

2020



Full Fans & Sharp Spurs

W I L D T U R K E Y R E P O R T

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

2020 ALABAMA WILD TURKEY REPORT



Welcome to *Full Fans & Sharp Spurs* the 7th edition of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division (WFF), Wild Turkey Program report. This report provides turkey hunters and others with information concerning Alabama's wild turkey resource. The report contains biological and sociological data used by ADCNR to monitor and manage the state's turkey population.

A total of 858 turkey hunters signed up to participate in the 2020 Avid Turkey Hunter Survey, and 454 reported data from hunts. This was a 107% increase from the 219 out of 860 participants who actually reported data in 2019. We continue to encourage all turkey hunters to become partners with ADCNR in the conservation and management of Alabama's wild turkeys. Your participation in the Avid Turkey Hunter Survey is key to providing vital information used to better manage the resource. Any avid turkey hunter who would like to participate in the survey should contact ADCNR Upland Game Bird Coordinator Steven Mitchell at steven.mitchell@dcnr.alabama.gov.

Your membership in the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) benefits wild turkeys in Alabama tremendously. The Alabama Chapter of the NWTF is a strong supporter of ADCNR and their efforts to manage turkeys in Alabama. Through Hunting Heritage Super Fund and Tag Fund expenditures as well as property acquisitions, NWTF has helped open access for hunters to thousands of acres and has enhanced even more acres for wild turkey in Alabama. In addition, NWTF partially funds adult mentored hunts, an R3 staff position and sponsors a reward program for people who provide significant information that leads to the conviction of people illegally hunting turkeys. Anyone with information on illegal turkey hunting in Alabama should call 1-800-GameWatch.

Thank you for your efforts to enhance the management of that noble bird, the wild turkey.

Cover Photo: Tes Randle Jolly



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The WFF is pleased to share the 7th edition of our Wild Turkey Program Report, *Full Fans & Sharp Spurs*. In these pages, you will find results of our avid turkey hunter survey as well as our wild turkey brood survey. While this is not scientific data, it is valuable information that overtime will reveal trends in our wild turkey population. We hope you enjoy this program report and extend you an invitation to assist us in collecting data. You will find directions for how you can assist inside.

This publication is a joint venture with the Alabama Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF). NWTF is a strong conservation partner putting thousands of dollars on the ground in Alabama and across the country.

This report would not have been possible without the assistance of the ADCNR IT staff, ADCNR Communications and Marketing staff, the field staff of the Wildlife Section, and the members of the Alabama Wild Turkey Committee.

The data in this report was provided by WFF staff, other agency personnel, private landowners and turkey hunters from across the state. It would not be possible without your continued support.

Thank you all.

Steven Mitchell

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www.outdooralabama.com



Kay Ivey, Governor

This past year has reminded us of just how important outdoor recreation is to our health and well-being. A day in the field or on the water can reset our minds and refresh our spirits. Because of that, the services provided by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources are essential to maintaining the cherished outdoor activities that we enjoy today.

The Department's Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division works diligently to ensure Alabama's diverse wildlife species, including the Eastern wild turkey, thrive while providing abundant hunting opportunities throughout the state.

I encourage you to take advantage of those opportunities as often as you can. I also encourage you to share those experiences with someone who is unfamiliar with turkey hunting. They will carry our outdoors traditions into the future.



Christopher M. Blankenship, ADCNR Commissioner

Alabama has a long history of wild turkey conservation steeped in ample hunting opportunities. The prominent status of wild turkeys across our state has provided a rich hunting heritage for this magnificent game bird. The bountiful hunting we enjoy today would not be possible without the collaboration of conservation leaders and the conservation movement that began many years ago. Those forward-thinking individuals representing the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, landowners and hunters knew that if action was not taken to restore, protect and enhance our turkey population, future generations might never experience the gobble of a wild turkey on a cool spring morning.

One of the most valuable assets in this conservation effort is you, the turkey hunter. I encourage all dedicated turkey hunters to participate in the Avid Turkey Hunter Survey. Participation in the survey provides our biologists with important information on statewide and regional trends in gobbling activity, hunter effort, harvest rates, age structure and sex ratios.

Data collected about Alabama's most popular game bird is one of the guiding factors in WFF's turkey management decisions. When more hunters participate in the survey, the better the data will be. That goes for participation in Alabama's mandatory Game Check system as well. This knowledge ultimately helps WFF make management decisions that link the interests of sportsmen with the wise use of the state's turkey resource.

We are grateful to our turkey hunters for the invaluable information they provide that helps make this report possible each year. Your observations in the field combined with the work of wildlife biologists statewide can help sustain Alabama's wild turkey population so it can be enjoyed by future generations.



Chuck Sykes, WFF Director

Turkey hunting during the pandemic was definitely a new experience for me. According to our calculations, there was an influx of new turkey hunters in the woods this spring. These newcomers could benefit greatly from a seasoned veteran taking time to show them the ropes. Therefore, I am going to continue with my mentor challenge I issued two years ago. There are thousands of new hunters who are eager to learn the finer arts of turkey hunting from an experienced woodsman. Sometimes turkey hunters, me included, find it hard to share with others. Trust me, once I decided I didn't have to be the one pulling the trigger for it to be a successful hunt, I haven't regretted it one bit!

As always, I want to thank the Alabama State Chapter of the NWTF for their unwavering support of turkey conservation, turkey hunting, and especially our Department. Good luck to you all this season and hopefully your ears will be filled with gobbles and your game bag with full fans and sharp spurs!



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WILDLIFE AND FRESHWATER FISHERIES UPLAND GAME BIRD COMMITTEE (EST.2014)

Alabamians have enjoyed a sustainable wild turkey population for a few decades. Through trapping, relocation, and restocking efforts initiated in the late 1950s through early 2000s, the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division (WFF) began replenishing a once declining population and bolstered wild turkey numbers throughout Alabama. Since then, turkey hunters in Alabama have been afforded one of the longest spring seasons and most liberal bag limits in the country but statewide trends in turkey population metrics are showing declining trends for the last ten years. Unfortunately, neighboring states have also reported declines in their turkey populations as well. Alternative frameworks are now being reviewed for implementation due to declining trends.

The WFF Upland Game Bird Committee (UGBC), composed of Biologists representing each of the WFF Districts and

Committee Chairs, are tasked with monitoring and evaluating wild turkey populations and recommending statewide management aimed towards sustaining those populations. Given, our statewide surveys continue to indicate a downward trend in turkey reproductive success, alternative hunting season frameworks are being reviewed and evaluated. Working in collaboration with researchers from Auburn University for the last five years we measured survival, productivity, and movements of turkeys in the three most significant landscapes for turkey populations in the state. This information will provide valuable insights on impacts of season structures on turkey harvest, productivity, survival and abundance for future wild turkey management. Working together, we hope to insure the maximum sustainable wild turkey population to be enjoyed by future generations.

Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries – District Offices

DISTRICT 1

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Tanner, AL 35671
256-353-2634
dcnr.d1wff@dcnr.alabama.gov

DISTRICT 2

4101 Alabama Hwy. 21 N.
Jacksonville, AL 36265
256-435-5422
dcnr.d2wff@dcnr.alabama.gov

DISTRICT 3

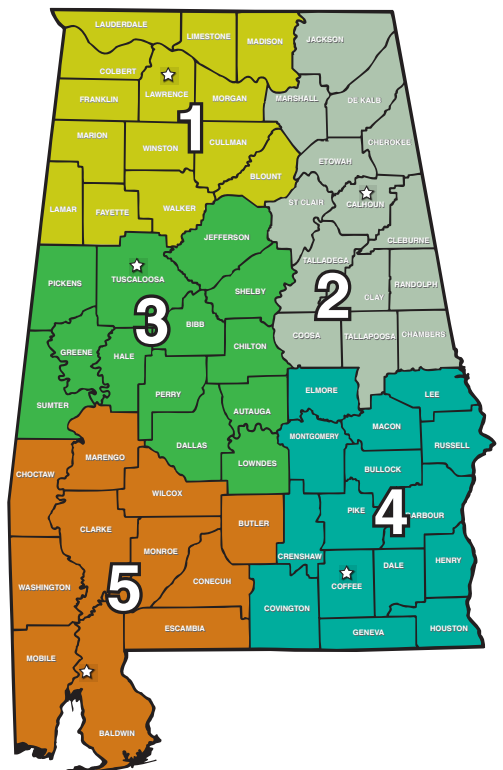
8211 McFarland Blvd., West
Northport, AL 35476
205-339-5716 (Northport)
334-289-8030 (Demopolis)
dcnr.d3wff@dcnr.alabama.gov

DISTRICT 4

3520 Plaza Drive
Enterprise, AL 36330
334-347-1298
dcnr.d4wff@dcnr.alabama.gov

DISTRICT 5

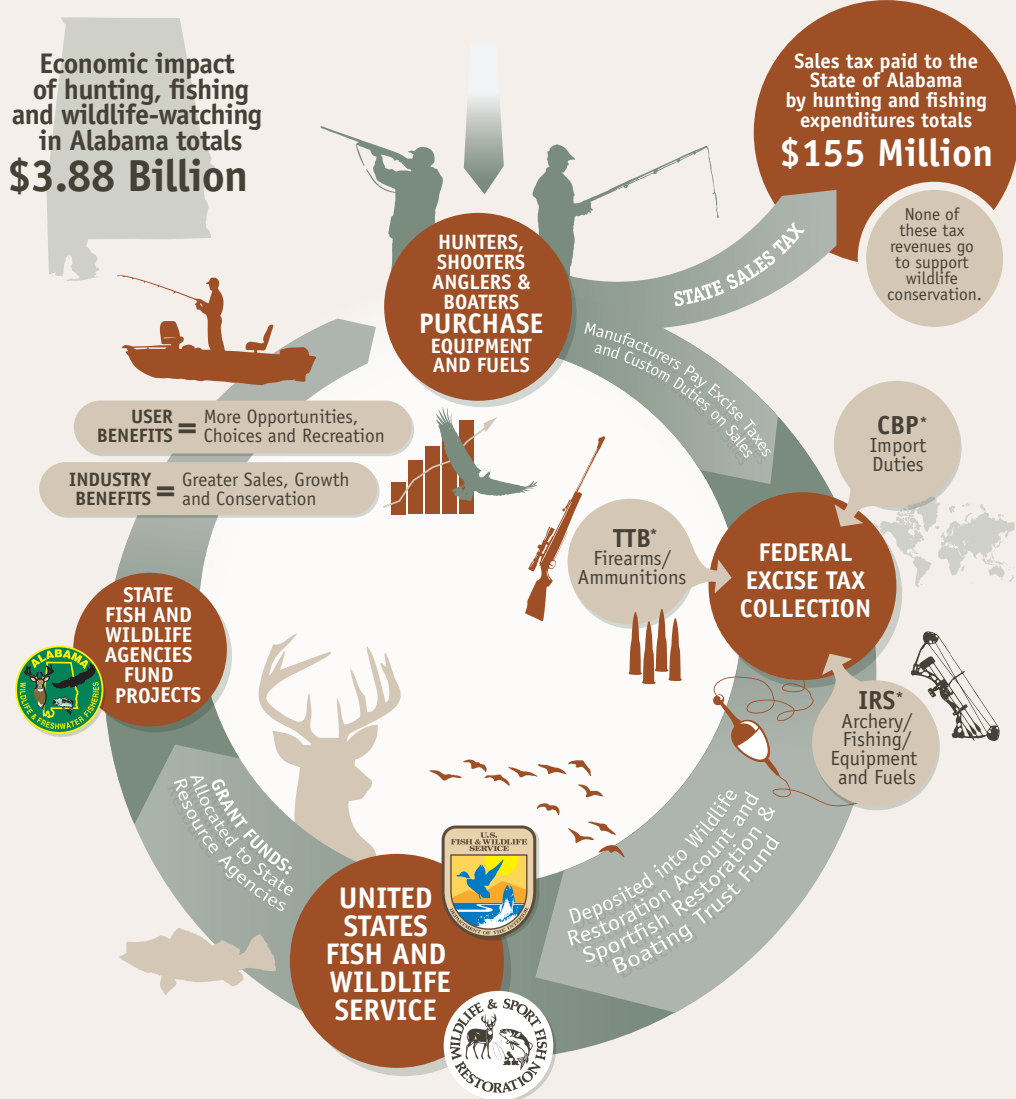
30571 Five Rivers Blvd.
Spanish Fort, AL 36527
251-626-5474
dcnr.d5wff@dcnr.alabama.gov





TES RANDLE JOLLY

HOW HUNTING & FISHING IS FUNDED IN ALABAMA



Hunting and Fishing are great pastimes that offer tremendous recreational value for the participants. Conservation is big business for the state's economy and benefits all Alabama citizens, whether they hunt or not. It is important that everyone has an understanding of the economic importance of hunting and fishing in Alabama.

Not everyone helps fund wildlife conservation, but everyone benefits.



2020 ALABAMA AVID TURKEY HUNTER SURVEY


The Alabama Avid Turkey Hunter Survey was initiated in 2014 to provide the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) with biological information about wild turkey populations in the state. Cooperating hunters are asked each year to record their observations from their hunts during the spring season. The gobbling activity and observational data obtained assists Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFF) wildlife biologists in monitoring turkey populations and in making management decisions. WFF appreciates those who are willing to take time to collect and submit this valuable information. All turkey hunters are encouraged to take part in this effort. This is an opportunity to be directly involved in the conservation and management of wild turkeys in Alabama. An invitation to participate in the survey is located in this report.

Gobbling Activity

The number of individual gobblers and total number of gobbles heard are used as indices to gobbling activity.

Gobbling activity is reported as the average number of gobbles heard during 10 hours of hunting. Gobbling activity is considered an indicator of hunting quality and may show a trend reflecting the number of gobblers in the population. The data can also be used to examine trends in the chronology of peak gobbling activity throughout a season.

Turkey Observations

Turkey observations are classified as gobblers, jakes and hens. Observation rates are reported as the average number of gobblers, jakes or hens observed during 100 hours of hunting. Observation rates provide indices to sex ratios, gobbler age ratios, and population size and trends. Jake observations reflect recruitment of males into the population from the previous year's hatch and provide an index to the potential number of 2-year-old gobblers in the population during the next spring turkey season. High numbers of two old gobblers often lends itself to a good gobbling year. 





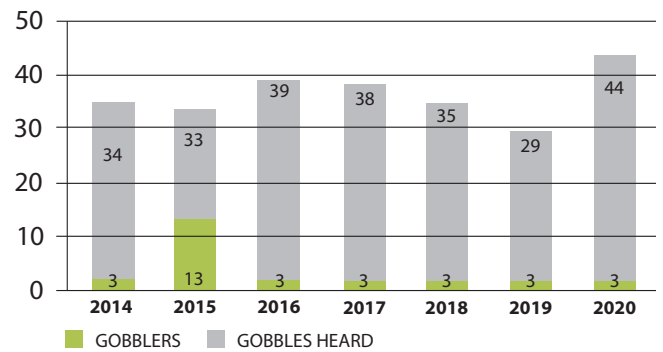
DISTRICT 1

District 1 is comprised of 14 counties in the northwest part of the state. It has several physiographic regions that are unique to north Alabama. The Plateau region consists of the Interior Low Plateau, Appalachian Plateau, and Tennessee Valley regions. The plateau is dominated by upland Oak/Hickory and Oak/Pine forest intermingled with pasture, grazing, and agricultural crops. Soils adjacent to the major rivers and flood plains in this region are highly fertile, and thus support much agricultural production, especially in the Tennessee Valley. Topography can vary greatly from steep ridges to low lying valleys. The Fall Line Hills separate the Appalachian Plateau from the Upper Coastal Plain. This area is characterized by gently rolling hills dominated by Pine/Oak forest and Oak/Gum/ Cypress bottom lands near major drainages. The greatest habitat diversity in the state is located in the Fall Line Hills.

