

**Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Project: W-15-R**  
**Title of Job: 2018 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 2018. 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 2018 until 9 July 2018. A full summary of hunter responses is provided in a separate report, *Spring 2018 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 2018 season, however, 69.1% of unique permits sold were associated with 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 hunters, 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 2018 season were 9.3% lower than the spring of 2017. Youth permits (4,004 permits) sales fell 17.0% and regular statewide permit (26,058 permits) sales fell 8.1% compared to spring 2017 (4,822 youth and 28,352 regular permits). Youth permits continue to be a strong component of overall spring permit sales, comprising 13.3% of the total permits sold for the spring 2018 season. Spring 2018 harvest was 13.2% lower than spring 2017 harvest (20,431), with an estimated total harvest of 17,731 turkeys in 2018. Overall harvest success was 61.3% for spring 2018, compared to 64.4% for spring 2017. Spring 2018 success rates were above the management goal for spring harvest success of 50%.

**Take-home Message.** Spring turkey hunters continue to enjoy a high rate of success in Nebraska, but fewer turkeys were harvested during the spring 2018 season compared to 2017. Although still strong sellers, youth permit sales dropped considerably compared to 2017. Non-resident hunters, on both youth and regular permits, were more successful than their native Nebraskan counterparts were.

**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 2018 season was sent to 16,142 permit buyers (69.1% of unique permit buyers), but 583 were bounced back as undeliverable, giving an effective sample size of 15,559 permitted hunters. Initial invitations were emailed on 22 June 2018, and a reminder email was sent to all non-responding hunters on 29 June 2018. The survey was closed on 9 July 2018. The survey was also available on the NGPC website for hunters who did not have valid emails associated with their permits. The website survey was open over the same period as the invitation-only version. At the end of the survey period, responses had been received from 4,018 spring turkey hunters, representing 5,831 individual permits for the spring 2018 season. The raw response rate was, therefore, 25.8% and the permit response rate was 37.5%. Each survey respondent represented 5.2 spring 2018 permit buyers.

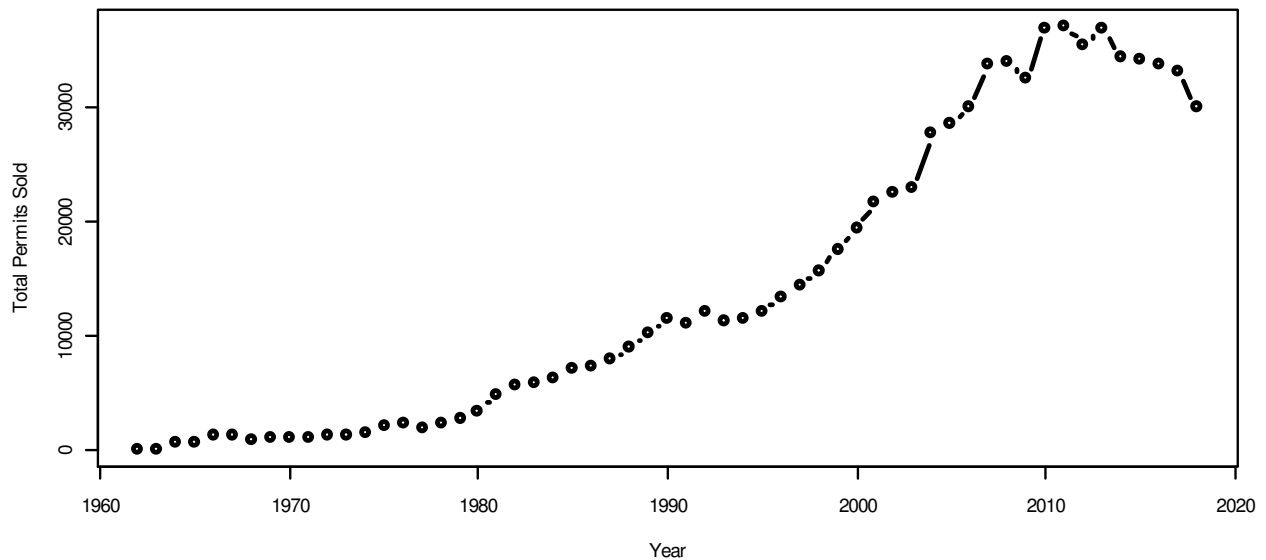
**Results.** Permit sales for the spring 2018 season ( $n = 30,062$ ) were 9.3% lower than spring 2017 sales ( $n = 33,174$ ; Figure 1). Of permits sold, 4,004 (13.3%) were youth permits and 26,058 were statewide regular permits. Youth permits sales were 17.0% lower than in 2017 ( $n = 4,822$ ), and statewide regular permit sales were 8.1% lower than in 2017 ( $n = 28,352$ ). Of all unique permit

buyers ( $n = 23,347$ ), 77.4% bought only one permit, 16.4% bought two permits, and 6.2% bought three permits. Estimated total turkey harvest for the spring 2018 season was 17,731 turkeys. Of these, 1,430 were harvested on youth permits and 16,301 were harvested on regular statewide permits (Table 1, Figure 2). Overall, harvest was 13.2% lower during the spring 2018 season compared to spring 2017. Success during the spring 2018 season was 61.3%, with youth success lower at 37.2% and regular permit holders' success higher at 64.7% (Figure 3). Table 2 summarizes the 2018 spring season results.

