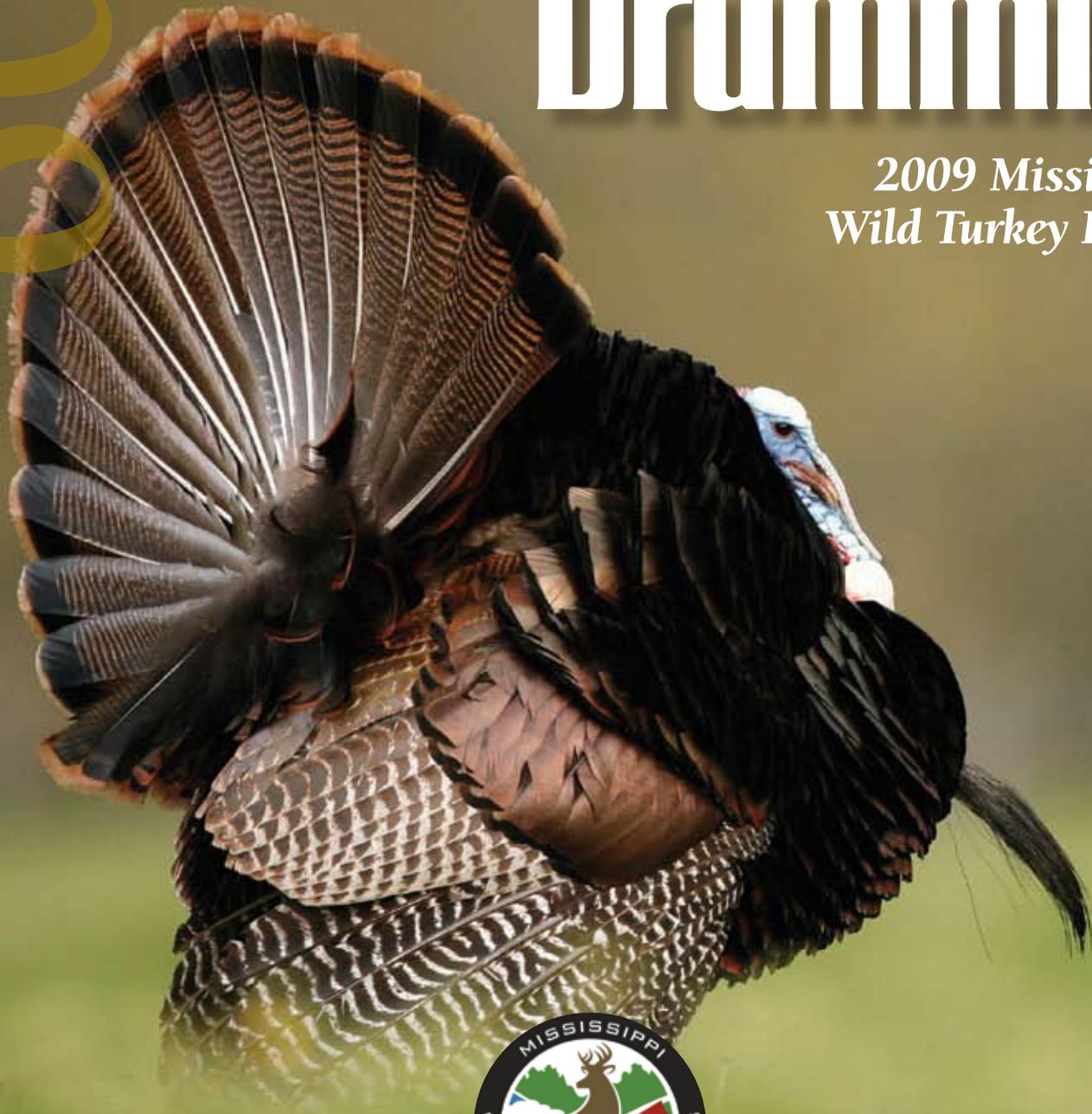


2009

Spittin' & Drummin'

*2009 Mississippi
Wild Turkey Report*



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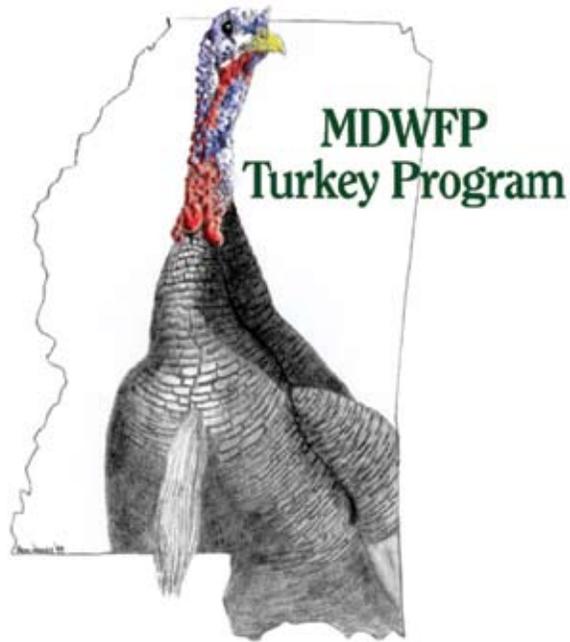
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2009 MISSISSIPPI
WILD TURKEY REPORT



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1505 Eastover Drive | Jackson, MS 39211

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks goes to all of Mississippi's turkey hunters – you are passionate about our wild turkey resource, and working with you over the past couple of years has been a joy. I would especially like to thank those turkey hunters that have collected data for the Spring Gobbler Hunter Survey – without your efforts this report would not be possible. I also want to extend a special thank you to the Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation which has been a constant and strong partner of the MDWFP Wild Turkey Program for many years. Thanks to Steve Gulledge for once again helping to make our publication look better – his wild turkey photos are first class, and his dedication to turkey conservation is a model for us all. Cindy Clark also does a great amount of work to help us layout and prepare this document, and we appreciate all she does for the Turkey Program. Thanks to Dene Smith for all she does for our program and for our agency – she makes everything we try to do easier! Jason “The Great One” Price is owed a huge debt of gratitude for all the work he does to develop and maintain computer programs to help us wrestle with huge amounts of turkey data! Thanks to all of the Wildlife Bureau personnel who have helped the Turkey Program during the past year, especially Ron Seiss, Larry Castle, Charlie “Buck” Welch, Ashley Gary, Jim Willcutt, and Scott Edwards. I want extend a genuine thank you to Adam Butler and Joe Koloski – their hard work has made my job much easier, and together we are moving the Turkey Program forward! Finally, I would like to thank my family for putting up with my odd hours and work activities – you make it easy for me to work on this project, and your love and support are deeply appreciated!

Dave Godwin,
MDWFP Wild Turkey Program Coordinator

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the turkey hunters who voluntarily collect the data that makes the bulk of this report possible. Mississippi has a rich turkey hunting legacy

– arguably the richest in the nation – and our current legion of turkey hunters are a compliment to this tradition. Many people support the Turkey Program each year in the compilation of this report. Without the talents of Jason Price, “Spitting and Drumming” would be exponentially more difficult to pull together. The Turkey Program is also deeply indebted to Dene Smith for all that she does. Without her support, it is doubtful that we could accomplish a quarter of the things we do. Special thanks are also extended to Ron Seiss, the former Turkey Program Coordinator who now roosts in a higher office, for lessons learned from numerous discussions of turkey habitat and biology. Finally, as my tenure with this agency is still relatively new, I'd like to thank all the employees of the MDWFP who have made the transition into this job an easy one. Each day ya'll remind me that there must surely be nothing more satisfying than working for wildlife conservation in Mississippi.

Adam Butler, MDWFP Turkey Program Leader

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many members of the National Wild Turkey Federation in Mississippi. Your volunteer efforts and contributions to this great organization are allowing us to continue achieving our mission of Conservation of the Wild Turkey and Preservation of the Hunting Tradition. Together, we are improving wild turkey habitat throughout the state and recruiting the next generation of hunters into the sport we all love. I would also like to thank the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks for their continued partnership with the NWTF. Our working relationship is allowing us to have a greater impact on wild turkeys in Mississippi and is proof that partnerships work! Finally, Mr. James Bryant deserves my heartfelt thanks for leading the effort in producing the Magnolia Turkey Talk section of this report.

Joe Koloski, MDWFP/NWTF Cooperative Biologist



FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER

Steve Gulledge, Outdoor Photographer from Bruce, Mississippi, again provided the MDWFP with several beautiful turkey pictures to be used in this publication. Steve has a true passion for the wild turkey and his work reflects his dedication to the bird. Steve has served as President of the Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation as well as serving on the chapter's Board of Directors for many years. We truly appreciate Steve's willingness to share some of his outstanding turkey photography for your enjoyment, and we thank him for all he does for the wild turkey!

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RESTORATION**



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FUNDED PROJECT**

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

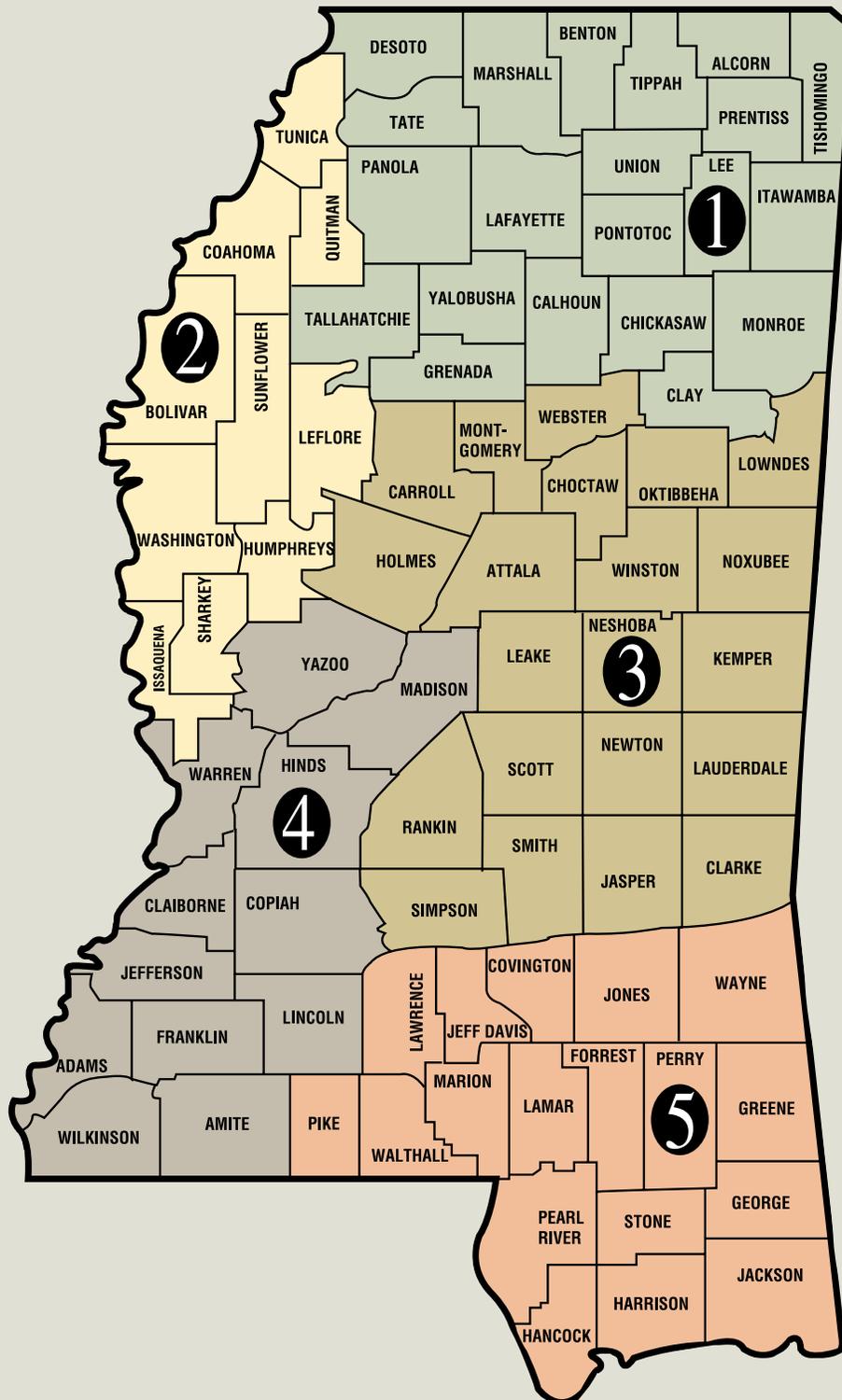




PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

2009 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 is providing 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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A MDWFP Wildlife Biologist reviews aerial photography with a private landowner.

Turkey Management Assistance Available for Mississippi Private Landowners

THE MDWFP OFFERS TECHNICAL GUIDANCE TO PRIVATE LANDOWNERS ON ALL WILDLIFE-RELATED ISSUES. MANY Mississippians are familiar with the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) that has helped hunting clubs and landowners manage private land deer populations for many years. However, many people do not realize that the same type of assistance is available for those interested in managing private lands to benefit wild turkeys or any other wildlife resources! Turkey program biologists working with the MDWFP routinely make site visits to help private landowners develop management plans aimed at obtaining the turkey-related goals and objectives for a specific tract of land. Additionally, the MDWFP's Private Lands Program has biologists assigned to each region of the State that work with landowners to address wildlife management questions and needs. These biologists are available to help with management



The MDWFP provides technical guidance on any wildlife-related issue at no charge to the Landowner.



planning decisions and can often help private landowners identify cost-share opportunities for management practices they prescribe. If you are interested in receiving technical guidance with wild turkey management on your club or private property, please contact the MDWFP Wildlife Bureau at 601-432-2199!

A MDWFP Wildlife Biologist can schedule a site visit to your private property to help develop a management plan to meet your objectives.



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

How are Turkeys in My Neck of the Woods?



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

Mississippi Wild Turkey Population Statistics

Based on Spring Gobbler Hunting & 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.

This is an opportunity to be directly involved in the conservation & management of the wild turkey in Mississippi.



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

Private land data from the 1996 – 2008 SGHSs are presented graphically in the following two-page statewide and regional summaries. The remainder of this introduction describes how the data were collected and summarized, along with important points to consider during interpretation. Most parameters are expressed as an average number per every 10 or 100 hours of hunting. Standardizing values by a specific number of hours hunted allows the rates to be compared among regions and years even though hunter effort varies.

Reproduction

During June, July, and August, the annual wild turkey brood survey (initiated in 1994) is conducted by personnel from the MDWFP, Mississippi Forestry Commission, U.S. Forest Service, and other cooperators. Brood surveys provide indices to reproduction and are valuable in

monitoring turkey population trends. Hens observed with at least one poult are considered successful. Hens without poults are considered unsuccessful and either did not attempt to nest, abandoned their nest, lost their nest to predation or human disturbance, or had no poults survive. Average brood size is the total number of poults divided by number of successful hens and is an index to poult survival. "Poults per total hens" is defined as the number of poults observed divided by total number of hens seen. "Poults per total hens" is the most practical reproductive index because it considers successful hens, unsuccessful hens, and poult survival.

Turkey Observations

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

Gobbling Activity

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

Harvest Rates and Age Structure

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



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

2008 Summer Brood Survey

WILD TURKEYS HAVE RELATIVELY HIGH NATURAL MORTALITY AND LOW NEST SUCCESS. THIS COMBINATION means that the birds are extremely dependent on periodic years of good reproduction to sustain abundant populations. A few years of good reproduction can result in a boom in turkey numbers, and vice versa, with several bad hatches in a row, turkeys can become scarce. In order to track these trends, wildlife officials with the MDWFP annually survey the reproductive output of the state's turkey population. These reproductive indices from this dataset are oftentimes very good predictors of the number of year-old gobblers that will be observed in the following year's Spring Gobbler Hunter Survey.

Statewide

Overall, the statewide hatch was mediocre, and the poults / total hens index was down slightly from the 1.89 poults / total hens that we observed from last year, but was still near the overall 5-year average. Reproductive output appeared to vary substantially from region-to-region.

Poults / Total Hens: 1.65
Nest success: 47%
Average Brood Size: 3.53

Some areas, such as the Delta, had extremely poor hatches, while others, such as East-Central Mississippi, appeared to have their best hatch in several years.

Region 1 – Northeast

Although some of the southern counties in this region – Chickasaw, Calhoun, Grenada, and Monroe – may have seen decent reproduction, most of the hatch in this area was relatively poor, and appears slightly below

Poults / Total Hens: 1.38
Nest success: 47%
Average Brood Size: 2.91

the average of the last 5 years. The observed poults / total hen ratio was second lowest of all regions.

Region 2 – The Delta

Due to the historic flooding of the Mississippi River that left most areas inundated for the majority of the nesting season, it appears that reproduction was almost non-existent in the Delta last spring. Nest success was an abysmal 7 %, and those hens that were successful appeared to only raise an average of 1.25 poults per brood. While it was not reflected in our brood survey, personal communication with land managers in the northern-most portion of the Batture lands along the River indicated that better turkey reproduction was observed there as flood waters began to fall in these areas first, giving the birds a narrow window in which to nest.

Poults / Total Hens: 0.12
Nest Success: 7 %
Average Brood Size: 1.25

Region 3 – East-Central

East-central Mississippi appears to be the only region of the state that had an overall good hatch. The number of poults seen per total hens is up significantly from 2007, and is well above the 5-year average for the region. Interestingly, the region's nest success was relatively low (30%), however this seemed to be offset by high poult survival – the average brood size was 4.27 poults, the highest for any region during 2008.

Poults / Total Hens: 2.30
Nest Success: 30 %
Average Brood Size: 4.27

Region 4 – Southwest

Southwest Mississippi experienced a decent hatch, with the counties along I-55 in the eastern side of this region fairing much better than the counties along the

Poults / Total Hens: 1.81
Nest Success: 62 %
Average Brood Size: 2.93

Mississippi River. Region 4 lead the state in nesting success, as 62 % of hens were seen with at least 1 poult. However, like the Delta, low-lying areas throughout the river counties likely suffered due to extreme flooding during the early nesting season.

Region 5 – Southeast

Southeast Mississippi reported its best hatch on record last year, so as expected reproduction was down somewhat this year. Nonetheless, while this year's hatch cannot be considered great, it was respectable throughout much of the region. The counties of Covington, Jefferson Davis, Marion, and Pearl River in the western side of the region appear to have tallied the region's best reproduction.