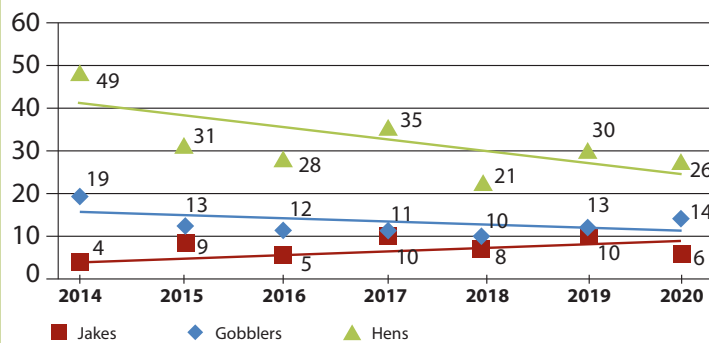
HARVEST AND OBSERVATIONS

Cooperators in District 1 reported hearing 14,296 gobblers from 1,268 gobblers and harvesting 105 birds during the 2020 spring turkey season. Compared to 2019 (n= 47 birds harvested), there was a 123% increase in the number of birds reported harvested in District 1. Harvest intensity peaked in weeks two and three. Over the past seven years, trends in turkey observations for District 1 indicate avid hunters on average are observing 2.8 less hens, 1.0 less gobblers, and similar numbers of jakes annually compared to previous years.

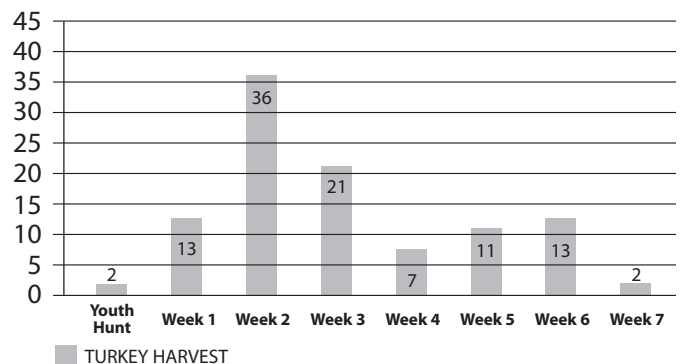
Gobblers and Gobbles Heard per 10 Hours Hunted



Turkey Observations per 100 Hours Hunted



Spring Season Harvest by Week



DISTRICT 1 Wildlife Management Areas that Provide Turkey Hunting

LAUDERDALE WMA

By Courtenay Conring WMA Wildlife Biologist

Lauderdale WMA encompasses 20,343 acres in Lauderdale County acquired under the Forever Wild Land Trust and the Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFF). The WMA encompasses 20,343 acres of mature hardwoods, loblolly pine plantations, short-leaf pine reforestation areas, and recently harvested areas. Hardwood drains of various sizes and shapes designated as streamside management zones are interspersed throughout the pine plantations of varying age classes. This diversity of timber types is managed to provide

a multitude of habitat types for wild turkeys. Prescribed burning has been utilized in past years on the WMA on a relatively small scale. Beginning in fall 2014, prescribed burning efforts were increased greatly and will continue to be implemented on a three-year interval as a major tool to improve and maintain favorable habitats for wild turkeys. In conjunction with previously established wildlife openings, additional early successional units will be created and managed with prescribed fire, drum chopping, bush-hogging and seasonal disking. For more information, contact the District 1 office at 256-353-2634.

RIVERTON COMMUNITY HUNTING AREA

By Courtenay Conring WMA Wildlife Biologist

Riverton Community Hunting Area encompasses approximately 5,316 acres in Colbert County acquired by the Forever Wild Land Trust. Loblolly pine plantations, shortleaf pine reforestation, and areas of recent timber harvests dominate the upland landscape on this CHA. Streamside management zones are interspersed throughout the area, providing a bottomland hardwood component to the landscape. For more information, contact the District 1 office at 256-353-2634.

FREEDOM HILLS WMA

By Courtenay Conring WMA Wildlife Biologist

Freedom Hills WMA occupies approximately 33,896 acres in Colbert County acquired by the Forever Wild Land Trust and WFF. The WMA contains tracts of mature hardwoods, dense loblolly pine plantations, shortleaf pine reforestation, and recently harvested areas. Hardwood drains of various sizes and shapes are interspersed throughout the WMA as streamside management zones among most of the plantation pines. Timber stand diversity provides a wide array of habitat types to benefit turkeys. Prescribed burning has been utilized in the past will continue to be implemented on a three-year interval to improve and maintain habitats beneficial to wild turkeys. In addition to the previously established wildlife openings, additional early successional units will be established and managed with prescribed fire, drum chopping, bush-hogging and disking. For more information, contact the District 1 office at 256-353-2634.

BLACK WARRIOR WMA

By Kevin Pugh, WMA Wildlife Biologist

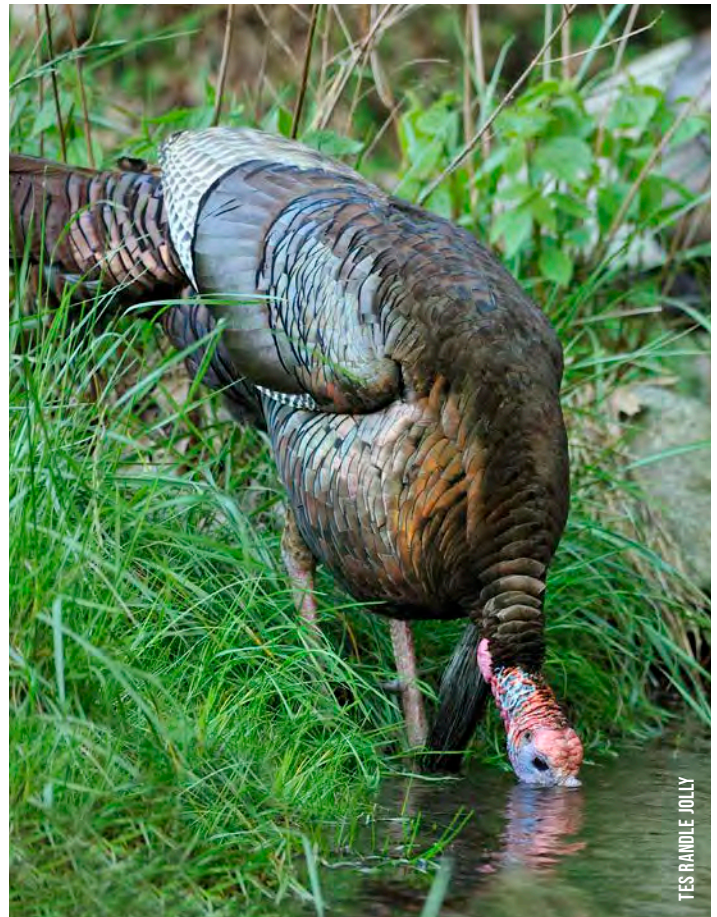
Black Warrior WMA provides public hunting opportunities through a long-standing cooperative partnership with the U.S. Forest Service. This WMA is located in the Bankhead National Forest in Winston and Lawrence counties and encompasses over 92,000 acres of U.S Forest Service Lands, including the 26,000-acre Sipsey Wilderness. Mature hardwood/hickory or hardwood/pine forest timber stand components dominate the landscape of the WMA. Recently, an effort to convert and restore loblolly pine stands to more naturally occurring shortleaf pine has been initiated. In addition, recent efforts to increase thinning operations in the pine stands has produced valuable early successional habitat for nesting and brood-rearing hens, which is of limited availability in this Forest. Prescribed fire is frequently implemented during both dormant and growing seasons to produce a wide array of vegetative diversity. Wildlife openings

are planted with a variety of warm and cool season grains, peas and clovers in order to provide year-round supplemental food sources for wild turkey. For more information, contact the District 1 office at 256-353-2634.

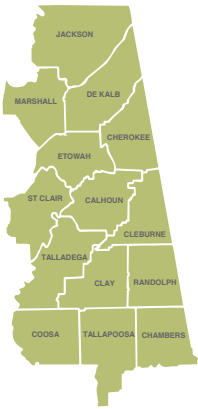
SAM R. MURPHY WMA

By Kevin Pugh, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Sam R. Murphy WMA contains approximately 17,000 acres located near Guin, Alabama, in Marion and Lamar counties. The Murphy family continues to participate as a valuable partner in conservation with WFF by providing public hunting opportunities at no cost to the State. Plantations of loblolly pine of various age classes tend to dominate the landscape of this commercial forested WMA, with stands of mature hardwoods along steep slopes and streamside management areas, with agricultural fields along the river. The numerous wildlife openings distributed throughout the WMA are managed to provide warm and cool season supplemental food sources to all species of wildlife. For more information, contact the District 1 office at 256-353-2634.



TES RANDLE JOLLY



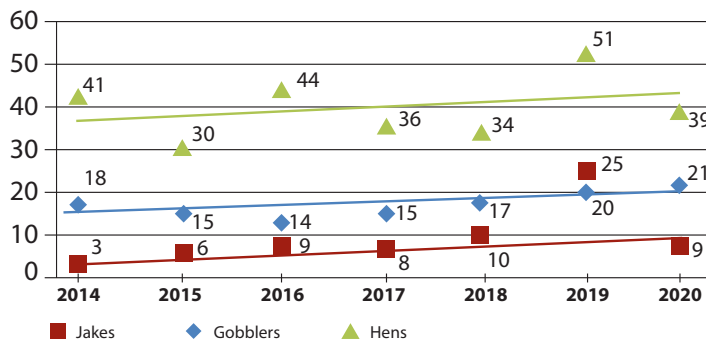
DISTRICT 2

District 2 consists of 14 counties stretching from east central Alabama to the northeast corner of the state. It is a linear, diverse area that encompasses the Piedmont, Interior Plateau, Southwestern Appalachian, and Ridge and Valley Ecoregions. The lower portion of the district is mostly rolling hills and becomes more mountainous as you move north. The flora is also very diverse. Longleaf pine is found in the lower portions of the District while loblolly and shortleaf pine are more dominant further north. Deciduous forests of primarily oak and hickory are located throughout the region often in drainages and on steep ridges. District 2 is dissected by three river systems, the Tennessee in Jackson County, the Coosa in the central counties, and the Tallapoosa in the southern counties. The Talladega National Forest Shoal Creek Ranger District and the Talladega Ranger District provide 233,500 acres of primarily forest habitat within the district.

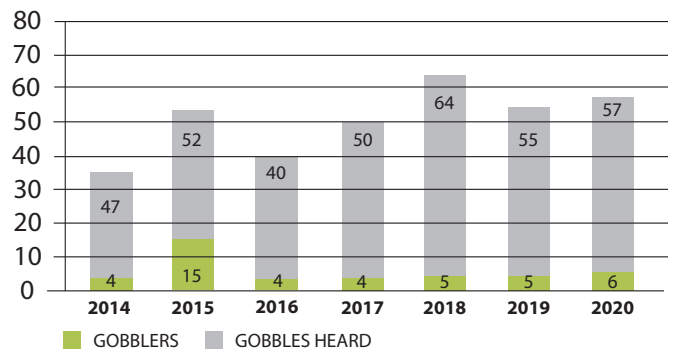
HARVEST AND OBSERVATIONS

Cooperators in District 2 reported hearing 31,400 gobblers from 2,917 gobblers and harvesting 221 birds during the 2020 spring turkey season. Compared to 2019 (n= 77 birds harvested), there was a 187 % increase in the number of birds reported harvested in District 2. Harvest intensity peaked in weeks one, two, and three. Over the past seven years, trends in turkey observations for District 2 indicate avid hunters on average are observing 1.0 more hens, 1.0 more gobblers, and 2.0 more jakes annually compared to previous years.

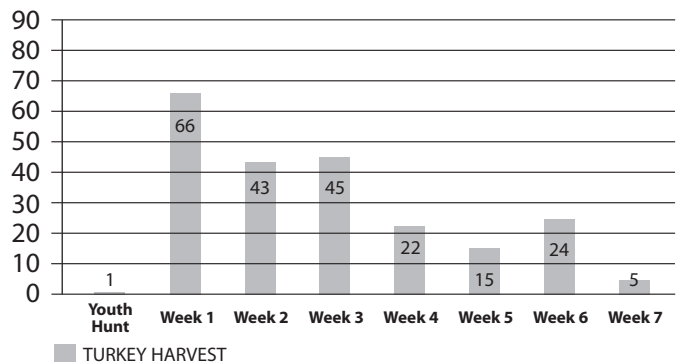
Turkey Observations per 100 Hours Hunted



Gobblers and Gobbles Heard per 10 Hours Hunted



Spring Season Harvest by Week



DISTRICT 2 Wildlife Management Areas that Provide Turkey Hunting

JACKSON COUNTY WMAS & REFUGES

By Austin LeCroy, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Jackson County WMAs and Refuges are comprised of three WMAs and two Refuges primarily managed for waterfowl and other small game. The WMAs and Refuges combined are 26,934 acres located along the Tennessee River in northeast Alabama (Southwestern Appalachians ecoregion) between the towns of Scottsboro and Stevenson. The WMAs and Refuges are provided through a partnership between Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division (WFF). One of the Jackson County WMAs,

Raccoon Creek WMA, has a tract acquired through the Forever Wild Land Trust named Coon Gulf Tract. This property is 3,500 acres of mountainous terrain with oak-hickory hardwood forested slopes and planted pines with a few grass openings intermixed on the plateau. Native warm season grasses are managed for in the openings through a bi-annual prescribed fire regime to provide more nesting and brood-rearing habitat for wild turkeys. Coon Gulf Tract is the only tract on the Jackson County WMAs and Refuges that offers turkey hunting opportunities. For more information, contact the Jackson County WMAs and Refuges Office at 256-437-2788.

JAMES D. MARTIN – SKYLINE WMA

By Brae Buckner, WMA Wildlife Biologist

James D. Martin-Skyline WMA is 60,732 acres of public land situated in the southwestern Appalachians Ecoregion of Alabama bordering Tennessee. It lies within Jackson County Alabama, historically one of the most productive counties in Alabama for eastern wild turkey harvest, and is composed primarily of very mountainous topography. Skyline WMA can be accessed from US Highway 72 in Scottsboro by taking Alabama Highway 79 North approximately 17 miles. It was originally developed as a public hunting area by ADCNR and has evolved into a multi-use hunting area, non-consumptive recreational activity, and wildlife research site. Initially established in 1959, Skyline WMA was officially renamed the James D. Martin-Skyline WMA on August 7, 1998. Its name-sake comes from the former commissioner of the ADCNR, James D. Martin. Martin was instrumental in the passage of the Forever Wild Land Trust legislation, which was formed in order to acquire land for public use with the intent to educate the public, provide wildlife research sites, and provide public hunting and recreational activities. James D. Martin-Skyline WMA is owned and operated in cooperation with ADCNR, the Forever Wild Land Trust, and Alabama Power with each controlling 21,187; 25,195; and 14,350 acres respectively. The Alabama Power Company ownership is in conjunction with mitigation from the R.L. Harris Hydroelectric Project on the Tallapoosa River that created Lake Wedowee. For additional information, please call 256-587-3114.

