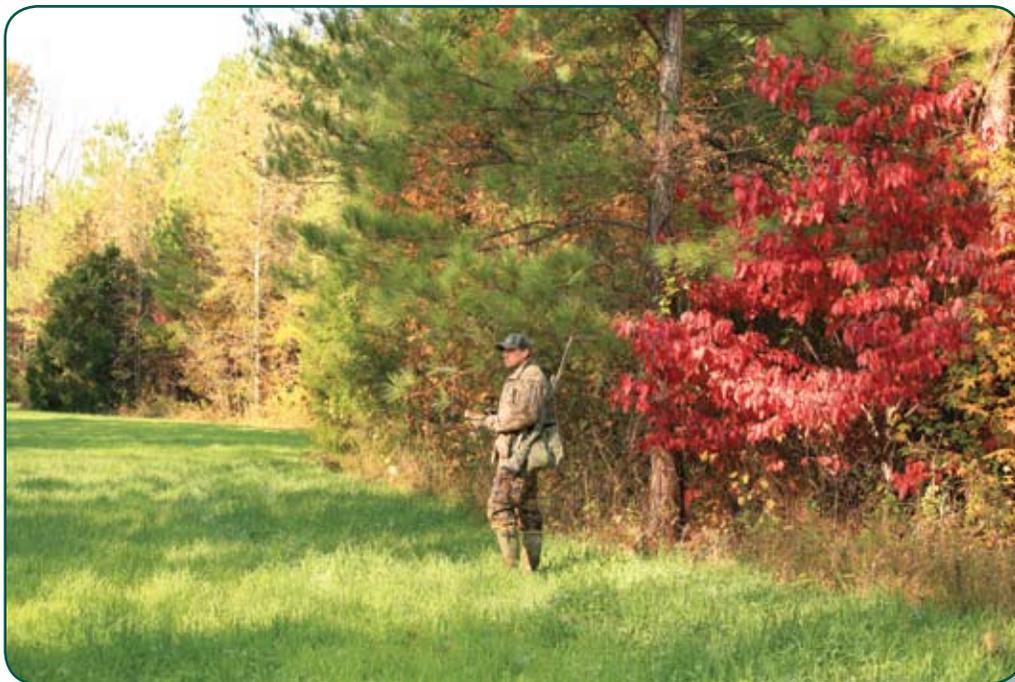


Photo by Steve Gullede

NWTF Continues Support for Mississippi's Acorns for Wildlife Initiative

FOR THE SIXTH YEAR, NWTF PARTNERED WITH THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, and Parks (MDWFP) to provide landowners statewide an opportunity to purchase native oak seedlings at a reduced cost through Mississippi's Acorns for Wildlife Program.

Funding has come from the NWTF from a multi-year grant from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to provide quality native oak seedlings at a reduced cost to Mississippi landowners. Additional partners supporting the initiative are Mississippi Chapter of NWTF, MDWFP, and Mississippi State University Extension Service

According to NWTF regional biologist Luke Lewis, acorns provide a high carbohydrate food source for turkeys and other wildlife during the fall and winter months. This food source from oak trees provides energy reserves for turkeys, deer, squirrels, ducks, and other wildlife. With the right growing conditions these high quality seedlings will begin to produce acorns at about age 10-15 years of age.

Lewis emphasizes the importance of planting native oak seedlings collected in Mississippi, as these trees are more adaptable to the soils and regions of our state. With proper planting and care, these oak trees should respond much sooner in producing the oak mast preferred as a food source by many wildlife species. Oak varieties available to landowners are usually swamp chestnut, white oak, Nuttall oak, Shumard oak, water oak, and cherrybark oak.

MDWFP biologists across the state collect available oak acorns in the fall and have them grown at a nursery with a special growing protocol that produces seedlings in most cases between 2'- 3' feet in height. The root systems are much more developed and larger and require a post hole digger or auger to plant in the ground. Lewis credits the MDWFP staff, specifically program supervisor Jim Willcutt, for

working some long hours each year collecting these acorns. Approximately 80,000 acorns are gathered by the MDWFP staff across the state with hopes of about 80% survival being available for planting the next year.

As a landowner wishing to improve their habitat on their property, planting these oak seedlings in fields or openings will add another native food source to attract wildlife for hunting or viewing. Protecting these trees from girdling by deer, rabbits, or beavers is important. Also, proper spacing between trees and reducing competition from surrounding brush and grass can improve growth and earlier production of oak mast.

The program is open to any landowner that would like to participate. Orders for the 2011 planting season will be accepted beginning October 2010. For more information about the Mississippi Acorns for Wildlife Program, or to be placed on a mailing list to receive an order form, contact Luke Lewis by telephone at 318-423-7777, or by email at llewis@nwtf.net.



Stewardship Contracting Improves Turkey Habitat on Mississippi WMA's

STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING IS AN AUTHORITY GRANTED TO THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE BY THE U.S. Congress in 2003. In essence, stewardship contracting allows the U.S. Forest Service to use revenue generated through timber sales to complete important habitat restoration and enhancement activities. This authority for taking receipts generated from sales and putting it back into habitat enhancement will continue until 2013, when the U.S. Congress will evaluate the merits of the program for reauthorization.

Typically, U.S. Forest Service timber sales that generated additional dollars could be spent on land improvements, or habitat enhancement only on the designated sale site or compartment. The Chickasawhay and Bienville Ranger Districts have broken the ice in Mississippi to generate over 3 million dollars of receipts for improving lands for both game and non-game wildlife. Both ranger districts are in the process of beginning new stewardship projects on their areas. The Chickasawhay Ranger District is introducing a 10 year plan to improve timber stands for forest health, while using the dollars generated for habitat improvements on its district and many other ranger districts in Mississippi. That is the beauty of Stewardship Contracting, where one district can request dollars generated by another for habitat and land improvements.



Mason Creek WMA Tour

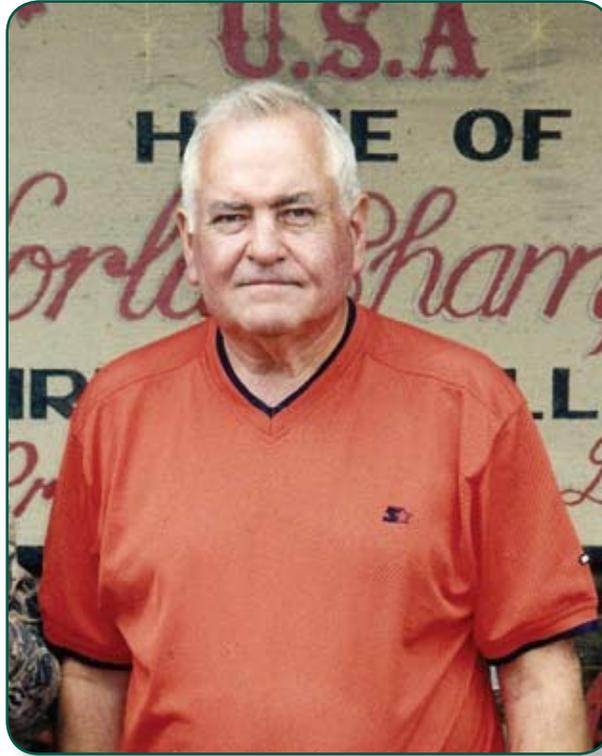


Habitat improvements on Homochitto NF

Stewardship Contracting has the potential to benefit and improve existing timber stands for good Forest Health, while opening up the timber spacing after a thinning for species that require food and cover created by the early succession plants and grasses. Native grass seed lying dormant in the soil is released by disturbance, rain, and sunlight giving way to an explosion of food plants and nesting cover for turkey and other wildlife. Usually prescribed fire is used once the area has been thinned, which again stimulates natural growth of grasses, forbs, and low growing woody plants. These harvest areas usually target improving habitat for endangered animals such as the Red Cockaded Woodpecker and Gopher Tortoise, and improving soil conditions for many rare or threatened flowers and plants. The bottom line to the turkey hunter is improved nesting cover and brood rearing habitat for turkeys.

The NWTF and the MDWFP have been involved with planning projects that benefit turkeys and other wildlife with the Chickasawhay and Bienville Ranger Districts annually. Planning and meeting with other forests like the Delta, Homochitto, Desoto, and Tombigbee National Forests and their associated ranger districts have taken place this year in hopes of creating more opportunity to provide habitat work that has specific benefits to the wild turkey.

As a volunteer, your input and involvement in potential Stewardship Contract projects is important and vital to how the National Forest lands are managed in your region of the state. All stakeholders win if we manage our forest for timber stand health, and use the renewable timber revenues to improve habitat and other recreational uses on our national forests. If you are interested in learning more about Stewardship Contracting and how you can get involved locally in the planning and public input process, please contact Luke Lewis, NWTF regional biologist at 318-423-7777 or llewis@nwtf.net.



A Tribute to Jack Dudley (1938–2008)

By Otha Barham

A Turkey Hunter is Born

JACK DUDLEY HAD NEVER KILLED A WILD TURKEY, BUT HE SAT STILL AND STAYED HIDDEN WELL AS HE called intermittently in the spring woods. He was on The Spinks Place and it was well after sunup and no turkey had gobbled. Suddenly he saw five turkeys approach. A gobbler stepped into range at 30 yards. Dudley lined up his shotgun and fired at the bird. The turkey was only wounded and flew away with the others.

Dudley followed and searched. He made two moves and calculated where the birds might have gone. Discouraged, he eventually sat down near a big briar patch to do some calling. He heard a flopping in the briars and out came his wounded gobbler, flopping along a trail coming to his call. This time Dudley's shot was true and he collected his first gobbler.

The turkey hunting fever already had infected this man, but there was no way he could know that day that this exceptional feat of calling up a freshly wounded bird was foretelling a turkey calling career that would be second to none. He could not foresee stories written about him in magazines like *Southern Outdoors* and respected national ones like *Turkey Hunter*, *Field and Stream*, *American Rifleman*, and *Fur, Fish and Game*. There was no hint when that first gobbler fell that his turkey calling would bring him friends like Jimmy Robinson of *Sports Afield* magazine and a calling exhibition for Bear Bryant and his football team. Robinson, who had hunted since the 1920's, once said of Dudley that he was the best turkey caller he had ever heard.

Dudley's friends and relatives had told him that his calling with his natural voice sounded more like a turkey than any call on the market, but on that day at The Spinks Place he never would have dreamed that one day he would be titled "National Champion" turkey caller.

Kemper County Native

Jack Dudley was raised in Kemper County, and lived there just north of DeKalb until his death in 2008. He was married to the former Mary Winner Poole. He was a stockman and worked as a field representative for Livingston Stockyards. But those who are drawn to the outdoors know him as a super star in the world of turkey hunting and turkey calling.