Poults / Total Hens: 1.79
Nest Success: 47 %
Average Brood Size: 3.77



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

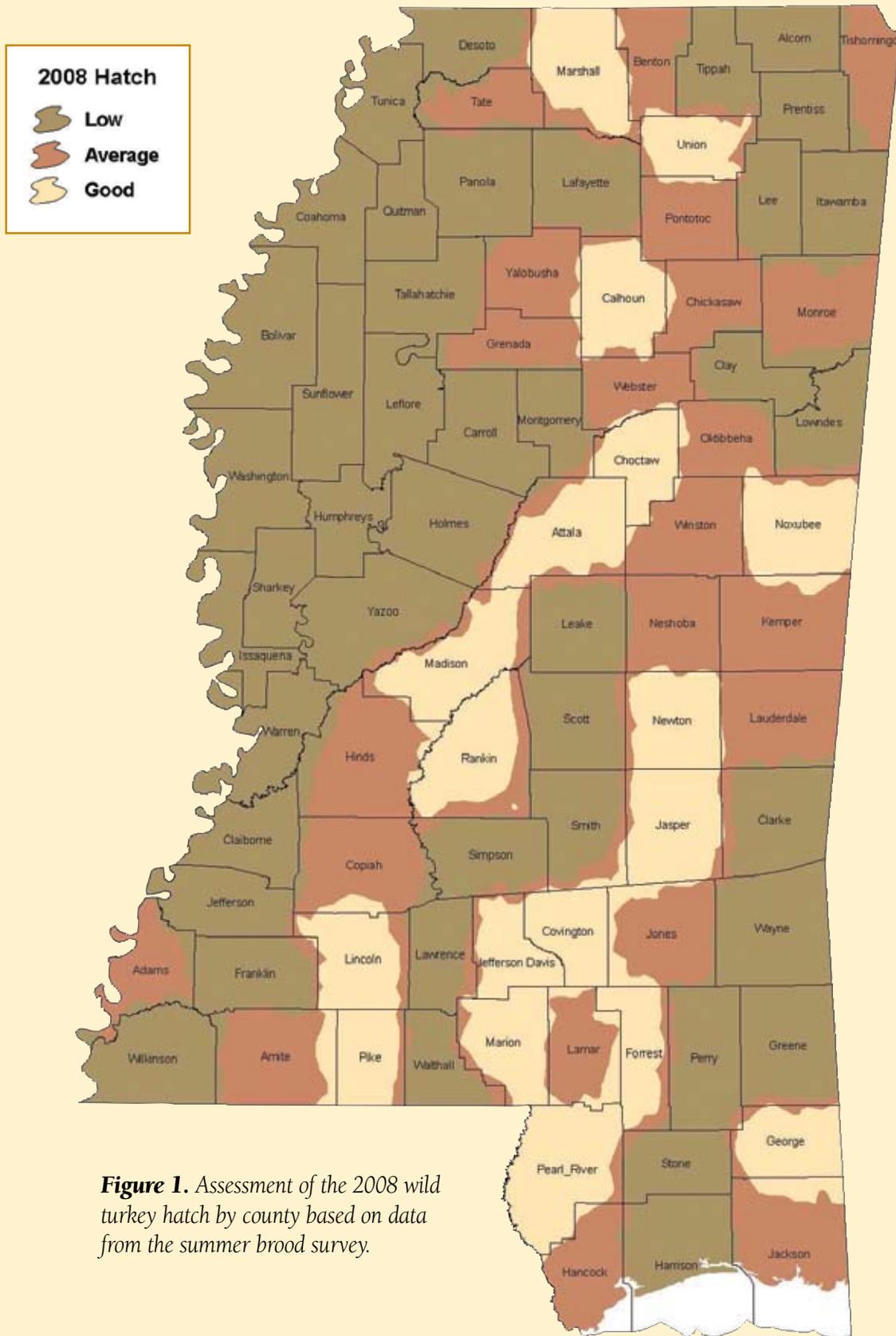


Figure 1. Assessment of the 2008 wild turkey hatch by county based on data from the summer brood survey.

Figure 1 on page 8 depicts a more fine scale view of the hatch by breaking some of our data down to the county level. It should be noted, however, that little data was reported from some counties; therefore, the regional summations may be a better reflection of actual conditions in a particular area.

Readers should also be aware that these summaries are just that – summaries. The hatch on your particular piece of ground may or may not have been reflective of your 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 the years when reproduction is regionally low.

Gobbler-to-Hen Ratio

In addition to poults and hens, cooperators for the annual brood survey also record the number of gobblers that are 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 2008 brood survey, there were approximately 0.69 gobblers seen for every hen observed statewide (**Figure 2**), a substantial increase from 2007. This suggests that the 2009 season should be an excellent one for turkey hunters in the Magnolia State!

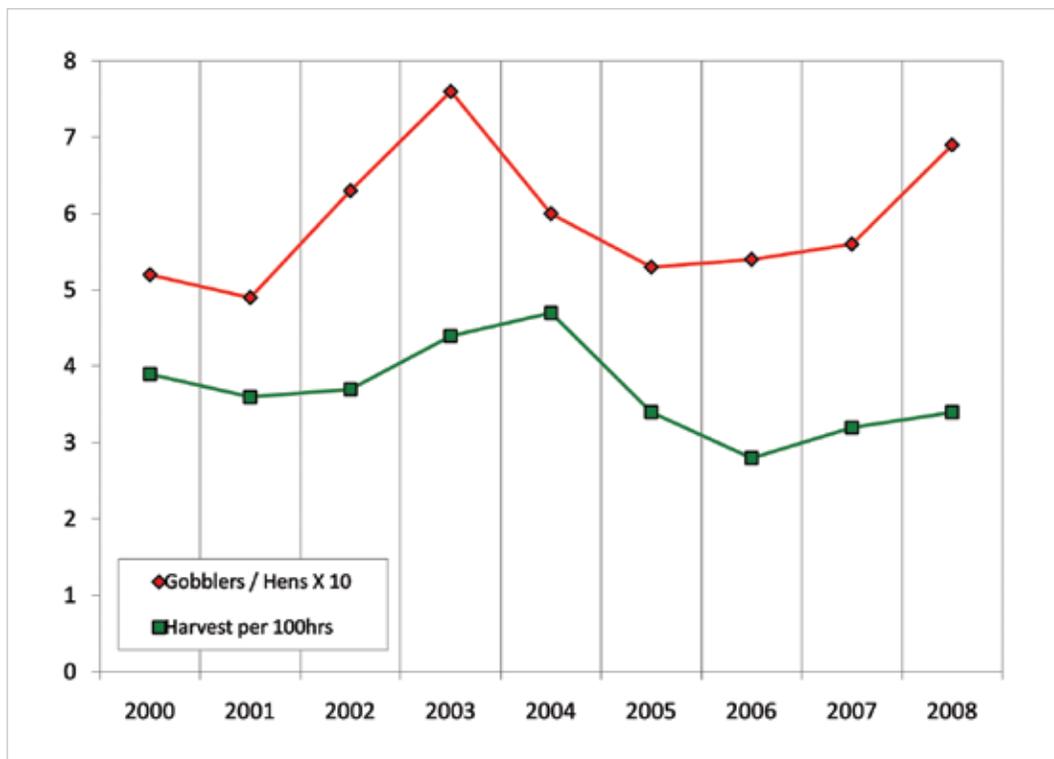


Figure 2. Comparison of the ratio of gobblers seen per hen (x 10) from summer brood survey and subsequent change in harvest rates, 2000-2008.

Statewide

Statewide

TURKEY HUNTING INFORMATION WAS COLLECTED STATEWIDE ON PRIVATE LANDS DURING THE 2008 SEASON BY OVER 60 HUNTING CLUBS & MORE THAN 700 INDIVIDUAL HUNTERS. DATA WERE RECORDED IN ALL REGIONS OF THE STATE ON PRIVATE LANDS DURING THE 2008 SEASON.

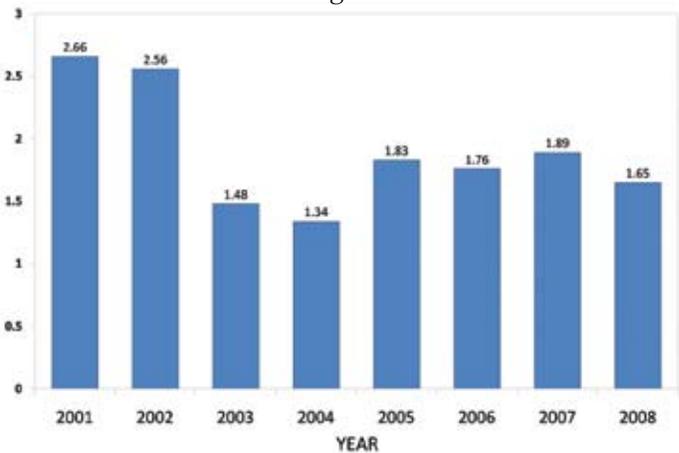


Reproduction

During the 2008 wild turkey brood survey, 2,549 hens were seen. Of these hens, 1,190 (47%) successfully nested and were observed with at least one poults. A total of 4,204 poults were observed and the average brood size was 3.53 poults which was up from 2007. The average number of poults for all hens was 1.65 (**Figure 1**), which was down from 2007. During the past 8 years, poults per total hens has averaged 1.89 and ranged from 1.34 in 2004 to 2.66 in 2001.

Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

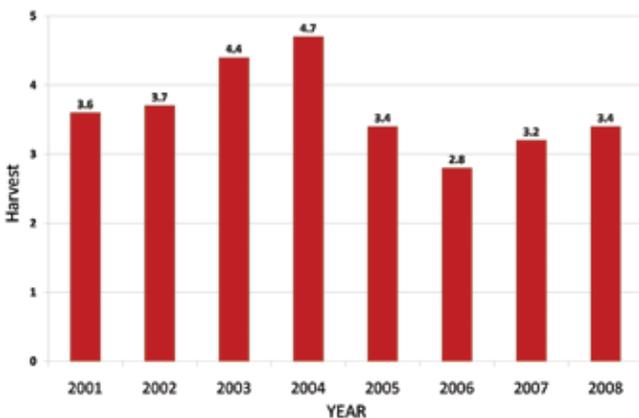


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

The 2008 season showed a slight increase in harvest rates. On average, hunters harvested 3.4 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 2008 was similar to that observed in 2007. Of the gobblers harvested, 53% were 3+ year-old toms with spur lengths of greater than one inch (**Figure 3**), and 10% had "limb-hanging" spurs greater than 1.25 inches. Forty-six 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 45% in 2007.

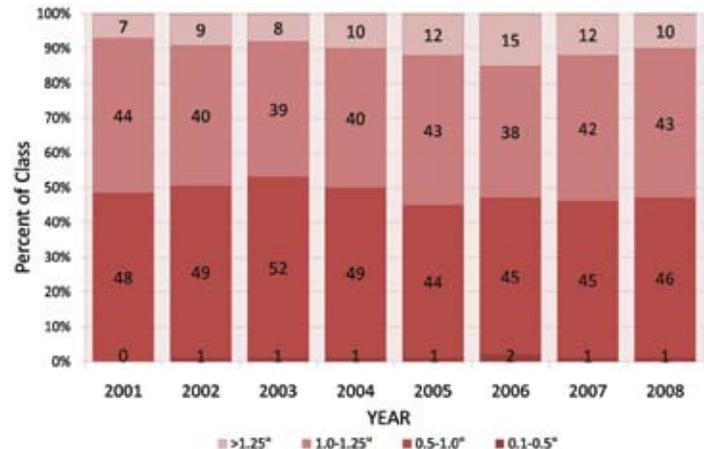
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

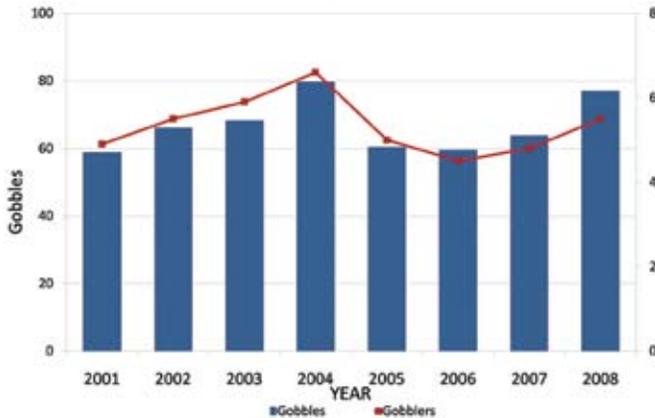


Gobbling Activity

During 2008, seasonal gobbling activity increased with hunters hearing an average of 5.5 gobblers and 77.0 gobbles for every 10 hours of hunting (**Figure 4**). The number of gobblers heard was highest during the youth week and the second week of the regular turkey season, while gobbles heard peaked during week 3 of the regular season.

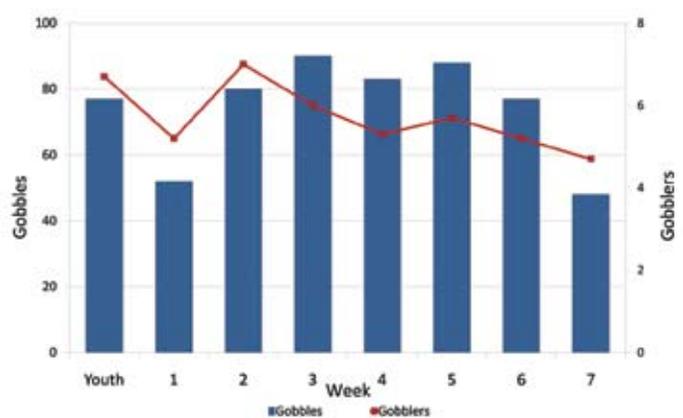
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted By Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted By Week

Figure 5

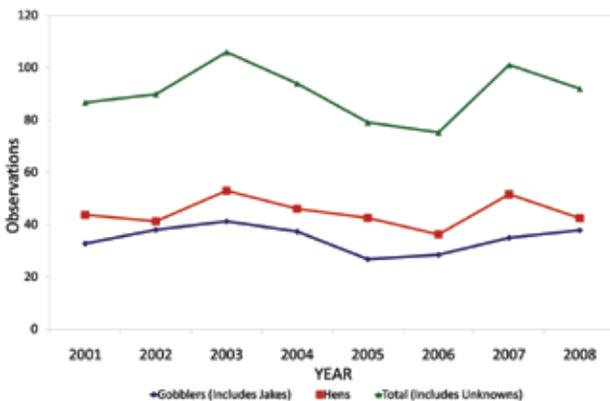


Turkey Observations

During the 2008 season, hunters observed an average of 20.5 adult gobblers, 17.3 jakes, 42.4 hens and 11.7 unknowns for every 100 hours of hunting (**Figure 6**). Jake observations were similar to that observed in 2007 (**Figure 7**).

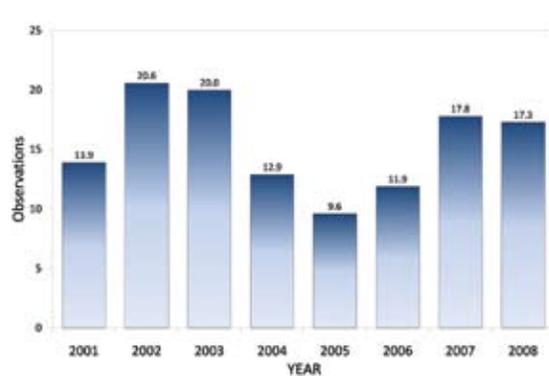
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7



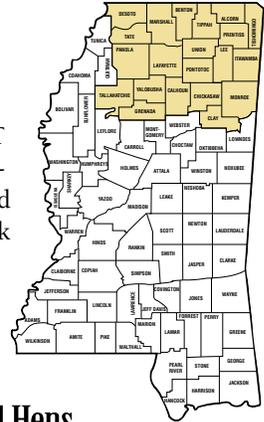
Statewide 2009 Season Forecast

Spring turkey season forecasts generally focus on the number of 2-year gobblers we expected to see in the Spring population. 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 2007, and the jake observation data from 2008, Mississippi turkey hunters can expect the number of 2-year gobblers statewide to be similar to what they observed during the Spring 2008 season. Of course, we anticipate regional variance in turkey populations, and we will address regional forecasts in the coming pages.

Region 1

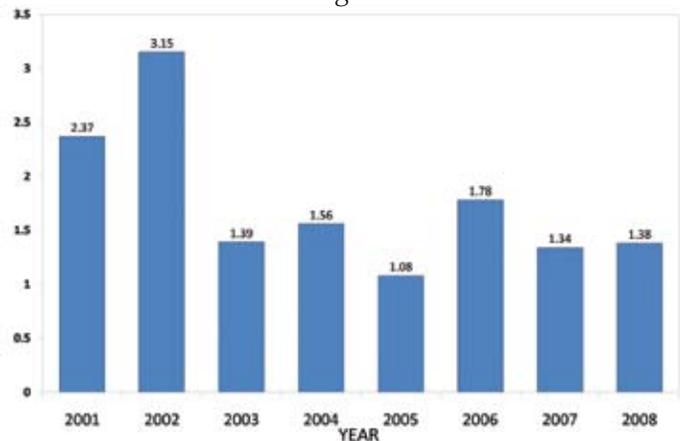
Turkey Region 1

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



Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1



Reproduction

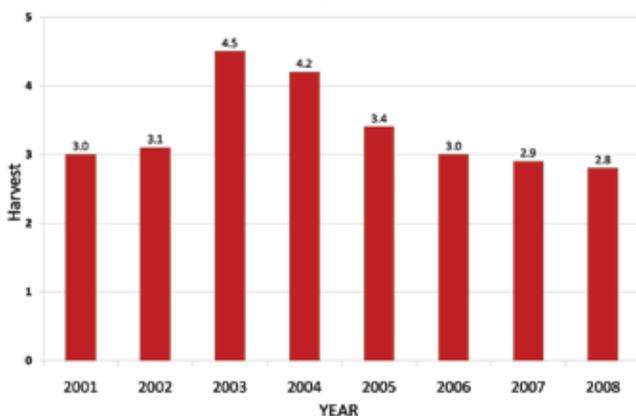
According to the 2008 wild turkey brood survey, reproduction in this region was similar to that observed the previous year, with 1.38 poults produced per hen (Figure 1). This observed reproduction was the second lowest of all regions for 2008. A total of 665 hens were observed, of which 315 (47%) successfully raised at least one poult. Successful hens had an average brood size of 2.91 poults.

Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Hunters harvested 2.8 gobblers for every 100 hours of hunting during the 2008 season, which was similar to the previous year (Figure 2). Forty-four percent of the gobblers harvested were 3-year-olds with spurs between 1.0 and 1.25 inches long (Figure 3), while eight percent of the gobblers harvested were at least 4 years old with spurs greater than 1.25 inches long.

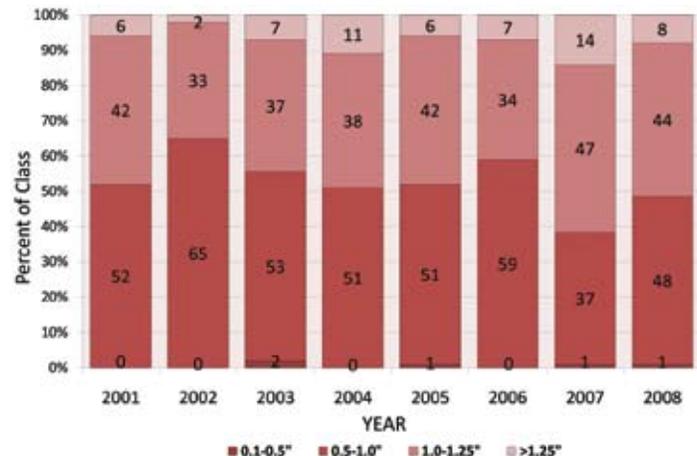
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

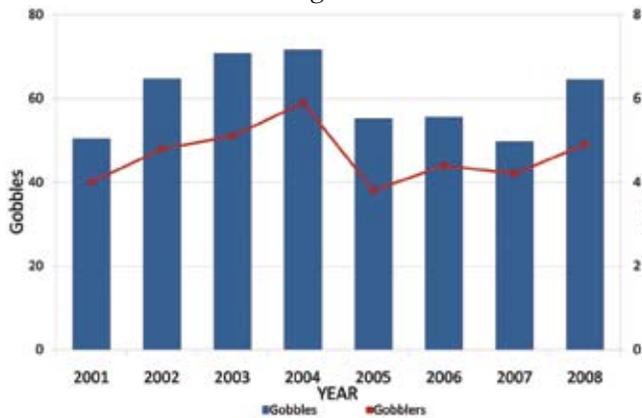


Gobbling Activity

During the 2008 season, hunters heard an average of 4.9 gobblers gobble 64.5 times for every 10 hours hunted (**Figure 4**). Gobbling activity was up slightly from the previous year. The number of gobblers heard peaked during the Youth week, but the number of gobbles heard did not peak until the 4th and 5th weeks of the regular hunting season (**Figure 5**).