LITTLE RIVER WMA

By Brandon Howell, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Little River WMA exists through a unique cooperative partnership between the Alabama State Parks Division, National Parks Service, the Forever Wild Land Trust, and WFF. Located just east of Fort Payne, Alabama, in Cherokee and DeKalb counties, the WMA occupies more than 13,000 acres of land held by the cooperative agencies and programs. Habitat types range from loblolly plantations on the plateau to hardwoods spanning from the slopes to the bottomlands along Little River. Timber thinning operations and prescribed fire are utilized to encourage open habitats of early successional vegetative species to produce nesting and brood rearing habitat for wild turkey throughout the WMA. Warm and cool season herbaceous plantings and natural openings are also established throughout the WMA to provide supplemental nutrition and provide additional habitat. For more information, contact the District 2 office at 256-435-5422.

CHOCOLOCCO WMA

By Brandon Howell, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Chocolocco WMA represents a continued cooperative conservation effort between the U.S. Forest Service, Alabama Forestry Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and WFF. The WMA is located just east of the Anniston/ Oxford area in Calhoun and Cleburne counties and occupies over 52,600 acres comprised of land owned by the Alabama Forestry Commission, U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The WMA hosts a wide array of habitat types including longleaf pine stands, plantations of loblolly pine, mixed hardwood pine forests, upland and bottomland hardwoods of all age classes and recently harvested areas. Timber stand management practices such as mid-rotation timber removal, thinning operations and prescribed burning all make for a considerable contribution to the wild turkey populations residing on the Chocolocco WMA. These management strategies have greatly increased the number of turkeys in the past two decades and will likely continue due to our valuable cooperative partnerships. For more information, contact the District 2 office at 256-435-5422.

HOLLINS WMA

By Landon Johnson, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Hollins WMA represents a cooperative partnership between WFF, U.S. Forest Service, and private landowners, providing over 26,000 acres of public hunting opportunity in the rolling Appalachian foothills of Talladega and Clay Counties (Piedmont ecoregion) near the small town of Hollins, Alabama. The area consists of mature longleaf pine stands, mixed hardwood-pine stands, and hardwood drains. Over 100 permanent wildlife openings have been established throughout the WMA and maintained in a variety of warm and cool season plantings for wild turkey and other wildlife species. Long rotation longleaf and loblolly pine timber management coupled with a two to three-year rotational prescribed fire regime produces a valuable collection of habitats for wild turkeys. Other management practices that benefit turkey populations include mowing, strip disking, and selective timber harvesting. For more information on, contact the District 2 office at 256-435-5422.

COOSA WMA

By Landon Johnson, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Coosa WMA encompasses over 16,000 acres in the Piedmont Ecoregion of Alabama, near Rockford in Coosa County between Montgomery and Birmingham. 11,330 acres of the area is owned by the state of Alabama through the Forever Wild Land Trust with the rest of the acreage comprised of

long-term leases with cooperative partners including Alabama Power Company, Molpus Woodlands Group and other private landowners to provide public hunting opportunities. Coosa WMA represents one of the state's oldest established hunting areas. The west side of the area is bordered by the Coosa River, with portions of Mitchell Lake contained within the WMA. The WMA accounts for thousands of acres of mountain longleaf pine habitat interspersed by hardwood drains, mixed pine-hardwood, loblolly pine stands, and recently harvested areas in the process of being restored to longleaf pine stands. The property hosts one of the last remaining populations of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (RCW)

outside of Alabama's National Forest system. Heavy thinning operations of mature pine stands and prescribed burning conducted on three to five-year rotations are management practices used to manage for RCWs, and these wildlife management techniques also serve to create ideal nesting and brooding habitat for wild turkeys. Other management practices used to benefit wild turkeys on the area include mowing, strip disking, and maintaining permanent wildlife openings in a variety of warm and cool season forages. For more information on, contact the District 2 office at 256-435-5422.



TES RANDLE, JULY



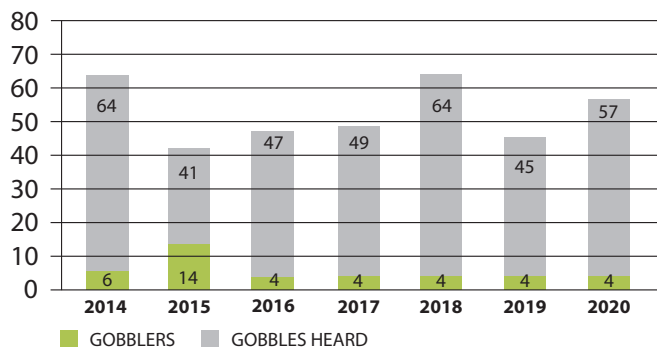
DISTRICT 3

This region consists of 13 counties in west central Alabama. It is a very diverse region consisting of eight ecoregions: southern inner piedmont, blackland prairie, flatwoods/blackland prairie margins, fall line hills, southeastern floodplains and low terraces, low rolling hills, sandstone ridges and shale hills. The southern portion consists mostly of blackland prairie, bottomland hardwood, Oak/Gum Cypress bottomlands near major drainages and industrial pine forest habitats. This area lies below the fall line and has mostly flat, to slightly rolling, terrain. Soils adjacent to the major rivers and flood plains in this region are highly fertile, and thus support much agricultural production. The soils are typically not rocky. The northern portion of the district consists of the fall line hills with rocky soils. It is comprised of mostly oak/hickory, mixed pine/hardwoods, industrial pine forest habitats, intermixed with transition zones thus creating great habitat diversity.

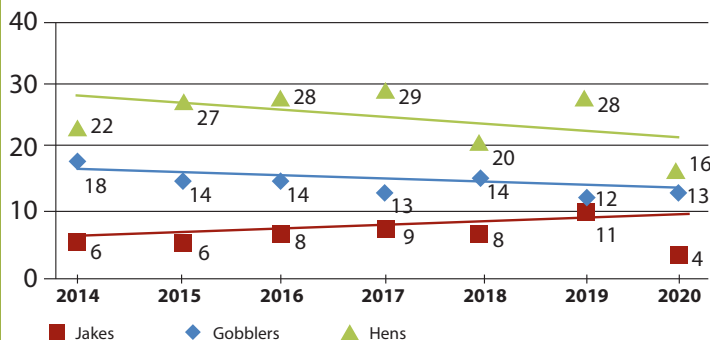
HARVEST AND OBSERVATIONS

Cooperators in District 3 reported hearing 30,124 gobblers from 2,144 gobblers and harvesting 175 birds during the 2020 spring turkey season. Compared to 2019 (n= 99 birds harvested), there was a 77% increase in the number of birds reported harvested in District 3. Harvest intensity peaked in weeks one and two. Over the past seven years, trends in turkey observations for District 3 indicate avid hunters on average are observing 1.0 less hens, 1.0 less gobblers, and about same number of jakes annually compared to previous years.

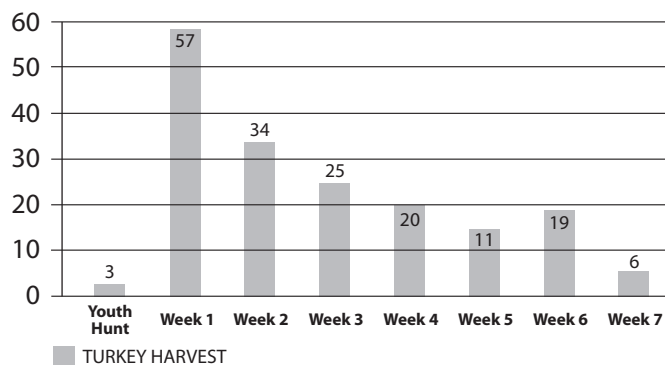
Gobblers and Gobblers Heard per 10 Hours Hunted



Turkey Observations per 100 Hours Hunted



Spring Season Harvest by Week



DISTRICT 3 Wildlife Management Areas that Provide Turkey Hunting

CHARLES D. KELLEY-AUTAUGA WMA

By Dalton Bray, WMA Wildlife Biologist

The Charles D. Kelley - Autauga WMA is 9,138 acres, centrally located in Alabama. It is in northeastern Autauga County, 15 miles north of Prattville. Historically, the area has been managed in industrial pine forest planted in loblolly and long-leaf. Hardwoods are found in the bottomlands and established streamside management zones. Rolling hills and sandy soils are found throughout this unique and diverse WMA. This important public outdoor recreational area was recently

purchased in phases by WFF and the Forever Wild program. The WMA is managed through a partnership with WFF and ADCNR's State Lands Division. Sportsman may pursue both small and big game animals while other outdoor enthusiast can soak up nature in the forest by taking a stroll down one of the many roads meandering throughout the property. The area boasts a healthy population of white-tail deer, turkey and small game animals. More than 80 wildlife openings are planted in a variety of cool and warm season crops for wildlife. Pine stands will be burned on a three- to five-year rotation to enhance nesting and brood rearing habitat for

many wildlife species. Extensive powerline right-of-way's and old logging decks are mowed to maintain early successional habitat. Gates have been installed to minimize vehicular disturbance during peak nesting and brood rearing season for many wildlife species. Some areas will remain gated during turkey season to create popular walk-in turkey hunting areas. Many generations of Alabamians will greatly benefit from this public land acquisition and conservation partnership. For more information, please contact the District 3 office at 205-339-5716.

CEDAR CREEK SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY HUNTING AREA (SOA)

By Justin Gilchrist, Area Wildlife Biologist

Cedar Creek Special Opportunity Area (SOA) is a unique property in south Dallas County bordering the Alabama River and Cedar Creek between Selma and Camden. WFF, along with the Forever Wild Land Trust worked cooperatively to purchase this property for the public to experience this special hunting opportunity. This SOA has a limited number of slots for a successful permit holder and guest to hunt a dedicated 300- to 400-acre unit for two to four day durations. These smaller units and limited quota (random drawn permits) hunting format is designed to reduce hunting pressure and increase the quality of the hunting experience. Permits to hunt the SOA are obtained through an online selection process. Interested hunters can apply and select desired hunt dates. The cost for this unique hunting experience is only the purchase of a state hunting license and WMA license. Management of the SOA is conducted through a collaborative partnership between the WFF and State Lands Division. In each hunting unit, wildlife openings are planted in a variety of cool season crops to supplement native vegetation benefiting a variety of wildlife species. Prescribed fire is utilized to manipulate existing pine stands and conducted annually on a three-to five-year rotation. While current camera surveys indicate whitetail deer and turkey are found throughout the property, planned management efforts will greatly improve the habitat, population, health, and age structure of these species. Many generations of Alabamians will greatly benefit from this public land acquisition and conservation partnership. For more information, contact the Demopolis office at 334-289-8030.

PORTLAND LANDING SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY HUNTING AREA (SOA)

By Justin Gilchrist, Area Wildlife Biologist

This unique property is in south Dallas County and borders Pine Barren Creek, on the Dallas/Wilcox county line. WFF, along with the Forever Wild Land Trust, purchased this property in partnership for the public to experience this

special hunting opportunity. This SOA will have a limited number of slots for a successful permit holder and guest to hunt a dedicated 300- to 400-acre unit for two to four days. These smaller units and limited quota hunting format was implemented to reduce hunting pressure and increase the quality of the hunting experience. Permits to hunt the SOA are obtained through an online selection process. Interested hunters can apply and select their preferred hunt dates. The cost for this unique hunting experience is only the purchase of a state hunting license and WMA license. Management of the SOA will be conducted by the cooperative partnership of the WFF and State Lands Division. In each hunting unit, wildlife openings will be planted in a variety of cool and warm season crops to supplement the native vegetation to benefit a variety of wildlife species. Prescribed fire will be implemented seasonally throughout the SOA to sustain and enhance wildlife populations and habitats. These planned management efforts will greatly improve habitats, population, health, and age structure of these species. The Portland Landing SOA will also serve as the hub for the Adult Mentored Hunt Program (AMH). The AMH program was established to provide a one-on-one opportunity to anyone over the age of 19 who is new to hunting or has limited lifetime hunting experience. This program provides new hunters the opportunity to learn, from experienced hunters, basic hunting skills, and about our valued hunting traditions. Many generations of Alabamians will greatly benefit from this public land acquisition and conservation partnership. For more information, contact the Demopolis office at 334-289-8030.

MULBERRY FORK WMA

By Chas Moore, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Mulberry Fork WMA is located just north of the Black Warrior River in southern Walker and eastern Tuscaloosa counties near the town of Oakman. Hunting rights on this 33,280-acre tract were secured by the Forever Wild Land Trust from Molpus Timberlands for WFF to manage and conduct public hunting programs. The terrain is very steep and rugged, as this area represents the southern end of the Appalachian Mountains. Molpus Timberlands primarily manages the loblolly pine stands on the WMA as a commercial forest with timber stand ages ranging from recently harvested to 25 years of growth. Streamside management zones are scattered and interspersed throughout the property and primarily consist of older aged hardwoods. Roughly 40 wildlife openings are planted annually for both cool and warm season supplemental forage for wild turkeys. For more information, contact the District 3 office at 205-339-5716.

WILLIAM R. IRELAND SR. - CAHABA RIVER WMA

By Chas Moore, WMA Wildlife Biologist

William R. Ireland Sr.- Cahaba River WMA lies along the Cahaba River in central Alabama in Shelby and Bibb counties near the towns of Helena, Montevallo, and West Blocton. The WMA encompasses a total land acreage of 37,897 acres. Molpus Timberlands owns 27,894 acres in which hunting rights have been acquired through the Forever Wild Land Trust with WFF managing the hunting programs. Other valuable cooperative landowning partners include Hancock Forest Management (2,744 acres), RMS (3,070 acres), and USX (689 acres). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service owns another 3,500 acres, known as the Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge, and is included in the WMA. The terrain throughout the area is very steep, rocky, and rugged. The uplands are typically plantation pine stands managed on a 25- to 30-year rotation with older stands typically being thinned. Streamside management zones are abundant along the many creeks that feed into the Cahaba River and are comprised of older aged hardwoods. Approximately 80 wildlife openings managed in cool season and warm season forage crops to benefit native wildlife of the WMA and are scattered throughout the area. For more information, contact the District 3 office at 205-339-5716.