In the first lines of his book, “The Greatest Moments of My Life”, Dudley says “Back when I was a boy, there weren’t too many turkey hunters,” and then he names the few he knew, among them heroes to him and to many of the rest of us. Most of the old timers, like Mr. Jesse Burroughs, have passed on. But they are not forgotten. Their images pass before our minds’ eyes and their teachings live in our springtime schemes as we perpetuate the traditions of wild turkey hunting.

Jack Dudley would rise quickly in this revered sport as he hunted the flatwoods, pastures, swamps and hills, of what ultimately became some of the finest turkey woods in the nation, with guidance from these old woods wise hunters. They saw in him early on, a man who would take expert turkey hunting into a new generation. Dudley went on from those early days of tutoring by the old pros to capture turkey calling championships far and wide.

Back when turkey hunters were scarce as jake’s teeth, this East Mississippian captured many of the early calling contests by calling with his mouth. In 1967, he finished third in a state contest in which the National Champion competed. With eyes on the big trophies, Dudley began to practice almost daily, and in 1968 he won the Mississippi State Championship, the Mississippi Open, and later the 1969 National Championship, this latter event by a wide margin. He was soon on television programs in Atlanta, did programs for the Mississippi Game and Fish Commission with Paul Ott Carruth, had photo sessions with the governor and Jackson’s mayor, and got many phone calls from well wishers. He conducted exhibitions in numerous towns.

He put on an exhibition for the Mississippi State Legislature and they passed a Concurrent Resolution commending him. But Dudley wasn’t through. His domination of the Mississippi contest caused the sponsors to urge him to retire so more competitors would enter. In 1970 he was presented with a Retiring State Champion trophy.

Champion of Champions

Past national champions were invited to compete in a newly formed competition that Jack recalled was named the King of Kings event, and Dudley won that contest in 1971 and returned to win it again in 1977, winning narrowly over a young man he had tutored since the fellow, Preston Pittman, was 13 years old. Pittman had just edged out Dudley in the National finals, becoming National Champion by just points over his mentor. In those early days, Pittman won the 1973, ‘74, and ‘75 Mississippi Championships and the 1975 National Championship. He is still winning contests to this day and credits Jack Dudley for much of his success.

Famed outdoor writer Bruce Brady of Brookhaven got his turkey hunting start with Dudley. Brady, long time field editor for Outdoor Life magazine, was the first to label Jack as “Deadly Dudley” in print. Mississippi outdoor writer, Tony Kinton, referred to Dudley in his newspaper column as “my most endearing hero.” He tells of the day he was introduced to Dudley and reminds readers that Jack Dudley was “the first and the best,” referring to Mississippi’s history of turkey calling contests and great turkey hunters.

Georgian Charles Elliott, the dean of early turkey hunting writers in the country, hunted gobblers twice in Mississippi with Dudley. Dudley’s book has sold in 40 states and Northern Ireland. His recording of turkey calling sold in every turkey hunting state, including Hawaii. Three copies went to Vietnam.

In his last days, Jack Dudley preferred talking more about his grandchildren than about his championship calling and his awards and accomplishments. The members of Jack’s Gypsy Village Hunting Club treated him like a grandfather. His natural grandchildren became expert turkey callers under guidance from their grandfather, who was proud of their success.

Turkey calling champions don’t necessarily stand out in a crowd, many projecting the private, guarded nature of the typical turkey hunter who is protective of his favorite “honey hole.” But Jack Dudley was quick to share his advice, his hunting time and his hunting spots with all those who showed an interest in this grand endeavor. Somewhat strangely, he rarely hunted alone, as most gobbler hunters prefer.

Dudley was unusually outgoing, accommodating and accepting of his acquaintances. Your ideas were never disrespected. And no man could match his memory. He had to be the best listener anywhere. It seemed he could recall every bit of information in conversations from years back. Acquaintances knew Jack considered their words to be important.

Jack Dudley was known and admired by “everybody in Kemper County,” as has been said by folks in East Mississippi who knew him. He was a man who made his friends feel important because they were important to him. The turkey hunter who spent time visiting and hunting with Jack Dudley was a fortunate person indeed.

A Letter From Janene

Foreword by James Bryant

THREE BOOKS AUTHORED BY THE LATE EARL MICKEL FORM AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR WILD TURKEY world. His books inform readers about turkey callmakers—true American folk artists. These books together provide the best and most complete reference for turkey call collectors. And in response to my efforts to get Earl's literary accomplishments recognized in the Winchester Wild Turkey Museum in Edgefield, South Carolina, Janene Mickel, Earl's wife, wrote a letter to me in October, 2009, thanking me for my efforts. Her letter also provides some interesting background information about Earl's books. Janene has now given me permission to share her letter with our readers. Thus, her letter follows....

Dear Mr. Bryant,

Thank you for copying me your letter to the NWTf regarding out-of-print wild turkey books. I, as well as my children, were honored that you suggested that Earl's books be considered for inclusion.

I know that all three books were sent to the NWTf as a gift from Earl. He was a most generous man, and I sometimes think he gifted more books than he sold. I sent his books all over the country when a letter was received requesting a donation to a particular chapter's fund raising banquet. (Hundreds of them).

Earl had absolutely no English or literary background. His greatest attribute was that he wasn't afraid to TRY. He always believed he could do a job, perhaps not as well as someone else, but he was willing to try. Thank goodness. He brought so much pride and happiness to a wonderful group of callmakers and made many lasting friendships as a result. He never just "waded up to his ankles" in a project. He jumped in "up to his neck." He was so interested in and fascinated with all the different kinds of turkey calls and wanted to learn more. He made phone calls all over the country, talking to custom callmakers and asking them if they knew any other callmakers. He placed newspaper ads all over the country requesting information on a deceased callmaker. In a quite short time, he had gathered an unbelievable amount of information. Neil Cost was most impressed, and it was Neil who said, "Earl, you need to write a book. Nothing has ever been written about custom callmakers." That's where the seed was planted. The next step was our travel all over the country to interview the callmakers. Earl much preferred a personal interview versus one by telephone. It wasn't an easy journey, trying to schedule meetings and getting as many interviews as possible each day. We met some very interesting people and saw some beautiful territory. I remember that the wives of all the callmakers were so supportive of their husbands' work.

*Earl's first book, **Turkey Callmakers Past and Present, MICK'S PICKS**, was published in 1994. It was a soft-cover book because he wanted to keep it as affordable as he could. The printing was more expensive than he thought it would be,*

but only because when it came to the color pictures of the calls, he ended up with 16 pages instead of 4 pages. He just couldn't resist including more calls from his collection. So... he cut costs by going soft-cover. That was a mistake, because Earl's books were "referral" books. You didn't just read it and put it away. Folks would go back and read what he had to say about each call. A lesson was learned.

It took us about four years to sell that book out. It, as well as the other two, was self-published. The last year Earl advertised, he stated, NO REPRINTS.



Photo by Steve Gullede

We wished we hadn't done that. Not because of the monetary reason...but because we would have liked for everyone to be able to have a copy of all three books. Once you state that, you are honor bound to keep your word, and Earl was an honorable man.

*His second book, **Turkey Callmakers Past and Present, The Rest o/The Best**, was published in 1999. When Jim Casada wrote a review of that book for the NWTF, he stated, "If you are fortunate enough to own both of Earl's books, you have a wonderful guide to collecting turkey calls." By now, Earl had established his credibility and everyone wanted that first book. We were sold out, but some folks had purchased several or even a case of books, and they began to appear, online, for sale...the price becoming more and more expensive. We heard some went for as much as \$1,000.00. (We sold it for \$27.00 postpaid).*

*The third book, **Longbeards, Callmakers and Memories**, published in 2005 was a tremendous undertaking. It took him six years, and the last two years he was battling cancer. He had to bag a longbeard (no jakes or hens) in every state (except Alaska, no wild turkey there) using a call made by a callmaker from that state. Halfway through, he said he wished he had never begun that journey, but Earl was no quitter. He desperately wanted to reach his goal so he could finish the last book. He didn't want to disappoint any of the callmakers in the book, but he knew his mortality was in question. How happy he was when he bagged that final longbeard. In the meantime, he had decided to declare **NO REPRINTS** on the second and third books, also.*

The children and I have had so many requests to reprint, but we honor Earl's decision. If the NWTF does wish to include Earl's three books in their museum, and they say they don't have them, I will be happy to donate.

*I am sorry to tell you of the **NO REPRINT** decision of Earl's... but that is how it is.*

*I would like to tell you one more thing, although this letter is becoming a book in itself. In the first book, Earl rated the calls **MICK'S PICKS**. The*

*more letters, the higher the rating. I begged him to **NOT** do that. It was my fear that some callmakers would be hurt, disappointed, or even angry if they thought their call wasn't rated as they thought it should be. Earl told me that someone needed to **TAKE THE STEP**. He said he wasn't rating the calls on how they sounded but on collectability. He explained that the rating was "one man's opinion." Some callmakers received no letters, just their write-up and not one callmaker complained. They were all just proud and grateful to be included in the book. Earl always said, "Callmakers are the salt of the earth."*

Jim Casada is probably the best man to approach with your Out-of-Print Books Committee. He is a most knowledgeable and noted book collector and appraiser. He has written reviews on books for the NWTF.

I apologize for the length of this letter. I'm certain it is most obvious how proud I am of Earl's accomplishments, and once again, thank you for suggesting that his books be included in the NWTF museum. They should be there!

