

Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Project No: W-15-R

Job: E2

Title of Job: Spring 2018 Turkey Hunter Survey



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The spring turkey hunter survey is conducted each year at the end of the spring season. In 2018, the spring season closed on 31 May. The objective of the survey is to obtain information on the spring turkey harvest and success, to determine age and sex of the harvest, and to assess characteristics of the hunt and hunters (e.g., satisfaction). This year's survey was available to hunters from 22 June to 9 July 2018, inclusive. A summary of estimated harvest and success is available in a separate report, *2018 Spring Wild Turkey Harvest*.

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, 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 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 2018 Spring Wild Turkey Harvest report).

Interpretations. Non-resident hunters during the spring 2018 season came largely from Colorado and Minnesota, and residents from Lancaster, Douglas, and Sarpy Counties. Most resident hunters did not hunt in other states (94%), but the majority of non-residents (73%) had hunted in other states, including Kansas and Missouri. Spring 2018 turkey hunters spent an average of 5.5 days afield hunting turkeys. Total number of days spent afield by respondents was 21,440. Knox, Dawes, Lincoln, and Custer Counties were reported as being hunted in most frequently. Whereas residents were not pursuing a specific subspecies (75%), non-residents reported pursuing Merriam's more than other subspecies (49%). Importance of feather coloration and genetic purity of a particular subspecies was generally low for residents and non-residents, but was higher among non-residents pursuing Merriam's turkeys (44% "very important"). Almost all resident (97%) and non-resident (95%) hunters would hunt Nebraska again based on their experiences in the spring of 2018. Most hunters were satisfied with the number of turkeys seen afield and were overall satisfied with their spring 2017 hunting experiences. Among resident hunters, availability of permits, turkey abundance, and having family in the state were most important in their decision to hunt in Nebraska. Among non-residents, subspecies available, the number of permits allowed per hunter, turkey abundance, and success rates were also important.

Take-home Message: Spring turkey hunting continues to be a popular and satisfying experience for turkey hunters.

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 (69.1% of unique permit buyers) spring turkey hunters, 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. Below are figures and tables that summarize hunter responses to survey questions. In most cases, the results are presented for residents, non-residents, and all hunters combined.