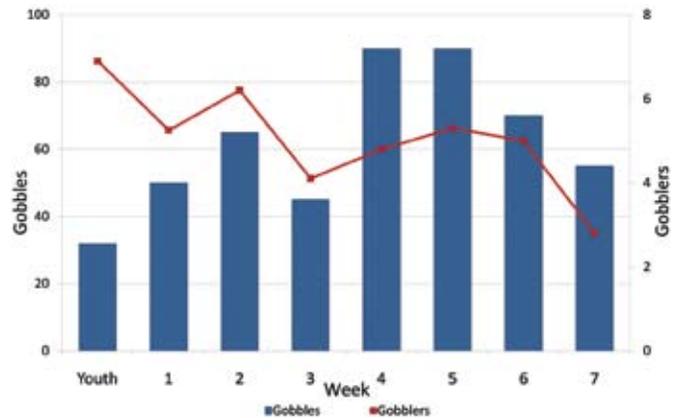
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted By Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted By Week

Figure 5

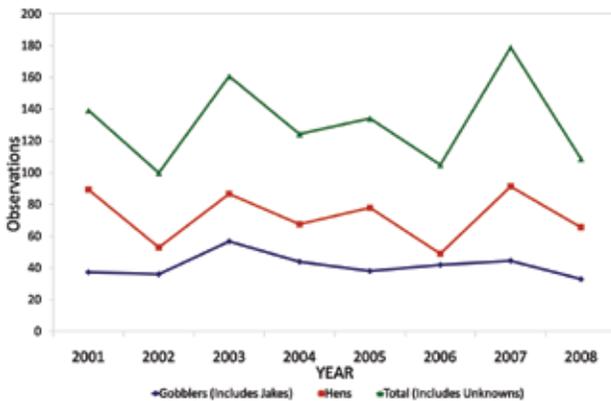


Turkey Observations

Turkey hunters observed an average of 108.7 turkeys per 100 hours hunted in 2008 (**Figure 6**) which was down from 2007 and comparable to 2006. Jake observations were also down in 2008 (**Figure 7**).

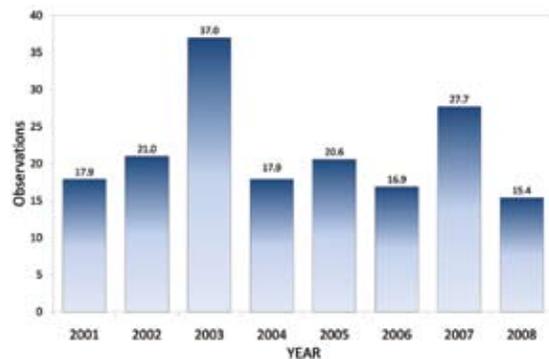
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7

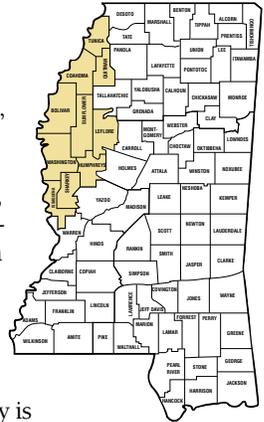


2009 Season Forecast

With two consecutive below average hatches, and a decline in 2008 jake observations, Region 1 hunters should expect a decline in the number of 2-year-old gobblers they see 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.

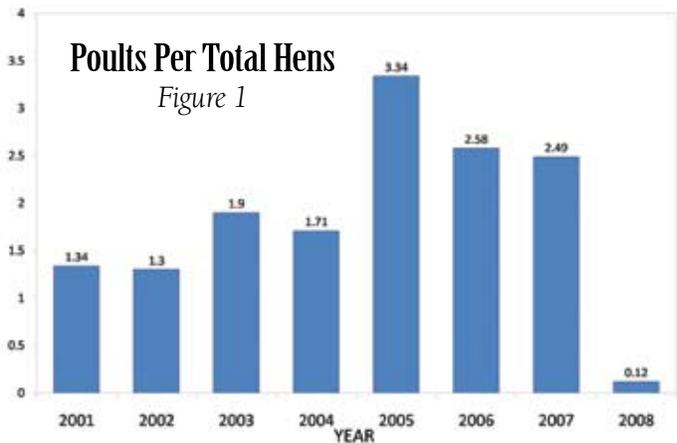


Region 2 is unique in that most of the turkey habitat in the interior Delta is on public lands (national forest, wildlife management areas, and wildlife refuges) and the vast majority of the private land habitat is located in the batture lands west of the Mississippi River levee. Therefore, data from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

During the Spring 2008 season, much of Region 2 was negatively affected by significant flooding. Many areas within this region were effectively closed to hunting for much of the season due to high water. For this reason, many of the 2008 results for Region 2 represent limited sample sizes and might not be useful for accurately assessing trends for this region.

Reproduction

Following 3 very good years of reproduction, a record low of 0.12 poults per total hen was observed for Region 2 during 2008 (**Figure 1**). A total of 288 hens were seen, with only 20 (7%) of them successfully producing at least 1 poult. Average brood size was 1.25 poults per successful hen, which was also the lowest for any region of the State. This very poor reproduction was attributed to extensive flooding in this region during the Spring and early Summer of 2008.

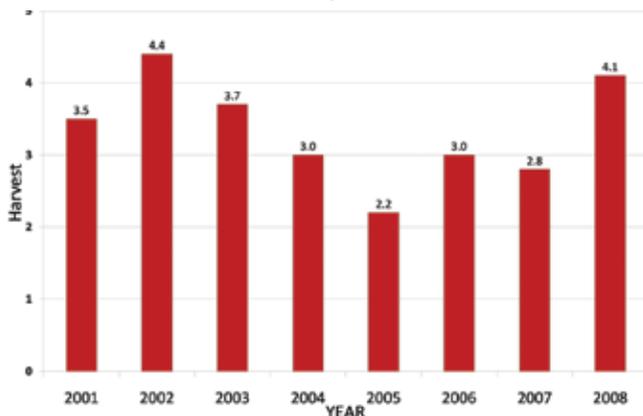


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

During the 2008 season, an average of 4.1 gobblers was harvested for every 100 hours of hunting (**Figure 2**), which was a significant increase from the 2007 season. However, this harvest rate should be viewed with caution due to the limited hunting data available for Region 2 in 2008. Extensive spring flooding made turkey hunting very difficult for most of the 2008 season. Most hunting effort occurred during the first 10 days of the season and while harvest rates were relatively high during that period, the overall harvest for

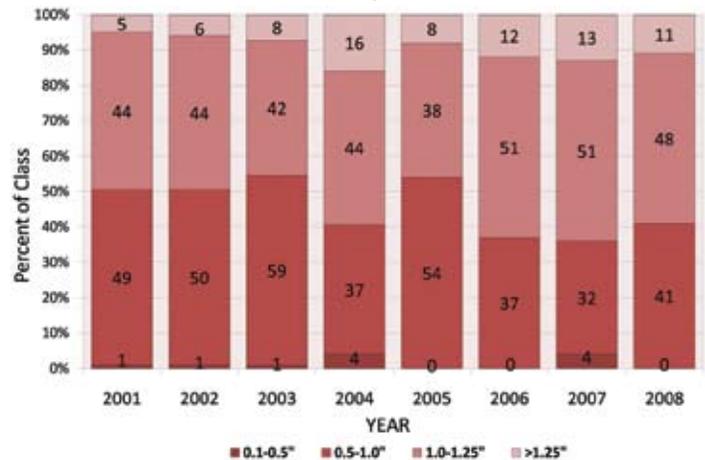
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3



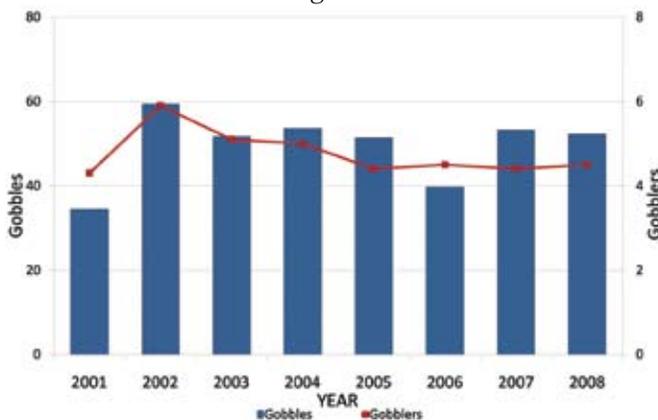
Region 2 was relatively low due to a significant reduction in hunting opportunity with much of the region inaccessible for most of the season. Harvest rates in Region 2 have ranged from 2.2 gobblers per 100 hours hunted in 2005 to 4.4 gobblers per 100 hours in 2002, and have averaged 3.36 during the past 8 seasons. Approximately 59% of the gobblers harvested in Region 2 were at least 3-years old (**Figure 3**), with 11% having spurs over 1.25 inches in length. Forty-one percent of the birds harvested in Region 2 were in the 2-year old class with spurs between 0.5 and 1.0 inch long.

Gobbling Activity

Gobbling activity for 2008 was comparable to that recorded in 2007 for Region 2 (**Figure 4**). Hunters in this region heard an average of 4.5 gobblers and 52.3 gobblers per 10 hours of hunting. The number of gobblers heard peaked in week 3 and the highest number of gobblers were heard in week 5 (**Figure 5**), but this is based on limited and sporadic hunting effort.

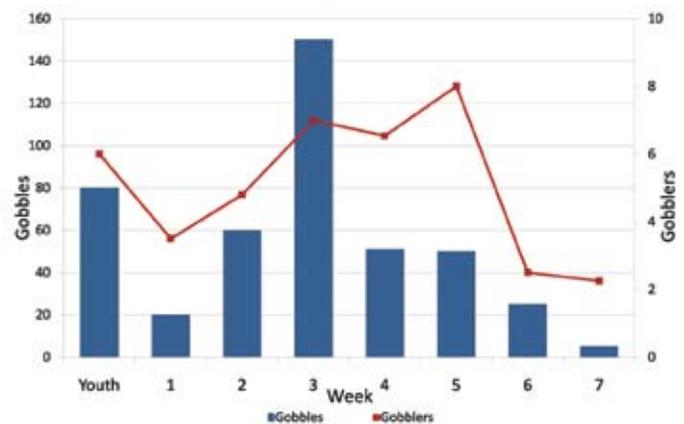
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted By Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted By Week

Figure 5

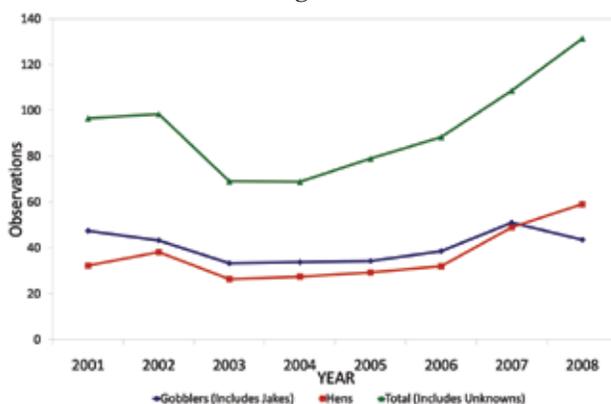


Turkey Observations

Overall turkey observations increased during the limited hunting that occurred during the 2008 season. Hunters saw an average of 131.4 birds per 100 hours of hunting (**Figure 6**). Jake observations declined to 18.9 per 100 hours of hunting (**Figure 7**).

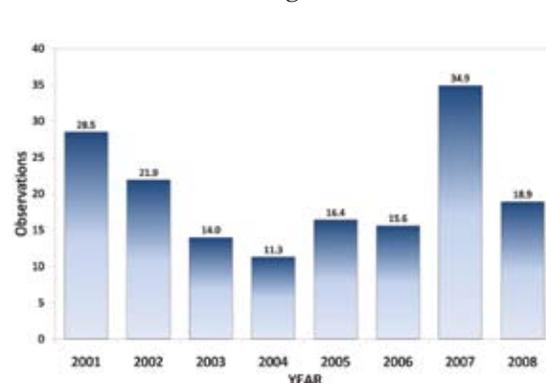
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7



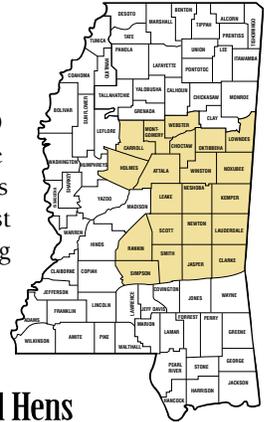
2009 Season Forecast

Region 2 should produce excellent turkey hunting during the Spring 2009 season. Good reproduction during the 2007 season should result in a nice crop of 2-year birds. Additionally, good to excellent hatches in 2005 and 2006, combined with a restricted harvest during the 2008 season should result in a great carryover of older gobblers in this area. Low reproduction in 2008 should mean a limited number of jakes will be seen in most of the region, and this could impact future seasons, but 2009 should be a great turkey year for Region 2.

Region 3

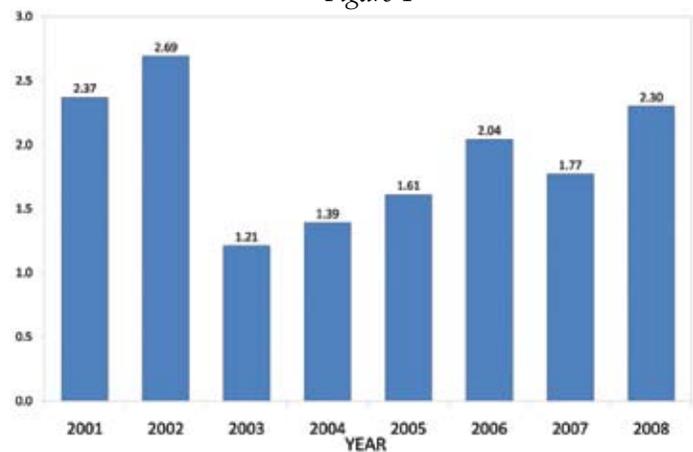
Turkey Region 3

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.



Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1



Reproduction

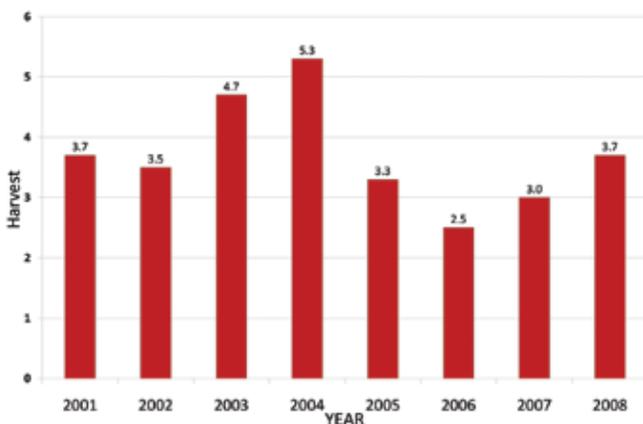
An average of 2.30 poults per total hen was recorded for Region 3 (Figure 1) which was the highest for any region in 2008. A total of 786 hens were seen in this region during the 2008 brood survey and 424 (54%) of the hens successfully produced at least one poult. Average brood size was 4.27 poults per successful hen, which was also the highest for any region during 2008.

Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Hunters harvested 3.7 gobblers per 100 hours of hunting in Region 3 during 2008 (Figure 2) which was up from 2007 and the highest recorded since 2004. Age structure, as measured by spur length classes, was very similar to that observed during 2007 (Figure 3), with 51% of the harvest again falling in the 3-year and older class.

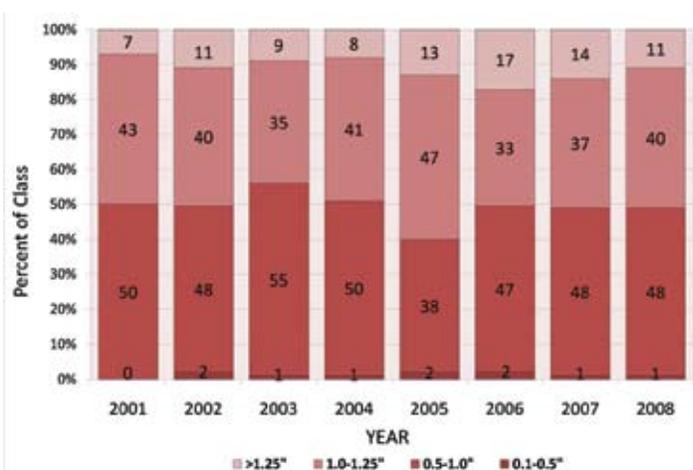
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

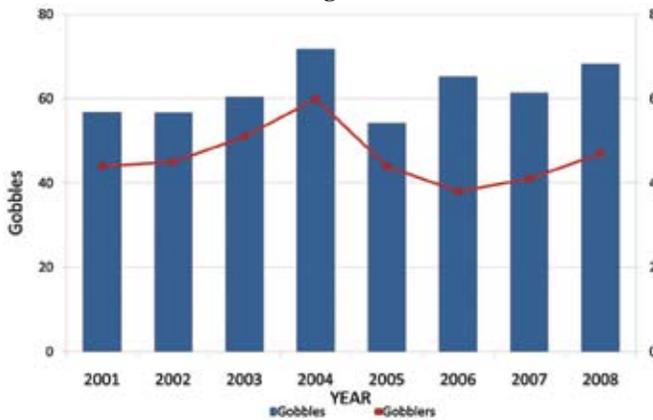


Gobbling Activity

Gobbling activity was up for this region in 2008, with hunters hearing an average of 4.7 gobblers and 68.2 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 of the regular season (**Figure 5**).

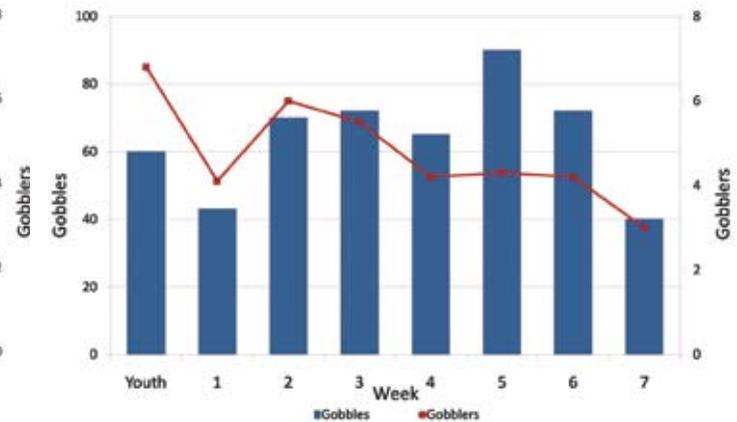
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted By Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted By Week

Figure 5

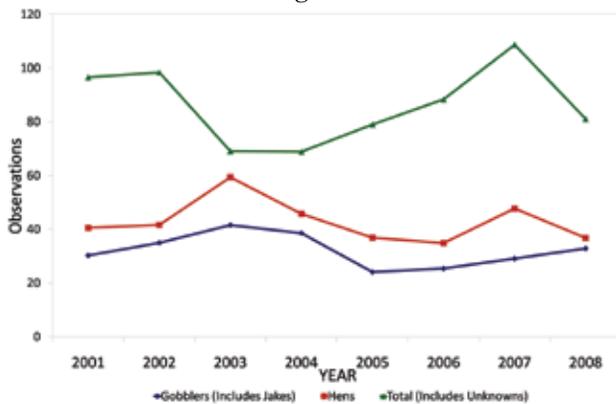


Turkey Observations

Hunters averaged observing 81.1 turkeys per 100 hours hunting during the 2008 season (**Figure 6**), which was down from 2007. However, gobbler observations increased to 32.9 per 100 hours of hunting. Jake observations increased to 15.1 per 100 hours hunting, which was the highest for this region since 2003 (**Figure 7**).