*Yours truly,
Janene Mickel*

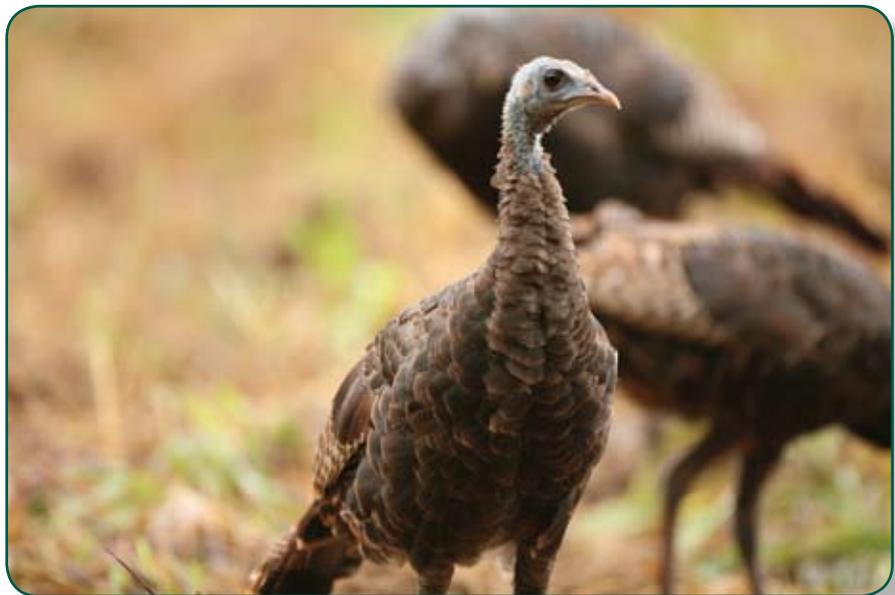


Photo by Steve Gulledge

MCNWTF Conducts Teacher Workshop

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MISSISSIPPI, THE MISSISSIPPI CHAPTER AND THE TALLAHALA LONGBEARDS Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) conducted a workshop to better inform teachers about wildlife conservation. The workshop was offered to teachers free-of-charge. Attending teachers received continuing education units (CEUs), teaching aids, and a Peterson Field Guide book of their choice. Ten teachers, representing five different schools, attended the June 2-3, 2009, event.

Bay Springs High School library was the training site for the inside portion of the workshop and the outside portion took place on Tallahala Wildlife Management Area and Marathon Lake Recreation Area in the Bienville National Forest.

Workshop instructors and assistants are listed as follows: James Bryant, Jane Bryant, Abby Coffman, and Joe Koloski, representing the NWTF; Adam Butler, Dave Godwin, and Brian Gordon, representing the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks; Tommy Rogers, representing the U.S. Forest Service; Otha Barham, outdoor writer for the Meridian Star; Paul Meek, representing Paul Meek Outdoors; Waldo Cleland, representing Mississippi Archery in the Schools Program; and Ed Brown representing the Mississippi Forestry Commission. The workshop planning committee was chaired by James Bryant and Jane Bryant served as committee secretary.



Pictured above are school teachers and support personnel that participated in a wildlife conservation workshop in Bay Springs (June 2009). The workshop was organized and co-sponsored by the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Financial supporters for the workshop in addition to the NWTF were the Jasper County Forestry Association and Forestry Suppliers, Inc. from Jackson. Door prizes were supplied by Cabela's Inc. from Sidney, Nebraska.

As moderator, James Bryant dedicated the workshop to the memory of Mr. Gene Nunnery of Meridian, Mississippi. Mr. Nunnery was a well-known ethical turkey hunter, wildlife conservationist, and author of two books. One of these books, "The Old Pro Turkey Hunter" was referred to a number of times during the workshop.

The idea for the workshop was born out of the Mississippi Chapter's "THINK TURKEY, MISSISSIPPI!" public information campaign.

2009 Wheelin' Sportsmen Deer Hunt for Youth with Disabilities

A VERY SPECIAL EVENT TOOK PLACE IN MISSISSIPPI ON THE WEEKEND OF NOVEMBER 6-8, 2009. THIS event is known as the annual Wheelin' Sportsmen Deer Hunt for Youth with Disabilities. And what makes this annual event special are the special kids that participate in the Hunt. Oh, by the way, all of the supporters of this event seem to be pretty special, too.

Last year, this event had four co-hosts: Bass Pro Shops; the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP); the National Wild Turkey Federation (i.e., Wheelin' Sportsmen NWTF, the Mississippi Chapter of the NWTF, and the Greater Jackson Chapter of the NWTF), and Primos Hunting Calls. In 2009, these co-hosts were joined by a new co-host, the Mississippi Braves. And the close proximity of their baseball facility was a natural fit for some of the Hunt activities that normally take place at the Bass Pro Shop site in Pearl. For example, both the Friday night banquet and the Sunday lunch and testimonial service took place at Trustmark Park. Steve DeSalvo is General Manager for the Mississippi Braves. His involvement with the event is very much appreciated by the Hunt planning committee. And thank you Dan Robinson for your help in finding this new co-host.

Once again, the Bass Pro Shop allowed their foyer to be used to check-in the Hunt participants on Friday. In addition to Bass Pro Shop Manager Pat Renegar's continued involvement with planning and conducting this youth event, Pat also assigned some of his employees to help with planning and conducting the 2009 Hunt. Therefore, *Magnolia State Turkey Talk (MSTT)* is recognizing these individuals for a job well done. They are: T. C. Clark; Stacy Dearman; and Rick Spietchly.

Thankfully, Ben Jones and other members of Cleary Baptist Church continued their good work from last year by providing the food service for the 2009 Hunt.

Actually, they expanded their assistance by providing hot dogs, chips, and drinks for Friday's lunch.



Preston Pittman seems to be having lots of fun with Hunt participants Bobo Barefield (center) and Corey Pierce (right).



Samantha Lee was all smiles when she checked-in for the 2009 Hunt.



The youth hunter check-in station was once again staffed by volunteers, Nicole McClendon (left) and Harriet Lowe (right).



What are these two legally blind hunters talking about at the Friday night banquet? The next day's hunt of course. Pictured, left to right, are Kainen Gilley and Austin Nix.



The 2009 Hunt was the fourth one attended by youth hunter Patrick Files and Family.

For the second year in a row, the Magnolia Rifle and Pistol Club graciously allowed the Hunt participants the use of their shooting range to test-fire their firearms on Friday of the Hunt weekend. And Chris McDonald and his MDWFP co-workers did an outstanding job readying kids for hunting the next day.

But the real story of the Hunt weekend is twofold. One part of the story, of course, is the deer hunting itself, which continues to be a very successful venture for an ever-growing number of participants. In just four years, the number of participants has grown from 28 to 84. And the Hunt has expanded from being solely headquartered at the Bass Pro Shop to additional hunts at two remote locations. These locations are: Adams County (5 kids) and Jones County (6 kids).

Harvest totals for the 2009 Hunt are: 58 deer, which includes 22 bucks and 36 does; 6 hogs; and one coyote. Out of these totals, 9 hunters harvested their first deer. All hunts were made possible because 37 landowners and/or hunting clubs graciously donated the use of their properties.

Another part of the Hunt story that is worth noting is the number of friendships that continue to be developed and sustained among the youth hunters, their families, and the Hunt supporters. In fact, among veteran participants and supporters, the Hunt is taking on the nature of a family reunion. And *MSTT* was pleased to learn that a number of Hunt participants are enjoying hunts with their hunting hosts/guides throughout the hunting seasons. Therefore, *MSTT* asked the mother of Hunt participant Dakota Martinez to write an article about new hunting buddies Dakota and guide David Ruth. Thankfully, Kristy Smith agreed to do this and her article appears elsewhere in *MSTT* under the title of "Huntin' Buddies: A Mother's Story."



Pictured front row, left to right, are Cliff White Chapter Youth Hunt participants, Will Graves, Dylan Robinson, Zach Miles, David Moss, Grant Carter, and Jonathan Smith. Standing behind David Moss is MCNWTF Board Member Tommy Walters.



Shelly West was one of the nine youth hunters that harvested their first deer during the 2009 Hunt.



Santa Claus was a surprise visitor during the Friday night banquet. Santa handed out gift bags to all Hunt participants.

MSTT also wants to recognize two other persons for their very good efforts in promoting and conducting the Hunt. Joe Woods, Regional Director for the NWTF, has served as chairman for the event planning committee for all four years that the Hunt has taken place. And Chad Dacus, MDWFP Deer Program Coordinator, has served as chief liaison between his Agency and other Hunt supporters. Also, thanks go to Chad's wife who helped with event photographs.

The growing number of financial supporters of the Hunt other than those already mentioned are likewise thanked by MSTT. Without their continued support, the Hunt cannot continue on an annual basis.

Now, what about the 2010 Hunt? It was amazing to observe how many persons left the 2009 Hunt greatly anticipating the next one. Some have mentioned a goal of 100 kids participating in 2010. Based on past and growing accomplishments, this seems to be an achievable goal.

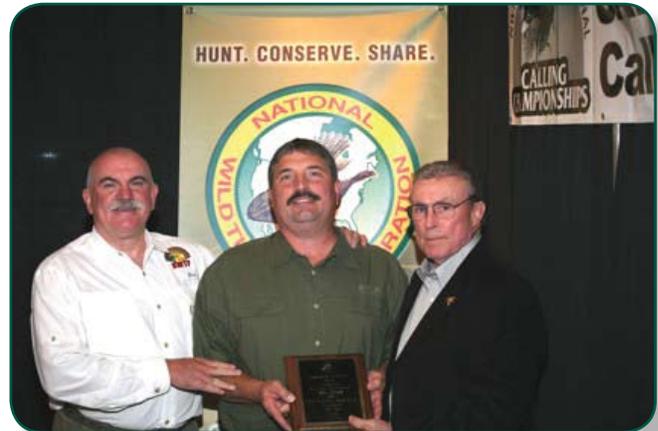
Anyone out there want to volunteer to help in 2010? If so, please contact the Mississippi Chapter, NWTF.



Patrick Davis was the winner in the Youth Gun Drawing held Sunday morning. Pictured with Patrick is Smokey Bear and Chad Dacus, MDWFP Deer Program Coordinator.



Joe Wood, Regional Director for the NWTF, has served as chairman of the planning committee for the Hunt for four years. Joe was recognized for his outstanding work at the 2009 State Awards Banquet. Pictured above, left to right are Mark Wallace, Joe, Scott Cumbest, and Bob Spell.



Ben Jones and his fellow church members at Cleary Baptist Church continue to provide the annual Hunt with great food service. Ben was recognized for his valuable volunteer work at the 2009 State Awards Banquet. Pictured above, left to right are Joe Wood, Ben, and Bob Spell.

Cliff White Chapter Hosts Deer Hunt for Youth with Disabilities

WHAT BEGAN AS A DREAM IN TOMMY WALTER'S HEART JUST A FEW MONTHS AGO BECAME REALITY this past weekend. The Cliff White Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, in conjunction with the Mississippi Chapter's annual hunt headquartered at the Bass Pro Shop in Pearl, MS, sponsored their first Youth with Disabilities Deer Hunt the weekend of November 6-8. The hunt and all other activities were held at Adventure Lake near Laurel, MS. Owners Jay Fenton and Neil Scrimshire opened up their property and their hearts to six hunters and their families, along with over fifty volunteers, for a weekend of hunting, fishing, food, and fellowship.

