

Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Project: W-15-R
Title of Job: 2015 Spring Wild Turkey Harvest

Job: E2



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The spring turkey hunter survey is conducted each year at the end of the spring season. The season closed on 31 May 2015. The objective of the survey is to obtain information on the spring turkey harvest and success. Information on age and sex composition of the harvest is also obtained and is reported elsewhere. This year's survey was available to hunters from 22 June 2015 until 6 July 2015. A full summary of hunter responses is provided in a separate report, *Spring 2015 Turkey Hunter Survey Report*.

Caveats. The spring Wild Turkey Hunter Survey samples spring turkey hunters who provided valid email addresses at the time they purchased their permit(s). As such, the sample frame may be biased and not strictly generalizable to the population of all spring turkey hunters. For the spring 2015 season, however, 62.9% of all permits sold were associated with an email address. After accounting for individuals who purchased multiple permits, 62.0% of unique, individual permit buyers provided an email address. A reminder email was sent to all non-respondents one week after the initial invitation was sent, but no further attempts were made to contact hunters who failed to respond to the survey. Therefore, results might be biased toward successful hunter, if successful hunters respond more readily to harvest surveys. However, it is likely that such biases are small given the proportion of permit buyers sampled and the response rate (see below).

Interpretations. Permit sales for the spring 2015 season were 0.84% lower than the spring of 2014. Youth \$5.00 permits sales fell 2.9% and regular statewide permit sales fell 0.5% compared to spring 2014. Youth permits continue to be a strong component of overall spring permit sales, comprising 15.9% of the total permits sold for the spring 2015 season. Spring 2015 harvest was 5.5% higher than spring 2014 harvest, with an estimated total harvest of 19,994 turkeys in 2015. Overall harvest success increased to 59.0% for spring 2015, compared to 56.1% for spring 2014. Spring 2015 success rates were above the Focus on the Future strategic plan goal for spring harvest success of 50%.

Take-home Message. Spring turkey hunters continue to enjoy a high rate of success in Nebraska, with more turkeys harvested during the spring 2015 season compared to 2014, despite a slight drop in the number of permits sold.

Methods. This year's survey was composed and administered in-house using Snap Survey development software (Snap v11) and Snap Webhosting service. An initial invitation to participate in the survey for the spring 2015 season was sent to 16,901 (62.0% of unique permit buyers) permit buyers, but 888 were bounced back as undeliverable, giving an effective sample size of 16,013 permitted hunters. Initial invitations were emailed on 22 June 2015, and a reminder email was sent to all non-responding hunters on 29 June 2015. The survey was closed on 6 July 2015. At the end of the survey period, responses had been received from 4,126 spring turkey hunters, representing 6,164 individual permits for the spring 2015 season. The raw response rate was, therefore, 25.8% and the permit response rate was 38.5%. Each survey respondent represented 5.5 spring 2015 permit buyers.

Results. Permit sales for the spring 2015 season ($n = 34,140$) were 0.84% lower than spring 2014 sales ($n = 34,430$; Figure 1). Of permits sold, 5,416 (15.9%) were \$5.00 youth permits and 28,724 were statewide regular permits. Youth \$5.00 permits sales ($n = 5,416$) were 2.9% lower than in 2014 ($n = 5,576$), and statewide regular permit sales ($n = 28,724$) were 0.5% lower than in 2014 ($n = 28,854$). Of all permit buyers, 80.0% bought only one permit, 14.8% bought two permits, and 5.2% bought three permits. Estimated total turkey harvest for the spring 2015 season was 19,994 turkeys. Of these, 2,616 were harvested on \$5.00 youth permits and 17,378 were harvested on

regular statewide permits (Table 1, Figure 2). Overall, harvest was 5.5% higher during the spring 2015 season compared to spring 2014. Success during the spring 2015 season was 59.0%, with youth success lower at 48.3% and regular permit holders' success higher at 60.5% (Figure 3). Table 2 summarizes the 2015 spring season results.

TABLE 1. Spring turkey season harvest and success, 2008-2015.

Type	Statistic	Year						
		2009	2010*	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Archery	Permits	7637						
	Harvest	3,688						
	Success	48%						
Shotgun/ Regular	Permits	24,880	30,693	30,344	29,541	30,760	28,854	28,724
	Harvest	17,009	21,270	20,237	18,884	19,040	16,707	17,378
	Success	68%	69.3%	66.7%	65.9%	61.9%	57.9%	60.5%
Youth	Permits	2,776	6,210	6,385	5,979	6,144	5,576	5,416
	Harvest	1,485	2,912	3,065	2,535	2,402	2,253	2,616
	Success	53%	46.9%	48.0%	42.4%	39.1%	40.4%	48.3%

Special archery permits were not required after 2009. Archery harvest occurred with a statewide permit during the archery season. Totals under Shotgun/Regular are for both archery and shotgun harvest for 2010 and subsequent years.

FIGURE 1. Spring turkey permit sales, 1964-2015.