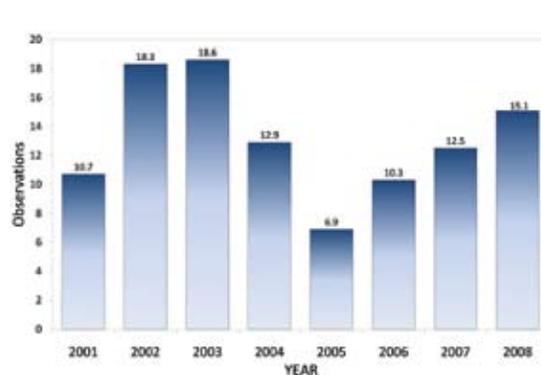
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7



2009 Season Forecast

A decent reproductive year in 2008 should result in hunters seeing more jakes during the 2009 season which is encouraging news for hunters in Region 3. The sources of information that we look at to predict the number of 2-year-old gobblers we anticipate for the upcoming season are conflicting in this case. Brood survey data suggests that the 2007 hatch was lower than that observed in 2006, while the number of jakes observed by hunters was greater in 2008 than 2007. Trends in the number of jakes seen by Spring Gobbler Survey Participants have usually been a consistent predictor of the number of 2-year-old gobblers hunters will see in the woods the following year, therefore we expect an increased number of vocal 2-year-old gobblers in Region 3 during the 2009 Spring season.

Turkey Region 4

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.

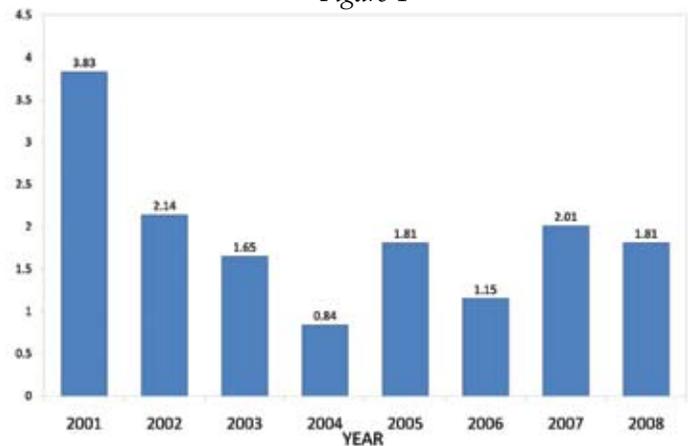


Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1

Reproduction

A total of 1.81 poults per total hens was observed for Region 4 during the 2008 brood survey (**Figure 1**) which was down from 2007. Sixty-two percent of the hens observed successfully reproduced, which was the highest success rate of all regions. Average brood size was 2.93 poults for Region 4.

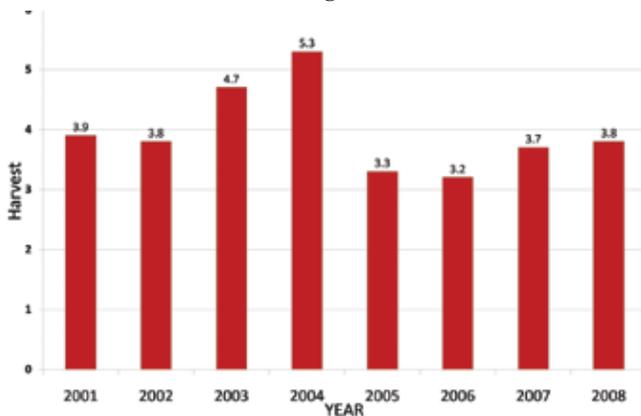


Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Region 4 turkey hunters harvested 3.8 gobblers per 100 hours of hunting in 2008 (**Figure 2**) which was up slightly from 2007. The percentage of older gobblers (with spurs at least 1-inch long) increased to 58% (**Figure 3**) while the percentage of 2-year old birds in the harvest declined to 40%.

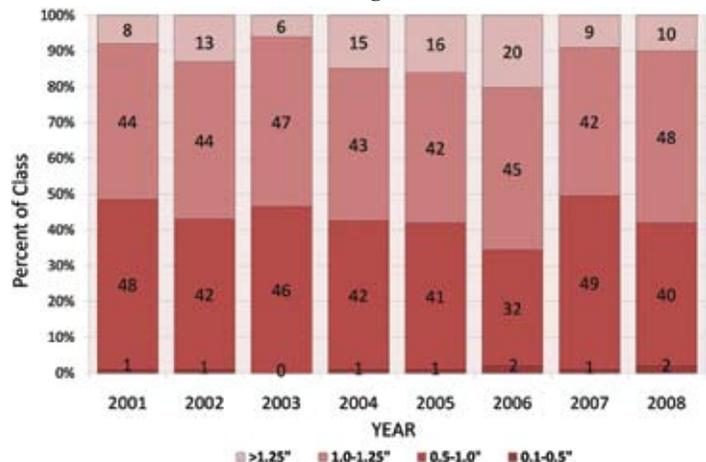
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

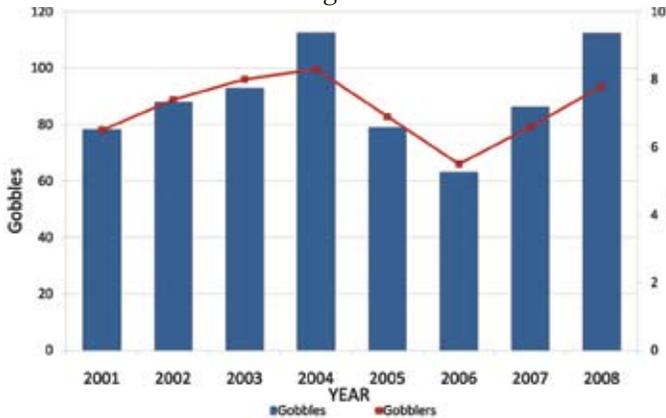


Gobbling Activity

Gobbling activity for Southwest Mississippi increased in 2008 (**Figure 4**) as hunters heard 7.8 gobblers and 112.4 gobbles per 10 hours of hunting. The number of gobblers heard in this region peaked during week 2 of the season, while the number of gobbles heard was highest during week 3 (**Figure 5**).

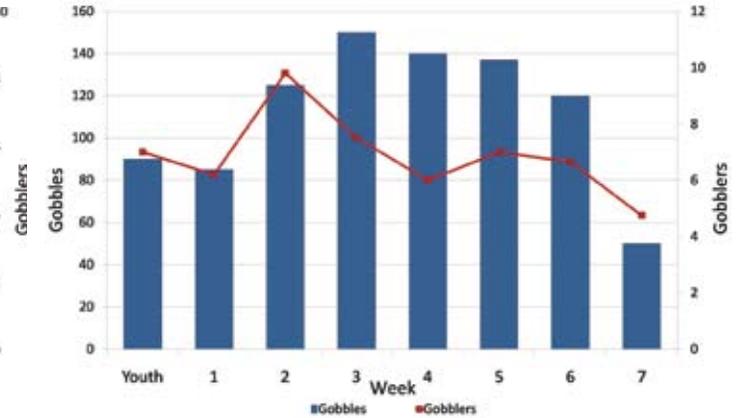
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted By Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted By Week

Figure 5

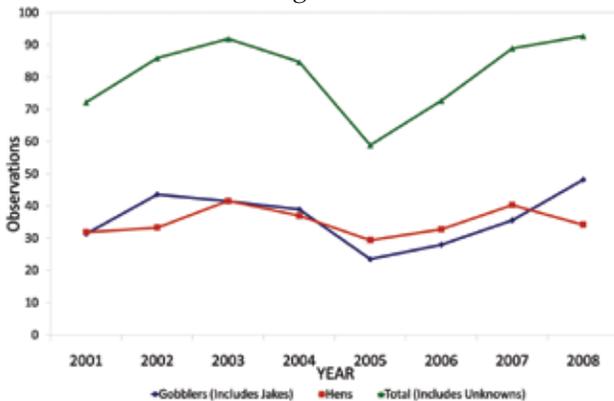


Turkey Observations

Turkey hunters observed 92.7 turkeys per 100 hours of hunting in 2008 (**Figure 6**) which was an increase from 2007. Hunters observed 18.5 jakes per 100 hours hunting (**Figure 7**) which was an increase from 2007, and the highest observed since 2002.

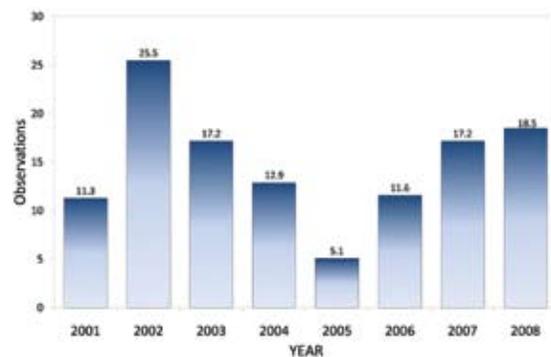
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7



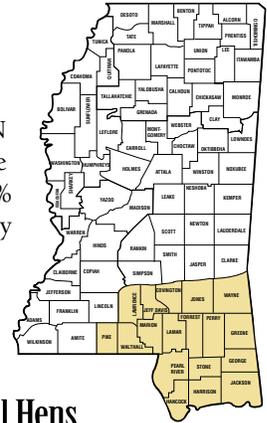
2009 Season Forecast

With increases in both the number of poults observed in 2007 and the number of jakes seen last spring, turkey hunters should expect to encounter more 2-year-old gobblers in Region 4 than they found last season. Total turkey observations in this region have increased during the past 4 years, and hunters should expect that trend to continue during the 2009 season.

Turkey Region 5

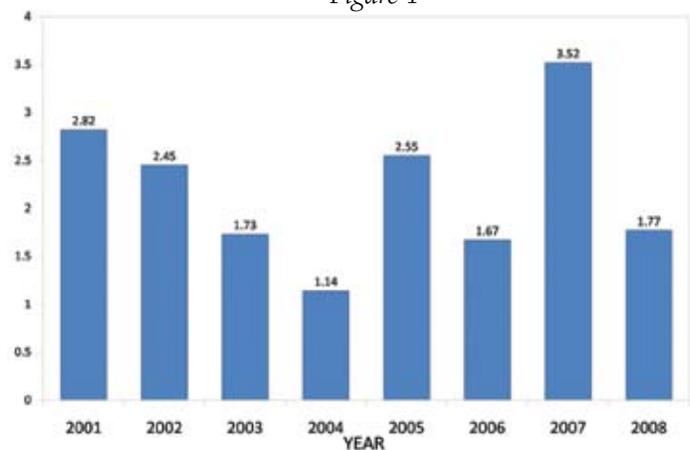
Region 5

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.



Poults Per Total Hens

Figure 1



Reproduction

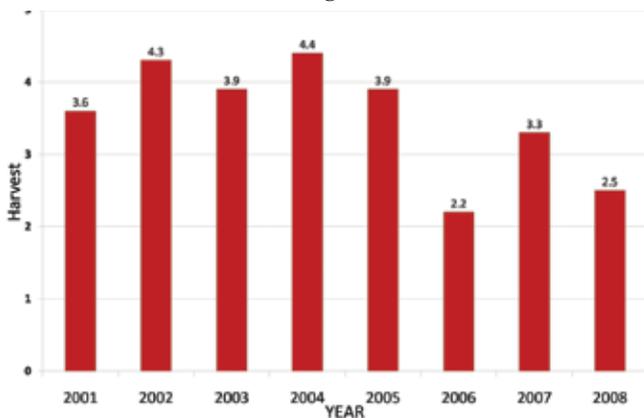
A total of 1.77 poults were observed per hen during the 2008 brood survey (**Figure 1**), which was down from a very good hatch year in 2007 in Region 5. A total of 47% of the hens observed successfully reproduced, and average brood size was 3.77 poults.

Harvest Rates & Age Structure

Region 5 hunters harvested 2.5 gobblers per 100 hours of hunting in 2008 (**Figure 2**) which was down from 2007. 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**).

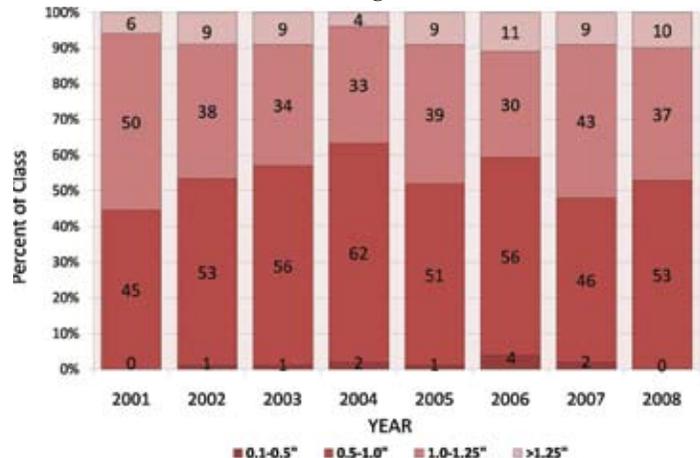
Harvest Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 2



Spur Length Classes (%)

Figure 3

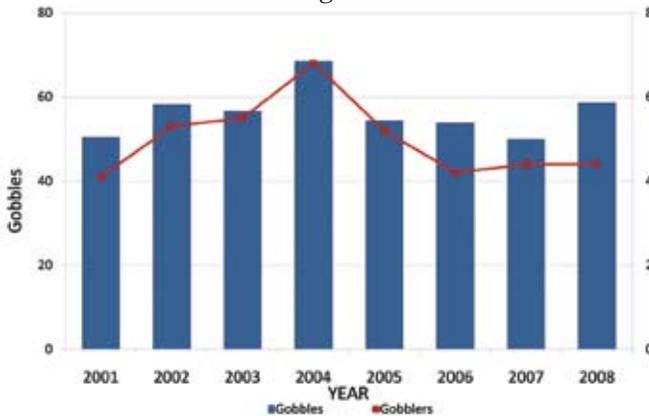


Gobbling Activity

During 2008, hunters in this region heard 4.4 gobblers per 10 hours, which was similar to 2007, and 58.6 gobbles per 10 hours which was higher than the previous year (**Figure 4**). The number of gobblers heard peaked during week 2 of the season, while the number of gobbles heard was highest in week 3 (**Figure 5**).

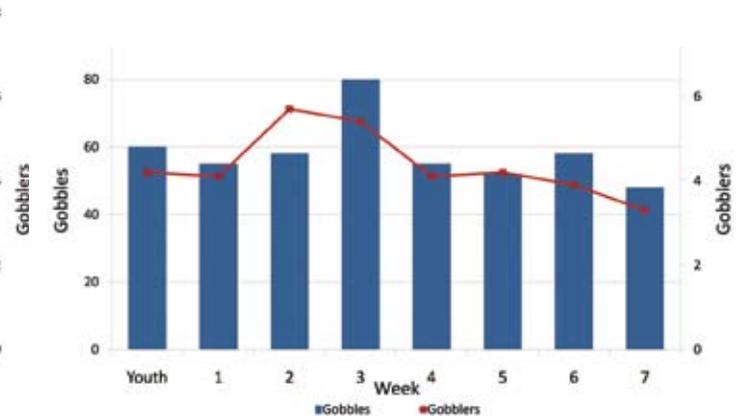
Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted By Year

Figure 4



Gobblers & Gobbles Heard Per 10 Hours Hunted By Week

Figure 5

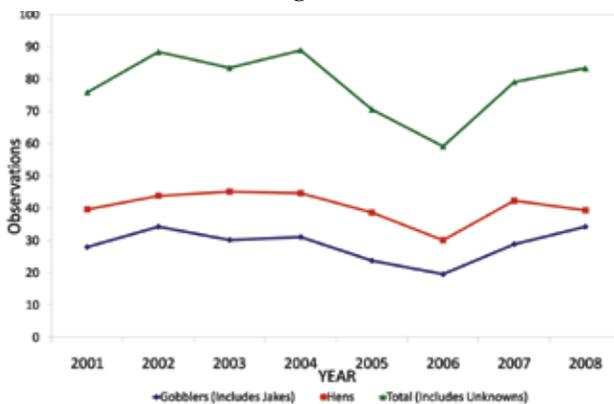


Turkey Observations

Total turkey observations increased in 2008 to 83.4 birds per 100 hours hunting (**Figure 6**), and jake observations were the highest on record for this region at 21.5 (**Figure 7**).

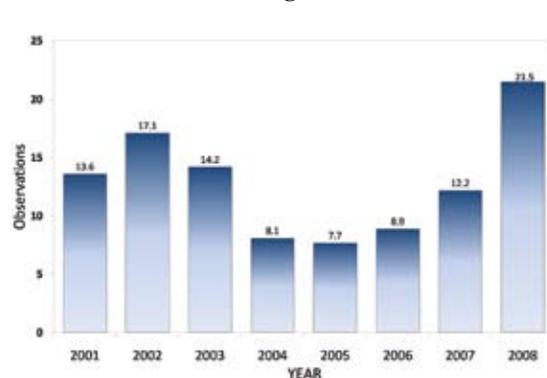
Turkey Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 6



Jake Observations Per 100 Hours Hunted

Figure 7



2009 Season Forecast

The 2009 Spring season should be one of the best in recent history in Region 5. The number of poults observed in 2007 and the number of jakes observed in 2008 were both record highs for this region! While the decrease in reproduction observed during 2008 will likely mean fewer jakes seen in 2009, hunters should expect plenty of 2-year gobblers to match wits with during the upcoming hunting season!



A hunter spends a few moments to fill out his SGHS. Participation in the SGHS is quick and easy.

PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

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 and Drummin." There are also other ways that hunters can benefit:

Benefits of Participating in the SGHS

- A complimentary copy of "Spittin and 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 sponsored by the MS Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. This raffle is aimed at increasing participation in the SGHS. See below for more details.
- You can improve your turkey hunting knowledge and skills by keeping track of your own hunting experiences and habits throughout the season.



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

Magnolia State Turkey Talk



The Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation

I AM OFTEN ASKED “WHY THE NWTF”. WHAT A QUESTION!! I COULD WRITE A BOOK ABOUT THIS SUBJECT, MUCH less fill the “Spittin’& Drummin” report with the whys, but I’ll try and limit my comments to this letter.

While growing up in south Copiah County about all you could hunt were squirrels, rabbits and a few doves. However, something did happen during that time, I began to realize that we were a blessed people and by the luck of the draw we had been born in the greatest country in the world. I don’t think the thought was original with me, but I did learn that “If you take, you should give back”. And, that is what the NWTF has given me. I found that through the projects the NWTF does, it is, in my opinion, the very best vehicle to “give back” to society, nature and mother earth. One person cannot make too much of an impact, but a lot of people with the same goals can really make a difference.

Previous leaders of this organization were wise enough to partner up with the MDWFP on turkey related projects. The result of this partnership is evidenced by the increase of our turkey flock, the betterment of habitat and the growing attitude of good hunting ethics by the Mississippi hunter.

The success of the NWTF is due to the efforts of the thousands of volunteers involved in numerous projects all over our State. Since 1991, through money raised at the Hunting Heritage Super Fund banquets, over \$1,500,000 has been put into projects in Mississippi for wild turkey conservation and preservation of the hunting tradition. I can’t help but believe that on the ground projects that benefit the wild turkey also benefits other game and non-game wildlife.

I want to thank the NWTF volunteers for the tremendous job that they do, and for allowing me to be in a position where in a small way I can “give back”. The MCNWTF also thanks the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks for the great job that they do, and for allowing us to be a partner.

We hope that you will look over the information set forth on the following pages. We have highlighted some of the projects and efforts of our members. If you are not a member of the NWTF we invite you to be a part of what we are doing. Contact any of us and we will welcome the opportunity to make you a part of our organization.