When Tommy first approached the chapter committee members about being involved in this activity, we all agreed, but did not know what we were signing up for. The Mississippi State Chapter of the NWTf has sponsored a Youth with Disabilities hunt in the Jackson area for several years. Tommy felt that if we could hold a hunt locally, we would be able to accommodate some young people who could not make it to the Jackson event. Once the location at Adventure Lake was secured, the real work began. Over the next several weeks, donations were solicited, volunteers stepped up, and most importantly, hunters were signed up. We were able to sign up six hunters; David Moss, Zach Miles, Grant Carter, Will Graves, Dylan Robinson, and Jonathan Smith.

The hunters and their families began to converge on Adventure Lake at noon on Friday, Nov. 6. They were signed in and assigned their rooms and the guides who would accompany them on their hunts. After signing in, they were all given a hunter safety training session by local members of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks. The first hunts took place that afternoon and one nice doe was killed. After the hunt, everyone settled in for a wonderful supper of brisket, baked beans, and potato salad. This was followed by a wonderful selection of desserts prepared by several of our volunteers. After the meal, new friendships began to be forged between hunters, guides, and volunteers.

Saturday morning started early with a "big boy" breakfast of biscuits, tomato gravy, eggs, grits, bacon, and sausage. This was washed down with hot coffee, cold milk, and orange juice. Five hunters went out with their guides after breakfast. The deer were not very active, but we had one lucky hunter return with a nice six-point-buck. After the hunt, everyone made their way down to the lake for some fishing. Over the next couple of hours, a lot of big bream and a couple of nice bass were landed by our gang of youngsters. We then enjoyed a lunch of hamburgers and hot dogs. After lunch a short ceremony was held where Tommy presented each hunter with a trophy and some other prizes.

The evening hunts went well, with two more bucks, a spike and a four-point, being brought in to the skinning rack. Friendships continued to be solidified over a supper of grilled chicken, baked beans, and cole slaw. After the meal, everyone made their way out to the campfire for more fun and some musical entertainment.

Most of the hunters went home Saturday night, but two remained overnight. After another large breakfast on Sunday morning, a devotion was given by Gary Cockrell. At about mid morning, camp was broken and everyone went home.

It would be impossible to attempt to thank everyone by name, but the Cliff White Chapter expresses our thanks to everyone who participated, from the hunters to all the volunteers. The joy that we witnessed and new found friendships and love we felt cannot be put into words, at this time. This was just the beginning, and we are already looking forward to next year's event.

Bruce West
November 10, 2009

Huntin' Buddies: A Mother's Story

By Kristy Smith

MY NAME IS KRISTY SMITH AND I HAVE A THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD SON BY THE NAME OF DAKOTA MARTINEZ. Dakota was born with cerebral palsy and doctors said he would probably never walk or talk. To make a long story short, he is able to walk and talk today. He still has some problems that keep him from doing many things that other children do, but overall, he is doing great. Dakota has a passion for hunting. It is one thing that does not separate him from the outside world. He lives and breathes hunting. It was very hard to get him in a place that would be easy access for him where we live. Then, someone mentioned to me a hunt that was put on for children with disabilities in Pearl, MS. I immediately checked into it to see what it was all about. Bass Pro and the National Wildlife Turkey Federation put a hunt on for children with disabilities. I signed Dakota up for his first hunt in November of 2008. We arrived at Bass Pro to do registration and to meet everyone that helps with the hunt. Dakota was then paired up with David Ruth who would be his guide for the hunt. These guides prepare food plots well in advance for these children. The next morning Dakota went for his hunt and killed his very first deer. I can not even begin to tell you the joy that it brought to him. It was an amazing experience and one that he will never forget. In this whole process we all have become very close to his guide David. We continued to keep in touch throughout the following months. He became to be more like family. Dakota thinks the world of this man. David has made an enormous difference in Dakota's life and it just overwhelms me that people like him take out the time to make a difference in these children's life. The relationship between Dakota and David continued on into the spring. Turkey season came and David wanted to help Dakota get his first turkey. David set things up for Dakota and off we went back to Pearl. Dakota was able to kill his first turkey with a 10 ½ inch beard. I could spend all day trying to explain how this one man has changed the life of my son immensely. I am so thankful for being able to have the experience of this whole process. I thank God for pairing Dakota up with David because he has become someone Dakota looks up to and enjoys being with so much. The hunt was great and Dakota was so excited to be able to kill his first deer and turkey. The one thing that has come out of this that Dakota will be able to take with him for the rest of his life is the relationship that developed through his experience. Now we make this hunt a top priority and enjoy it like a mini vacation. Thanks to Bass Pro and the National Wildlife Turkey Federation for a life changing experience.



David Ruth of Brandon with his huntin' buddy Dakota Martinez.

Chapter News Briefs

Mississippi Chapter: For the fourth year in a row, the Mississippi Chapter operated a teacher information center in its booth at the 2009 Wildlife Extravaganza in Jackson. Fifty teachers stopped by the MCNWTF booth on Friday and Saturday to participate in free drawings for educational aids for their school. Grades K-6 teachers were allowed to participate in a drawing for one of two "Wild About Turkey Education Boxes" and grades 7-12 teachers were allowed to participate in a drawing for one of three Peterson Field Guide books entitled "Birds of Eastern and Central North America." Box winners were Bentonia-Gibbs Elementary School and Simpson County Academy. Book winners were Brandon High School, Newton High School, and Port Gibson High School.

During the May, 2009, MCNWTF Board of Directors meeting, board members were elected to serve two-year terms. Those elected to serve from May, 2009, until May, 2011, are: Gary Barber (Chunky), John Lyle Briggs (Bailey), Jim Bush (Collins), Cliff Covington (Port Gibson), Frank Dantone (Greenville), Terry Farris (Mantachie), Jared "Hut" Hutto (Laurel), Marc Measells (Starkville), Wayne Smith (Gautier), and Tommy White (McComb).

As the State Awards Banquet has been operating at a financial loss for the last two years, the MCNWTF Board of Directors voted to discontinue the Banquet at its August, 2009, board meeting. Starting with the 2010 banquet season, State awards winners will be recognized at the various local chapter events.

Bienville Chapter: The Bienville Chapter supported a Women In The Outdoors event at Roosevelt State Park (Oct. 30-Nov.1) by helping with the financial arrangements.

Choctaw County Chapter and East Mississippi Chapter: These two chapters combined resources to host a Women In The Outdoors event at Circle M Plantation in Noxubee County on Halloween weekend.

Cliff White Chapter: The Cliff White Chapter hosted a first-time deer hunting event in Jones County for youth with disabilities. This event was conducted in conjunction with the 2009 Hunt headquartered at the Bass Pro Shop in Pearl. (Chapter President Bruce West has written a feature story about the Jones County event. It appears elsewhere in *Magnolia State Turkey Talk*).

Greater Jackson Chapter: The Greater Jackson Chapter donated 100 frozen turkeys to various charities operating in the metro Jackson area for meals for Thanksgiving, 2009. During the past four years, the Chapter has participated in the NWTF's "Turkey Hunters Care" program, donating approximately 400 frozen turkeys for that time period. Once again, the members would like to thank everyone who supports their Chapter in a way that allows them to help needy persons during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

Smith County Chapter: During its Hunting Heritage Banquet in May, 2009, the Smith County Chapter continued its practice of awarding an academic scholarship to a senior at all three high schools in Smith County. Scholarships went to the following students: Bayle Bryant-Mize High School; Brenton Shelby-Taylorville High School; and Kelsea Wedgeworth-Raleigh High School.

Tallahala Longbeards Chapter: In May, 2009, the Tallahala Longbeards concluded its fourth year of sponsorship of a JAKES Conservation Class for third graders at Sylva-Bay Academy. Meetings centered on wildlife conservation were held monthly. The last program of the year consisted of a field trip to Tallahala Wildlife Management Area and Marathon Lake Recreation Area in the Bienville National Forest. Students were awarded certificates of participation in the JAKES class at the end of the 2008-09 school year.

In May 2009, the TLC participated in a Natural Resource Conservation Field Day for fourth grade students in Jasper County. Approximately 145 students from both public and private schools attended the event. One of the six stops on the morning program dealt with wild turkey biology and management. TLC President James Bryant served as the field day planning chairman.

In October 2009, the TLC sponsored a booth at the "Montrose Day" celebration. Committee member Ed Brown manned the booth for the Chapter. The TLC has participated in this event for the last four years.

Women in the Outdoors Events

Roosevelt State Park

October 30–November 1, 2009
(Reprinted by permission of Brenda Valentine)



Roosevelt State Park near Morton, Mississippi, came alive with outdoors during Halloween weekend. NWTF Regional Director Abby Coffman hosted a Women in the Outdoors event for ladies wanting to learn new skills and share fun times with other outdoor gals. Participants came from all over Mississippi and a few neighboring states to support the program while enjoying the beauty of the Park.

Circle M Plantation WITO Event

October 30–November 1, 2009

Circle M Plantation, near Macon, MS also held a Women in the Outdoors event on the same weekend. This event as seen in photos was enjoyed by all the participants.



Jakes Event Held at Bay Springs Lake on Tennessee Tombigbee Waterway

THE NORTH WATERWAY CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FOUNDATION AND THE MISSISSIPPI Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) sponsored a Jakes event October 17th, 2009 at Jackson's Camp Youth and Handicap area on Bay Springs Lake. Many of the youths came with Mom or Dad and both the youth and parents had a great time. The event has been held for the last six years for youth in the local area in an effort to promote safety and to introduce children to the outdoors. Activities this year were geared for 8-15 year old youths and consisted of four stops.



Archery and range safety was one stop available. At this stop the youth learned about archery safety and shot at targets with bows and arrows that were provided. This year one of the archery range volunteers was a hunter visiting from Germany. He was here in the U.S. hunting on the Divide Section Wildlife Management Area. He gave the participants an idea of how lucky they were to live in a country where they could hunt. Participants were amazed to hear him explained some of the challenges of hunting in his home country.



Lunch was provided by the chapter and each participant was entered into a drawing for a new twenty gauge shotgun. This year's winner was Ms. George of Booneville.



After the remaining door prizes were given out NWTF Chapter president Terry Farris thanked the group and parents for coming and invited them to join the best conservation group around. All total about ninety-six people attended the event. Forty-eight were participants.

NWTF Volunteer Profile

MAGNOLIA STATE TURKEY TALK TAKES THIS OCCASION TO INTRODUCE ALL OF ITS READERS TO MARK Wallace, NWTF volunteer who is presently serving as Wheelin' Sportsmen Coordinator for Mississippi.

At the time of this writing, Mark is 41 years old and is a resident of Pearl River County. His full-time occupation is Director of Residential Energy Management for Coast Electric Power Association (CEPA). His office is located in Bay St. Louis, and he has been employed by CEPA for 17 years.