OAKMULGEE WMA

By Drew Tincher, Area Wildlife Biologist

Oakmulgee WMA is the oldest WMA in Alabama, established in 1937 as a cooperative partnership with the U.S. Forest Service. The WMA consists of 45,000 acres located in Bibb, Hale, Perry and Tuscaloosa counties in west central Alabama. The terrain is reminiscent of the landscape just north of the fall line with its moderate to steep rolling hills. Longleaf pine stands dominate the upland ridges with mature hardwoods in the bottomlands. Following U.S. Forest Service requirements to manage for the red-cockaded woodpecker, pine stands are thinned to a park-like appearance and burned on a three- to five-year rotation. The prescribed burning practice implemented by the U.S. Forest Service on the WMA greatly enhance habitat conditions for the wild turkey and many other wildlife species. This forest management regime type creates ideal nesting and brood rearing habitat for wild turkeys. More than 100 wildlife openings are planted and maintained in a variety of warm and cool season forages throughout the WMA. Selected areas are seasonally closed to motorized vehicles to create popular walk-in turkey hunting areas. For more information, contact the District 3 office at 205-339-5716

LOWNDES WMA

By Dalton Bray, Area Wildlife Biologist

Lowndes WMA encompasses 15,920 acres acquired in a cooper-

ative partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Forever Wild Land Trust, and WFF to provide public hunting opportunities and other outdoor recreational activities. Lowndes WMA is located in the northwest corner of Lowndes County approximately 4 miles northwest of the town of White Hall and 30 miles west of Montgomery. Lowndes WMA lies along the Alabama River and consists of fallow agricultural fields, hardwood river bottoms, swamp drainages, and mixed pine hardwood stands. Approximately 6,200 acres of fallow agricultural fields have been replanted with a mix of hardwood species. Eighty-seven permanent wildlife openings are scattered throughout the WMA, three green tree waterfowl reservoirs, and mourning dove fields provide a diversity of outdoor recreational hunting opportunities. The wildlife openings are planted in a variety of cool season grains and clovers to benefit a variety of wildlife species. Loblolly pine stands on the area are prescribed burned on three-year rotations to provide suitable habitat and brood rearing for wild turkeys and other wildlife species. Other wildlife management practices that benefit wild turkey populations include mowing, strip disking, and selective timber harvests. For more information, call the District 3 office at 205-339-5716.

DAVID K. NELSON WMA

By Justin Gilchrist, WMA Wildlife Biologist

David K. Nelson WMA is located at the confluence of Tombigbee and Black Warrior rivers near Demopolis, Alabama. The funding for this land acquisition and management support for this WMA are provided by a cooperative partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The WMA is composed of nine tracts of land comprising 8,557 acres. The WMA is predominately alluvial river floodplains and bottomland hardwood habitat intermixed with various managed pine stands and native warm season grasses. Approximately 70 acres of wildlife openings are planted annually in both warm and cool season seed varieties throughout the WMA. Pine stands and native warm season grass openings are burned on a three to five- year rotation. These prescribe burns are implemented to provide maximum benefit and improved habitat quality for the wild turkey and a variety of other wildlife species. The 2,500-acre Damsite Tract is the only unit within the WMA that is accessible by vehicle. The remaining eight tracts are accessible by boat only. For more information, call the Demopolis office at 334-289-8030.



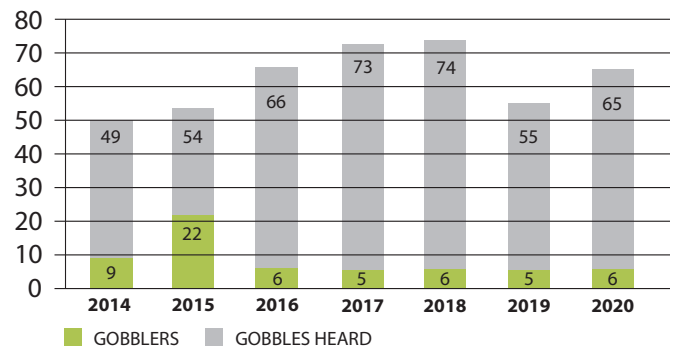
DISTRICT 4

This district consists of 15 counties in the southeastern corner of Alabama. This region has four eco-regions: piedmont, coastal plain, black belt and lower coastal plain. The piedmont area is located on the northern fringe of the region and is mostly mixed pine-hardwood forest type with rocky mountainous terrain. The black belt region is centrally located in the region and is mostly a grassland area with some oak-hickory forest along with loblolly pine plantations. The coastal plain has mostly hardwoods in the riparian areas and a mix of loblolly and longleaf pines in the uplands. The lower coastal plain is located along the southern most portion of the region and has swampy gum-cypress lowlands and the uplands are dominated by longleaf pine.

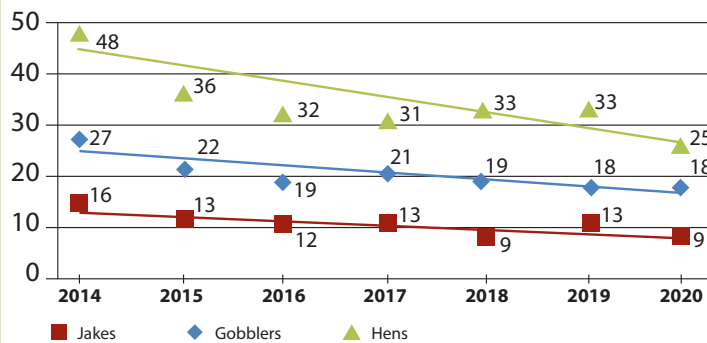
HARVEST AND OBSERVATIONS

Cooperators in District 4 reported hearing 26,542 gobblers from 2,245 gobblers and harvesting 173 birds during the 2020 spring turkey season. Compared to 2019 (n= 69 birds harvested), there was a 151% increase in the number of birds reported harvested in District 4. Harvest intensity peaked in weeks one and two. Over the past seven years, trends in turkey observations for District 4 indicate avid hunters on average are observing 2.6 less hens, 1.2 less gobblers, and about 1.0 less jakes annually compared to previous years.

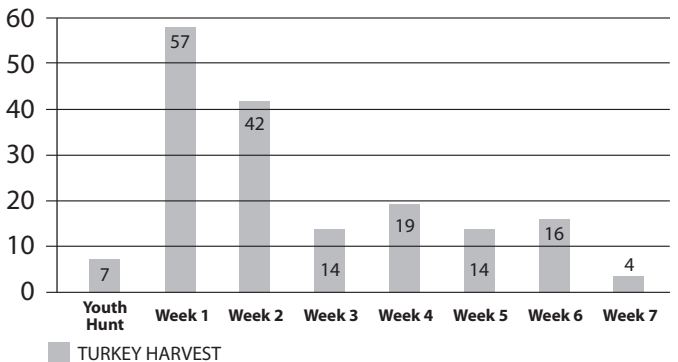
Gobblers and Gobbles Heard per 10 Hours Hunted



Turkey Observations per 100 Hours Hunted



Spring Season Harvest by Week



DISTRICT 4 Wildlife Management Areas that Provide Turkey Hunting

FOREVER WILD GOTHARD – AWF YATES LAKE WEST WMA

By Kara Glassey, WMA Area Manager

Forever Wild Gothard–AWF Yates Lake West WMA is located in Elmore County just north of the city of Tallassee. The WMA encompasses 5,933 acres initially acquired by the Forever Wild Land Trust in 2009 to provide public hunting opportunities and is cooperatively managed by State Lands Division and WFF. Since the initial purchase of 3,518 acres in 2009, Forever Wild Gothard - AWF Yates Lake West WMA has acquired an additional 2,415 acres through Forever Wild. The area is heavily forested and primarily consists of uneven-aged, mixed

hardwood-pine stands. Mature hardwoods are scattered throughout the area, primarily located along the steep slopes and drains that border the Tallapoosa River. Mature stands of longleaf pine can still be found along the ridge tops of gradually steepening slopes. No food plots are currently planted on the area, however, habitat management practices, such as prescribed burning assists in improving habitat quality. For more information, please call the District 4 office at 334-347-1298.

BARBOUR WMA

By Carl Childree, WMA Area Manager

Barbour WMA is located in Barbour and Bullock counties near the small town of Clayton. It encompasses 29,644 acres including property acquired through the Forever Wild Land Trust and WFF. Most of the area consists of longleaf and loblolly pine timber with hardwoods in the streamside management zones but older stands of mixed pine/hardwood timber remain to occupy portions of the WMA. The northern portion of the WMA has been restored to a longleaf pine ecosystem. Frequent prescribed burning is utilized as a habitat management tool on the entire area to produce viable turkey habitats. The long-term timber management goal is to establish uplands in an open pine habitat, converting loblolly pine stands to longleaf pine where soils are appropriate and maintain and enhance hardwood stands on steep slopes and in drainage systems. Permanent wildlife openings are scattered throughout the entire area and are planted with both warm and cool season crops to provide year-round food and cover for turkey and other wildlife. For more information, contact the area biologist at 334-529-3222.

BLUE SPRING WMA

By Griff Johnson, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Blue Spring WMA is a cooperative partnership between the WFF and the U.S. Forest Service. Blue Springs WMA is 24,783 acres nestled within Conecuh National Forest. Longleaf and slash pine dominate the forest with hardwoods in the uplands and bottomland stream corridors. The U.S. Forest Service manages the forest on a long-term rotation of 70 plus years. These long rotations are part of their comprehensive plan to restore historical longleaf pine habitat in the coastal plain. The U.S. Forest Service utilizes prescribed fire on a two to five-year rotation, and mechanical understory and mid-story removal to help promote suitable habitat for a variety of species like Eastern wild turkey. In addition to the U.S. Forest Service forest management practices, WFF manages permanent wildlife openings to provide quality habitat for a variety of wildlife species. For more information, please call 334-898-7013.

BOGGY HOLLOW WMA

By Griff Johnson, RF, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Boggy Hollow WMA is a cooperative partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, NWTF, and Quail Forever. Boggy Hollow consists of approximately 7,000 acres within the Conecuh National Forest in Covington County, Alabama. This WMA is managed as a bobwhite quail focal area and will provide additional habitat for nongame species including gopher tortoise and red-cockaded woodpecker. Boggy Hollow WMA is located off State Route 137 just west of Wing, Alabama. The terrain is flat

to low rolling hills, typical of the lower coastal plain. Mature hardwoods primarily reside along streamside management zones and drains. In addition to an emphasis on quail habitat, Boggy Hollow will also provide exclusive small game and deer hunting opportunities during regular season dates. Thursdays and Fridays will be dedicated to squirrel, rabbit, raccoon, and opossum hunting. Quail hunters will have dedicated hunting days on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Deer hunters have been provided archery-only hunting days Sunday through Tuesday. Turkey hunting will also be permitted on Boggy Hollow, on regular season dates. For more information, please call 334-898-7013.

GENEVA STATE FOREST WMA

By Griff Johnson, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Geneva State Forest WMA is a cooperative partnership between the WFF and the Alabama Forestry Commission. It spans 16,634 acres, of which Alabama Forestry Commission owns 7,280 acres. Alabama Forestry Commission acreage is forested with longleaf and slash pine burned at two to three-year intervals. Some mature hardwoods are present along small creek bottoms. Through timber management carried out by Alabama Forestry Commission, a mosaic of suitable habitat is created for Eastern wild turkey. Two recent purchases by WFF added 9,354 acres to the WMA. The new addition consists of industrial managed loblolly pine plantations of varying age classes in which several older stands have been thinned. Terrain on both ownerships is flat to low rolling hills. Permanent openings are managed to provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species. For more information, please call 334-898-7013.

UCHEE CREEK SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY AREA (SOA)

By Richard Tharp, Wildlife Biologist

Uchee Creek SOA is a public land hunting opportunity area that opened for the 2018 season. This property is located in northwest Russell County southwest of Phenix City near Seale, Alabama. This diverse property is bisected by Uchee Creek and contains some coveted black belt soils. The Forever Wild Land Trust purchased this property and partnered with WFF to allow the public a special hunting opportunity. Uchee Creek SOA will have a limited number of openings for a permit holder and guest to hunt a predetermined hunt unit for two to four days. This format of a limited quota (random draw hunts) and hunt unit setting is designed to reduce hunting pressure and provide for a quality hunting experience. Permits to hunt the SOA are obtained through an online selection process. Interested hunters can apply and choose their preferred hunting dates. Licenses required are a state hunting license and a WMA license. Management of the SOA is a partnership of the WFF and ADCNR's State Lands Division. Each unit contains wildlife

openings that are planted in a variety of cool season crops to supplement the native vegetation to benefit many wildlife species. Annual prescribed fire is utilized as a management tool. This SOA has a healthy population of white-tailed deer and

Eastern wild turkey and provides an enjoyable and rewarding hunting experience for many hunters. For more information, contact the District 4 office at 334-347-1298.



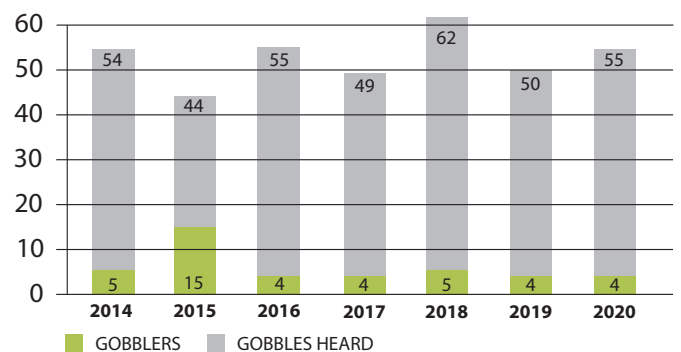
DISTRICT 5

District 5 consists of 11 counties in southwest Alabama. This ecoregion is part of the Coastal Plains which rises from gentle, rolling hills in the south, to steep, mountain-like ridges to the north. The extreme north end of the district transitions to open prairie. This region is bisected by the lower reaches of the Alabama and Tombigbee rivers, the confluence of which forms the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. Forest types include uplands dominated by piney woods interspersed with oak, beech, and magnolia with broad stream bottoms in oak, gum, bay, and cypress associations. Loblolly pine plantations are the major forest type throughout with scattering compartments of historic longleaf.

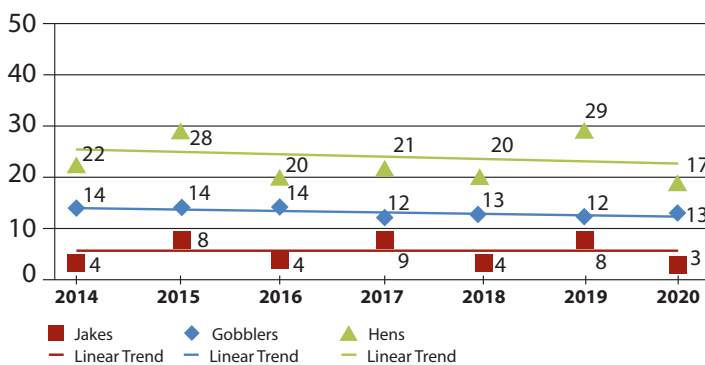
HARVEST AND OBSERVATIONS

Cooperators in District 5 reported hearing 22,739 gobblers from 1,753 gobblers and harvesting 147 birds during the 2020 spring turkey season. Compared to 2019 (n= 70 birds harvested), there was a 110% increase in the number of birds reported harvested in District 5. Harvest intensity peaked in weeks one and two. Over the past seven years, trends in turkey observations for District 5 indicate avid hunters on average are observing 1.0 less hens, and about same number of gobblers and jakes annually compared to previous years.

