

Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Project: W-15-R
Title of Job: 2017 Fall Wild Turkey Harvest

Job: E2



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The fall 2017 turkey hunter survey is conducted each year at the end of the fall season. The season closes on 31 January 2018. The objective of the survey is to obtain information on the fall 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 between 6 and 23 April 2018, inclusive. A complete summary of hunter responses is provided in a separate *Fall 2017 Turkey Hunter Survey Report*.

Caveats. The fall Wild Turkey Hunter Survey samples mostly fall turkey hunters who provided valid email addresses at the time of purchase of their permit(s). As such, the sample frame may be biased and not strictly generalizable to the population of all fall turkey hunters. However, efforts were made to make the survey available to hunters without email addresses on file. For the fall 2017 season, 66.9% of unique permit buyers had provided email addresses.

Interpretations. Permit sales for the fall 2017 season declined 20.1% compared to fall 2016. Since 2012, fall permit sales have declined 44.9%. Among permit buyers, only 5.1% purchased a second fall permit (compared to 4.9% permit buyers in 2016). After accounting for multiple permits, there were 6,531 hunters participating in the 2017 fall season, a decline of 20.2% compared with fall 2016. Estimated harvest for the fall 2017 turkey season was 3,520 turkeys, a decline of 30.2% from 2016, when 5,042 turkeys were harvested. Resident harvest was higher than non-resident, with 2,856 turkeys harvested by Nebraskans compared to 664 turkeys harvested by hunters from other states. Youth permit sales continue to constitute a sizable portion of total permit sales; with 18.7% of total sales being youth permits (1,283 youth permits). Success rates were higher for non-residents than for residents. Non-resident (and youth) success was 75.5% (92.6% youth success, 71.1% regular permit success), compared to 47.7% for Nebraskans (48.9% youth success, 47.4% regular permit success). This could be indicative of a non-response bias among non-resident hunters, since non-residents responded at a higher frequency (17.4% of respondents) than their permit buying (12.6% of permits sold) would suggest.

Take-home Message. Interest in the fall turkey season continues to wane among turkey hunters. Permit sales have declined by ~45% compared to 2012 and harvest has declined concomitantly. Success rates, although higher among non-residents, continue to be below the 60% FotF goal.

Methods. This year's survey was composed and administered in-house using Snap survey software and Snap WebHost service. An initial invitation to participate was sent to 4,366 (66.9%) of unique permit buyers on 6 April 2018, of which 4,173 were deliverable. A follow-up reminder was sent on 13 April 2018 to hunters who received the first invitation, but failed to respond. In addition to the email invitations, the survey was also available to hunters via the NGPC website, and promotional posts to agency social media were made on the date the initial invitations were sent and on the date the follow-up reminder was sent. The survey was closed to all participants on 20 April 2018, at which time 783 responses had been received, for a raw response rate of 18.2%. The responding hunters represented 914 individual permits, for a permit response rate of 21.3%. Each survey respondent represented 7.51 fall 2017 fall permit buyers.

Results. Permit sales ($n = 6,863$) were 20.1% lower than for the fall 2016 turkey season ($n = 8,589$, Figure 1). Of permits sold for the fall 2017 season, 18.7% were youth permits ($n = 1,283$) and 81.3% were regular or landowner permits ($n = 5,580$). Estimated total fall 2017 harvest was 3,520 turkeys (Table 1, Figure 2), with youth harvesting 725 turkeys and regular/landowner permit holders harvesting 2,795 turkeys. Overall, harvest was 30.2% lower for the fall 2017 compared to fall 2016. Overall success rates for regular/landowner permit holders was 52.0%, and 56.3% for youth permit holders, giving an overall success rate of 52.7% (Figure 3). Table 2 summarizes the 2017 season harvest results.

TABLE 1. Fall turkey season harvest and success, 2010-2017.

Type		Year							
		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Shotgun	Permits	12,241	11,482	12,449	10,836	10,175	9,744	8,589	6,863
	Harvest	10,356	8,405	8,362	6,748	7,003	6,336	4,868	3,520
	% Success	84.6	73.2	68.4	63.6	67.7	64.6	58.7	52.7