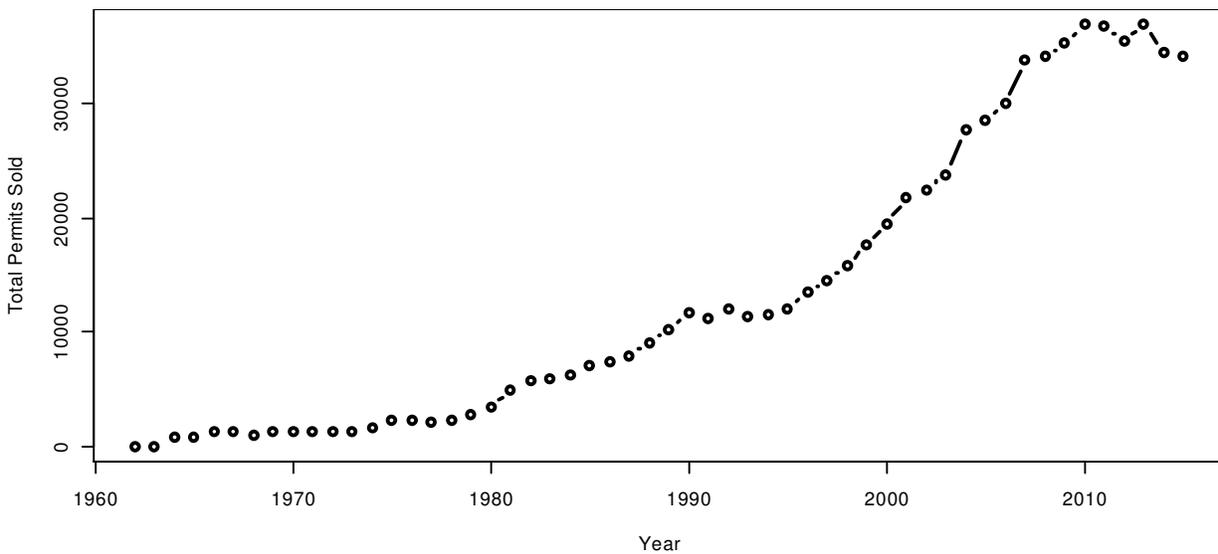


TABLE 2. Summary of spring 2015 turkey hunter survey responses and estimated harvest.

Permit Type	Permits Sold	Survey Permits	Reported Harvest	Success Rate	Estimated Harvest
Youth	5,416	780	377	48.3%	2,616
Regular	28,724	5,384	3,259	60.5%	17,378
Total	34,140	6,164	3,634	59.0%	19,994

FIGURE 2. Spring turkey harvest, 1964-2015.

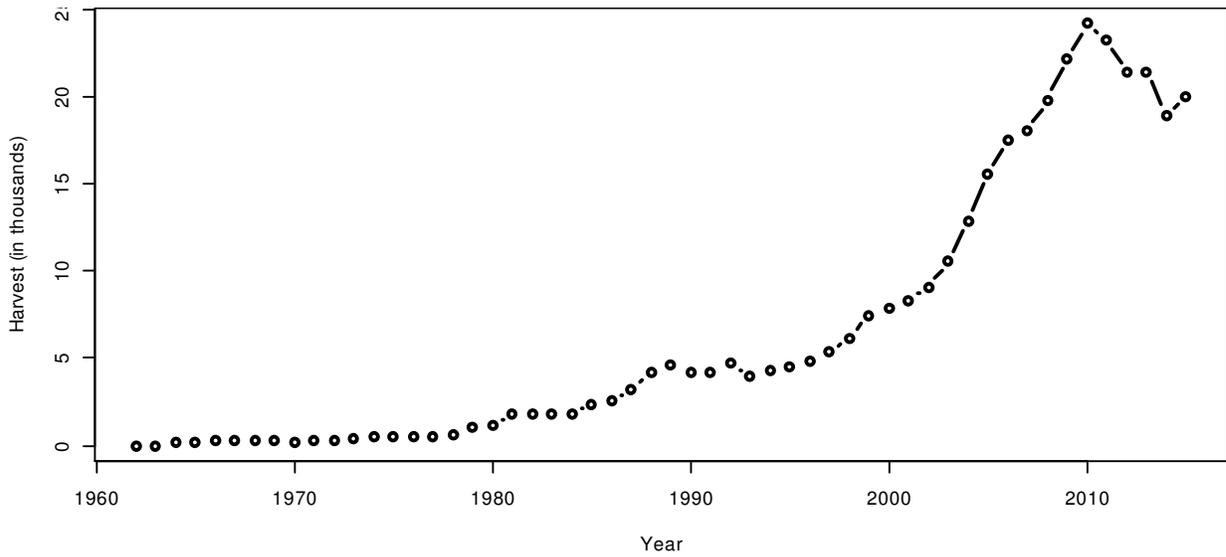


FIGURE 3. Spring turkey hunter success rate, 1964-2015. The horizontal line represents the success-rate goal established in the Focus on the Future plan (50% success).