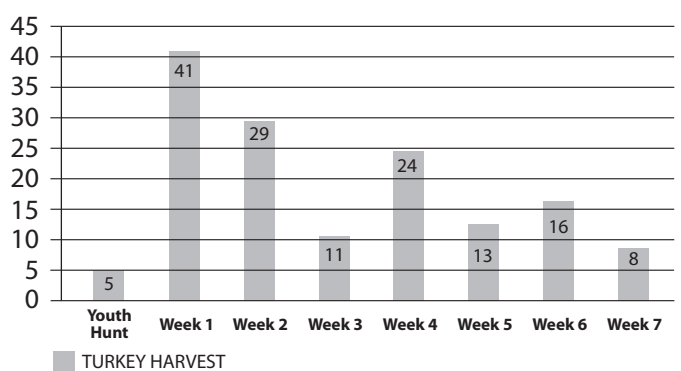
Gobblers and Gobbles Heard per 10 Hours Hunted



Turkey Observations per 100 Hours Hunted



Spring Season Harvest by Week



DISTRICT 5 Wildlife Management Areas that Provide Turkey Hunting

FRED T. STIMPSON SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY AREA (SOA)

By Bruce Todd, SOA Wildlife Biologist

Fred T. Stimpson SOA, formerly a wildlife sanctuary, was key to the restoration of deer and turkey throughout the state. The area is in the Lower Coastal Plain in southern Clarke County and is comprised of 5,320 acres. The southeastern portion of the property is composed primarily of longleaf pine and has

rolling hills. The southwestern portion has mature mixed pine and hardwood uplands as well as river swamp. The northern portion of the area is timbered in mixed hardwood and pine stands with mixed terrain of uplands, steep slopes, and gullies. Management activities on the SOA include prescribed fire, openings maintained by mowing, disking or burning, and cool and warm season plantings. These management practices provide for ideal habitat for turkeys year-round. Since the initial establishment of this area, there has never been turkey hunts

allowed. However, beginning in Spring 2021 limited quota turkey hunts will begin for the first time on Fred T. Stimpson. The limited quota hunts offer a unique public land hunting opportunity where hunters will have their own designated compartment on the SOA to hunt in. Permits to hunt the SOA are obtained through an on-line selection process. Interested hunters can apply and pick their preferred hunt dates. The cost for this unique hunting experience is only the purchase of a state hunting license and WMA license.

PERDIDO RIVER WMA

By Thomas Harms, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Perdido River WMA encompasses approximately 17,337 acres east of Robertsdale in Baldwin County. The acreage was acquired through purchases by the Forever Wild Land Trust and ADCNR's State Lands Division to provide hunting and recreational opportunities in southwest Alabama. The WMA is primarily composed of plantation pine timber stands with interspersed streamside management zones along the drainages and the Perdido River. An effort to restore coastal tracts of longleaf, through the conversion of the numerous loblolly plantations is currently in progress on the WMA. Thinning operations of both loblolly and longleaf stands are being conducted and prescribed fire is currently being used to maintain these areas to provide improved nesting and brood rearing habitats on the area. Permanent wildlife openings are also maintained in a mixture of warm and cool season plantings to benefit turkeys. For more information, contact the District 5 office at 251-626-5474.

UPPER DELTA WMA

By Jared Knight, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Upper Delta WMA is located in the northerly portions of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta in Baldwin and Mobile counties, north of Interstate 65. The WMA encompasses approximately 42,451 acres resulting from acquisitions completed by the Forever Wild Land Trust, Alabama Wildlife Federation, and WFF to provide public hunting opportunities. The majority of the WMA lies within the alluvial floodplains of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta with its meandering waterways and interior scattered islands comprised of low perimeter hardwood ridges with interior basins dominated by cypress and tupelo gum. The majority of this WMA is accessible only by boat. A marginal acreage is composed of upland habitats primarily in the north Baldwin County section. This portion is accessible by vehicle and consists of loblolly pine plantations currently being restored to longleaf pine. This restoration will provide our wildlife managers a better opportunity to manage these longleaf stands with prescribed

fire to provide suitable nesting and brood rearing habitats for wild turkeys. For more information, contact the District 5 office at 251-626-5474.

UPPER STATE SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY AREA (SOA)

By Bruce Todd, SOA Wildlife Biologist

Upper State SOA is in southwestern Clarke County, near the Tombigbee River. The majority of the 1,920 acres is mature mixed pine and hardwood timber. The topography varies from uplands to rolling hills, steep slopes and river swamp. This area was deeded to WFF in 1935 and was one of two sanctuaries established to propagate deer and turkey to repopulate the state. Habitat management practices including prescribed fire, and maintenance of wildlife openings through disking, mowing and planting provide excellent turkey nesting and brood rearing areas. Beginning with the 2020-21 hunting season Upper State SOA will offer limited quota turkey hunts Permits to hunt the SOA are obtained through an online selection process. Interested hunters can apply and pick their preferred hunt dates. The cost for this unique hunting experience is only the purchase of a state hunting license and WMA license. For more information, contact the District 5 office at 251-626-5474.

W. L. HOLLAND AND MOBILE-TENSAW DELTA WMA

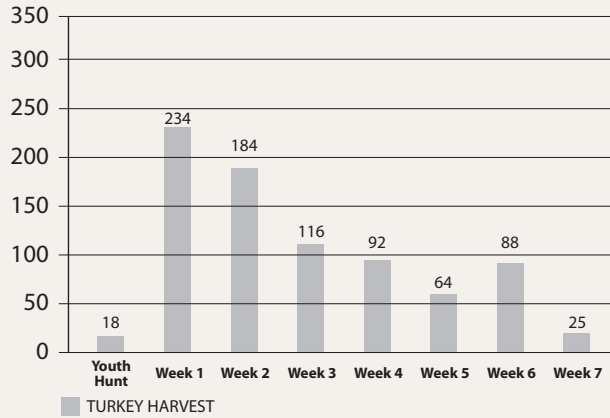
By Jared Knight, WMA Wildlife Biologist

W.L. Holland and Mobile-Tensaw Delta WMA is located in the lower portion of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta south of Interstate 65 in Baldwin and Mobile counties. The area encompasses approximately 51,040 acres of tracts acquired by the Forever Wild Land Trust, WFF, and our cooperative partners in conservation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Ducks Unlimited. The W.L. Holland and Mobile-Tensaw Delta WMA are primarily composed of open marsh in the lower regions with islands of bay, cypress, and tupelo gum as latitude increases, which is primarily accessible only by boat. Two compartments are accessible by vehicle. One tract, termed the Jacinto Port tract, is in transition to be restored to a longleaf pine community leaving hammocks of live oaks with scattered pockets of other hardwoods in lower areas. Rotational prescribed burning of this tract will assist turkey of the area in providing early successional acreage to enhance nesting and brood rearing habitats. For more information, contact the District 5 office at 251-626-5474.

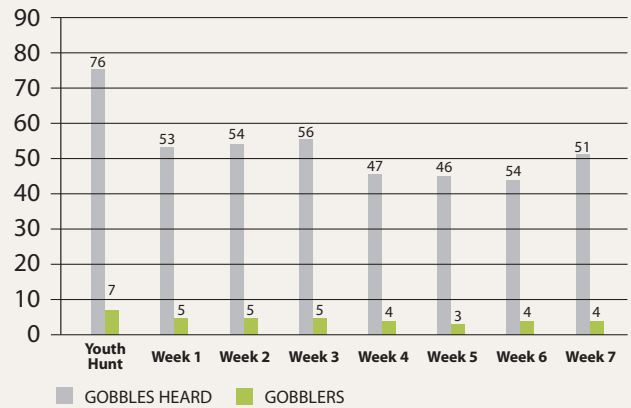
2020 STATEWIDE HARVEST AND OBSERVATIONS

Cooperators statewide reported hearing 125,101 gobblers from 10,327 gobblers and harvesting 821 birds during the 2020 spring turkey season. Compared to 2019 (n= 362 birds harvested), there was a 127% increase in the number of birds reported harvested statewide. Harvest intensity peaked in weeks one and two.

Spring Turkey Season Harvest by Week



Spring Season Gobblers and Gobblers Heard per 10 Hours Hunted by Week



* Harvest numbers compiled from 454 avid hunter survey respondents and represent only a subset of the total harvest within Alabama.



TES RANDLE JOLLY



2020 BROOD SURVEY

Reproduction

During the months of July and August, the wild turkey brood survey is conducted across the state by WFF personnel, resource professionals from other state and federal agencies, and interested hunters and landowners. This effort began in 2010. Brood surveys provide information concerning reproduction and are valuable in monitoring turkey population trends. Hens observed with at least one poult are considered successful. Hens without poults are considered unsuccessful. It is assumed they either did not attempt to nest, abandoned their nest, lost their nest to predation or human disturbance or had no poults survive. Average brood size is the total number of poults divided by the number of successful hens and provides an index to poult survival. Poults per hen is defined as the number of poults observed divided by the total number of hens seen. Poults per hen is the most practical reproductive index because it considers successful hens, unsuccessful hens and poult survival.

Wildlife biologists typically rate brood survival based on the average number of poults per hen. Recruitment of four or more poults per hen is considered excellent, three is good, two is fair, and one or less poult per hen is poor. While survival of one poult per hen is poor, researchers contend that as long as hens are successful, a turkey population can be maintained.

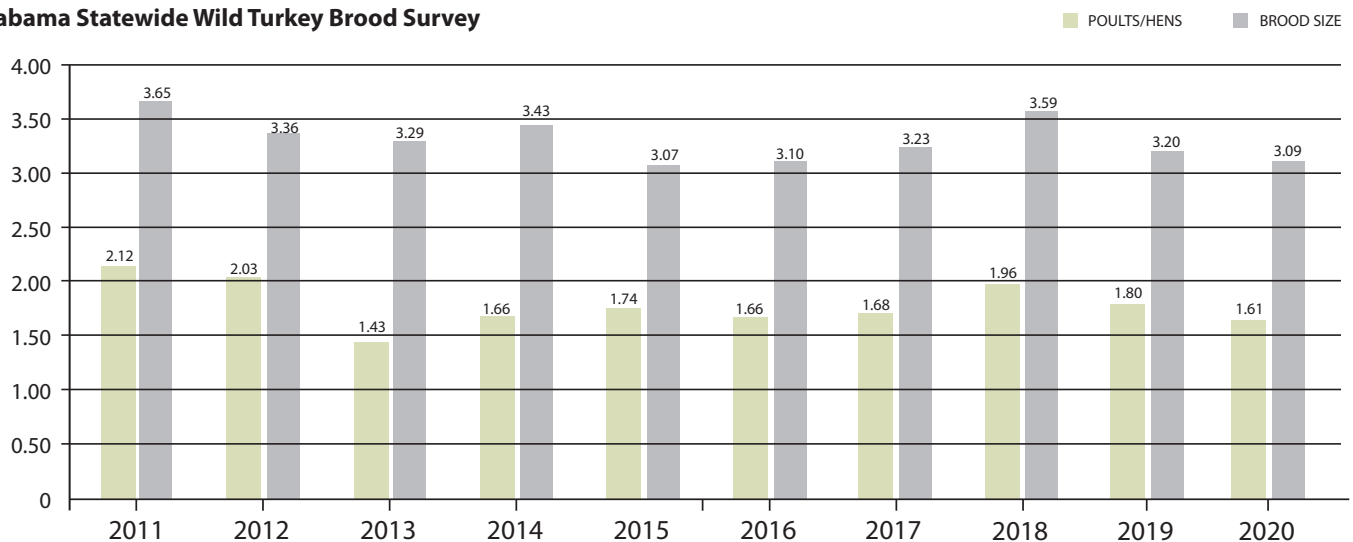
However, the goal is to optimize conditions through habitat enhancement and other management applications to promote optimal reproductive success and high turkey populations.

Observations

Data collected over the last ten years through the statewide brood survey indicates a declining trend in poult productivity. Although slight increases in poults per hen (pph) and brood size (poults per hen with poults) were observed in some years, trend analysis of productivity over the last decade reflects a 2% annual decline in pph and a 3% annual decline in brood size. The 2020 survey indicated the statewide productivity decline continued as averages dropped to 1.61 pph and 3.09 brood size from the 2019 averages of 1.80 pph and 3.20 brood size. The 10-year statewide average is 1.77 pph and 3.30 brood size.

Observer participation and sample size are extremely important factors in the brood survey. Adequate numbers of observations and spatial distribution of observations throughout the state are needed for dependable district, ecoregion, and statewide estimates of poult production. For instance, an average of 4.0 pph and 6.80 brood size was observed in the Interior Plateau ecoregion during the 2020 brood survey, up from an average of 1.70 pph and 3.40 brood size in 2019. However, there were only 10 observations in this ecoregion for the 2020 survey.

Alabama Statewide Wild Turkey Brood Survey

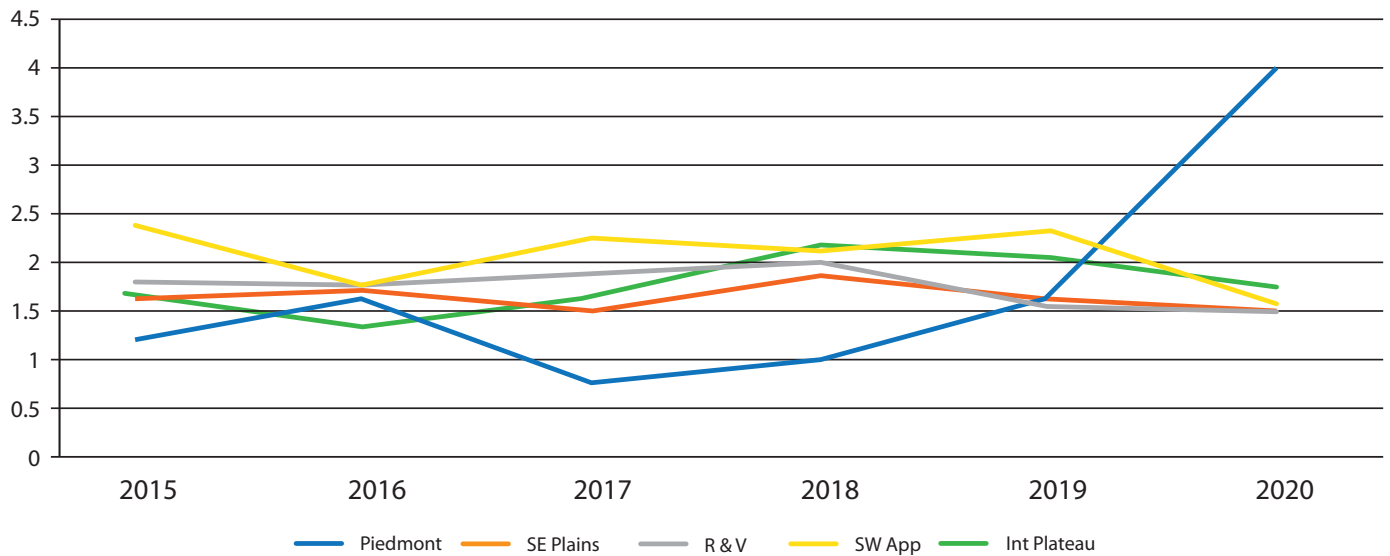


The Interior Plateau averaged 1.30 poult per hen and 3.10 brood size in the five years prior to 2020. Given the low poult productivity observed in previous years and only one year of high poult productivity observed through only 10 reported observations, it would be premature and naive to conclude this as an upward trend in productivity for the ecoregion.