Bob Spell, President

Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation



Noxubee Refuge

Mississippi Chapter NWTF — 2008 Project Highlights

Habitat Projects

Seed Subsidy: The Mississippi Chapter NWTF offered seed to NWTF members at a reduced cost in 2008. Turkey Gold Chufa was offered through the Spring Seed Subsidy program and NWTF's Strut and Rut Perennial Clover Concentrate mix was offered through the Fall Seed Subsidy program. This program is a direct benefit to NWTF members and helps enhance wild turkey habitat on private land.

Noxubee Refuge Midstory Control: The Mississippi Chapter NWTF partnered with MDWFP, BASE, and Quail Forever to enhance over 250 acres of wildlife habitat on Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge. Upland pine stands were thinned and herbicides were applied to control midstory hardwood trees. With prescribed burning of the area planned in the future, the end result of this project will be enhanced brood-rearing and nesting habitat for wild turkey and bobwhite quail and increased browse for whitetail deer.

MCNWTF Contribution: \$5,000.00 **Total Project Cost:** \$20,915.00

Native Warm Season Grass Restoration: The Mississippi Chapter NWTF partnered with the DeSoto County Soil and Water Conservation District, Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission, Quail Unlimited, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and private landowners to purchase 2 native warm season grass drills and restore 250 acres of native warm season grass in northern Mississippi. Drills will be available for public use and restoration of native warm season grasses provides excellent brood-rearing and nesting habitat for wild turkeys.

MCNWTF Contribution: \$3,500.00 **Total Project Cost:** \$100,250.00

Sprayer for Choctaw, John W. Starr, and Trim Cane WMAs: The Mississippi Chapter NWTF donated a 55 gallon tractor-mounted sprayer to MDWFP for use on Choctaw and Trim Cane Wildlife Management Areas and John W. Starr Memorial Forest. The sprayer will be used in treating invasive weeds, maintaining permanent openings, and in conducting prescribed fires.

MCNWTF Contribution: \$765.00

Yockanookany WMA Permanent Openings: The Mississippi Chapter NWTF partnered with MDWFP to create 5 acres of permanent openings on Yockanookany WMA. These openings have added needed brood-rearing and nesting habitat for wild turkeys.

MCNWTF Contribution: \$1994.00 **Total Project Cost:** \$3988.00

Prescribed Fire Equipment: The Mississippi Chapter NWTF partnered with MDWFP and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to purchase prescribed fire equipment. This equipment will increase the capacity of the MDWFP Private Lands Habitat Program to conduct prescribed burning on public and private lands.

MCNWTF Contribution: \$1,500.00 **Total Project Cost:** \$12,000.00



Yockanookany WMA



Left photo: Copiah WMA Opening; right photo: Copiah WMA Fire Line

Copiah County WMA Permanent Openings and Fire Lines: The Mississippi Chapter NWTF partnered with MDWFP to create 15 acres of permanent openings and 4 miles of fire lines on Copiah County WMA. The openings have added brood-rearing and nesting habitat for wild turkeys and the fire lines will aid in conducting prescribed fires on the area.

MCNWTF Contribution: \$5,500.00 **Total Project Cost:** \$11,000.00

O’Keefe WMA Midstory Control: The Mississippi Chapter NWTF partnered with MDWFP to purchase herbicide and equipment to control midstory hardwood trees on O’Keefe WMA. This treatment will enhance brood-rearing and nesting habitat on the area.

MCNWTF Contribution: \$309.00 **Total Project Cost:** \$618.00

Malmaison WMA Road Daylighting: The Mississippi Chapter NWTF partnered with MDWFP to widen 2 miles of road shoulders (daylight roads) on Malmaison WMA. Widened road shoulders will be maintained to provide brood-rearing and nesting habitat for wild turkeys.

MCNWTF Contribution: \$1,750.00 **Total Project Cost:** \$3,500.00



Marion County WMA

Sprayer for Marion County WMA: The Mississippi Chapter NWTF partnered with MDWFP to purchase a tractor-mounted sprayer for use on Marion County WMA. The sprayer will be used in treating invasive weeds, maintaining permanent openings, and in conducting prescribed fires.

MCNWTF Contribution: \$648.00 **Total Project Cost:** \$1,296.00

Clover Seed for WMAs Statewide: The Mississippi Chapter NWTF partnered with MDWFP to purchase clover seed to be planted on MDWFP WMAs statewide. These plantings will provide brood-rearing habitat for wild turkeys.

MCNWTF Contribution: \$4,000.00

Outreach, Hunting Heritage & Education

National Archery in the Schools Program: The Mississippi Chapter NWTF made a donation to the Foundation for Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks to help support the National Archery in the Schools Program. The donation offset equipment costs to establish an archery program in one Mississippi school.

MCNWTF Contribution: \$2,800.00

Scholarship Program: The Mississippi Chapter NWTF awarded twenty nine \$250.00 scholarships to graduating seniors in Mississippi. A state scholarship winner was awarded a \$2,000.00 scholarship and competed for a \$10,000.00 national NWTF scholarship.

MCNWTF Contribution: \$9,250.00

4-H Shooting Program: The Mississippi Chapter NWTF donated \$2,500.00 to the Mississippi 4-H Shooting Program to support youth shooting programs in Mississippi.

MCNWTF Contribution: \$2,500.00

JAKES Education Boxes: The Mississippi Chapter NWTF provided JAKES Wild About Turkey Education Boxes to local chapters to donate to local schools. Boxes were also provided to 48 teachers attending conservation education workshops for teachers. Education boxes contain materials relating to conservation and wild turkeys and are a great resource for teachers and students to learn about the importance of conservation and hunting.

MCNWTF Contribution: \$6,302.00

Hunting Heritage: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf made donations to the American Hunting Heritage Fund and the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America to help ensure the preservation of our hunting heritage nationwide.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$1,000.00

Law Enforcement Projects

Digital Cameras for MDWFP: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf purchased 75 digital cameras for use by MDWFP Law Enforcement Officers. The cameras will be used in gathering evidence and will aid in successfully prosecuting wildlife violators.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$9,880.00

Portable Radios For MDWFP: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf purchased 3 portable radios for use by MDWFP Law Enforcement Officers. The radios will be used to assist Law Enforcement Officers while working in the field.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$750.00

Reward 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 2008.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$784.00 **Total Program Cost:** \$1,568.00

Research Projects

Mississippi State University Research: The Mississippi Chapter NWTf contributed to an ongoing research study being conducted by Mississippi State University. The research is investigating regional differences in gobbling activity in an effort to better understand gobbling activity and how it relates to turkey hunting season dates.

MCNWTf Contribution: \$7,500.00

Grant Projects

Cogongrass Control on Pascagoula River WMA: NWTf received a grant from BASF to treat cogongrass on Pascagoula River WMA. Through the grant funding, NWTf treated 112 acres of cogongrass on the area. In addition, MDWFP received a grant from The Nature Conservancy to treat an additional 100 acres of cogongrass infestations on Pascagoula River WMA.

Total Project Cost: \$40,000.00

Habitat Enhancement on Sandy Creek WMA: NWTf received a grant from Entergy to improve habitat along its transmission right-of-way crossing Sandy Creek WMA. Through the grant funding, MDWFP established 4 acres of new permanent openings and converted 6 acres of permanent openings to perennial clover.

Total Project Cost: \$4,000.00

Habitat Enhancement on Marion County WMA: NWTf received donations from Mississippi Power Company and Progressive Solutions to enhance habitat on Marion County WMA. Through the grant funding, MDWFP established perennial clovers along a portion of a Mississippi Power Company right-of-way crossing the area and purchased herbicides to treat cogongrass infestations.

Total Project Cost: \$2,000.00

Longleaf Pine Restoration: NWTf received a grant from the Southern Company and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to restore longleaf pine and conduct public education about longleaf pine in MS, AL, GA, and FL. Through a partnership with Georgia Pacific, over 400 acres of longleaf pine has been restored on private lands in Mississippi. In addition, NWTf conducted a landowner workshop in Stone County in May, 2008. Over 100 landowners attended the workshop and learned about longleaf pine management and wild turkey biology and management.



Pascagoula River WMA



Right photo and left photo: Sandy Creek WMA

NWTF Supports Mississippi's Acorns for Wildlife Initiative

For the fifth year, NWTF partnered with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks to provide landowners statewide an opportunity to purchase native oak seedlings at a reduced cost through Mississippi's Acorns for Wildlife Initiative.



Mississippi's Acorns for Wildlife Initiative provides high quality, hard mast-producing native oak seedlings to Mississippi landowners. The program is made possible by partnerships between the National Wild Turkey Federation's Mississippi Chapter and Greater Jackson Chapter, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, and Mississippi State University Extension Service.

According to NWTF/MDWFP Cooperative Biologist Joe Koloski, acorns are an excellent wildlife food source during winter months, but are in short supply throughout much of the state. The quality native oak seedlings offered to landowners through this program attract and benefit wildlife while improving opportunities for hunters and wildlife watchers.

Koloski emphasizes the importance of planting native seedlings to improve habitat conditions. "The high quality native oak seedlings provided through this program are grown from acorns collected in Mississippi," Koloski says. "Trees grown from these native acorns will adapt to conditions in Mississippi more easily than seedlings grown from non-native acorns."

The program is open to any landowners that would like to participate. Orders for the 2010 planting season will be accepted beginning October 2009. For more information about the Mississippi Acorns for Wildlife Program or to be placed on the mailing list to receive an order form, contact Joe Koloski by telephone at 601-454-4455, or by email at jkoloskinwtf@yahoo.com.



NWTF Continues Cooperative Biologist Partnership with MDWFP

The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) and Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks (MDWFP) partnered in 2008 to field a Cooperative Biologist position in Mississippi. Although an employee of the NWTF, the Cooperative Biologist position is funded in part by MDWFP and the Mississippi Chapter NWTF. Primary duties of the Cooperative Biologist are to: coordinate habitat enhancement projects on public lands; coordinate the Acorns for Wildlife Program; develop and administer grants for habitat enhancement projects; assist the MDWFP Turkey Program with the Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey, annual Wild Turkey Program Report, and Wild Turkey Brood Survey; provide technical guidance to state and federal agencies and private landowners; and to act as a liaison between NWTF and state and federal wildlife and land management agencies.

The first year of this partnership has been extremely successful. Habitat enhancement projects funded through the Mississippi Hunting Heritage Super Fund were completed on 7 individual Wildlife Management Areas, over 30,000 high-quality oak seedlings were provided to landowners through Mississippi's Acorns for Wildlife Initiative, and grant projects were completed on an additional 3 Wildlife Management Areas. In addition, the Cooperative Biologist has begun coordinating with the US Forest Service to complete habitat enhancement projects on Forest Service WMAs using the stewardship contracting program.

This partnership has allowed Joe Koloski, currently serving as the NWTF/MDWFP Cooperative Biologist, to focus his efforts in Mississippi. Although many successes have been realized as a result of this partnership in its first year of existence, much remains to be done. Both NWTF and MDWFP look forward to continuing the partnership and to having an even greater impact for wild turkeys, turkey habitat, and turkey hunters in 2009.

Stewardship Contracting Holds Promise for Mississippi WMA's

Stewardship contracting is an authority granted to the US Forest Service by the US Congress in 2003. In essence, stewardship contracting allows the US Forest Service to use revenue generated through timber sales to complete important habitat restoration and enhancement activities.

With traditional US Forest Service timber sales, only a portion of the revenue generated is available for habitat enhancement, and any enhancements must be made within the timber sale boundary. With stewardship contracting, all of the revenue generated from a timber sale can be applied to habitat enhancements and the money can be spent outside the timber sale boundary. The bottom line is that stewardship contracting gives the US Forest Service more flexibility, funding, and options for completing necessary habitat work.

NWTF has been involved in stewardship contracting with the US Forest Service and has participated in a number of projects around the country. Although stewardship contracting has been slow to take off in Mississippi, momentum is beginning to build. The Chickasawhay Ranger District in southeast Mississippi is in the process of completing a stewardship contracting project and is in the planning stages of another 10-year, large-scale project. The Bienville Ranger District completed a small stewardship contracting project in 2008 and will be beginning the planning process for another project in 2009.

Both NWTF and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks (MDWFP) recognizes stewardship contracting as a golden opportunity to accomplish habitat enhancement projects on Wildlife Management Areas cooperatively managed by MDWFP and the US Forest Service throughout the state. The NWTF/MDWFP Cooperative Biologist and other MDWFP personnel are currently developing project ideas and communicating with US Forest Service Ranger Districts with the goal of implementing stewardship contracting projects on MDWFP/US Forest Service WMAs statewide.

Stewardship contracting holds great potential for wildlife and wildlife habitat on public land in Mississippi and we look forward to working with the US Forest Service to make stewardship contracting successful. Public input and involvement is always important when planning and implementing habitat enhancement projects on US Forest Service lands, and the more NWTF members and hunters we have involved in the process the better. If you are interested in learning more about stewardship contracting and how you can become involved in the planning or public input process, please contact Joe Koloski, NWTF/MDWFP Cooperative Biologist, at 601-454-4455 or jkoloskinwtf@yahoo.com.



Mississippi Chapter NWTF Names WMA Manager & Wildlife Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

Each year, the Mississippi Chapter NWTF recognizes an outstanding Wildlife Management Area Manager and Wildlife Law Enforcement Officer for their efforts in Mississippi.

Danny "Hank" Stringer was selected as the 2008 Mississippi Chapter NWTF WMA Manager of the Year. Hank is the manager of Marion County WMA, a position he has held for nearly 30 years. Hank does an outstanding job of managing the area and is passionate about wildlife, wildlife habitat, and hunting. Anyone who has ever visited Marion County WMA knows that Hank cares about the area, its wildlife, and the hunters who use the area.

Master Sergeant John Shirley was selected as the 2008 Mississippi Chapter NWTF Wildlife Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. Master Sergeant Shirley is a Conservation Officer for MDWFP in Clarke County. He is a 16 year veteran of MDWFP and is a third-generation conservation officer. Master Sergeant Shirley is an avid turkey hunter, turkey call maker, and is actively involved in several conservation organizations. He is involved in the community, promotes hunting and is respected by his peers and the public.

We would like to congratulate Master Sargent Stringer and Master Sergeant Shirley and thank them for their contributions to wildlife conservation in Mississippi. Both were recognized at the Mississippi Chapter NWTF annual awards banquet in January..

Preston Pittman Inducted Into The “Legends of the Outdoors” National Hall of Fame

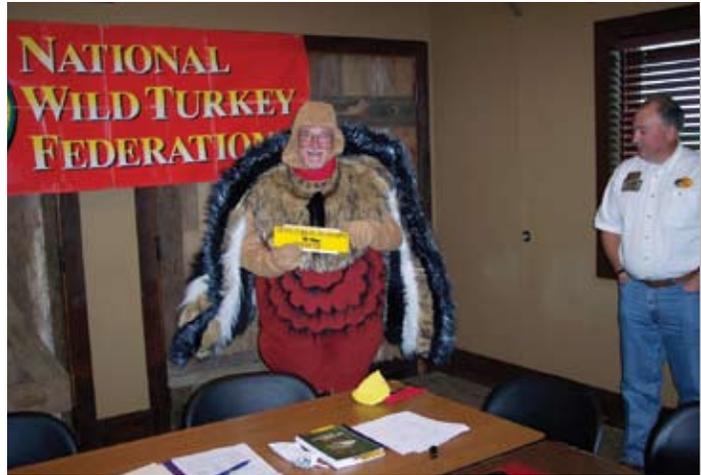
The Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation and “Magnolia State Turkey Talk” offer its congratulations to Mississippi’s own Preston Pittman for being inducted into the “Legends of the Outdoors” National Hall of Fame. Way to go, Preston!

The induction ceremony took place on August 29, 2008 at the Sheraton Music City Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee. This was the 7th annual edition of this noteworthy event which recognizes those men and women who have made an impact and considerable contributions to the outdoors and the outdoor industry.

Other persons inducted into the Hall of Fame along with Preston are: Tom Knapp, Jerry Martin, Bill Jordan, George Cochran, Walley Marshall, Jimmy Houston, and Cris Houston. So, without doubt, Preston was among a group of distinguished individuals on this special night.

Locally, Preston is well-known for his willingness to do just about anything to promote wildlife conservation and to involve all manner of persons in wholesome outdoor activities such as hunting and fishing. Preston’s sincerity and interest in working with kids is also quite apparent. And who does not feel more upbeat and energized when they are in Preston’s company?

Here in Mississippi, Preston is an important part of our turkey hunting “world”. So, thank you, Preston, for just being “Preston”.



This wily old gobbler (or is it Preston Pittman appearing in his alternate personality?) dropped by the August Mississippi Chapter, NWTF Board of Directors meeting to give a boost to the Chapter’s new public information campaign, “THINK TURKEY, MISSISSIPPI!”. Looking on in amazement is Kenny Odom, MCNWTF Secretary.

2008 Wheelin’ Sportsmen Deer Hunt for Youth with Disabilities: A Circle of Friends



A participant in the Wheelin’ Sportsmen Youth Deer Hunt poses with Mississippi Chapter NWTF President Bob Spell.

The annual Wheelin’ Sportsmen Deer Hunt For Youth With Disabilities is becoming much more than just a deer hunting event for special kids. Many new friendships are being developed and sustained among those involved.

On Friday, November 7, 2008, the first day of the three-day event, many happy reunions were observed as youth hunters from the 2006 and/or 2007 events came in to register and then were matched-up with hunter hosts/landowner hosts from the previous years. In fact, one kid did not stop at the registration desk in the foyer of the Bass Pro Shop in Pearl until he had met and hugged his host from last year. The number and depth of these friendships were also in evidence during the testimonial time during the Sunday morning program.

Volunteers and contributors for the 2008 youth hunt are just too numerous to mention in this article, but a few do need to be recognized. Stepping into this circle of friends in a big way was Ben Jones and his fellow church members at Cleary Baptist Church. These Church members, from kids to adults, generously handled the preparation and serving of food at our Friday night and Sunday morning programs. This, of course, was a big and important undertaking on their part and it was very much appreciated by all.

Also stepping into this growing circle of friends in a much needed way were Pat Renegar and Dean Davis of Bass Pro Shop, Chad Dacus and Chris McDonald and their co-workers at the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, and Jimmy Primos of Primos Hunting Calls. It seems that all of these people were willing to make whatever accommodations were needed to ensure the success of the 2008 hunt.

In addition, Will Clark, former MSU and major league baseball player who was attending the event with son, Trey, will long be remembered as a true friend for his generous act of giving the NWTF Gun-of-the-year he won at the Friday night fund-raising banquet to hunt participant, Chase Byrd of Bay St. Louis. But this was not the only "prize" for Chase, he harvested his first deer on his first ever hunt on Saturday. It was a 6 point buck.

Attendance for the annual Wheelin' Sportsmen youth deer hunt continues to climb. Twenty-eight (28) kids participated in the first hunt in 2006. Sixty-one (61) kids participated in the 2008 hunt. Of this number, fifty-eight (58) attended the event headquartered at the Bass Pro Shop, and three (3) attended a hunt at an alternate location in Adams County. But no matter where they attended, you can be assured that friendships were developed and nurtured among youth hunters and support personnel.

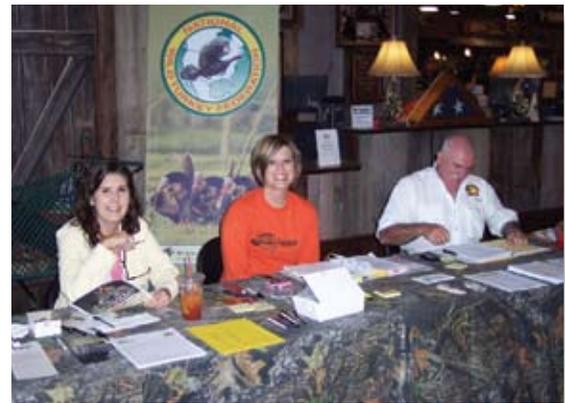
And the harvest total of forty-two (42) deer taken on the Saturday and Sunday morning hunts certainly indicate that these special kids are serious deer hunters. Out of this total, several nice bucks were harvested, but the heaviest buck was something to behold. It was a 7-point that weighed 252 pounds. The lucky hunter that took this whopper was Jeremy McCulloch, and the hunter host for Jeremy was Robert Higginbotham of Louisville, MS. Without a doubt, this hunt will be remembered among friends for a long time.

