

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

Job: E2



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The fall 2015 turkey hunter survey is conducted each year at the end of the fall season. The season closes on 31 January 2016. 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 10 and 28 March 2016, inclusive. A complete summary of hunter responses is provided in a separate Fall 2015 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 2015 season, overall 63.7% of permits purchased were associated with email addresses. Once accounting for hunters who purchased a second permit, 63.4% of unique permit buyers had provided email addresses. Although a reminder email was transmitted one week after the initial invitation was sent, no further effort was made to contact hunters who failed to respond, such as with follow-up phone interviews. Therefore, results might be biased toward successful hunters, who might more readily respond to harvest assessment surveys. Such biases are likely small, however, given the response rate (see below) and the proportion of hunters who were in the sample frame.

Interpretations. Permit sales for the fall 2015 season were 4.2% lower than in fall 2014. Youth \$5 permits constituted 19.5% of total permit sales. An estimated 6,336 turkeys were harvested by hunters during the fall 2015 season, which is down 9.5% compared to fall 2014. Overall success rate for hunters was 64.6%, which is above the management goal established in the Focus on the Future strategic plan.

Take-home Message. Fall turkey hunting, although less popular than spring turkey hunting, provides turkey hunters with plentiful opportunity and high success rates. Fall turkey hunting also appears to provide opportunity to recruit youth hunters to the sport.

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 5,858 (63.4%) of unique permit buyers on 10 March 2016, of which 5,583 were deliverable. A follow-up reminder was sent on 17 March 2016 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, on the date the follow-up reminder was sent, and 2 days before the survey closed. The survey was closed to all participants on 28 March 2016, at which time 1,228 responses had been received, for a raw response rate of 22%. The responding hunters represented 1,424 individual permits, for a permit response rate of 25.5%. Each survey respondent represented 6.84 fall 2015 permit buyers.

Results. Permit sales ($n = 9,744$) were 4.2% lower than for the fall 2014 turkey season ($n = 10,175$, Figure 1). Of permits sold for the fall 2015 season, 19.5% were \$5 youth permits ($n = 1,896$) and 80.5% were regular or landowner permits ($n = 7,848$). Estimated total fall 2015 harvest was 6,336 turkeys (Table 1, Figure 2), with youth harvesting 1,462 turkeys and regular/landowner permit holders harvesting 4,874 turkeys. Overall, harvest was 9.5% lower for the fall 2015 compared to fall 2014. Overall success rates for regular/landowner permit holders was 62.1%, and 77.1% for youth permit holders, giving an overall success rate of 64.6% (Figure 3). Table 2 summarizes the 2015 season harvest results.

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

Type		Year							
		2008	2009*	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Shotgun	Permits	9,855	12,738	12,241	11,482	12,449	10,836	10,175	9,744
	Harvest	8,236	10,853	10,356	8,405	8,362	6,748	7,003	6,336
	% Success	84	85.2	84.6	73.2	68.4	63.6	67.7	64.6
Archery	Permits	1,480							
	Harvest	539							
	% Success	36							

* After 2009, permits were valid for both archery and shotgun seasons with appropriate weapons, so results are reported in aggregate.