A total of 805 observations were reported during the 2020 brood survey. Most brood observations were reported on private lands (51%) and WMAs (35%). WFF districts with the most reported observations were districts 2 (247 observations, 31% of total) and 4 (233 observations, 29% of total). The

Southwestern Appalachians, Ridge and Valley, and Piedmont ecoregions comprise District 2, and all of District 4 is in the Southeastern Plains ecoregion. Data analysis reflects 481 or 60% of reported brood observations were in the Southeastern Plains. Poults per hen (pph) and brood size average was highest in the Interior Plateau, but again there were only 10 reported observations. The second highest poult per hen and brood size averages of 1.78 pph and 3.27 brood size were observed in the Piedmont with 120 reported observations. 🦃

Alabama Ecoregions Poults per Hen (PPH)



Poults per hen (pph) trends by ecoregions (Piedmont, Southeastern Plains (SE Plains), Ridge and Valley (R&V), Southwestern Appalachians (SW App), and Interior Plateau (Int Plateau) since 2015. Note: Statewide brood survey has been conducted since 2010; however, ecoregions were defined differently prior to 2015.



2020

WILD TURKEY BROOD SURVEY OBSERVATIONAL DATA SUMMARY

Observational surveys were conducted during the months of July and August.

	OBSERVATIONS	TURKEYS OBSERVED					POULTS PER HEN TOTAL	POULTS PER HEN WITH POULTS	PERCENT OF HENS WITH POULTS	GOBBLER TO HEN RATIO
		GOBBLERS	HENS WITHOUT POULTS	HENS WITH POULTS	POULTS	UNKNOWN				
STATEWIDE	805	923	531	580	1790	247	1.61	3.09	52.21%	1:1.20

DISTRICT 1 TOTALS	170	155	125	131	421	69	1.64	3.21	51.17%	1:1.65
DISTRICT 2 TOTALS	247	394	155	220	604	88	1.61	2.75	58.67%	1:0.95
DISTRICT 3 TOTALS	97	90	50	88	264	51	1.91	3.00	63.77%	1:1.53
DISTRICT 4 TOTALS	233	215	167	113	424	27	1.51	3.75	40.36%	1:1.30
DISTRICT 5 TOTALS	58	69	34	28	77	12	1.24	2.75	45.16%	1:0.90

PIEDMONT	120	134	78	94	307	8	1.78	3.27	54.65%	1:1.28
SOUTHEASTERN PLAINS	481	477	329	299	964	150	1.54	3.22	47.61%	1:1.32
RIDGE & VALLEY	74	164	32	83	172	69	1.50	2.07	72.17%	1:0.70
SOUTHWESTERN APPALACHIANS	120	141	85	94	279	19	1.56	2.97	52.51%	1:1.27
INTERIOR PLATEAU	10	7	7	10	68	1	4.00	6.80	58.82%	1:2.43

HUNTING CLUB	47	43	34	25	54	20	0.92	2.16	42.37%	1:1.37
PUBLIC	4	2	3	7	22	0	2.20	3.14	70.0%	1:5.00
PRIVATE	407	452	252	273	901	141	1.72	3.30	52.0%	1:1.16
DMAP	1	3	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.0%	1:0.00
WMA	282	241	206	205	630	58	1.53	3.07	49.88%	1:1.71
SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY AREA	22	63	12	7	32	0	1.68	4.57	36.84%	1:0.30
PDHA	6	6	1	2	9	6	3.00	4.50	66.67%	1:0.50
FEDERAL	36	113	23	61	142	22	1.69	2.33	72.62%	1:0.74



JOIN THE AVID TURKEY HUNTER SURVEY TEAM

Are you passionate about turkey hunting?

**Would you like to contribute to the conservation
and management of turkeys in Alabama?**

If your answer is yes, then read on.

The Avid Turkey Hunter Survey was initiated in 2014 as a means of collecting long-term data on turkey activity and population numbers. The data collected by cooperators forms the basis for this report. We appreciate all of those who took part and need much more participation. The more hunters that participate the better our data will be. From this dataset, biologists at ADCNR gain valuable information on statewide and regional trends in gobbling activity, hunter effort, harvest rates, age structure and sex ratios. This knowledge ultimately helps ADCNR make decisions that link the interests of sportsmen with management of the state's turkey resource. These decisions directly affect your recreational opportunities as a sportsman and conservationist. The data you collect will provide valuable insight concerning management questions regarding the seasons or bag limits. Will certain regulations improve or degrade the quality of turkey hunting? These are topics that should be vitally important to the avid turkey hunter.

Participation in this process allows hunters a unique opportunity to directly contribute to the conservation and management of turkey in Alabama. Participants will

receive a copy of *Full Fans & Sharp Spurs*, the Alabama Turkey Program annual report that discusses turkey population trends, biology and management in each area of the state.

How Can I Participate?

If you turkey hunt in Alabama you are eligible and encouraged to participate. The only cost to you is a minute or two of your time following every hunt to record information on what you observed. Many hunters keep a hard copy of their data and enter it on our research website at the end of the season, while others enter their data each day.

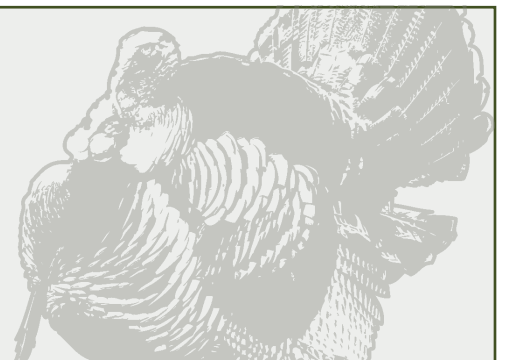
If you would like to become involved, please contact the ADCNR Upland Game Bird Coordinator listed below or go to:

www.outdooralabama.com/wild-turkey

Your efforts will assist ADCNR in monitoring Alabama's turkeys to make decisions in the best interest of the resource and the hunters.

For questions or to participate in the survey, please contact:

Steven Mitchell, Upland Game Bird Coordinator
Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, Wildlife Section
steven.mitchell@dcnr.alabama.gov



GAME CHECK & WILD TURKEYS



The Game Check system allows for annual wild turkey harvest data to be obtained from both licensed and license exempt hunters for a more accurate representation of harvest statewide. Through Game Check participation, biologists can observe trends in harvests at the county level, statewide, or on specific public landholdings such as wildlife management areas. In addition, Game Check provides data on harvest characteristics such as harvest timing and intensity during a season. Accumulation of more detailed and representative harvest data over multiple seasons offers biologists a means for targeted management recommendations to ensure healthy and sustainable populations of wild turkeys. For turkey hunters, this translates to more gobbling birds and ample harvest opportunities. We commend all hunters who lawfully comply with reporting harvests through Game Check.

Game Check results for the 2020 season indicated 16,851 harvested gobblers were reported in 2020, which is a 54% increase compared to 10,948 reported in the 2019 season. There was also a 47% increase in the number of unique hunter IDs that reported harvests in 2020 compared to the 2019 season. Additionally, the harvest distribution (i.e. bag per hunter) in 2020 remained consistent with 2019. In both years, approximately 90% of reporting hunters harvested 3 birds or less. The harvest increase was likely due to an increase in the number of hunters from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and increased compliance with Game Check rather than an increase in harvest success per hunter due to increased effort (i.e. man days afield).

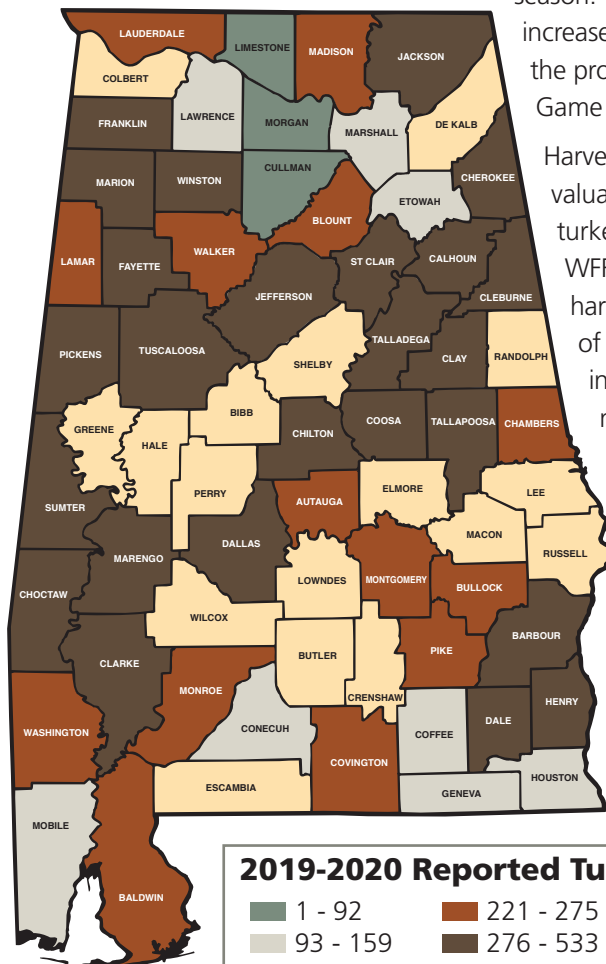
The Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFF) also conducts a post-season telephone sample survey licensed Alabama hunters through

Responsive Management Inc. to acquire hunting and harvest information for comparative analysis with Game Check.

The post-season surveys poll both license and license exempt hunters for representation of overall hunter and harvest numbers statewide. Lending support to our game check numbers and resulting assessment of harvest increase, our annual post-season harvest survey also showed an increase in hunter numbers. An estimated 59,946 hunters harvested 34,882 male turkeys in the 2020 season. Hunter numbers increased 24% and harvest increased 36% compared to 2019 estimates. Comparing the post-season survey harvest estimate against Game Checked turkeys, reporting compliance with the mandatory Game Check program was 48%. The compliance reporting percentage needs to be much higher but does reflect a 5% increase from the 43% compliance rate of the 2018-19

season. We are optimistic compliance will increase as more hunters discover how simple the process is to report harvests through Game Check.

Harvest data collection is an extremely valuable part of managing Alabama's wild turkey population. Game check provides WFF with data regarding timing of harvest, harvest number, and distribution of harvest throughout the state. This invaluable information is used to guide management decisions regarding hunting season frameworks, such as setting timing of seasons, bag limits, and zones, as well as population management. Please do your part to Game Check and help us better manage for you! More information about Game Check is on the back cover of this publication and may also be found at www.outdooralabama.com.



TURKEY HARVESTS REPORTED THROUGH GAME CHECK

Turkeys Harvested Per Hunter	2017		2018		2019		2020	
	Frequency	% of Total	Frequency	% of Total	Frequency	% of Total	Frequency	% of Total
1	3,184	62.7%	3,420	61.7%	3,897	61.5%	5,397	57.3%
2	1,098	21.6%	1,177	21.2%	1,384	21.8%	2,095	22.3%
3	455	9.0%	545	9.8%	573	9.0%	954	10.1%
4	222	4.4%	227	4.1%	281	4.4%	546	5.8%
5	123	2.4%	178	3.2%	202	3.2%	421	4.5%
Unique Hunter IDs	5,082		5,547		6,337		9,413	

The frequency in the number of turkeys harvested per hunter (i.e. total bag per hunter) reported through Game Check by year for the spring turkey season in Alabama.

FIRST HARVEST CERTIFICATE

The Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries First Harvest Certificate program is designed to honor that special moment in which a hunter harvests his/her first gobbler. Certificates are available to provide a way to remember those first special moments in a hunter's lifetime.



If you would like to download a First Harvest certificate, visit:
www.outdooralabama.com/hunting.



ALABAMA'S TURKEY "RUT"

*By Drew Tincher, Wildlife Biologist
Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries*

In the Whitetail World, there exists no shortage of information pertaining to the breeding cycle of deer. The "Rut" has been written about extensively in both scientific literature as well as in the mainstream hunting media. Almost every deer hunter is familiar with terms such as "pre-rut, post-rut, chasing, seeking, and cruising" and some popular hunting industry professionals have even coined certain phrases pertaining to the "phases" of the rut and applied coinciding dates and useful hunting tactics. I have found quite the opposite to be true regarding the breeding cycle of the wild turkey. Sure, we know when and how to hunt them, but we often lack in the biological understanding of the happenings leading up to, during, and after the breeding season. Knowledge of turkey breeding chronology is often shrouded in myth and mystery such as the all too common phrase "They'll be gobbled out before season with this weather." This article will attempt to dispel some of those

myths, lay out a timeline of wild turkey breeding chronology in Alabama, cast some light on what is happening biologically during the turkey "rut," and explain how maybe we should begin to think about it a little differently.

Let us start with the "pre-rut." In the fall and winter, turkeys typically assemble into large winter flocks. These flocks are generally comprised of multiple groups of hens and their surviving poults from the previous summer. Groups of jakes (2-year olds in the coming hunting season) and adult gobblers of varying age classes will also group together. It is not at all uncommon to see large mixed flocks of adult hens, poults, and gobblers of various age classes. It is during this time that pecking orders and dominance hierarchies are beginning to be teased out. The male poults in these groups will be the roving groups of jakes we see come springtime and will already be testing each other to feel out where they stand in



the dominance hierarchy. Turkey hunters are all too aware that these marauding groups of youngsters have certainly been known to terrorize a gobbler or two and possibly botch a few hunts along the way. Although lesser understood, there is also a dominance hierarchy within groups of hens, and they will establish a "pecking order" (no pun intended) as well. These dominance hierarchies come into play in an important way later in the spring when breeding begins. Often, the most dominant gobbler will also be the most vocal, and in turn breed the most hens. The process of establishing a dominance hierarchy within groups can typically take several months generally starting in winter and extending through early spring. Dominant gobblers begin to become vocal on the landscape before hens are ready to breed. It stands to reason that these more vocal, dominant birds can often be the first birds harvested when turkey season opens in the spring. Over the last several years, ongoing turkey research efforts throughout the Southeast have focused on investigating what happens within male dominance hierarchies once the dominant gobbler is harvested, and how this impacts breeding and nesting success. Furthermore, previous research published by Dr. James Earl Kenamer at Auburn University suggests there is evidence that subordinate gobblers have testosterone levels far lower than dominant birds which could lead to increased egg infertility rates.

Now let's fast forward on into March and April and get to the "rut." Contrary to popular belief, the annual breeding cycle in wild turkeys is triggered by a physiological reaction to the length of daylight patterns known as the photoperiod. The rise of testosterone levels in gobblers and timing of hens becoming receptive is primarily related to increasing daylight over time. Hens will become receptive to gobblers and breeding will take place at roughly the same time year after year, directly in response to photoperiod cycles. Concurrently, as the length of day increases in early spring, testosterone levels in

gobblers also begin to rise at accelerated rates. Consequently, gobblers will be ready to breed far before hens are receptive. This increasing level of testosterone explains why it is not uncommon to hear excited toms gobbling on a crisp, high pressure, blue-bird clear February morning. Rest assured, this does not insinuate that breeding is taking place. As daylight hours lengthen and testosterone rises, winter gobbler groups become increasingly annoyed by each other's presence and begin to systematically split off across the landscape either individually or in smaller groups typically containing one dominant bird and a few subordinates. We all know this scene, a dominant strutter accompanied by his subordinate minion(s) that dare not display anything even remotely resembling a mere half strut for fear of swift retribution. The struggle for dominance during the "pre-rut" period and where each male stands in the pecking order was made quite clear to them. The wild turkey mating strategy is often referred to as an exploded lek, dominant gobblers scattered throughout the landscape with pockets of hens interspersed around them. This mating system centers around receptive hens moving to these dominant breeder gobblers as they vocalize to hens giving up their whereabouts. This biological strategy is often made painfully obvious when we throw on our turkey vests, grab our various calls, and hit the spring woods trying to reverse mother nature and entice a reluctant gobbler to come to us.