The 2009 youth hunt was co-hosted by Wheelin' Sportsmen NWTF, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, Bass Pro Shops, Primos Hunting Calls, the Mississippi Chapter of the NWTF, and the Greater Jackson Chapter of the NWTF. NWTF Regional Director, Joe Wood, served as chairman of the event planning committee. But many more assisted with the event in various ways. Most everyone involved is looking forward to the 2009 hunt.

Any readers of "Magnolia State Turkey Talk" that want to be involved in a very special event for very special kids may want to volunteer to help with 2009 hunt. If so, be assured that you will become involved with a great new circle of friends working together in a way that will be long remembered by all.



Participant Karlye Flanagin registers for the Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Deer Hunt at the registration table.



NWTF volunteers await participants in the Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Deer Hunt at the registration table.



Participants in the Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Deer Hunt anticipate the hunt at the Friday night banquet at Bass Pro Shops in Pearl.



This participant in the Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Deer Hunt left no doubt about her stance on hunting. Her hat reads, "Good Girls play dress up...bad girls hunt".

2008 Wheelin' Sportsmen Deer Hunt for Youth with Disabilities, continued...



Will Clark and his son Trey enjoy the Friday night banquet at the Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Deer Hunt.



Bass Pro Shops general manager Pat Renegar welcomes the crowd to the Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Deer Hunt Friday night banquet at the Bass Pro Shop in Pearl.

Destin Ware won a new shotgun at the Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Deer Hunt Sunday morning testimonial and worship service.



A large crowd returned to Bass Pro Shops to take part in the Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Deer Hunt Sunday morning testimonial and worship service.



Dakota Martinez is presented a certificate for taking his first deer at the Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Deer Hunt by MDWFP Biologist Chris McDonald.



This group of hunters has participated in all three of the Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Deer Hunts. Back Row (left to right): Patrick Townsend, Austin Nix, JC Davis. Front Row (left to right): Evans Howell, Lane Balch, Destin Ware, Patrick Files.



This lucky participant in the Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Deer Hunt went home with a NWTF Gun of the Year.

Chapter News Briefs

Mississippi Chapter: For the third year in a row, the Mississippi Chapter operated a teacher information center in its booth at the 2008 Wildlife Extravaganza in Jackson. Seventy-one (71) 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 two books entitled, "Forest Plants of the Southeast and Their Wildlife Uses". Box Winners were Gary Road Elementary School, (Byram) and Lovett Elementary School (Clinton). Book winners were McLaurin High School and Vicksburg High School. In addition, forty-nine (49) teachers also pre-registered for a two day workshop on wild turkey history, biology, and management that is tentatively scheduled for the first week of June, 2009 at Jones County Junior College.

New officers for the MCNWTF were elected at the Board of Directors Meeting in May, 2008. Those elected to serve as officers for a two-year period are: President, Bob Spell of Jackson; Vice President, Scott Combest of Pascagoula; Secretary, Kenny Odom of Waynesboro; and Treasurer, Barry Biggers of Flora. Alan Sumrall will be serving in the position of Immediate Past President.

East Mississippi Chapter: The East Mississippi Chapter hosted a Women in the Outdoors event at Circle M Plantation in Noxubee County on July 26, 2008. Robert Higginbotham and Mary Tabor headed up this event. (Photos from event, below.)



Participants in the East Mississippi Chapter Women in the Outdoors event enjoyed a day of fun and fellowship at Circle M Plantation in Noxubee County.

Tiffany Haney, Julee McNeill, and Amber Osborne participate in the auto maintenance 101 class at the East Mississippi Chapter Women in the Outdoors event.



Participants in the East Mississippi Chapter Women in the Outdoors event receive instruction on safe handgun operation.



Shooting instructor Jonathen Peebles helps Tina Higginbotham hit clay targets at the East Mississippi Chapter Women in the Outdoors event.



An instructor teaches participants in the East Mississippi Chapter Women in the Outdoors event how to operate a GPS unit.



Participants in the East Mississippi Chapter Women in the Outdoors event fire handguns.



Justin Strait (auto maintenance instructor) won a pink Ruger 10-22 donated by the East Mississippi Chapter at their Women in the Outdoors event.

Chapter News Briefs, continued...

Cliff White Chapter(formerly Mill Creek Chapter): The 14th annual fundraiser banquet for the newly named Cliff White Chapter was held on Thursday, February 5, 2009 at the Sanderson Farms Corporate Facility in Laurel. Many may remember that the Founder of the Mill Creek Chapter, Cliff White, was killed in an automobile accident the night before the 2008 banquet. Chapter members proceeded with the banquet, but with heavy hearts.

During the 2009 banquet, a special time was set aside to memorialize Cliff, recognizing his commitment to the NWTF mission that so many others support. Family members and friends were in attendance to honor one who was taken away too soon.

Pike-Amite Chapter: The Pike County-Amite County Chapter hosted the 2nd Annual JAKES Youth Field Day on June 14, 2008 at the Ethel Vance Park in Liberty. This event was designed to teach kids about the outdoors. The day's activities included the following: youth horseshoe pit, mock turkey hunt, space walks, rod/reel casting contest, Mississippi narcotics dog, laser gun gallery, riding horses, and pellet rifle range. Special guests for the event were Bubba McPhearson, Primos Special Products Manager, and Smokey Bear.

Tallahala Longbeards Chapter: For the third year in a row, the Tallahala Longbeards Chapter (TLC) sponsored a JAKES Conservation Class with monthly meetings for third graders at Sylva-Bay Academy in Bay Springs. 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 2007-08 school year.

And for the second year in a row, fourth graders at Sylva-Bay Academy went on a field trip to Noxubee Wildlife Refuge. The TLC made plans for the trip and also furnished a guide to accompany the students.

In May, 2008, the TLC participated in the Chester and Rosett Thigpen Memorial Conservation Field Day in Jasper County. Six (6) fourth grade classes in the West Jasper School District attended the event. One of the six (6) stops at the field day dealt with wild turkey biology and management. TLC President, James Bryant, served as the field day planning chairman.

In October, 2008, the TLC manned a booth at the "Montrose Day" celebration. The TLC also coordinated the deer hunting event for the celebration. The TLC has participated in this event for the last three (3) years.

Greater Jackson Chapter: The Greater Jackson Chapter of the NWTF donated 100 turkeys to various charities for meals at Thanksgiving and Christmas 2008. In the past 3 years the chapter has participated and donated over 300 turkeys to charities in the Turkey Hunters Care program administered through the The National Wild Turkey Federation. The members of the chapter would like to thank everyone who supports The Greater Jackson Chapter to allow them the opportunity to give to the less fortunate during the holidays.



Mississippi Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation Launches New Public Information Campaign

The 2008 Wildlife Extravaganza in Jackson provided the Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation with a great opportunity to launch a public information campaign designed to further promote the conservation of the wild turkey in Mississippi. This campaign, known as "THINK TURKEY, MISSISSIPPI!", seeks to involve certain groups as conservation partners in this worthy effort. These groups are: wildlife enthusiasts, forest landowners/managers, agricultural operations, educators, governmental entities, and utility companies.

The most visible elements of the new campaign are a bumper sticker and a companion pamphlet highlighting how the various conservation partners can contribute to the conservation of the wild turkey in Mississippi. However, at the time of this writing, the MCNWTF's supply of the "THINK TURKEY, MISSISSIPPI!" bumper stickers and pamphlets has nearly been exhausted. Therefore, a second printing of these materials might possibly be done. And if this happens, these materials will be made available at upcoming NWTF events.

Most readers of this issue of "Magnolia State Turkey Talk" will probably fit into either one, or both groups, of the conservation partners known as "wildlife enthusiasts" and "forest landowners/managers". And it is important that they know they can contribute greatly to the future well-being of the wild turkey. In fact, their roles together might be the most far-reaching of any of the conserva-

tion partners listed in the "THINK TURKEY, MISSISSIPPI!" pamphlet. Therefore, the MCNWTF encourages individuals in these two groups to equip themselves with the knowledge they need to promote the conservation of wild turkeys.

Another group of conservation partners listed in the "THINK TURKEY, MISSISSIPPI!" is "educators". So, educators who read "Magnolia State Turkey Talk" need to know that the MCNWTF is interested in seeing that wildlife conservation lessons are taught in our public and private grade schools. And those educators that receive training in wildlife conservation are best equipped to do such teaching. Therefore, the MCNWTF is going to assist with teacher training by sponsoring a teacher workshop at Jones County Junior College during the first week of June, 2009. The workshop will deal with the history, biology, and management of the wild turkey. Pre-registration for this workshop was held during the 2008 Wildlife Extravaganza.

Yes, there is no doubt that the wild turkey is already the centerpiece of one of our Nation's most successful wildlife conservation efforts. Wild turkeys have recovered from a very low level of about 30,000 birds in the 1930's to a present day population level of an estimated 7,000,000 birds. Huntible populations now exist in 49 of 50 states. But the future of the wild turkey is not secure apart from a continuing commitment from all of the conservation partners listed in our MCNWTF pamphlet. So, please, "THINK TURKEY, MISSISSIPPI!"



Opening Day of Turkey Season Proves to Be Challenging

Submitted by Bruce West

It was a day anticipated for months by any and all diehard turkey hunters. The opening day of spring turkey season in Mississippi was only hours away. All the gear was ready, the turkey calls had been tuned, the shells had been counted, the shotgun was checked out, the camo was folded and ready to put on. Preseason scouting had located several birds on our club, and Buck and I were ready.

All indications were that this would be a great opening morning. Then, on Thursday the weather turned sour. A cold front had moved in and with it came very windy conditions that were forecast all the way into Saturday, opening day. This is not how we had planned it, but we would do our best to persevere.

On Friday morning, I located three gobbling turkeys, but one of them was having a high time gobbling. He must have gobbled at least fifty times before I left for work. As I walked back to the truck, I thought to myself that this turkey must have a death wish. Little did I know, but one day can make a world of difference in the turkey woods.

On Friday night, I double checked everything and went to bed with visions of early success the next morning. When I got to Buck's house, it was windy, cloudy, and cool. We drove to the club and parked about a half mile from where I heard the turkey on Friday. We walked down an old log road and stopped to listen about 200 yards from where I had heard a turkey gobble about 50 times on Friday. Our confidence level was high and we were sure that we would hear the gobbler and be able to move into position for an attempt at calling him in. As it began to lighten up, the wind began to blow harder. We began to hear owls, crows, and pileated woodpeckers, but no turkeys. We stood and listened until it was good daylight and still heard nothing that resembled a turkey gobble.

Buck began to give me one of those "are you sure you heard one here?" looks, and I gave him one of those innocent, "sure I did" looks.

After a few more minutes we moved down in a bottom and set up to call, hoping the turkey might respond to some "first class" hen imitations. After about 30 minutes of this, we decided that either the turkeys were gone or maybe our calling was not exactly "first class". We did manage to interest four deer, but they quickly realized that we were not real turkeys and ran off snorting and blowing. When we got up to walk out of the area, we began to see colored ribbons and markings that indicated seismograph crews had been in the woods since yesterday. Evidently, they moved in after I left on Friday, and succeeded in running the rather vocal gobblers into the next county.

We made two more unsuccessful stops before we spotted 3 gobblers in a grass patch on a large power line right-of-way. We circled around and set up decoys on a road that opens out on the right of way about 60 yards from where the turkeys were. Buck and I then backed up, sat down, and began to call. Our calling was very loud because the wind was gusting 20-25 mph. After what seemed like a long time, but was probably only 30 minutes, we decided to check the grass patch. The turkeys were gone, so we crossed the opening, and circled around in the bottom looking for sign. After about 45 minutes, we split up. Buck went around the main road and I went back up the road we had set up on.

When I got about 20 yards up the road, I found three sets of gobbler tracks. The turkeys had circled to our right and came out on the road behind us. They had apparently walked out after we left and when they could not see any hens, they turned and walked back up the road. Another blow had been struck by the turkeys against the mighty turkey hunters.

Not willing to give up yet, we struck out for the other side of the club hoping to find some turkeys who had more interest in our calling. We came out on a gas pipeline right of way and saw 3 hens in a small grass patch. They were feeding around the patch, so we sat in the edge of the woods and watched them for a while. Thinking that a gobbler might be nearby, we stayed there for at least an hour. When the turkeys walked into the woods, we went back up the road and set out the decoys. We faced the direction we thought they might come and began to call. After about 45 minutes, the long day and our depression caught up with us. We got up and walked out of the woods wondering what went wrong with what we thought would be a banner day in the turkey woods.

As we drove out toward the gate, a big gobbler and about 9 hens crossed the road in front of us. We just stopped and looked at them, then drove on home. Opening day had left us somewhat discouraged, but as any true turkey hunter knows, some days are better than others. After opening day was behind us, we both had success during the remainder of the season. However, on this opening day of turkey season in March 2008, the saying, “roosted ain’t roasted” was most appropriate.



■

Tail Feathers

TURKEY WORLD

James Bryant, Editor, Magnolia State Turkey Talk
Jane Bryant, Secretary/Treasurer TLC, Typist



One of Mississippi's best known artists is Walter Inglis Anderson, Ocean Springs, Mississippi. As an artist, Anderson was multi-talented. He is most widely recognized throughout the art world for his watercolor paintings. Also being a keen observer of nature, Anderson often visited Horn Island which lies several miles off the Mississippi coast. Many of Anderson's paintings were done at the Horn Island location. Through these paintings, Anderson diligently tried to communicate to others what his perceptions of nature were. He also meticulously recorded his findings on the printed page. Today, these writings, along with some watercolor paintings, have been assembled in a book, “The Horn Island Logs of Walter Inglis Anderson”. It is in this book that I found some words that caught my attention. These words are quoted as follows: “Nature does not like to be anticipated – but loves to surprise”.

When I first read the above quote, I immediately thought about wild turkeys. Hunters that *anticipate* very much about what a wild turkey will or will not do show a lack of respect, which translates into only a few turkeys harvested. And what species of wildlife is full of more *surprises* than the great North American Wild Turkey?

Unfortunately, I did not hunt turkeys until I was almost fifty years old. My son, Ben, an avid turkey hunter, is responsible for leading me off into “turkey world”. Once entered into, there seems to be no escape. But really, who wants to escape from turkey world? Now at the age of sixty seven, and having muddled my way through turkey hunting experiences of mine, I am very much aware of the elements of “anticipation” and “surprise”. Turkeys are teaching me well.

This past summer, Jeff Simmons, a hunter friend loaned me his copy of Joe Hutto's book, “Illumination in the Flatwoods”. This book was a fascinating read for me. In fact, I read it twice. I probably will read it again because it provided much insight into turkey world.

Hutto is more than a talented writer. He is also an artist (pencil drawings) and a naturalist, a keen observer of nature in the same manner as Walter Anderson. Hutto is also a darn good substitute for a mother hen turkey.

Hutto's book is about his nearly two years involvement with wild turkeys that he hatched from two clutches of orphaned wild turkey eggs. During the first year, Hutto kept an almost daily journal of eggs and turkeys from May 4th to October 15th. Even though these were human imprinted turkeys, most of the inherent traits of wild turkeys were manifested during the regular forays to field and forest with “mother” Hutto.

Some important lessons to be learned about turkey world are recorded for us by Hutto. He informs us that the study turkeys were keenly aware of their surroundings. For example, they often paid close attention to objects such as feathers, bones, egg shells, etc. They were very watchful for avian predators. They discovered all snakes in close proximity and could seemingly distinguish between venomous and non-venomous varieties. Their social behavior is surprising.

The most enlightening things that I learned about the turkey world, however, comes from Hutto's exposition about “turkey speed” and “turkey time”. Regarding turkey speed, he says “Every day is a new lesson (for Hutto) in this discipline. Wild turkey speed allows

one to utilize consciousness and sensory awareness to minimize one's expenditure of energy. A wild turkey always proceeds as if he were in the perfect place at the perfect time. All his needs may be satisfied here in this moment. These opportunities are merely waiting to be recognized—a constant condition of sustenance through inquiry and discovery”.

In regard to turkey time, Hutto states that this is more difficult to explain. He says, however, that “any turkey hunter knows, they (i.e. turkeys) exist only as a probability, a tendency to occur in a certain place at a certain time..... A wild turkey is suddenly there like a gnat in your eye or he is an apparition that gives you occasion to doubt your senses. In either case, he can be hard to get to know”.

So now, I find myself more familiar with turkey world. And I more clearly understand the complexities and wonderment of God's creative work. In this, the magnificent wild turkey has been my primary teacher.

And if I am fortunate enough to hunt during the 2009 turkey season, I will be quite aware of the elements of “anticipation” and “surprise”. Therefore, I will anticipate surprise! I will hunt with a newfound attitude. Instead of hunting turkeys at my own speed and on my own time schedule, I will endeavor to hunt at “turkey speed” and “on turkey time”. This just might be the year that I start to make a serious transition from a hunter of turkeys to a true turkey hunter.

Good huntin', ya'll.

Hunt, Conserve, Share.



Photo Gallery



Mississippi Board of Directors member and Magnolia Turkey Talk editor James Bryant promotes the “Think Turkey, Mississippi!” campaign at the Wildlife Extravaganza in Jackson.



Kainen Gilley and Trey Cooke pose with deer taken during the Wheelin' Sportsmen Youth Deer Hunt.



People check out the Mississippi Chapter NWTF booth at the Wildlife Extravaganza in Jackson.

Photo Gallery, continued...



Mississippi Chapter NWTF Board of Directors officers pose with the guest of honor at the August, 2008 Board of Directors meeting. Pictured (left to right) are: Kenny Odom, MCNWTF Secretary; Scott Cumbest, MCNWTF Vice-President; Bob Spell, MCNWTF President; Barry Biggers, MCNWTF Treasurer.



Members of the Greater Jackson Chapter donated turkeys to needy families through the NWTF Turkey Hunters Care program.



James Bryant mans the Tallahala Longbeards Chapter booth at Montrose Days.

Jerry "Hut" Hutto, Cliff White Chapter Committee Member, seems to be mighty happy about this heavy-bearded gobbler he harvested during the 2008 season. Pictured with Jerry is MCNWTF Board of Directors member Tommy Walters of Laurel.

National Wild Turkey Federation Membership Application

My \$30.00 annual membership dues are enclosed. Please send my six issues of Turkey Call magazine to the address provided below.

Also, I would like to get more involved. Please let me know how I can learn more about your banquet program.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (Home) _____ (Office) _____

Mail to: National Wild Turkey Federation / P.O. Box 530 Edgefield, SC 29824

1-800-THE-NWTF



National Wild Turkey
Federation
P.O. Box 530
Edgefield, SC 29824

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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.

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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 started 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.

Top Scoring Typical

Rank	Score	Date Harvested	County Harvested	Hunter
1	80.57	4/8/2005	Smith	Amp Frith
2	79.20	4/18/2003	Copiah	Doug Borries
3	77.75	3/29/2007	Alcorn	Mike Suitor
4	77.00	3/28/1987	Kemper	Robby Ellis
5	76.70	4/13/2005	Pearl River	Kris Collins
6	76.10	4/13/2004	Lowndes	Chris Herring
7	76.00	4/16/2007	Lauderdale	Dr. Don E. Marascalo
	76.00	4/5/1997	Jefferson Davis	Shay Stephens
9	75.57	4/6/2002	Monroe	Monty R. Roberts
10	75.05	3/30/2004	Newton	Hunter T. Hayes
11	74.75	3/26/2002	Scott	Michael Walker
12	74.66	4/7/2001	Grenada	Todd Roberts
13	74.63	3/23/1998	Warren	Freddy Gaumnitz
14	74.50	3/24/2007	Claiborne	James D. Greer
15	74.33	4/8/2000	Kemper	Terry Frierson
16	74.25	4/8/2000	Leake	Ronald D. Coleman
17	74.13	4/30/2002	Alcorn	Larry Muse
18	73.80	3/23/2004	Scott	Justin Rogers
19	73.76	4/2/2003	Jefferson	Thomas McAlpin, Jr.
20	73.62	4/12/2001	Attala	Caleb Cain

The beard on this gobbler measures 17.25 inches and is number one in the state.