FIGURE 1. Fall turkey permit sales, 1962-2017

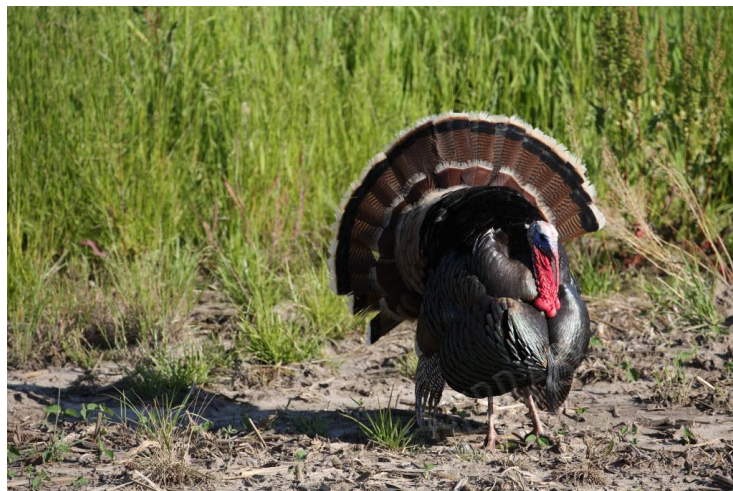
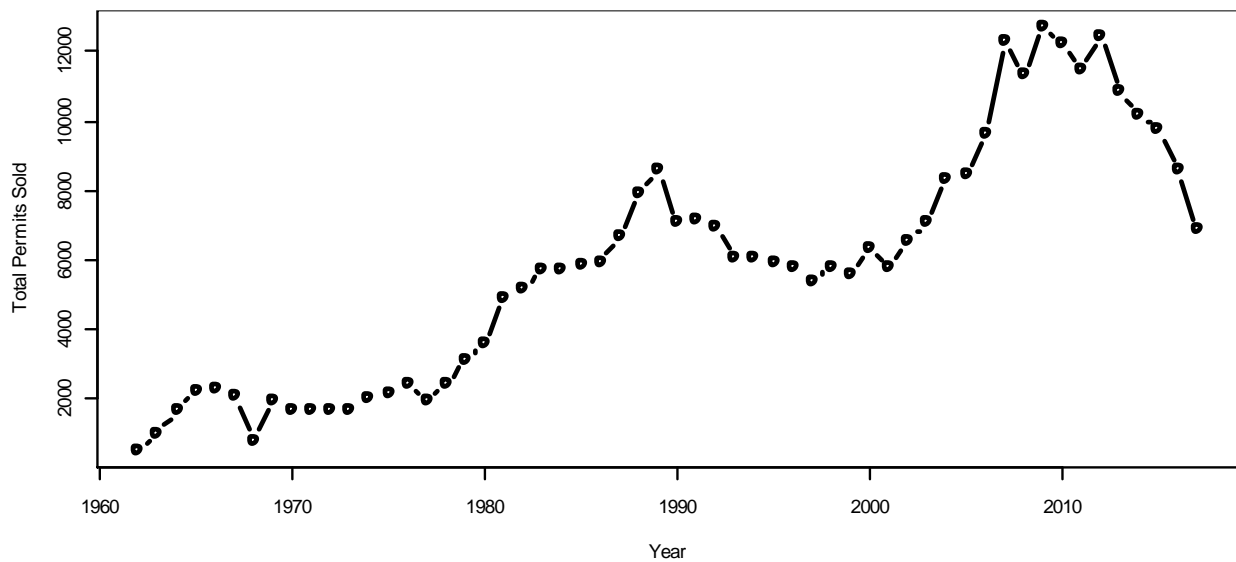


FIGURE 2. Fall turkey season harvest estimates, 1962-2017.

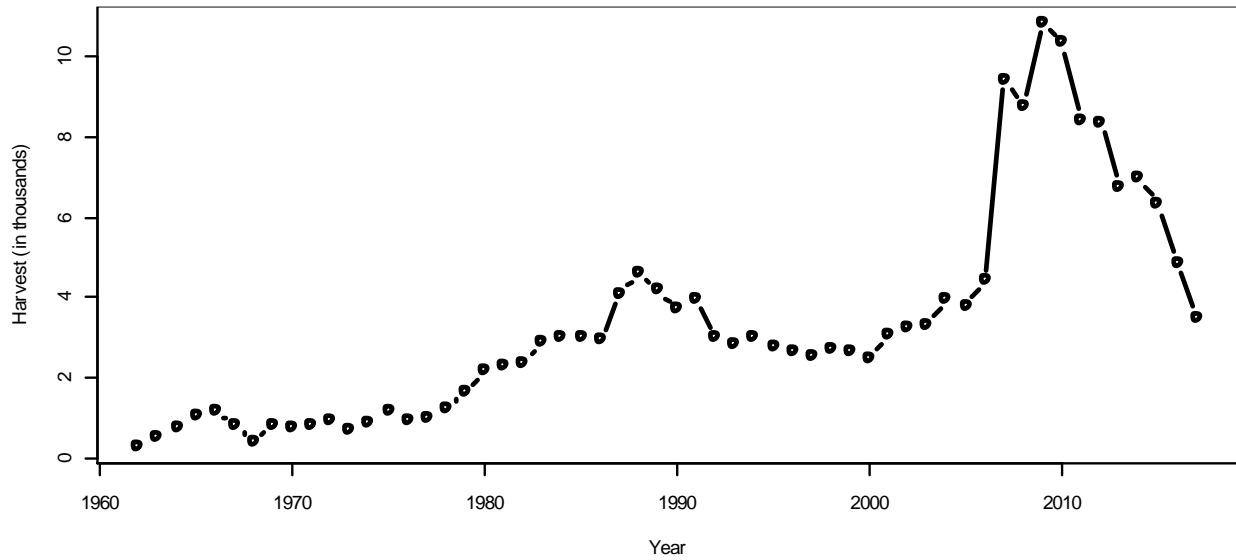


TABLE 2. Summary of fall 2017 turkey hunter survey responses and estimated harvest.

Residency	Permit Type	Permits Sold	Surveyed Permits	Reported Harvest	Success Rate	Estimated Harvest
Resident	Youth	1,057	131	64	48.9%	517
	Regular	4,935	616	292	47.4%	2,339
	Sub-total	5,992	747	356	47.7%	2,856
Non-Resident	Youth	225	27	25	92.6%	208
	Regular	642	140	101	72.1%	456
	Sub-total	867	167	126	75.5%	664
Total		6,863	914	482	52.7%	3,520

FIGURE 3. Fall turkey hunter success rate, 1962-2017. Horizontal line represents the success rate goal established in the Focus on the Future strategic plan. Note that starting in 2007 permits included a bonus tag, allowing the harvest of a second turkey.