Mark is not at all unfamiliar with a number of NWTF members, since he has served as auctioneer for NWTF banquets. Mark was also in attendance at the NWTF State Awards Banquet on January 30, 2009, where he was presented with the "Communicator of the Year" award for 2008. This award was well-deserved by Mark as he has been very active in outdoor media outlets for a number of years. He also has awards, affiliations, and interests that are too numerous to mention in *Magnolia State Turkey Talk*.

In regard to his role as Wheelin' Sportsmen Coordinator, Mark has stated the following: "I am honored to be a part of the Wheelin' Sportsmen program and get such a blessing from the young folks and their families that participate each year. I have made lifelong friends through the organization, and I look forward to many great years to come. Joe Wood, along with many folks that I cannot even begin to mention, has done an outstanding job putting together the yearly youth hunt. This year (2009), we had 84 participants, and we look forward to hosting 100 children next year and having some successful satellite hunts."

"God has blessed me with a healthy family and it is great to have them serve in the program. We all take advantage of the health and freedom we have without being thankful. This organization really keeps me grounded and lets me know how truly blessed I am. I would ask for everyone to continue to pray for the success of the program and remember each and every participant's family. If anyone would like me to come and speak on behalf of the program, please feel free to contact me at 601-772-9132 or markwallace@coastepa.com."

Mark is married to the former Marsha Alexander. They have three children: Colby (son—age 17); Caylie (daughter—age 15); and Courtnie (daughter—age 13). The family attends New Henleyfield Southern Baptist Church.

Mississippi Chapter NWTF

2009 Awards Banquet



Communicator of the Year
Mark Wallace



Highest Net Dollars Raised
Marion County Chapter



Golden Gobbler Chapters
Lawrence County, Pike/Amite Counties, Miss-Lou, Greater Jackson, Three Rivers, Chickasawhay, and Pearl River County



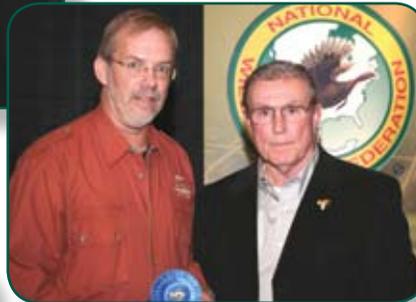
Outstanding Banquet
 North—Three Rivers Chapter (not pictured)
 South—Lawrence County Chapter



Outstanding State Board Member
 Gary Barber



Outstanding Jakes Membership
 #1—Pike/Amite County Chapter
 #2—Lawrence County Chapter



Outstanding Regular Membership
 #1—Miss/Lou Chapter
 #2—Chuquatonchee Chapter (not pictured)



Outstanding Sponsor Membership
 #1—Marion County Chapter
 #2—Lawrence County Chapter



Outstanding WITO Membership
 #1—East Mississippi Chapter
 #2—Pearl River Chapter



The Dr. Jerry King Scholarship
 Byron Burkhalter, pictured with
 parents (l) & Dr. King (r)



Two Old Birds
 Guest speaker Ronnie "Cuz" Strickland
 with State Chapter President Bob Spell

2009 Mississippi Turkey Calling Contest

TURKEY CALLERS FROM SEVERAL STATES ASSEMBLED AT THE BASS PRO SHOP IN PEARL ON SATURDAY morning, January 31, 2009, to compete in the various divisions of competition offered in the Mississippi Turkey Calling Contest.

This was a NWTF sanctioned calling contest with the winners of the Mississippi Open and the Mississippi Championship qualifying to compete in the NWTF Grand National calling contests held each year at the annual NWTF Convention. Gary Barber of Meridian served as chairman of the contest planning committee. Kenny Odom of Waynesboro served as the contest moderator. Both of these gentlemen presently hold positions on the Board of Directors for the Mississippi Chapter, NWTF.

Judges for the contest were Tony Bishop, Earnie Herrington, Preston Pittman, Jimmy Primos, Ron Seiss, Ronnie "Cuz" Strickland, and Demsey White.

Contest divisions and contest winners are listed below:

Youth Division	
1st place	Emily Oliver
2nd place	Benjamin Pentecost
3rd place	Christopher Drake

Gene Nunnery Memorial Division	
1st place	Seth Sturgeon
2nd place	Austin Newell
3rd place	Benjamin Pentecost

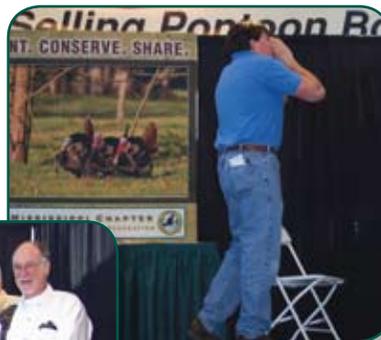
Ladies Only Division	
1st place	Emily Oliver
2nd place	Hailey Long
3rd place	Micah Pentecost

Friction Call Division	
1st place	Terrance Williamson
2nd place	Hailey Long
3rd place	Seth Sturgeon

Mississippi Open Division	
1st place	Saddler McGraw
2nd place	Shane Hendershot
3rd place	Jason Conrad

Mississippi Championship Division	
1st place	Corey Melton
2nd place	Chuck Rose
3rd place	Jason Conrad

Owling Division	
1st place	Corey Melton
2nd place	Saddler McGraw
3rd place	Dennis Neal



Corey Melton demonstrates his winning style in the Owling Division.



Winners in the Ladies Only Division are shown above, front row, left to right: Hailey Long—2nd place; Micah Pentecost—3rd place; and Emily Oliver—1st place. Contest judges are shown on the back row.



Tail Feathers

TURKEY TALK

By James Bryant, Editor, Magnolia State Turkey Talk
 Assistants to the Editor: Jane Bryant and Susan Kuykendall



MY FAVORITE BOOK ABOUT WILD TURKEYS AND DEDICATED HUNTERS THAT HAVE HUNTED THEM is entitled "The Old Pro Turkey Hunter." Gene Nunnery decided to write this book after hunting wild turkeys for 53 seasons in East Mississippi and West Alabama. His book was first published in 1980. It has been out-of-print for quite a few years, so I am not going to say what it cost me to obtain a copy online. But, I will say this: I have read the book no less than ten times during the last five or six years. For sure, I read it just before every turkey season begins, because this book helps me keep everything in the proper perspective. You see, it is full of "Turkey Talk," the kind I hunger for.

I don't know if I can completely explain what the words "Turkey Talk" mean, but every true turkey hunter will recognize turkey talk for what it is. For certain it is all centered on our North American Wild Turkey, the greatest of all game species to hunt. When I deeply reflect upon my experiences with the wild turkey, Psalm 8:5 (KJV) comes to mind. This verse says, "For thou hast made him (i.e., man) a little lower than the angels ----." Okay, I accept this biblical truth, but I will also vote for wild turkeys as occupying the number three spot in the creative work of the Almighty. However, I have crossed paths with several turkey gobblers that seemingly thought they occupied the number two spot.

Thank goodness there is no closed season on turkey talk. Yes, turkey talk is what sustains us turkey hunters throughout the year. Turkey talk can be enlightening, confusing, truthful, untruthful, exciting, depressing, consoling, humorous, but it is always interesting. Outdoor writer Otha Barham once stated in a wildlife conservation workshop for teachers that turkey talk is unique, because turkey hunters so often "celebrate" defeat by talking about their lost battles with their worthy opponent.

Turkey talk comes to us in various ways: One-on-one conversations, group gatherings, wildlife meetings and exhibitions, etc. Much of it comes by way of the printed page other than books. For example, two of my favorite episodes of turkey talk are found in "Turkey Call" magazine. One article, "Gabriel of South Ridge" by Otha Barham, July/August 2002 issue, focuses on the season-long battle with a memory-making turkey. The other article, "The Last Shot" by Ron Jolly, March/April 2007 issue, focuses on another important part of our turkey world, that being the people who hunt turkeys and their shared experiences.

In his book, Gene Nunnery keeps alive the memories of three "Old Pro" turkey hunters who were all mentors to him to some degree. Their names are Kyle Delk, Tony McCleb, and Gabe Meadow. However, the most influential to a young Gene Nunnery was Gabe Meadow. Their friendship evolved from their shared interest in turkey hunting. It began when Gene was only 15 years old. At that time, Gabe Meadow was in his late sixties. Throughout his book Gabe Meadow is presented as an ethical turkey hunter of unquestionable standing.

Under the Chapter title of "The Saga of Gallberry Joe," Gene tells about a turkey hunting trip he took with Gabe Meadow down to Lane County (probably Wayne County) to hunt a widely-known turkey by the name of Gallberry Joe. This trip occurred when Gene was about 21 years old. Before any hunting was done, Gabe told Gene that they would visit a master turkey hunter in the area, ninety year old Tony McCleb, to engage in some turkey talk. In regard to this plan, Gene Nunnery stated the following in his book: "Nothing could have pleased me more. I never have had enough turkey talk even to this day."

One of my favorite lines found in Gene's book soon follows. As these three men sat in the light of a fireplace in the old rural, dog-trot house, Gene noted and later recorded the following: "As Tony spun his story, I would look at Gabe to see on his face the satisfaction of time being well spent." To me, this statement speaks volumes about this whole business of turkey hunting and its necessary and constant companion, turkey talk.



As stated earlier in this writing, "The Old Pro Turkey Hunter" is full of turkey talk, both ageless and endearing to its readers. But I mainly put forth Mr. Gene's book as an example of who-knows-how-many turkey books that are currently out-of-print. Likewise, I have sadly observed that there is but little interest among turkey hunters to ensure the availability of such books once again. Believe me, these books are a very important part of our turkey world and our turkey talk. Turkey hunters must find a way to republish them! If this could happen, then certainly we would likely and often see in the face of our turkey hunting associates the satisfaction of time being well spent.

Good huntin', y'all,

HUNT, CONSERVE, SHARE.

Photo Gallery



MDWFP Wild Turkey Program Coordinator Dave Godwin is pictured (rear view) while explaining how a rocket net is used for the capture of live turkeys for relocation purposes. Listening to Dave are school teachers participating in a wildlife conservation workshop sponsored by the MCNWTF.



Jane Bryant, Tallahala Longbeards Chapter, helped operate the teacher information center in the MCNWTF booth at the Wildlife Extravaganza.

This picture should serve as proof that the drumsticks on a wild turkey are too tough to eat. Dakota Martinez is shown with "Joe" the turkey.