Top Scoring Non-Typical

Rank	Score	Number Beards	Total Length	Date Harvested	County Harvested	Hunter
1	151.16	7	57.25	3/17/2008	Tishamingo	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	135.72	9	52.86	4/14/2005	Tishomingo	Jerry Smith
7	134.98	5	45.50	3/24/2001	Alcorn	Mike Suiter
8	131.89	5	45.94	4/21/2001	Noxubee	Will Austin
7	130.25	5	44.25	3/24/1989	Hinds	Robbie Barlow
8	128.12	5	46.63	4/6/2008	Jefferson	Wayne Ponder II
9	126.04	5	43.07	4/14/2006	Warren	Kenneth Grogan, IV
10	125.75	5	42.38	4/3/1995	Calhoun	Walter Mitchell
11	125.69	4	38.75	4/11/1986	Noxubee	Robert E. Persons
12	124.28	6	43.14	3/15/2006	Jefferson	Bobby Hughes
13	122.86	6	43.63	3/22/2000	Tishomingo	Jeff Stephens
14	122.64	7	41.59	3/28/2003	Marion	Wade McKenzie
15	122.25	6	41.56	3/9/2008	Adams	Brandon Hebert
16	121.38	7	42.25	4/29/1989	Coahoma	Harold C. Wall
17	117.80	4	37.50	4/24/2004	Hinds	Jason L. Morrow
18	117.50	5	38.75	4/3/2000	Madison	Darren Johnson
19	117.48	6	39.44	3/22/2004	Smith	Danny Joe Young
20	115.78	6	37.89	4/18/2005	Marion	Chick Bourne

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 R. 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	William J. Smith
12	13.63	4/9/2004	Leake	Brian Terrell
13	13.50	4/10/2001	Attala	James C. Cain
14	13.00	4/19/1997	Neshoba	Darron Smith
	13.00	4/24/2003	Benton	Steve King
	13.00	4/8/2001	Holmes	Richard Wiman
17	12.75	3/12/2000	Madison	Joshua Shumaker
	12.75	4/22/1989	Bolivar	Charles E. Gramling
	12.75	3/27/2006	Simpson	Jeffery Walker
	12.75	3/24/2007	Lee	John Robbins

Longest Spurs

Rank	Spur Length	Date Harvested	County Harvested	Hunter
1	1.88	4/16/2007	Lauderdale	Dr. Don E. Marascalco
2	1.81	4/30/1990	Claiborne	Marvin Muirhead
3	1.75	4/13/2005	Pearl River	Kris Collins
	1.75	4/8/2000	Leake	Ronald D. Coleman
	1.75	4/5/2000	Copiah	Rickey Thompson
	1.75	4/17/2004	Chickasaw	Mike Soper
	1.75	4/2/2003	Jefferson	Thomas McAlpin, Jr.
	1.75	3/24/2007	Claiborne	James D. Greer
4	1.69	4/13/2004	Lowndes	Chris Herring
	1.69	3/26/2002	Scott	Michael Walker
	1.69	4/11/2004	Rankin	Michael Willoughby
	1.69	3/25/2000	Choctaw	Zach Crowley
5	1.68	3/22/2008	Wilkinson	Heath Chenier
6	1.63	4/18/2003	Copiah	Doug Borries
	1.63	4/17/1999	Leake	Roger D. Latham
	1.63	4/29/2002	Clarke	Gary D. Rodgers
	1.63	4/7/2000	Covington	Jeffrey Daniel Adams
	1.63	3/26/1989	Rankin	Richard Latham
	1.63	4/5/1997	Jefferson Davis	Shay Stephens
	1.63	4/21/1986	Coahoma	J. C. Gilbert
	1.63	4/13/1985	Jasper	Robert B. Caston
	1.63		Warren	Don G. Presley
	1.63	4/27/2006	Warren	Zachary Smith
	1.63	4/7/2000	Covington	Jeffery Daniel Adams
6	1.625	4/3/2008	Monroe	Tyler Hood
7	1.62		Issaquena	Skip Holifield
	1.62	4/2/2005	Alcorn	Frank Meador



This gobbler holds the current state record for spur length. The bird was harvested by Dr. Don Marascalco during the 2007 spring season.

Heaviest

Rank	Weight	Date Harvested	County Harvested	Hunter
1	25.25	3/30/2004	Newton	Hunter T. Hayes
2	25.19	3/26/2004	Neshoba	John Robb
3	24.68	4/18/2003	Copiah	Doug Borries
4	24.44	4/2/2005	Neshoba	Chad Young
5	24.00	3/18/2008	Adams	Chasen Gann
6	23.94	3/18/2005	Chickasaw	Brian Fikes
7	23.75	4/22/1996	Monroe	Jeff Daniel
	23.75	3/29/2007	Alcorn	Mike Suito
9	23.69	3/28/2005	Prentiss	Doug Taylor Jr.
10	23.50	3/24/1990	Jefferson Davis	Danny Sinclair
11	23.38	4/8/1995	Sharkey	R. Revel Rawlings
12	23.19	4/13/2000	Pearl River	J. B. Hodge
13	23.00	4/14/2006	Holmes	Joseph Mohamed
14	22.87	3/24/2000	Choctaw	Tommy Trussell
15	22.75	3/25/1995	Tishomingo	Phil Byram
16	22.60	3/28/2002	Monroe	Derwin (Dee) Riley
17	22.56	4/9/2000	Madison	Rebecca Case
18	22.50	3/25/2003	Calhoun	Brad Perkins
19	22.43	3/13/2004	Monroe	Kody Riley
20	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: 70.88 Total Score: 194.00 Date: 04/19/89 State: Wisconsin	Beard Length: 18.12 Date: 05/02/98 State: Virginia	Weight: 35.81 Date: 04/28/01 State: Iowa	Spur Length: 2.25 Date: 04/22/99 State: Kentucky



This 9-bearded gobbler harvested by Andy Stringer currently ranks third for top scoring non-typicals.



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

Fall Turkey Hunting in Mississippi

Fall Turkey Hunting in Mississippi

FALL TURKEY HUNTING IS A RELATIVELY NEW EXPERIENCE FOR MANY MISSISSIPPI TURKEY HUNTERS. WHILE FALL turkey hunting has been allowed in portions of some Delta counties along the Mississippi River for many years, most Magnolia State hunters did not have access to those areas. During the past few years, fall turkey hunting has been allowed by permit on private lands in 24 counties in 3 regions of the State. In this section, we will look at the results of the 2007 fall turkey season (results of the 2008 season were being summarized at the time this report was published), and we will look at an article by Adam Butler that describes the life history of wild turkeys during the fall season. If you would like additional information on fall turkey hunting, you can check out our website at www.mdwfp.com, or call the Wildlife Bureau at 601-432-2199.

Summary of 2007 Fall Turkey Season & Hunter Survey

Harvest Data

- 328 fall turkey tags were issued to 142 properties in 2007
- Harvest data was returned for 95 of the 142 properties (67 %)
- 37 birds were harvested – 15 gobblers, 22 hens
 - 7 young-of-year gobblers (jakes)
 - 3 second year gobblers
 - 5 ≥ three-year-old gobblers
- 1 bird harvested per 8.8 tags issued
- Harvest by county, see table below:

County	Total Tags	Total Harvest	Gobblers	Hens
Adams	0	0	0	0
Amite	6	1	1	0
Benton	11	2	0	2
Bolivar	63	6	3	3
Claiborne	24	2	0	2
Coahoma	42	5	4	1
Copiah	26	2	0	2
Franklin	15	0	0	0
Hinds	1	0	0	0
Issaquena	0	0	0	0
Jefferson	14	1	1	0
Lafayette	5	0	0	0
Lincoln	9	0	0	0
Madison	4	0	0	0
Marshall	17	7	0	7
Panola	8	2	2	0
Tippah	8	2	0	2
Tunica	5	0	0	0
Union	7	1	1	0
Warren	20	0	0	0
Washington	11	3	2	1
Wilkinson	19	2	0	2
Yazoo	20	1	1	0
Totals	333	37	15	22

Results of Hunter Survey

- 122 hunters spent a total of 477 days fall turkey hunting during 2007.
- 31 % of respondents said it was their first experience with fall turkey hunting.
- Of the respondents that had previously fall turkey hunted, 83% participated in the Mississippi fall season last year.
- 95 % said they would fall turkey hunt next year if the opportunity was available next year.
- 90 % believed that the fall season should be expanded to other counties.
- The average level of satisfaction was 1.8 (1 = highly satisfied, 5 = highly dissatisfied).



PHOTO BY NWTf

The Life and Times of Fall Turkeys

Adam Butler, Turkey Program Leader

AS THE LEAVES QUIETLY DRIFT DOWNWARD THROUGH THE TREES, AND AUTUMN'S COOL DAYS APPROACH, MOST of Mississippi's hunters turn their minds toward deer, ducks, squirrels, and rabbits. Except for the handful of hunters who take advantage of our limited fall turkey season, most turkey enthusiasts spend little time worrying about the wily birds until the approach of spring. However, the fall / winter period is an important time in the annual cycle, and the habits exhibited by fall turkeys make them seem to be an entirely different creature than most spring hunters are used to pursuing. The following glimpse into the secretive life of fall turkeys will hopefully cast them in a new light, and may render a renewed appreciation for the birds during a time when deer dominate the minds of most Mississippi hunters.

Fall turkeys seem to be an entirely different creature than most spring hunters are used to pursuing.

One of the most common statements voiced by turkey hunters is, "I saw turkeys all winter during deer season, but I cannot find them during spring." The reason for this complaint is simple: turkeys focus on different habitats at different times throughout the year. During spring and summer, turkeys spend a large proportion of their time around fields and open woods that contain low-growing, grassy and weedy vegetation. However, the changing seasons marks a time of transition for most turkey populations. Insects, seeds, and leafy vegetative growth that sustained birds throughout the summer begin to decline as days grow shorter. At the same time, more hard and soft mast become available throughout forests. In many areas, this disparity causes a dramatic shift in the home ranges of turkeys. Beginning in September, turkeys begin to gradually reduce their use of open habitats, and shift their ranges into areas of mature timber. Home range shifts of up to several miles are not uncommon, though the distance turkeys move often depends on the success of acorn crops and the proximity of mature forests.

More so than at any other time of year, turkey movements are regulated by the availability of groceries during fall and winter. During the early fall, fruits of various wild vines, shrubs, and trees are abundant and are the primary diet component. Wild grapes, black cherry, dogwood, persimmon, pawpaw, and American beautyberry may all be found in turkeys' diets from September to late October. By early November, however, turkey diets have almost totally shifted to acorns and other hard mast. The acorns of nearly all species of oaks are consumed, and along the Mississippi River, the nuts of sweet pecans are also important. The mast of beech trees is another relished turkey food during fall and winter, but its production can vary greatly from year to year. Likewise, pine seeds, particularly those of longleaf pine, are also consumed by turkeys during fall, but they are rarely considered an important food source due to highly variable production.

Turkey social behavior also changes with the seasons and becomes particularly interesting during fall and winter. By early fall, distinctive flocks have formed and are usually divided by gender, and sometimes also by age. Female offspring usually stay with their mothers throughout their first fall and winter, and form flocks composed of several adult hens and their broods from the previous spring. Hens that unsuccessfully nested during spring typically begin autumn in separate flocks, though they may join hen-brood flocks at some point. Gobblers form separate flocks, and are rarely found in association with hens during this time of year. In areas with dense turkey populations, gobbler flocks will typically be segregated by age group: young-of-the-year, upcoming 2-year-olds, and “old timers.” Hens do not share the gobblers’ tendency to segregate themselves by age, likely because the physical difference between age groups is not as apparent in hens as it is in gobblers. In areas of low populations, gobblers seem unable to ignore their gregarious nature and, if sizeable numbers of similar-aged individuals cannot be found, will readily form flocks with their older and younger peers. Young-of-the-year males begin the fall in association with their mothers, but many, though not all, will break away and form their own flocks by late fall. Within flocks of mature gobblers, pecking orders seem relatively established during the winter, but that is often not the case for jake flocks. Members of these young groups constantly squabble, as each bird vies for the dominant position. Fighting is common, though these skirmishes rarely reach the intensity seen in the fights of older birds during the spring.

In most areas, hen and gobbler flocks will utilize different habitat types, and are rarely found in association during the fall and winter. Studies conducted on turkeys fitted with radio transmitters have shown that hens are more consistently found within the bottomland hardwoods of major creek and river drainages, whereas gobbler flocks tend to utilize the mixed pine/hardwood transition areas along secondary streams at this time of year. Gobblers also seem to periodically use recently burned upland areas during the fall and winter months, while hens nearly always avoid these areas until spring. This segregation of habitat is believed to occur because gobblers may be able to exploit a wider range of resources due to their larger size, and foraging independently from hens may minimize within-species competition for the winter’s limited resources.

Though lack of fall and winter habitat is rarely touted as a wide-scale limiting factor for turkey populations, retention of these areas can be important, particularly in landscapes dominated by pine plantations. Maintaining wide hardwood buffers, known as stream-side management zones, along streams can ensure the interspersion of fall and winter habitat and provide travel corridors throughout landscapes that may otherwise have little to offer turkeys during October–February. Clear cutting large acreages of mature hardwoods should be avoided if turkeys are a management objective. This does not imply that logging crews should never be allowed in hardwood stands; on the contrary, periodic, selective thinning of hardwood stands can increase acorn production, provide nesting and brood habitat during spring, and still provide landowners with an income source. Through management of hardwoods, landowners can increase the value of these areas as wintering habitat, while still providing necessary habitat components that birds need in spring, thereby decreasing the need for turkeys to shift home ranges throughout the year. If you would like to learn more about managing your property to provide winter essentials for turkeys, contact the Wildlife Bureau at 601-432-2199. But be warned: frequent sightings of long-bearded gobblers throughout the winter can make the wait until spring nearly unbearable!



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

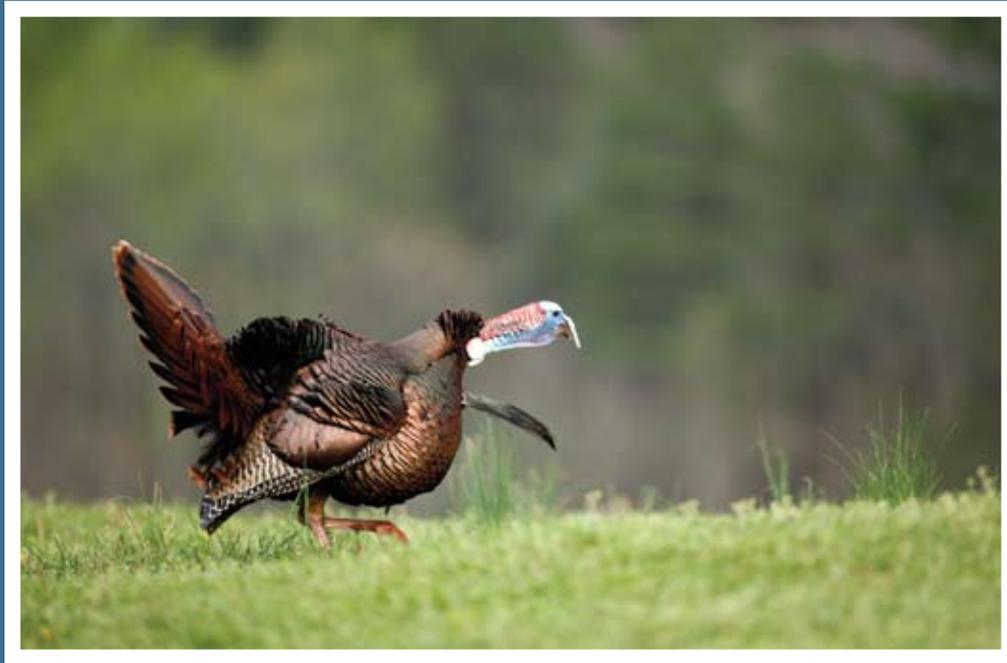


PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

Wild Turkey Research in Mississippi



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

Research Project to Explore Wild Turkey Restoration in the Mississippi Delta

*By Rich Minnis, Guiming Wang, & Jerry Belant
Department of Wildlife & Fisheries, Mississippi State University*

THE DELTA REGION WAS ONCE KNOWN AS THE LAND OF THE GIANTS, FOR ITS VAST EXPANSE OF TOWERING hardwoods and abundant wildlife. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the giants succumbed to the saw and the plow, becoming some of the most fertile agricultural land in the country. By the early 1980s the State of Mississippi started to restore some of the Giants' majestic nature, planting hardwoods across many regions of the Delta. Today, one can walk through areas of the Delta that have remnants of mature forest intermixed with young forests and ponder, "why don't we see turkeys in this area?" Some of these areas are beginning to resemble regions of the country with large turkey populations that are dominated by agriculture with small patches of forest. Researchers at Mississippi State University's Department of Wildlife and Fisheries are asking the same question – "Can the reforested areas of the Delta support a viable population of wild turkeys?"

Working in conjunction with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, researchers are planning to relocate wild turkeys to multiple reforested areas of the Delta to see if the birds will stay in the area and survive, or fly off to the batture or Loess Hills areas. Birds will receive backpack radio transmitters and will be monitored to follow their movements. If the birds survive, they will be followed to see if they reproduce and increase in numbers. Information gained from the surviving birds will be used to see what mixture of forest, reforested areas, and agriculture will support a population of turkeys. This information will allow researchers and state biologists to find other areas of the Delta that could also support a viable population of turkeys. If the birds do not survive, researchers will know that the land of the giants is not yet ready to support this premiere game bird. So, will we soon hear the gobble of the majestic wild turkey throughout the Mississippi Delta? Only time and the turkeys will tell!

Variability of Gobbling Activity Across the State of Mississippi

By Francisco J. Vilella & Matthew D. Palumbo

USGS Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit, Department of Wildlife & Fisheries, Mississippi State University

SPRING GOBBLER HUNTING IS A POPULAR SPORT IN MISSISSIPPI. DURING THE 2007 SEASON, OVER 31,000 HUNTERS invested 278,393 hunter-days in the field. The current hunting season for the wild turkey in Mississippi runs from March 15 to May 1. Hunters in the state have expressed concerns to agency biologists over the temporal frame of the turkey season as it relates to peak gobbling activity. Their concern stems from a perception that spring gobbling activity peaks at different times in different regions of the state. To address the concern expressed by turkey sportsmen and need of the state agency for more information, we are conducting state-wide surveys to determine if a gradient in gobbling activity exists across the state.

To examine recent efforts in other states of the Southeast and to refine our research approach, we conducted a pilot analysis using gobbling survey data collected in Arkansas and Louisiana during 2006 and 2007. We examined differences in mean date for gobblers heard per day by region. Arkansas data showed a significant difference of 1.5 days between north and south. In contrast, a 0.4 day difference between north and south Louisiana was not significant. Following this pilot analysis and the refining of our gobbling survey technique with a short project at Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge during 2007, we were ready to implement the first statewide spring gobbling surveys for Mississippi.