FIGURE 1. Fall turkey permit sales, 1962-2015

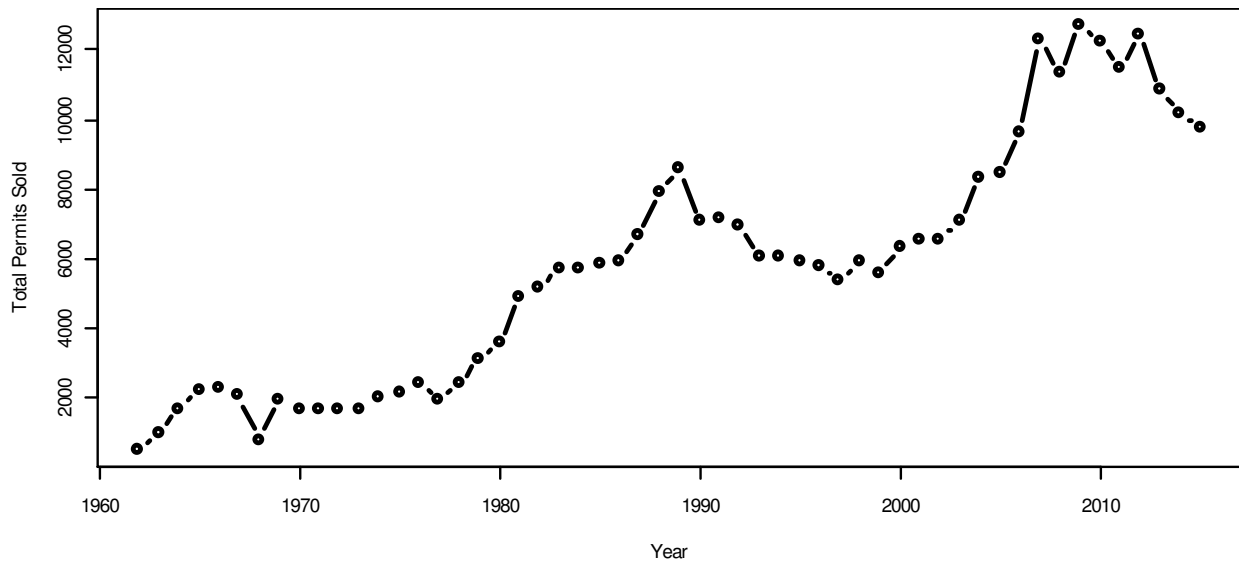


FIGURE 2. Fall turkey season harvest estimates, 1962-2015.

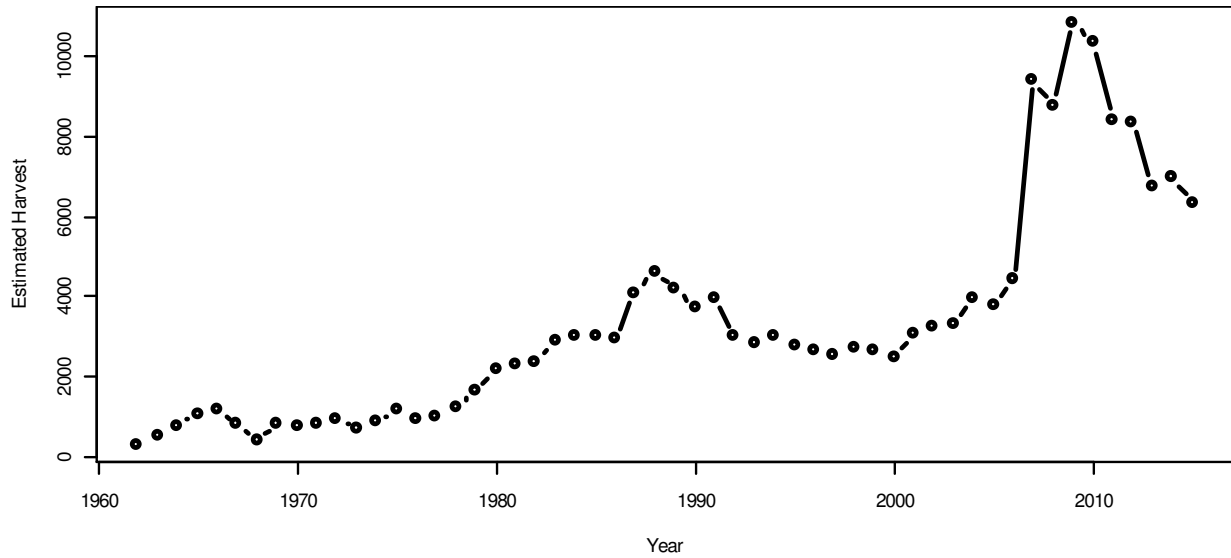


TABLE 2. Summary of fall 2015 turkey hunter survey responses and estimated harvest.

Permit Type	Permits Sold	Survey Permits	Reported Harvest	Success Rate	Estimated Harvest
\$5.00 Youth	1,896	240	185	77.1%	1,462
Regular	7,848	1,184	735	62.1%	4,874
Total	9,744	1,424	920	64.6%	6,336

FIGURE 3. Fall turkey hunter success rate, 1962-2015. Horizontal line represents the success rate goal established in the Focus on the Future strategic plan. Note that in 2007 permits included a bonus tag, allowing the harvest of a second turkey.