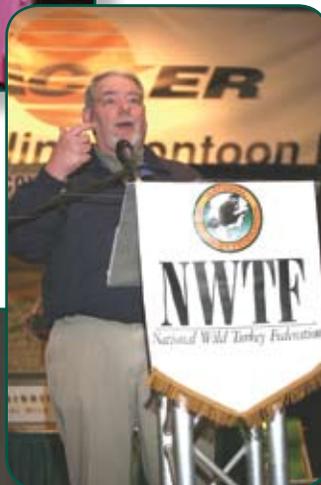
The way Jimmy Primos (left) and Will Primos (right) are grinning, it must have been a Primos call that led to the capture of this wild (?) turkey at the Wildlife Extravaganza.



MCNWTF Past Presidents were recognized at the 2009 State Awards Banquet. Pictured, left to right, are: Robert Higginbotham, Steve Gullede, Gene Davis, Revel Rawlings, Kenny Odom, and current President Bob Spell.



This group of kids were all prize winners at the JAKES/Extreme JAKES Callin' Corner during the Tallahala Longbeards Chapter Hunting Heritage Banquet. On the back row, left to right, are TLC President, James Bryant, MCNWTF Board member, Jim Bush, and TLC Committee Member, Ed Brown. (Photo courtesy of The Jasper County News.)



The featured speaker at the 2009 State Awards Banquet was Ronnie "Cuz" Strickland. Thanks "Cuz" for helping to enrich our outdoor experiences.



In addition to MCNWTF President, Bob Spell, these officers were also present at the 2009 State Awards Banquet. Pictured, left to right, are: Barry Biggers, Treasurer; Scott Combest, Vice President; and Kenny Odom, Secretary.



The Greater Jackson Chapter participated in the NWTF's "Turkey Hunters Care" program during the Thanksgiving holiday week. Pictured are Bob Spell (left) and Brian Sartain (right), Chapter President.

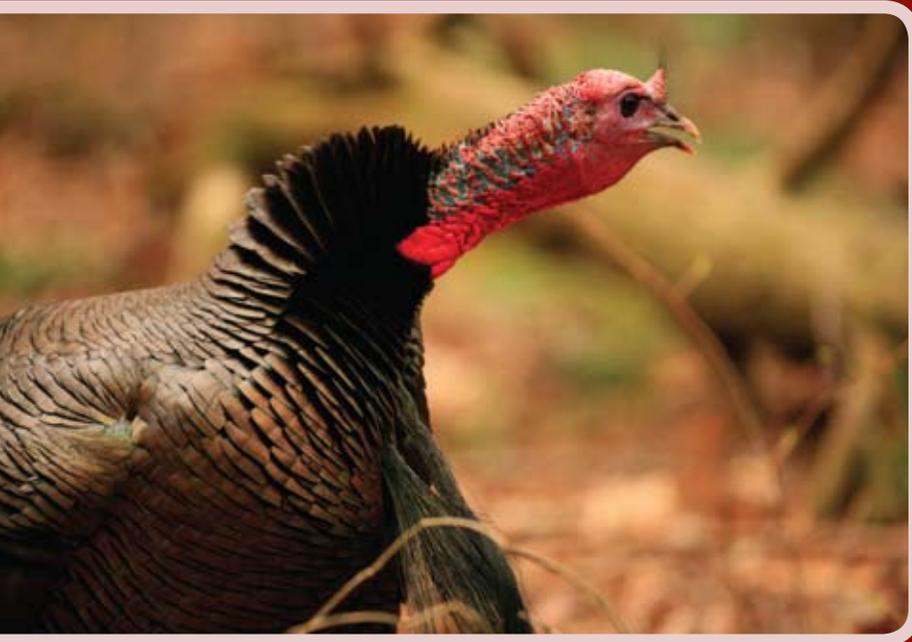


Photo by Steve Gulledge

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.



Photo by 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	76.00	4/16/2007	Lauderdale	Dr. Don E. Marascalo
	76.00	4/5/1997	Jefferson Davis	Shay Stephens
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	74.33	4/8/2000	Kemper	Terry Frierson
18	74.25	4/8/2000	Leake	Ronald D. Coleman
19	74.13	4/30/2002	Alcorn	Larry Muse
20	73.80	3/23/2004	Scott	Justin Rogers

Top Scoring Non-Typical

Rank	Total Score	Number Beards	Total Length	Date Harvested	County Harvested	Hunter
1	151.16	7	57.25	3/17/2008	Tishomingo	Jerrell Keele
2	148.30	7	52.69	3/28/2002	Amite	James R. Scheer
3	143.17	9	53.26	3/20/2000	Marion	Andy Stinger
4	139.50	5	46.50	4/29/2008	Simpson	Bobby Tebo
5	139.26	8	52.69	3/23/1998	Scott	Richard Latham
6	137.13	6	51.69	3/24/2009	Tishomingo	Lee Oaks
7	135.72	9	52.86	4/14/2005	Tishomingo	Jerry Smith
8	134.98	5	45.50	3/24/2001	Alcorn	Mike Suiter
9	131.89	5	45.94	4/21/2001	Noxubee	Will Austin
10	130.25	5	44.25	3/24/1989	Hinds	Robbie Barlow
11	128.12	5	46.63	4/6/2008	Jefferson	Wayne Ponder II
12	126.04	5	43.07	4/14/2006	Warren	Kenneth Grogan, IV
13	125.75	5	42.38	4/3/1995	Calhoun	Walter Mitchell
14	125.69	4	38.75	4/11/1986	Noxubee	Robert E. Persons
15	124.28	6	43.14	3/15/2006	Jefferson	Bobby Hughes
16	122.86	6	43.63	3/22/2000	Tishomingo	Jeff Stephens
17	122.64	7	41.59	3/28/2003	Marion	Wade McKenzie
18	122.25	6	41.56	3/9/2008	Adams	Brandon Hebert
19	121.38	7	42.25	4/29/1989	Coahoma	Harold C. Wall
20	118.25	5	37.94	3/23/2008	Rankin	William Loflin

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. Marascalo
2	1.812	3/31/2009	Lafayette	Greg Vaughan
3	1.810	4/30/1990	Claiborne	Marvin Muirhead
4	1.750	4/13/2005	Pearl River	Kris Collins
	1.750	4/8/2000	Leake	Ronald D. Coleman
	1.750	4/5/2000	Copiah	Rickey Thompson
	1.750	4/17/2004	Chickasaw	Mike Soper
	1.750	4/2/2003	Jefferson	Thomas McAlpin, Jr.
	1.750	3/24/2007	Claiborne	James D. Greer
10	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
14	1.687	4/2/2009	Jasper	Sam White
	1.687	3/22/2008	Wilkinson	Heath Chenier
16	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
27	1.625	4/23/2009	Calhoun	Derek Adams
	1.625	4/3/2008	Monroe	Tyler Hood
29	1.620		Issaquena	Skip Holifield
	1.620	4/2/2005	Alcorn	Frank Meador



Photo by Jim Willcutt

Greg Vaughan harvested this fine bird during the 2009 season in Lafayette County, Mississippi.



This fine Panola County bird was harvested by Lauren Russell during the 2009 season, and claimed the top spot in the Weight category of the Mississippi Wild Turkey Records. The bird also ranks second in the Typical scoring category.

Heaviest

Rank	Weight	Date Harvested	County Harvested	Hunter
1	25.27	4/11/2009	Panola	Lauren K. Russell
2	25.25	3/30/2004	Newton	Hunter T. Hayes
3	25.19	3/26/2004	Neshoba	John Robb
4	24.68	4/18/2003	Copiah	Doug Borries
5	24.44	4/2/2005	Neshoba	Chad Young
6	24.00	3/16/2009	Forrest	Matthew Saucier
	24.00	3/18/2008	Adams	Chasen Gann
8	23.94	3/18/2005	Chickasaw	Brian Fikes
9	23.75	4/22/1996	Monroe	Jeff Daniel
	23.75	3/29/2007	Alcorn	Mike Sutor
11	23.69	3/28/2005	Prentiss	Doug Taylor Jr.
12	23.50	3/24/1990	Jefferson Davis	Danny Sinclair
13	23.38	4/8/1995	Sharkey	R. Revel Rawlings
14	23.30	3/16/2009	Washington	Anonymous
15	23.19	4/13/2000	Pearl River	J. B. Hodge
16	23.00	4/14/2006	Holmes	Joseph Mohamed
17	22.87	3/24/2000	Choctaw	Tommy Trussell
18	22.75	3/25/1995	Tishomingo	Phil Byram
19	22.60	3/28/2002	Monroe	Derwin (Dee) Riley
20	22.56	4/9/2000	Madison	Rebecca Case
21	22.50	3/25/2003	Calhoun	Brad Perkins
22	22.43	3/13/2004	Monroe	Kody Riley
23	22.24	4/19/2003	Marion	Jeff Armstrong

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: 73.50 Total Score: 195.50 Date: 04/19/08 State: North Carolina	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



Photo by Steve Gullledge

Fall Turkey Hunting in Mississippi



Photo by Steve Gullledge

Fall Turkey Hunting in Mississippi

DURING 2009, 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, 2009, and included the following counties or portion of counties, on private lands with a minimum of 100 acres, 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 2009 fall season. During the 2008 fall turkey season, a total of 244 tags were issued for 115 properties. A total of 24 turkeys were reported harvested during the 2008 fall season (17 hens, 2 jakes, and 5 adult gobblers). A total of 150 hunters actually participated in fall hunting during 2008, and logged 527 days of hunter-effort. Of participating hunters, 36% said that this was their first experience with fall turkey hunting. All participating hunters said they would participate in the future if fall turkey hunting opportunity was available, and 90% 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=1.8, 1=highly satisfied, and 5=strongly dissatisfied).



Photo by 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.

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 (NWF) 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. We captured turkeys using cannon nets and rocket boxes, and then transported them in specially-designed turkey transport boxes provided by the NWF. 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

Photo by Jim Willcutt



Wild turkeys were fitted with radio transmitters and released on the study areas.

Photo by Scott Edwards



MDWFP Wild Turkey Program Leader Adam Butler uses radio telemetry equipment to monitor turkeys in the Mississippi Delta.

Photo by Scott Edwards



MDWFP Associate Biologist Jim Willcutt releases a wild turkey gobbler on a Delta study area.

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. Over the next few years, we will learn more and more about restoring wild turkeys to the Mississippi Delta. For more information on this study, visit <http://home.mdwfp.com/research>.

will help us determine survival rates, movements, home range size, and reproductive success of released turkeys.