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

We conducted the 2008 spring gobbling surveys from mid-February to late May in the southern and northern portions of Mississippi. We placed 8 survey routes north of Highway 82 and 7 routes south of Highway 84. We placed survey routes in areas characterized by hardwood saw timber, pine saw timber, and pine regeneration. Preliminary analysis of the 2008 spring gobbling survey found a highly significant difference of approximately 10 days between the northern and southern portions of Mississippi. Spring gobbling activity peaked around 7 April for the southern portions of the state and around 17 April for the northern region of the state. Our results are markedly different from the spring gobbling data obtained for the neighboring states of Arkansas and Louisiana.

We intend to replicate our spring gobbling surveys in 2009 keeping the same survey routes and level of effort as in 2008. Once we have completed our surveys we will be conducting our data analyses to investigate the influences of weather, gobbler age structure, and population rate of increase on gobbling activity. Also, we will be exploring the various reasons (ecological, environmental, habitat) that may help explain our observed results. In other words; why should there be differences in spring gobbling activity between different geographic regions of the state? We believe results from this research will serve as a basis for long-term monitoring of spring gobbling activity across the state, and will enable state biologists to adaptively manage hunting seasons around gobbling activity.



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

Wildlife Management Areas

Wildlife Management Areas

Offering Turkey Hunting Opportunities Near You

AS ANY GOOD TURKEY HUNTER KNOWS, IT IS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO HAVE TOO MANY PLACES IN WHICH TO chase wily longbeards. Luckily for Mississippi's hunters, the MDWFP maintains and manages a multitude of public Wildlife Management Areas throughout the state that allow turkey hunting.

No matter where you chose to hunt in Mississippi, abundant turkey hunting opportunities are located on a WMA within an easy drive. Over 36 of our WMAs offer turkey hunting, and turkey populations on many of these areas are second to none. Permit-only hunting is offered on many of our WMAs during the first 9 days of the season as a means of reducing early season pressure and providing higher quality hunting opportunities to selected hunters. Participants are randomly selected from an open drawing, and notified several weeks prior to the season. For more information regarding draw hunting opportunities, or to apply online, please see our website at www.mdwfp.com/turkey.

Descriptions of each WMA with turkey hunting opportunities are given below. Season framework and bag limit for some WMAs may vary from statewide regulations,

so please carefully review WMA regulations prior to hunting. A complete listing of MDWFP Wildlife Management Areas, as well as individual area regulations can be found online at the MDWFP website at www.mdwfp.com.



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

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 season, this permit-only hunting period will occur from March 14-22, after which the area is open to all hunters. During the 2008 season, Bienville WMA accrued 932 man-days, and 31 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 (5,673 acres) primarily consists of agricultural fields, ditch rows, fence rows, small patches of woods, and scattered old fields. Most of the WMA does not contain suitable habitat for sustainable 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 (Fri.-Sun.) during each weekend of April. A maximum of 6 hunters are selected for each hunt. During the 2008 season, one gobbler was reported harvested. 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, MS in Calhoun County. The area is heavily forested with loblolly pine stands of various ages. Some hardwoods exist on the area in the scattered draws. Permanent openings are managed to provide habitat for wild turkeys and other species of wildlife. The WMA offers an early season for youth hunters in addition to the regular spring gobbler season.

During the 2008 season, Calhoun County WMA accrued 248 man-days and 9 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Calhoun County WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-628-6328.

Canal Section and John Bell Williams WMAs

by Jerry Hazelwood, WMA Biologist

Canal Section WMA (32,500 ac.) and John Bell Williams WMA (3,000 ac.) 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 (3,000 ac.) 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 2008 season, these two WMAs reported 1,179 man-days and 36 harvested birds. For more information on Canal Section and John Bell Williams 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 season, this permit-only hunting period will occur from March 14-22, after which the area is open to all hunters. During the 2008 season, Caney Creek WMA accrued 909 man-days, and 31 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Caney Creek WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-537-3555.

Caston Creek WMA

by Joshua L. 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 2008 season, Caston Creek WMA accrued 1,346 man-days, and 29 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, MS in Chickasaw County. The area is heavily forested, and is mostly comprised of loblolly pine stands of various age classes with a few scattered, mature hardwoods. Some permanent openings exist and are managed to provide habitat for wild turkeys and other wildlife species. Last year, harvest increased significantly from the spring of 2007. This may be attributed to a rebound in mature gobbler numbers due to good local hatches, and an increased proportion of gobblers surviving into the 2-year-old age class.

Chickasaw WMA offers an early season for youth hunters in addition to the regular spring gobbler season. During the 2008 season, Chickasaw WMA accrued 957 man-days and 37 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Chickasaw WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-447-0141.

Chickasawhay WMA

by Joshua L. 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 back to the US Forest Service. Now Chickasawhay WMA is approximately 30,000 acres, nearly ¼ 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 2008 season, Chickasawhay WMA accrued 649 man-days and 11 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 mostly forested with mature hardwoods and loblolly pine stands of various ages. Permanent openings exist and are managed to provide habitat for wild turkeys and other species of wildlife. Controlled burns, conducted by the U.S. Forest Service, help to improve habitat conditions for wild turkeys and other wildlife on the area by promoting quality vegetation.

Choctaw WMA offers an early youth season in addition to the regular spring gobbler season. During the 2008 season, Choctaw WMA accrued 1,076 man-days and 41 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Choctaw WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-285-6928.

Copiah County WMA

by Joshua L. 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 the 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 to facilitate prescribed burning and fields to be used as bugging areas for hens with poults.

During the 2008 season, Copiah County WMA accrued 475 man-days, and 12 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Copiah County WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-277-3636.

Divide Section WMA

by Jerry Hazelwood, WMA Biologist

Divide Section WMA (15,300 ac.) 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 1970's and early 1980's, 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 increases the turkey habitat.

There are no draw hunts on this area, but the current bag limit is 2 adult gobblers. During the 2008 season, Divide Section WMA accrued 790 man-days, and 26 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Divide Section WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-423-1455.

John Starr Forest WMA

by Brad Holder, WMA Biologist

John Starr Forest WMA is an 8,244 acre area located near Starkville in Oktibbeha County. The area is heavily forested with loblolly pine stands and mature hardwoods. Permanent openings exist and are managed to provide habitat for turkeys and other wildlife.

John Starr Forest WMA offers an early spring gobbler season for youth hunters in addition to the regular season. During the 2008 season, John Starr Forest WMA accrued 217 man-days, and 14 harvested birds were reported. For more information on John Starr Forest WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-840-5172.

Leaf River WMA

by Joshua L. Moree, WMA Biologist

Leaf River WMA is one of, if not the, most storied Wildlife Management Areas in Mississippi. During the 1950's and 60's 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.

The 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. A full-time wildlife manager was assigned to the WMA in the spring of 2007. Funds provided by the NWTf allowed the creation of additional openings on the WMA during the summer of 2007. Periodic timber thinning and prescribed burning conducted by the US Forest Service benefit wild turkeys on Leaf River WMA.

During the 2008 season, Leaf River WMA accrued 1,515 man-days, and 18 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. During the 2009 season, this permit-only hunting period will occur from March 14-22. Due to flooding during early in the 2008 season, Leroy Percy WMA only accrued 6 man-days of turkey hunting, and no birds were harvested. For more information on Leroy Percy WMA, contact Leroy Percy State Park at 662-827-5436.

Little Biloxi WMA

by Joshua L. 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 2008 season, Little Biloxi WMA accrued 431 man-days, and 4 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Little Biloxi WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-528-9861.

Malmaison WMA

by Brad Holder, WMA Biologist

Malmaison WMA is a 9,483 acre area located near Grenada in Carroll, Grenada, and Leflore Counties. Much of the area is dominated by mature hardwoods, and these areas offer excellent fall and winter habitat for turkeys by providing abundant hard mast. To improve springtime habitat conditions, numerous openings have been created to provide nesting and brooding habitat for turkeys. Plans for future wildlife habitat improvements will continue to positively affect wild turkeys on the area. Anticipated forest stand improvements and additional openings, created during fall 2008 with funding from the National Wild Turkey Federation, will provide more cover and food for wild turkeys and other wildlife species.

Malmaison WMA offers an early season for youth hunters, and nearly two weeks of special permit hunts in addition to the regular spring gobbler season. During the 2009 season, this permit-only hunting period will occur from March 14-22, after which the area is open to all hunters. During the 2008 season, Malmaison WMA accrued 934 man-days, and 58 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Malmaison WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-563-6330.

Marion County WMA

by Joshua L. 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 2008 season, Marion County WMA accrued 386 man-days, and 12 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Marion County WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-736-0066.

Mason Creek WMA

by Joshua L. Moree, WMA Biologist

The 27,272-acre Mason Creek WMA, located within the Desoto National Forest in Greene County, adjoins the larger Chickasawhay WMA to the south. Hunter compliance continued to improve this year with the continued presence of a full-time area manager. 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 2008 season, Mason Creek WMA accrued 596 man-days, and 10 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Mason Creek WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-928-3720.

Nanah Waiya WMA

by Jerry Hazelwood, WMA Biologist

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

Turkey season on Nanah Waiya WMA is the same as statewide (no draw hunts), but the bag limit is restricted to 2 adult gobblers. During the 2008 season, Nanah Waiya WMA accrued 83 man-days, and 1 harvested bird was reported. For more information on Nanah Waiya WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-724-2770.

Okatibbee WMA

by Jerry Hazelwood, WMA Biologist

Okatibbee WMA is approximately 6,883 acres on the Okatibbee Lake Project 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 is the same as statewide, but the bag limit is restricted to 2 adult gobblers. During the 2008 season, Okatibbee WMA accrued 196 man-days, and 5 harvested bird was reported. For more information on Okatibbee WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-737-5831.

Old River WMA

by Joshua L. 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. Timber salvage operations conducted after the hurricane improved hunter access to the WMA.

During the 2008 season, Old River WMA accrued 288 man-days, and 12 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Old River WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-772-9024.

Pascagoula River WMA

by Joshua L. 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 2008 season, Pascagoula River WMA accrued 288 man-days, and 12 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Pascagoula River WMA, contact the District 6 Office at 601-928-3720.

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 1000 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. In 2008, there were 127 man-days of turkey hunting with 5 birds harvested.

Red Creek WMA

by Joshua L. 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 county residents. Hunter compliance has been low on the WMA due to a lack of agency personnel present on the area; however, a full-time wildlife manager was assigned to Red Creek during the 2007-2008 hunting season. 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 2008 season, Red Creek WMA accrued 288 man-days, and 12 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Red Creek WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-928-4296.

Sandy Creek WMA

by Joshua L. 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. A full-time wildlife manager was assigned to the WMA prior to the 2007-2008 hunting season. Scattered permanent openings across the WMA are maintained with native vegetation and supplemental plantings.

During the 2008 season, Sandy Creek WMA accrued 1,053 man-days, and 27 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Sandy Creek WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-835-3058.

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 a 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 season, this permit-only hunting period will occur from March 14-22. During the 2008 season, flooding precluded any hunting opportunities on the WMA, subsequently no birds were 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. During the 2009 season, this permit-only hunting period will occur from March 14-22. In the 2008 season, use of the area was minimal due to flooding by the Mississippi River. Only 24 man-days and 1 harvested bird were reported. 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 consisting entirely of Delta National Forest, which is owned by the U.S. Forest Service. The area is located in Sharkey County, about ten miles east of Rolling Fork. Sunflower became a wildlife management area in 1955. Sunflower is entirely bottomland hardwood forest, and the stands vary in age from regeneration areas to mature forests. Major tree species on the area are: water, willow, overcup, and Nuttall oaks, ash, sugarberry, sweetgum and cypress. There are in excess of 200 acres of food plots and managed openings on the area.

Turkey hunting is by permit only during the first part of turkey season. After the second weekend turkey hunting is allowed without permits. During the 2009 season, this permit-only hunting period will occur from March 14-22. Sunflower WMA accrued 674 man-days in 2008, and 45 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Sunflower WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-828-3456.

Tallahalla WMA

by Scott Baker, WMA biologist

The 28,120 acres of Tallahalla 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 Tallahalla and Quarterliah Creeks.

Tallahalla WMA was the site of one of the longest running turkey research projects in the Southeastern United States. From the early 1980's through the late 1990's Mississippi State University conducted numerous studies on Tallahalla 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 9 days of the season is limited to permitted hunters who applied for the special draw period and were randomly selected. During the 2009 season, this permit-only hunting period will occur from March 14-22. After that time, the area is open to all hunters. During the 2008 season, Tallahala WMA accrued 1,316 man-days, and 40 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Tallahala WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-739-3671.

Tuscumbia WMA

by Jerry Hazelwood, WMA Biologist

Tuscumbia WMA, located in Alcorn County two 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 two separate units. The northern unit (1400 ac.) is mainly permanent water and slash, which is not easily accessed and provides little turkey habitat. The southern unit (1200 ac.) has mostly abandoned agricultural fields and seven 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 two units to turkey hunt. Neither unit has good year-round turkey habitat. The turkey season and bag limit are the same as statewide. During the 2008 season, Tuscumbia WMA accrued 116 man-days, and 5 harvested birds were reported. 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 Corps of Engineers and managed by the MS Dept. of Wildlife Fisheries and Parks 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 2008 season, Twin Oaks WMA accrued 86 man-days, and 1 harvested bird was 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 in Lafayette County near Oxford. The area is heavily forested with mature hardwoods and loblolly pine stands of various ages. Habitat improvements on the area include prescribed fires which are conducted by the U.S. Forest Service. Additional habitat improvements may have recently come from an unexpected source. During the spring of 2008, a tornado touched down within the area. The downed timber following the storm opened the canopy and likely will cause an increase in the availability of nesting cover throughout the area. Numerous permanent openings also exist throughout the area, and are managed to provide habitat for wild turkeys and other species.

Upper Sardis WMA offers an early season for youth hunters. Additionally, hunting is limited to randomly-drawn hunters only for approximately the first week and a half of the season. During the 2009 season, this permit-only hunting period will occur from March 14 – 22, after which the area is open to all hunters. 1,446 man-days were tallied on Upper Sardis during the 2008 hunting season, resulting in 55 birds being taken. For more information on Upper Sardis WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-234-6125.

Ward Bayou WMA

by Joshua L. 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 28 man-days and 6 harvested birds. For more information on Ward Bayou WMA, contact the area headquarters at 601-826-1012.

Wolf River WMA

by Joshua L. 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 2008 season, Wolf River WMA accrued 740 man-days, and 12 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Bienville 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. Habitat conditions continue to improve on the area with creation of wildlife openings made possible in part by the National Wild Turkey Federation. These openings are managed to provide habitat for wild turkeys and other wildlife species. Future timber management and creation of wildlife openings should provide additional food and cover for wild turkeys and other wildlife species. The 2008 gobbler harvest and man-days decreased from 2007 because of high water throughout the area during most of the spring.

Yockanookany WMA has an early youth season and the first 9 days of the season are permit only, after which the area is open to regular spring hunting. During the 2008 season, Yockanookany WMA accrued 5 man-days, and 2 harvested birds were reported. For more information on Yockanookany WMA, contact the area headquarters at 662-840-5172.



PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

Ways I Can Help Conserve Mississippi's Wild Turkey

Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey Application

THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS IS LOOKING FOR INDIVIDUAL hunters and hunting clubs interested in participating in the annual Spring Gobbler Hunting Survey. Cooperators are asked to record various information about their spring gobbler hunts. Harvest and population data provided by cooperators will be used to monitor and manage Mississippi's wild turkey resource. Results will be summarized in the annual Mississippi Wild Turkey Report. A copy of this report will be sent to all cooperators. Hunting clubs also will receive a summary report for their individual property.

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (Home) _____ (Office) _____

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

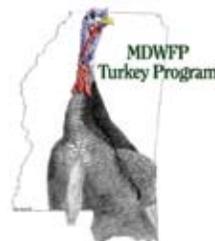
Club Name: _____

County: _____

Forested Acres: (including food plots) _____

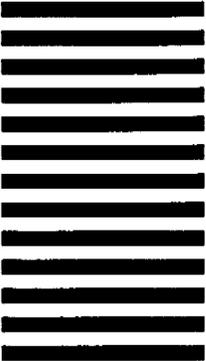
Estimate Total Number of Hunters Anticipated on this Property During the Turkey Season: _____

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





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



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PHOTO BY STEVE GULLEDGE

Turkey Related Law Enforcement

PLEASE HELP THE MDWFP ENFORCE GAME LAWS DURING THE TURKEY SEASON! REPORT ALL VIOLATIONS by calling 1-800-BE-SMART (1-800-237-6278). The MDWFP Law Enforcement Bureau works hard to protect our wild turkey resource! During 2008 MDWFP Conservation Officers wrote 113 turkey related citations (**Figure 1**). Please obey all game laws while pursuing the wild turkey in Mississippi. If you have questions on any game law, feel free to contact the MDWFP at 601-432-2400 for clarification!

Violation	Number of Citations
Hunting turkeys out of season	8
Trespassing	19
Hunting over bait	6
Hunting with no license	10
Hunting from road	14
Hunting from vehicle	1
Unlawful possession of turkey(s)	14
Other	41
Total	113

Figure 1. Turkey related citations written by the MDWFP during 2008.

Wild Turkey Disease Mortality Form

THE MDWFP IS TRYING TO DOCUMENT 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: _____

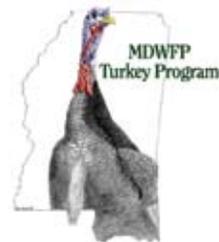
Location (county and nearest town): _____

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: _____ (Home) _____ (Work)

Hunting License Number: _____

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

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

Total Beard Length (measure in 1/16 inch increments): _____

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

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

Spur Length (measure in 1/16 inch increments): Left: _____ Right: _____

Date of Harvest: _____ County of Harvest: _____

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

Hunter's Signature: _____ Date: _____

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

Signature of MDWFP Employee: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

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



Wild Turkey Records
1505 Eastover Drive
Jackson, MS 39211

Place
Stamp
Here

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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.

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2009 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 Small Game & Wild Turkey Program Coordinator Dave Godwin at 662.325.5119 or dgodwin@cfr.msstate.edu.

1. Please rate the following turkey report sections:

2009 MISSISSIPPI WILD TURKEY REPORT					
	Poor	<i>Please Circle Your Rating</i>			Excellent
		Neutral			
■ <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 2010 Mississippi Wild Turkey Report? _____

If yes, please provide your address: _____



1

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1505 EASTOVER DRIVE
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES AND PARKS



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UNITED STATES



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1

Take a Walk on the 'Wild' Side... (of the Web, that is.)

Everything
you want to
know...

Photo Gallery

Management & Biology

Deer & Turkey Records

Interacti

Hunting Forecasts

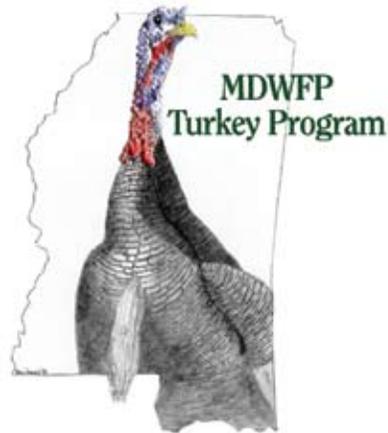
**NEW Turkey
Web Page!**

See **NEW** turkey page at
www.mdwfp.com/turkey

FOR COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION ABOUT MISSISSIPPI'S WILD TURKEY AND OTHER WILD-
LIFE, visit our website at www.mdwfp.com. On the home page, click 'Everything you want to know about your
favorite wildlife.' You will find: ■ Interactive question and answer forums ■ Management and biology articles
■ Turkey and deer records ■ Photo galleries, hunting forecasts, and more.

MS Chapter NWTF
610 Hospital Road
Starkville, MS 39759

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**The 2009 Mississippi Wild Turkey Report is a
cooperative effort between the MDWFP Turkey Program
and the Mississippi Chapter of the NWTF.**



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