**TABLE 1.** Spring turkey season harvest and success, 2012-2018.

Type	Statistic	Year						
		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Shotgun/ Regular	Permits	29,541	30,760	28,854	28,724	28,899	28,352	26,058
	Harvest	18,884	19,040	16,707	17,378	20,143	18,569	16,301
	Success	65.9%	61.9%	57.9%	60.5%	69.7%	67.5%	64.7%
Youth	Permits	5,979	6,144	5,576	5,416	4,932	4,822	4,004
	Harvest	2,535	2,402	2,253	2,616	1,993	1,862	1,430
	Success	42.4%	39.1%	40.4%	48.3%	40.4%	41.5%	37.2%

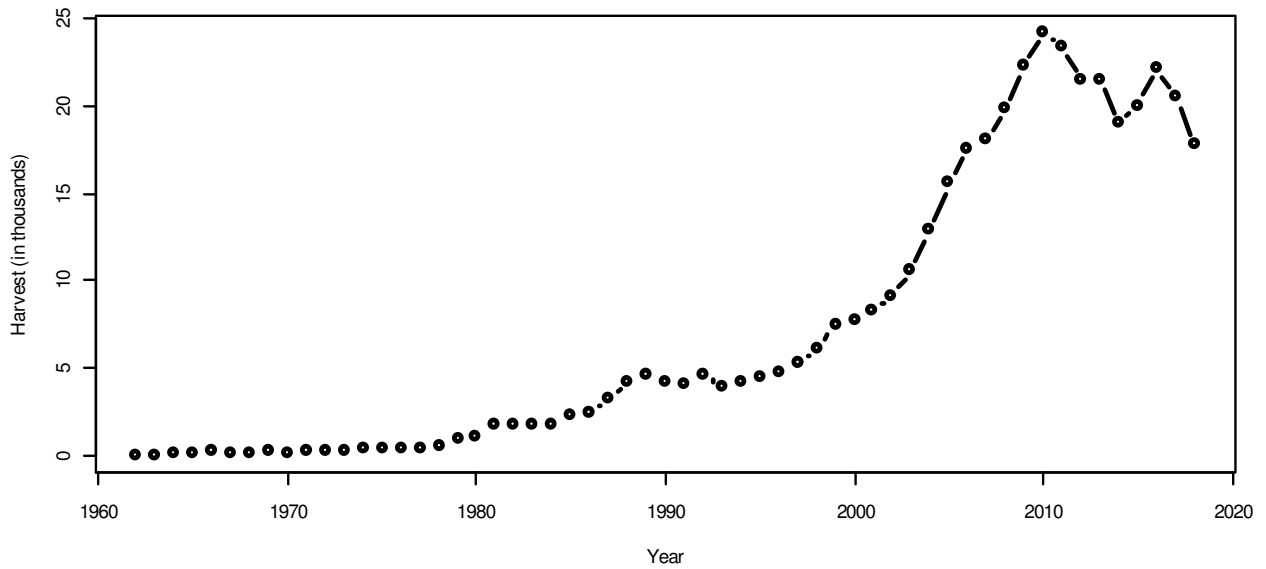
**FIGURE 1.** Spring turkey permit sales, 1964-2018.



**TABLE 2.** Summary of spring 2018 turkey hunter survey responses and estimated harvest.

Residency	Permit Type	Permits Sold	Survey Permits	Reported Harvest	Success Rate	Estimated Harvest
Resident	Youth	2,789	392	128	32.6%	911
	Regular	13,678	2,124	1,134	53.4%	7,303
	Sub-Total	16,467	2,516	1,262	50.2%	8,214
Non-resident	Youth	1,215	321	137	42.7%	519
	Regular	12,380	2,994	2,176	72.7%	8,998
	Sub-Total	13,595	3,315	2,313	69.8%	9,517
Total		30,062	5,831	3,575	61.3%	17,731

**FIGURE 2.** Spring turkey harvest, 1964-2018.



**FIGURE 3.** Spring turkey hunter success rate, 1964-2018. The horizontal line represents the success-rate goal established in the Focus on the Future plan (50% success).