The ultimate goal of this study is to predict where turkey restoration efforts can be successful based on available, suitable habitat. Rather than 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

Research Project Studies Gobbling Activity in Mississippi

By Dave Godwin and Matt Palumbo, MSU

Turkey hunters know that gobbling activity varies significantly throughout the spring. It is also thought that gobbling activity differs from one region to another. Timing of gobbling activity is one factor that managers must consider when setting spring turkey season frameworks. Some Mississippi hunters have asked if our current season framework, which runs from the Saturday closest to March 15 to the Saturday closest to May 1, provides the best hunting opportunities in our State. Thanks to the efforts of turkey hunters that participate in our Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey, the MDWFP has some excellent gobbling activity data during the period of turkey season. However, less was known about regional gobbling activity before and after the hunting season.

The MDWFP partnered with Mississippi State University to conduct spring gobbling surveys from mid-February to late May, 2008 and 2009, in the northern and southern portions of Mississippi. We placed 8 survey routes north of Highway 82, and 7 routes south of Highway 84. Routes were placed within habitat suitable for wild turkey populations. Data from these first 2 years suggest that while there is some annual and regional variation in gobbling activity, most gobbling activity occurs within Mississippi's spring gobbler hunting season. Peaks for both regions and both years fell well within the current framework of the hunting season.

In addition to looking at the timing of gobbling, researchers have gathered climate variables from weather stations located across survey regions of the state. Daily indexes have been created to examine the influence of specific weather variables on the intensity of gobbling activity. We will test gobbling survey data for any climate-related effects. We anticipate that results from this project will provide the MDWFP with a survey framework for long-term monitoring of gobbling activity across the state. This information will assist state biologists to construct a harvest season that will be both biologically appropriate and maximize hunters' opportunity to pursue wild turkeys when they are most vocal. For more information on this study, visit <http://home.mdwfp.com/research>.

Photo by Scott Edwards



MSU Graduate Student Matt Palumbo collects turkey observation data for his research project.

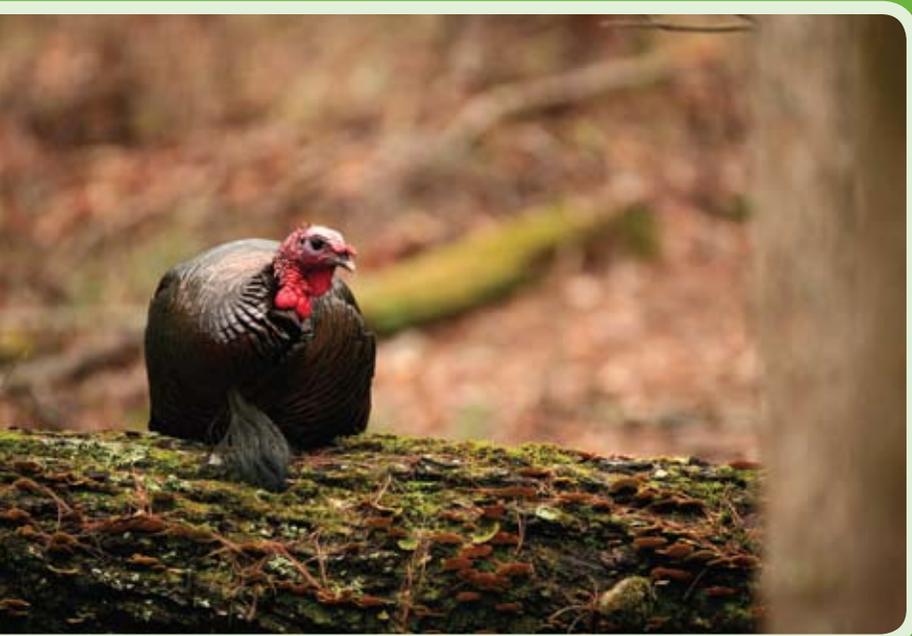
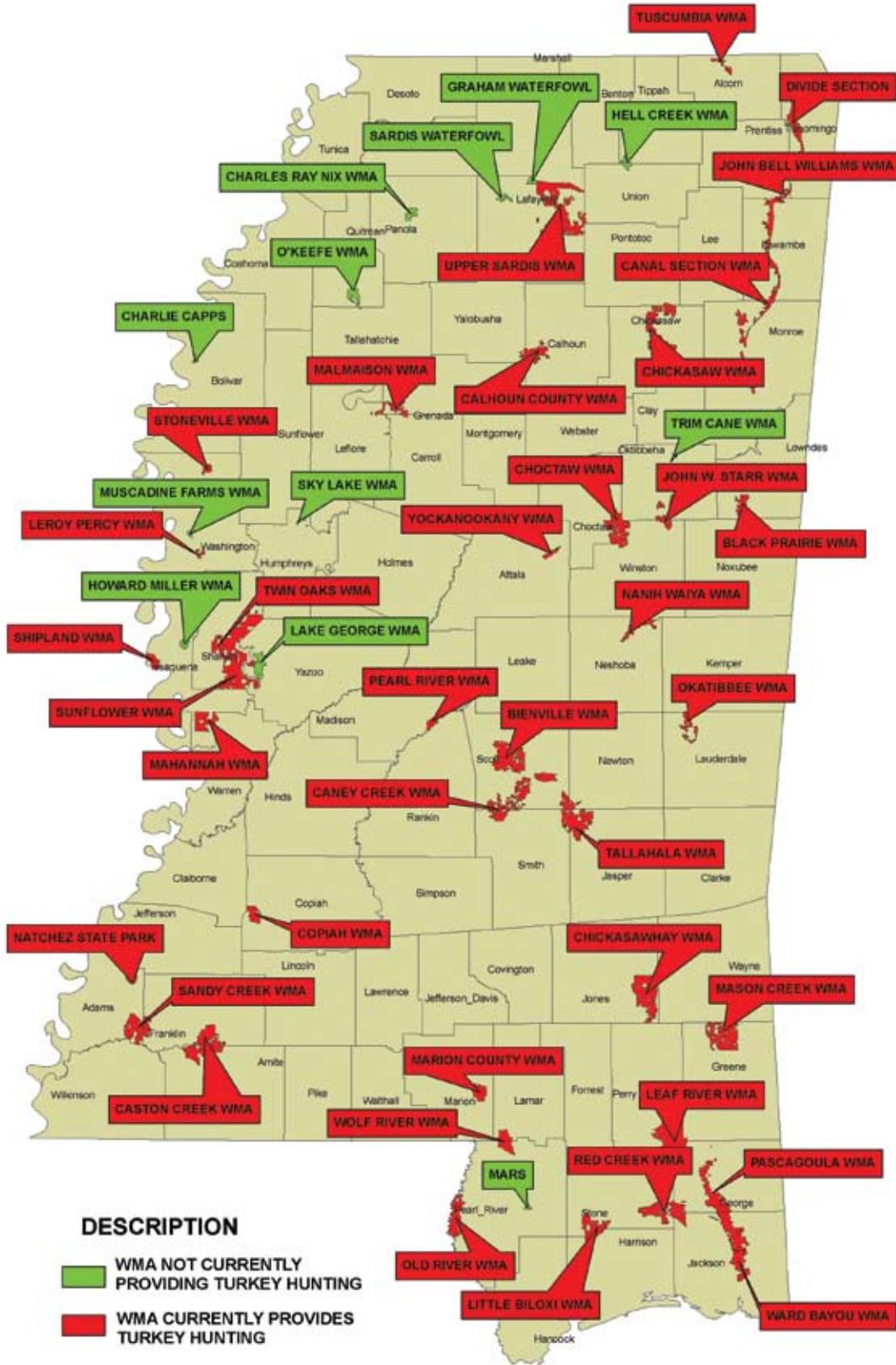


Photo by Steve Gulledge

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. 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 2009 turkey season, Bienville WMA accrued 787 hunter-days, and 21 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Bienville WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-537-3555.

Black Prairie WMA

By Jerry Hazlewood, 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 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 6 hunters are selected for each hunt. During the 2009 season, Black Prairie WMA accrued 8 hunter-days of hunting, and 2 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Black Prairie WMA, contact the District 1 Office at 662-423-1455.

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 in bottomland areas and draws. 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 season to youth hunters in addition to the regular spring gobbler season. During the 2009 spring season, 8 gobblers were harvested on this WMA in 298 hunter-days of effort. For more information on Calhoun County WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-628-6328.

Canal Section and John Bell Williams WMAs

By Jerry Hazlewood, 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 hardwood 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 highest ground in this section of the WMA is the waterway levee. The levee is divided into management sections that are mowed, burned, or left in natural vegetation. This management strategy provides turkeys with nesting and brood rearing cover. 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 2009 season, these two WMAs reported 73 hunter-days during the youth week and 1,472 hunter-days during the regular season for a total of 1,545 days. There were 2 and 22 birds harvested during the youth and regular seasons, respectively. This was a decrease from the 36 total birds harvested last year. 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 2009 turkey season, Caney Creek WMA accrued 1,050 hunter-days, and 32 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 2009 season, Caston Creek WMA accrued 1,287 hunter-days, and 30 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Caston Creek WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-384-3606.

Chickasaw WMA

By Brad Holder, WMA Biologist

Chickasaw WMA is a 28,000 acre area located within the Tombigbee National Forest near Houston in Chickasaw County. The area is heavily forested with various age class loblolly pine stands and mature hardwoods stands. Wild turkeys on the area benefitted from another good acorn crop during fall and winter months of 2008 and 2009. 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 2009, 23 gobblers were harvested on Chickasaw WMA during 1,020 hunter-days of effort. 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 area formerly

encompassed nearly 120,000 acres of the National Forest; however, after the 2008 turkey season, the MDWFP relinquished management responsibilities for some acreage back to the U.S. Forest Service. Now Chickasawhay WMA is approximately 30,000 acres, nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ of its previous area.

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 2009 turkey season, Chickasawhay WMA accrued 804 hunter-days, and 21 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Chickasawhay WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-344-0600.

Choctaw WMA

By Brad Holder, 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 age class loblolly pine stands and mature hardwoods stands. Wild turkeys on the area benefitted from another good acorn crop during fall and winter months of 2008 and 2009. 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 2009, a total of 25 gobblers were harvested on Choctaw during 1,114 hunter-days of effort. 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 Hazelhurst. 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 a resurgence in prescribed burns and creation of numerous permanent openings. Many of the habitat improvement projects have been sponsored by money from the National Wild Turkey Federation; these include the establishment of new firelanes and fields to be used as bugging areas for hens with poults.

During the 2009 turkey season, Copiah County WMA accrued 576 hunter-days, and 9 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Copiah County WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-277-3636.

Divide Section WMA

By Jerry Hazlewood, 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.

There are no draw hunts on this area, but the current bag limit is 2 adult gobblers. During the 2009 season, Divide Section WMA accrued 765 hunter-days, and 10 harvested birds were reported. These figures represent a slight decrease in hunter-days (25) and a significant decrease in birds harvested from the 26 in 2008. For more information on Divide Section WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-423-1455.

John W. Starr WMA

By Brad Holder, 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 age class loblolly pine 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 2009, 15 gobblers were harvested during 286 hunter-days of effort. For additional information on this area, contact the District Office at 662-840-5172. In addition to normal hunting license and WMA permit requirements, a special permit from Mississippi State University is required to hunt on John W. Starr WMA. This permit may be obtained from MSU by writing Starr Forest Permits, Box 9680, Mississippi State, MS 39762, or by calling 662-325-2191, Monday – Friday from 8am-4pm.

Leaf River WMA

By Joshua Moree, WMA Biologist

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

This 41,411 acre WMA, located within the Desoto National Forest in Perry County, is a mix of fire-maintained pine stands and scattered creeks and drains. Funds provided by the NWTF allowed creation of additional openings on the WMA during the summer of 2007. Periodic timber thinning and prescribed burning conducted by the U.S. Forest Service benefit wild turkeys on Leaf River WMA.

During the 2009 turkey season, Leaf River WMA accrued 2,087 hunter-days, and 29 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 2009 season, Leroy Percy WMA accrued 31 hunter-days of turkey hunting and 2 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 2009 turkey season, Little Biloxi WMA accrued 305 hunter-days, and 5 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Little Biloxi WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-528-9861.

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 2009 season was the first 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. High water during the last half of the season hurt hunter participation but 35 hunters harvested 1 bird. 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 near Grenada in Carroll, Grenada, and Leflore Counties. Mature hardwoods are the dominant cover type in both the delta and hill sections and provided abundant fall and winter hard mast during 2008 and 2009. Numerous openings are managed to provide habitat for wild turkeys and other wildlife species. Additional wildlife openings, created during fall 2008 with help from the National Wild Turkey Federation, and future forest stand improvements will provide more cover and food for wild turkeys and other wildlife species while improving overall forest health. A decline in turkey hunting effort and harvest has likely been caused by a combination of inclement weather, flooding, and reduced nesting success over the previous two years on the WMA. Malmaison 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 2009, 30 gobblers were harvested during 816 hunter-days of effort. For more information on this WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-563-6330.

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 2009 turkey season, Marion County WMA accrued 488 hunter-days, and 14 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. Habitat management has been very limited on Mason Creek WMA; however, plans are underway to improve wildlife habitat across the area. Creating additional permanent openings, timber thinning, and an improved prescribed fire regime are just some of the activities planned for Mason Creek WMA.

During the 2009 turkey season, Mason Creek WMA accrued 670 hunter-days, and 23 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Mason Creek WMA, contact the District 6 Office at 601-928-3720.

Nanah Waiya WMA

By Jerry Hazlewood, 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 Nanih Waiya WMA is the same as statewide (no draw hunts), but the bag limit is restricted to 2 adult gobblers. During the 2009 turkey season, Nanih Waiya WMA accrued 118 hunter-days, and 5 harvested birds were reported. These figures represent a 42% increase in effort and an increase of 4 birds harvested. For more information on Nanih Waiya WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-724-2770.

Okatibbee WMA

by Jerry Hazlewood, WMA Biologist

Okatibbee WMA is 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. Most 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 2009 turkey season, Okatibbee WMA accrued 163 hunter-days, and 6 harvested birds were reported. 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 2009 turkey season, Old River WMA accrued 350 hunter-days, and 13 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 2009 turkey season, Pascagoula River WMA accrued 749 hunter-days, and 35 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 2009 turkey season, there were 225 hunter-days of turkey hunting with 7 birds harvested.

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 US Forest Service to the benefit of the area's wild turkeys.

During the 2009 turkey season, Red Creek WMA accrued 367 hunter-days, and 4 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 2009 turkey season, Sandy Creek WMA accrued 916 hunter-days, and 28 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Sandy Creek WMA, contact the District 5 Office at 601-783-2911.

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 2009 turkey season, there were 40 hunter-days of turkey hunting with no birds harvested. 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. Only 21 hunter-days and no harvested birds were reported for the 2009 turkey season. For more information on Stoneville WMA, contact the District 3 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. From March 27-May 2 turkey hunting is allowed without permits. Sunflower WMA accrued 856 hunter-days during the 2009 turkey season, and 61 harvested birds were reported. 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 2009 turkey season, Tallahala WMA accrued 1,648 hunter-days, and 61 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Tallahala WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-739-3671.

Tuscumbia WMA

by Jerry Hazlewood, 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 ac.) is mainly permanent water and slash, which is not easily accessed and provides little turkey habitat. The southern unit (1,200 ac.) has mostly abandoned agricultural fields and 7 newly constructed 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 2009 turkey season, Tuscumbia WMA accrued 162 hunter-days, and 6 harvested birds were reported. These figures represent an increase of 46 hunter-days (40%) and an increase of 1 harvested bird. 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 2009 turkey season, Twin Oaks WMA accrued 133 hunter-days, and 2 harvested birds were reported. 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 National Forest Service, and natural disturbance from a tornado which impacted 2,500 acres during spring of 2008. Both will provide additional cover and food for wild turkeys and other wildlife species. Efforts are underway to improve forest habitat conditions for wild turkeys and other species of wildlife by implementing timber stand thins and continuing the use of prescribed fire. These tools will stimulate the growth of ground story vegetation, thereby producing more food, cover, and a healthier forest. Existing permanent openings are currently managed to provide habitat for wild turkeys and other species of wildlife. Upper Sardis 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 2009, 54 gobblers were harvested during 1,662 hunter-days of effort. For more information on this WMA, contact the area headquarters 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 68 hunter-days and 8 harvested birds for the 2009 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 2009 turkey season, Wolf River WMA accrued 917 hunter-days, and 21 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Wolf River WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-795-8682.

Yockanookany WMA

By Brad Holder, 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. Hunter-days exhibited a three-year high. Harvest continues to remain low. The effects of 3 consecutive below average hatches will begin to really have an impact on harvest over the next 3 seasons. Reproduction and poult survival was low again this year presumably because of record amounts of rainfall during nesting season and late summer. 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 2009, 5 gobblers were harvested on this area during 61 hunter-days of effort. For additional information on this WMA, call 662-840-5172.



Photo by Steve Gullledge

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



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Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey Gun Winners

EACH YEAR, ONE OF THE PRIMARY MEANS IN WHICH THE MDWFP MONITORS STATEWIDE TURKEY populations is through the annual Spring Gobbler Hunter Survey <http://home.mdwfp.com/wildlife/Species/Turkey/info.aspx?id=480> (SGHS). Hunters from across the state voluntarily record data on gobbling activity, turkey observations, and characteristics of harvested birds from their spring hunts. This dataset is invaluable to the MDWFP, and gives us a glimpse at turkey population trends from various regions of the state.

In an attempt to increase participation in the SGHS, we began something new for the 2009 spring season. The Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation agreed to sponsor two shotguns to be raffled off for hunters that returned SGHS data. This first drawing was open to all hunters who returned the survey booklet by May 15th, and the second drawing was for those hunters who enlisted a new SGHS participant in 2009.

The drawings for the shotguns were held during Summer 2009, and the winners were: General Drawing: **Timothy Sykes** of Horn Lake. Mr. Sykes received a Mossberg 835. Referral Drawing: **Conway Givens** of Brookhaven. Mr. Givens received a Mossberg 935.

The MDWFP Wild Turkey Program would like to congratulate these two gentlemen and thank them and everyone who took part in this year's SGHS. The data collection efforts by all the sportsmen that participated in the SGHS are much appreciated and are one of the best ways hunters can assist the MDWFP in conserving Mississippi's wild turkey resource.



Tim Sykes of Horn Lake, Mississippi with his new Mossberg 835 turkey gun!



Mississippi Chapter NWTf President Bob Spell (right) presents a new Mossberg 935 turkey gun to Conway Givens (left) of Brookhaven, Mississippi. Givens' son, Cole, and MDWFP Turkey Program Coordinator, Dave Godwin, were also present.

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: _____

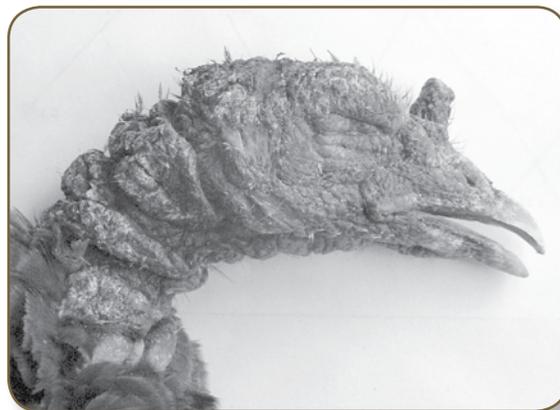
Phone: (Home) _____ (Office) _____

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

Place
Stamp
Here

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

FOLD

2010 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:

2010 MISSISSIPPI WILD TURKEY REPORT					
	<i>Please Circle Your Rating</i>				
	Poor		Neutral		Excellent
■ <i>How are Turkeys in My Neck of the Woods?</i>	1	2	3	4	5
■ <i>Magnolia State Turkey Talk</i>	1	2	3	4	5
■ <i>Long Beards & Curved Spurs:</i> <i>Magnolia State Turkey Records</i>	1	2	3	4	5
■ <i>Ways I Can Help Conserve Mississippi's Wild Turkey</i>	1	2	3	4	5

2. What kind of articles and subject matter would you like to see in future reports?

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

4. Do you want to receive the 2011 Mississippi Wild Turkey Report? _____

If yes, please provide your address: _____



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 JACKSON, MS 39211-9940



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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



Mississippi
Chapter

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

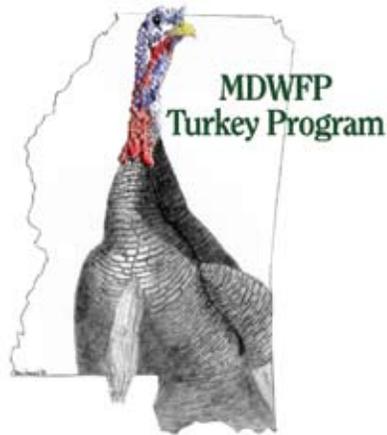
For more information on the
Mississippi Wildlife Federation
Call: 1-601-206-5703



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

MS Chapter NWTF
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Starkville, MS 39759

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The 2010 Mississippi Wild Turkey Report is a cooperative effort between the MDWFP Turkey Program and the Mississippi Chapter of the NWTF.



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