Now let's move on along and get into the "post-rut." To use another deer analogy, Mark Drury coined the phrase "desperately seeking" when referring to the phase of the whitetail rut when most does have come and gone from estrus and bucks are searching high and low for that one last potential mate. This turkey "post-rut" timeframe in the spring woods would be analogous to that "desperately seeking" phase of the whitetail rut. Studies in Alabama have shown that peak nest initiation is typically around April 15. Although average dates of nest initiation are generally similar across the southeastern U.S., annual variability can be great. Researchers have related this variability to weather and female body condition, which



may shift incubation initiation considerably earlier or later than average in some years. Around this time in April, many hens have been bred and begin to initiate nesting. During nesting, hens will generally lay somewhere between 10 and 12 eggs over about a two-week period. After the final egg is laid, she will begin continuously incubating the eggs for a period of approximately 28 days. Data collected on gobbling activity in Alabama indicates resurgences in gobbling activity during this later breeding “post-rut” time period when gobblers are “desperately seeking” a hen to breed. This late “post-rut” season can yield some very successful harvest rates and hunter satisfaction. Southeastern states with seasons remaining open into May show 10 percent or more of their total harvests coming in May which is at or above their average monthly seasonal harvest percentage.

As you can see, wild turkey social structures and breeding systems can be a lot more complex than what first meets the eye. Further research is needed for a better understanding of some of these social constructs, but these complexities do bring attention to the fact that we need to begin to think about changes to hunting seasons and harvest timeframes.

There exists the possibility that some harvest timeframes may have negative long-term impacts on overall turkey populations in our state. However, on a less somber note, these same complexities may also bring to light that there may be even better potential hunting and harvest opportunities of receptive gobblers later into the season than previously thought. Hopefully, with better understanding of when and how the wild turkey breeding season unfolds biologically, we as turkey hunters can help promote increased sustainability of turkey populations through our understanding of how the timing of our hunting and harvest affects spring breeding and reproduction. Hunters have always been the original conservationists and should want nothing more than our cherished renewable wild game resources to persist at harvestable rates long into the future. It is up to us to take the time to continuously educate ourselves on these matters. A better understanding of the intricacies surrounding turkey breeding chronology could go a long way in changing how we as hunters think about the spring breeding season and hopefully result in more exciting spring mornings in the turkey woods, especially the ones culminating in a successful harvest. 🌿





MOVEMENT IN THE TURKEY WOODS

*By Courtenay Conring, Wildlife Biologist
Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries*

Movement and the ability to detect it are key drivers in the predator-prey relationship. Knowing when and how to move is what earns the bobcat a rabbit. Conversely, it is also why the rabbit lived up until that point. That same knowledge, paired with a few other skills and some luck, are how we harvest turkeys every spring. Learning how to use your time of day, surroundings, the weather, and your calling to move in the turkey woods will heighten your experience and likely improve your success.

Picture it is 40 minutes before official sunrise on a nice spring morning and you hear the first gobble of the day. You have hunted this turkey before from where you are standing, so you are surprised when he gobbles 400 yards away. You could stay where you are and wait for a closer bird to gobble. Better yet, you may want to play it safe and stay where you are and try to call him to you, but then he gobbles again and again. You now know that he is going to be responsive and worth moving on, but up comes the sun and you are stuck. This situation is why getting into the woods well before daylight can help you harvest turkeys. That turkey may have been gobbling before you arrived at your listening spot. Turkeys do not see well in the dark, which is why they roost in trees. Use that to your

advantage. They are accustomed to things moving on the ground underneath them all night, so closing that 400-yard distance in the dark is just another nocturnal animal to turkeys. Nocturnal animals are not wearing headlamps, so using a dim setting or not at all is ideal. While they cannot see in the dark, they hear well any time. For that reason, when closing the gap pre sunrise or moving in the turkey woods you need to always be as quiet as possible.

After sitting against your tree listening to him gobble on the limb 20+ times, it is getting close to fly down time so you start to lightly call in his direction. He responds with a gobble. You call again and he responds. You get set up with your gun pointing in his direction and fly down time comes, but an hour passes with no gobbles. At this point you are almost certain that he has hens and moved elsewhere, so you stand up. As soon as you do, three turkeys fly off at 80 yards. Had you sat another 10 minutes you might have taken a shot at one. It is important to remember that turkeys are sometimes feeding as they walk, especially right off the limb. Feeding often keeps them from gobbling and slows down their pace. Hens also will slow down a gobbler's pace and desire to gobble. Sometimes you must be overly patient when dealing with an off-the-

limb gobbler. Another good practice prior to moving from any setups, is to call and wait another 10-15 minutes before moving. Some birds must be closer for your call to elicit a gobble and others have been pressured to the point that they hang. Despite what some hunters say, turkey mating strategies are dependent on hens going to the gobbler. When hunting, we are trying to entice gobblers to reverse nature and come to the hen, which means we must be patient and convincing for them to come to us. Either way, a little moving restraint and patience with on-the-roost turkeys can often work in your favor.

Now that you have flushed the turkeys, your next move is to predict which way they are traveling and set up for a new opportunity. You know where they frequent in the mid mornings and start making your way there. Turkeys see extremely well and usually will not tolerate a person walking within view, so you must get creative in how you move. Depending on where you are in the state, topography and landscape features may conceal your movements. Drainages, creeks, or any drop in elevation is worth going out of your way to use. In addition to blocking the turkeys' view, the sound of walking is dampened when utilizing these features. Creeks have thicker vegetation along them for cover and flowing water muffles your steps. Hardwood mountain drainages are extremely valuable during early season when leaf litter is loud and trees are leafless. They have smooth rocks and bare dirt for quiet walking and lower elevation for cover. Rock outcrops can be used similarly. It is important to note that when you crest some low-lying feature you have used to gain ground it must be slow and preferably behind something. Aside from humans, not many things in nature move directly vertical at a fast pace; however, plenty of animals move horizontally. That fact is also why you want to skirt around hills or mountains on benches instead of just popping over the top. Flanking movements are better than direct assaults. While it brings its own challenges, brief episodes of inclement weather also offer advantages for moving in the turkey woods. Much like creeks and drainages, rain and wind can conceal movement and sound. Cloud cover darkens the woods, while wind and rain cause the leaves to shake, trees to sway, and overall make it more difficult for turkeys to distinguish individual movements. If you hunt an area enough, you learn where resident turkeys go during inclement weather, and that knowledge should be factored in when making calculated moves.

After using all your tricks to move undetected to where you suspect turkeys are heading, you end up on a rather open hardwood hillside. You must clear 50 yards along the bench to reach a big, dying hickory with a bunch of weeds growing at



the base where you want to set up. Before moving from your cover along the drainage, you call. A gobbler responds past the curve of the hillside and you know you have time to make it to the tree. You lightly call as you walk quietly towards the tree, stopping only to scratch in the leaves once or twice. This is to mimic a hen moving towards a gobbler. Turkeys are constantly communicating with one another, so calling and scratching while moving towards the gobbler will hopefully convince that gobbler he has a responsive, mobile hen, instead of a stationary hunter.

He gobbles multiple times, closer with each one, as you settle in at the hickory. You point your gun towards an old logging road because it is the path of least resistance. He is likely just around that curve of the hill on that same road. You are ready, so you begin to call more aggressively to which he responds accordingly. Soon you hear drumming and just above the road on the crest of the hillside you see the top of a tail fan. He has moved high and by the time you process what has happened a blue head comes over the crest. He is about 45 degrees left of the end of your gun barrel when he begins to strut. After about 30 seconds, he breaks strut, gobbles, then steps behind an oak tree. You swiftly move your gun left, but not far enough before he steps back out from behind the tree and goes back into strut. He is at 35 yards and you cannot move until he gives you another opportunity. He throws his fan up and starts to spin facing away. Masked behind his own fan you

move your gun the last few degrees and cluck. His head shoots up and you pull the trigger. Regardless of the pressure, moving on turkeys when you are in close quarters is always tough and relies on a hunter's ability to detect movement. The first right move in this instance was the hunter's choice to sit with a large tree as the backdrop with a brushy native blind at the base. The hunter never broke the outline of the tree when moving and the vegetation broke up the hunter's outline against the tree. Next, with the first glimpse of a tail fan, the hunter knew he needed to move to harvest this bird. Instead of moving his entire head to look at the bird, only his eyes moved. Finally, the hunter once again used physical barriers in the tree and fan, to make final movements resulting in a harvested turkey.

While calling and woodsmanship are critical in the turkey woods, moving undetected and detecting movement are just as important. I struggle with it myself annually while turkey hunting and confidently believe that learning how and when to move and detecting movement is the difference between harvesting and educating turkeys. Most other game species do not have the vision of turkeys and are more effectively hunted by being stationary, so these skills are tried and best learned exclusively from hunting the wild turkey. 🦃





PREDATOR REMOVAL TACTICS FOR INCREASING TURKEY POPULATIONS

*By Adam Pritchett, Wildlife Biologist
Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries*

Predator removal is a hot topic among today's hunters and land managers. For some, predator hunting is the only type of hunting they do. For most hunters, however, it is simply something to help pass the time until fall hunting season arrives. It can be a great way for hunters to hone their shooting skills to stay sharp for the upcoming hunting seasons. It can also serve as an excuse for a fun filled gathering by family, friends or hunting club members during the off season. In this article, I will address how predator removal can be a valuable wildlife management tool for turkeys and other ground nesting birds, especially when done at the right time.

Turkeys are preyed upon at every stage of their existence and have a vast array of predators to worry about. Many animals, such as raccoons, opossums, skunks, snakes, crows and feral hogs are nest predators and either seek out turkey nests during the spring, or opportunistically take advantage of nests they happen upon. The nesting period, however, increases predation risks of adult hens as they are incubating eggs and spending much of their time on or near the nest. Other than hunters, bobcats, hawks, eagles, owls and coyotes are also considered predators of adult turkeys while on the nest. Poults are also highly susceptible to predation until they can fly and roost off the ground. Most predators in the previous two

categories are also significant predators of poults, but foxes, feral cats, and dogs may be added to the list. In areas with high densities of coyotes or feral hogs, their mere presence and frequent disturbances may be enough to disrupt breeding and nesting efforts of turkeys. Not only do feral hogs disturb nesting efforts and consume eggs and possibly poults, but they also compete with turkeys for food resources.

Some predator removal can be accomplished through hunting. Raccoons, opossums, fox, bobcats, coyotes, feral swine and



» Turkeys are preyed upon at every stage of their existence and have many predators to worry about. Nests are very vulnerable to various predators.

crows can all either be hunted or taken opportunistically during other game species seasons. This opportunistic take will not extirpate predator populations but may keep them from significantly expanding, especially when paired with active trapping. Actively pursuing some of these species can also make for some very interesting and exciting hunts. Most coyote hunters prefer to use decoys and calls to lure in their potential harvest. Successful use of this technique usually requires an open landscape where the hunter can shoot long distances. Because this type of habitat can be hard to find in the Southeast, this method is often ineffective at reducing predator populations in Alabama. Decoys and calls can also be used to effectively reduce crow populations on a local scale. However, timing is the key factor and pursuing predators just prior to and during nesting season for turkeys is most beneficial for mitigating localized losses due to predation.

Trapping, using snares, leg hold traps, or live traps can be a very effective way to reduce predator populations. Trapping is a skill that must be learned through hours of meticulous preparation and practice, preferably with the oversight of an experienced mentor, if it is to be effective and efficient. Once the necessary skills are perfected however, a skilled trapper can greatly reduce predator populations on a local level. In Alabama, some predator species such as bobcat, fox and skunks have seasons when they can legally be taken with trapping equipment. Other species such as coyote, raccoon, opossum and feral hogs can be trapped year-round. Again, the timing is critical if you want to have a direct effect on turkey reproduction.

Predator removal can be an effective tool and may be accomplished in a variety of ways, but properly managing habitat will always lead to a more permanent solution to increase turkey populations. In some instances, predator removal may be beneficial because poor habitat conditions are present that won't allow turkeys to successfully reproduce. Most game species will thrive, even in the presence of high predator populations, if they have access to ideal habitat for refuge and cover. When habitat is lacking necessary resources or existing resources are distributed in the wrong spatial arrangement, the effect of predation significantly increases. Managing habitat so that predator – prey contact is reduced should always be the goal.

For example, many properties have, as their primary cover type, short rotation pine plantations from which prescribed fire has been excluded. These forest stands characteristically have closed canopies resulting in the presence of very little vegetation at ground level to provide wildlife food and/or cover. The



» Trapping, using snares, leg hold traps, or live traps can be a very effective way to reduce predator populations

fact that food supplies are not well distributed across a given property means that game animals must travel farther to get food. While doing so, they are more likely to encounter and fall prey to predators. Moreover, food resources which are restricted to small or localized feeding areas allow predators to pattern game movements just as food plots allow hunters to do so. Lack of cover leaves game animals exposed and vulnerable to predation as they move from bedding or nesting areas to get food or water.

When used together, timber stand thinning and the application of prescribed fire greatly enhance the habitat structure present on many properties. Prescribed fire stimulates the growth of native grasses, forbs, and legumes. The enhanced understory vegetation produced goes a long way towards providing the well distributed, high quality food in conjunction with adequate cover that are beneficial to game species. Timing your use of prescribed fire so that you don't destroy turkey nests or the habitat structure they need during the nesting period is an important factor to consider.

Predators will never be eradicated from southeastern habitats. They are far too adaptable. In areas containing suitable habitat for their survival, some predators may even increase their reproductive output in response to decreases in their population. Predator removal can be locally effective, however, if turkey populations are below carrying capacity; if predator populations are determined to be high; and if predator removal is accomplished immediately prior to the nesting period. ✎

Contact your local WFF District Office to speak with the WFF Technical Assistance Biologist in your area if you need additional guidance on predator removal.



NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION



CRAIG HARRIS, ALABAMA STATE NWTF CHAPTER PRESIDENT

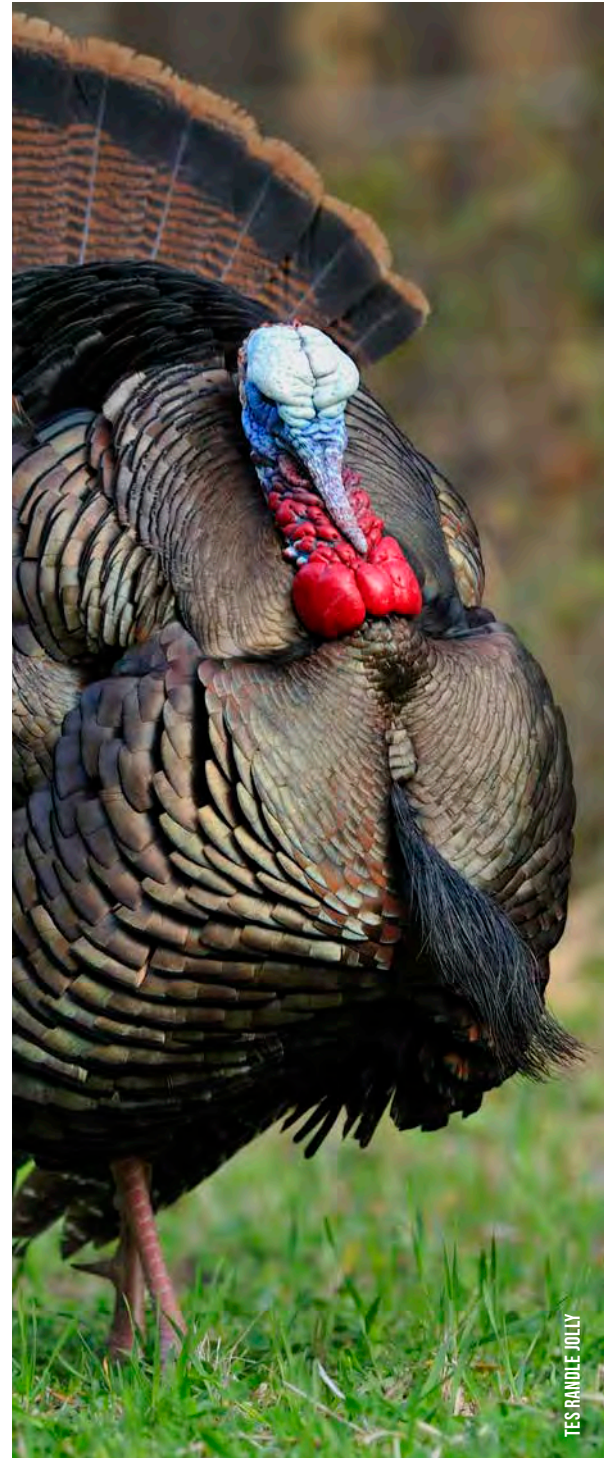


As I write this, it was just announced that the our NWTF National Convention will be held virtually in 2021 rather than in Nashville at the Opryland Hotel. This is indicative of the changes we have seen since COVID-19 began impacting our lives in March. This pandemic has caused unbelievable financial hardships on some businesses and individuals and the conservation organizations have not been spared. Most of the conservation organizations, including the NWTF, depend on fundraising events that had to be canceled or postponed. I want to thank you for continuing to support our mission

as we hopefully will have a more normal banquet season in 2021. Even though national funding for many projects has been temporarily curtailed, you can still support our work in Alabama by purchasing an NWTF license plate for your vehicle or an NWTF sticker for your boat.

I have been a NWTF volunteer since 1989 and served on the State Board of Directors since 2000. During that time, I have served as Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President and now, since August of 2019, President. During that time, I have seen the NWTF grow into the premier conservation organization in the country. We have 'turkey' in our name and in our blood but, we continue to work for the conservation of all species of game animals and the preservation of our hunting heritage. Here in Alabama we host JAKES events for our youth, provide funding for scholarships at the local and state levels, and support the Archery in the Schools program that continues to grow each year.

The Alabama State Chapter is proud to help fund this publication and we appreciate the partnership we share with the ADCNR. I hope you enjoy this edition of *Full Fans & Sharp Spurs* and appreciate the hard work by the ADCNR staff, NWTF staff, and volunteers like yourself who participate in research and support our fundraising events. For a list of upcoming events in your area, please visit nwtf.org.



TES RANDLE JOLLY



NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION



DEREK ALKIRE, NWTF DISTRICT BIOLOGIST



My name is Derek Alkire and I am the new District Biologist for the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) in Alabama. I want to provide you a little bit of background on myself before I update you on a few of the great things happening across the state. I am originally from West Virginia and have a background working with state and federal agencies. I have a bachelor's degree in wildlife management and a master's degree in forestry. I have

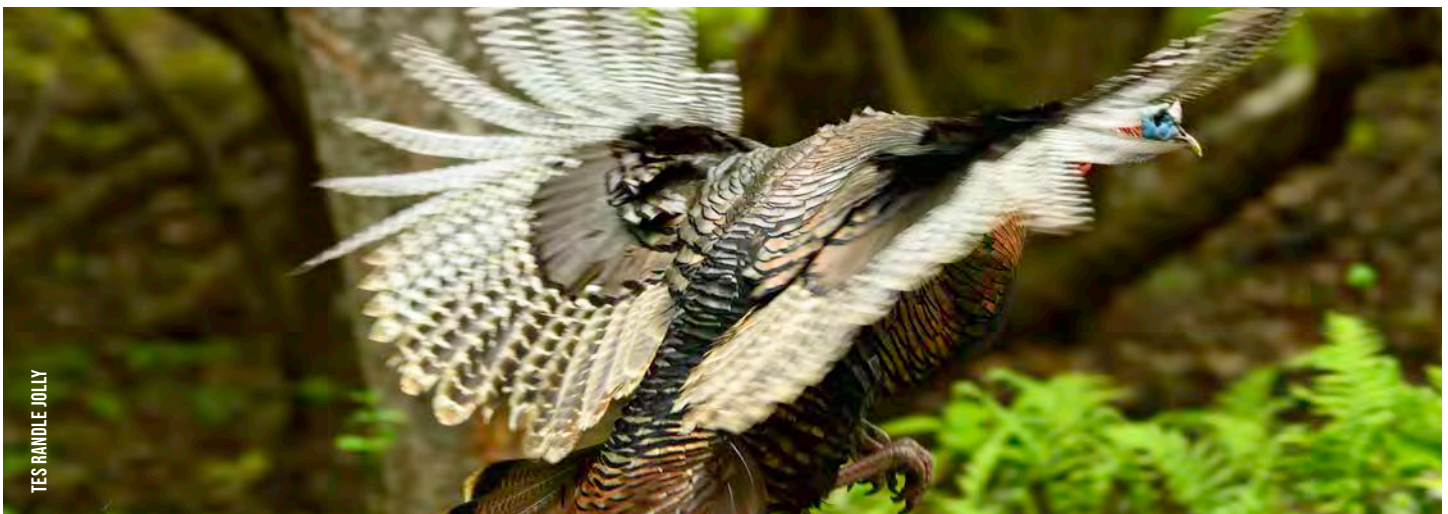
worked for the NWTF for 9 years in many different capacities. I look forward to working with everyone across the state to conserve the wild turkey and preserve our hunting heritage.

As you may already be aware, the NWTF is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation of the wild turkey and the preservation of our hunting heritage. The NWTF is a membership organization and the volunteers are the lifeblood that makes the mission possible. As the Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative starts to wind down for the organization; the excitement is gearing up for the 50-year anniversary coming up in 2023. As we take the time to reflect back on the history

of the organization, you can't help but smile to think about the growth of the wild turkey population and the popularity of turkey hunting.

That popularity continues to increase, and the 2020 turkey season was one of those seasons that saw an increase in hunters across many areas of the country. Due to COVID-19 many individuals had more free time and as such took to the field. When we think about the year 2020 many negative things may come to our mind, but from a hunter Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) standpoint the year provided a good opportunity to reconnect with nature. The NWTF employs several R3 coordinators across the country, and in Alabama we partner with the ADCNR to provide funding for a joint position. Positions like these are important to ensure that the many individuals who took to the woods in the spring 2020 season have the resources and confidence to continue the pursuit of the wild turkey into the future.

It has been a challenging year for many across the state and the NWTF is no different. However, we continue to work with our dedicated volunteers and partners to implement habitat projects, hunting heritage events, and other educational activities. Thank you all for the support of the NWTF in Alabama and please don't hesitate to reach out to me with any questions or comments at dalkire@nwtf.net



TES RANDLE JOLLY



ALABAMA'S NWTF OFFICER OF THE YEAR

The 2020 NWTF Officer of the Year for Alabama is Senior Conservation Enforcement Officer Chad Howell who has been employed with ADCNR since 2008. He is currently assigned to Colbert County in the northwest portion of the state. During his tenure, he has proven his deep commitment to protecting our great state's natural resources. He is a tremendous asset to WFF, the State of Alabama, and the people of Alabama.

Officer Howell's positive attitude, integrity, morals, character, and work ethic make him a role model for all law enforcement officers. He treats the public, his coworkers, and violators with the respect deserved and with an unmatched level of professionalism. Officer Howell is always punctual and takes great pride in his personal appearance, especially in the uniform he wears. He continuously strives to apprehend violators of all types of wildlife crimes by going above and beyond his normal duties. Officer Howell's superb investigative skills help him to better recognize illegal activity. He is very detailed in documenting and preparing evidence so that prosecutors and judges can more readily review it when making court decisions. This careful preparation has resulted in a high conviction rate of wildlife violators.

Officer Howell works diligently to patrol his assigned area and enforce the Alabama's laws and regulations pertaining to illegal turkey hunting. With spring turkey season in the northwest portion of the state opening about two weeks later than the remainder of the state, he has a limited time to devote to compliance checks in Colbert County. However, during the 2020 spring turkey season Officer Howell made and assisted with a total of 55 turkey hunting related arrests and warnings that resulted in substantial fines and court costs.

On May 1, 2020, Officer Howell was checking a property in Colbert County where he had received a complaint of hunting without landowner permission. Upon entering the property, he witnessed three subjects fleeing in the opposite direction.



**Senior Conservation
Enforcement Officer
Chad Howell**

Officer Howell was able to apprehend one suspect while the other two escaped into a wooded area. After calling for assistance, additional Conservation Enforcement Officers as well as a Division K-9 unit arrived on scene and assisted in the capture of the other two suspects. All three, two adults and one juvenile, were arrested for hunting without landowner permission, attempting to elude a police officer, and failure to possess a turkey harvest record. The two adults were also charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

Later, Officer Howell obtained search warrants for all three subjects' cell phones. He located the individuals again and seized each phone. Upon completion of the forensic searches, numerous incidents with multiple violations were discovered to have occurred throughout

Colbert, Lauderdale, and Lawrence counties during the 2020 spring turkey season.

During one incident in Lawrence County, a suspect killed two gobblers on the same day prior to the start of the season and did so without landowner permission. That person was arrested and charged with two counts each of hunting during closed season, failure to report harvested gobblers, exceeding the daily limit and hunting without landowner permission. Through text messages and photos related to that incident, it was revealed that a fourth subject in Lawrence County killed a gobbler prior to the start of the season. Warrants were signed for this suspect. He was located and arrested for hunting during closed season and failure to report a harvested gobbler. In total, Officer Howell obtained a total of 20 arrest warrants from the information obtained through the forensic cell phone searches for violations occurring in several different jurisdictions.

During the 2020 spring season, Officer Howell also assisted with the apprehension of an individual in Lauderdale County who shot and killed a gobbler out of his truck window on

private property while driving down a public road. After interviewing the suspect and a witness, three arrest warrants were obtained. The suspect was arrested for hunting without landowner permission, hunting from a public road, and hunting by aid of a motorized vehicle. Additionally, Officer Howell worked many turkey bait sites this past season. He arrested one individual in Colbert County and one in Franklin County for hunting turkey by the aid of bait.

Senior Officer Howell is always eager to participate in public outreach programs. He has participated with the National Archery in Schools Program, local youth dove hunts, Ducks Unlimited Green Wing events, local job fairs, sponsored youth

dog deer hunts in Colbert County, and wild game cooking events at area churches. He is a certified Hunter Education instructor and has assisted with numerous Hunter Education classes throughout his career.

Officer Howell is not only an outstanding Conservation Enforcement Officer but an educator, a mentor, and an advocate of the hunting and fishing heritage. He is defined by his dedication to the natural resources, particularly the wild turkey. He goes above and beyond to protect the wild turkey for future generations and is highly deserving of this prestigious award. 🦃

SHOTGUN WINNER

NWTF
Conserve. Hunt. Share.

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Wayne Boyett receives a Weatherby 20-gauge semiautomatic shotgun with pistol grip from Alabama National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) State Chapter. Pictured with the happy winner is NWTF Regional Director Matt Wilkins and Mr Boyett's grandson Pierce. Boyett, an avid turkey hunter from Bay Minette in Baldwin County, was randomly chosen from all 2020 Avid Turkey Hunter Survey participants. The ADCNR Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries (WFF) Division Avid Turkey Hunter Survey provides WFF biologists

with valuable information on statewide and regional trends in gobbling activity, hunter effort, harvest rates, age structure and sex ratios. This knowledge ultimately helps the WFF make management decisions that link the interests of sportsmen with the wise use of the state's turkey resource. Thank you to all the hunters who participated in the survey and thanks to the Alabama Chapter of the NWTF for their strong support and for supplying the shotgun for the drawing.

When **Tagging Out** means
so much more

Help promote
our hunting
heritage
and drive
conservation
by getting
your tag or
boat registration today.



2020 Alabama NWTF Programs

- *Youth Hunts*
- *Hunting Seminars and Trapping Events*
- *Land Owner Field Days*
- *Avid Turkey Hunter Survey*
- *NWTF State Biologist*
- *ALDCNR R3 Coordinator*
- *Scholarships*
- *Habitat Enhancements*
- *Hunter Development Programs.*





PARTNER IN CONSERVATION THE NWTF

By Steven W. Barnett, Wildlife Biologist
Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries

» Mulching conducted at
Portland Landing SOA

Conservation organizations provide valuable partnerships to state wildlife agencies and other entities across our nation. Many worthy projects would remain on a wish list without these collaborations, project initiatives, financial contributions, and volunteer assistance. In Alabama, we have many valuable partners whose efforts truly enhance our mission of wildlife conservation and management. When you dig a little deeper into the history of significant projects on public lands, none have been more impactful than those with the Alabama NWTF State Chapter. Since the inception of the NWTF Super Fund in 1985, the Alabama Chapter has spent close to \$3.2 million on projects across the state. In addition to Super Fund grants, the Alabama Chapter initiated a vehicle specialty tag that became available to the public in 2005, and those dollars have generated revenue to fund many projects as well. The Tag Fund has often enabled grants to be awarded when the number of worthy projects exceeded available Super Fund dollars. This level of financial commitment to conservation is a powerful force. Let's take a closer look at these projects and how they have been generated.

The NWTF Super Fund was initiated to provide a portion of dollars, generated from statewide Hunting Heritage Banquets, back to the State Chapter to fund wild turkey projects. In Alabama, project proposals are submitted to WFF staff who serve on the NWTF Technical Committee as well as to the state assigned NWTF District Biologist. Those proposals are subsequently reviewed by the Super Fund Committee. Project proposals recommended for funding are presented to the Board of Directors for approval. Although a substantial number of projects are funded for other entities outside the state wildlife agency, this article focuses primarily on project

grants provided to WFF. Every year since 1985, the Alabama NWTF State Chapter has provided grants in support of habitat enhancement, habitat equipment, trapping equipment, wild turkey research, land acquisition, wild turkey publications such as *The Wild Turkey in Alabama* and *Full Fans & Sharp Spurs*, National Archery in the Schools Programs, other educational programs, and many other projects. Last year close to \$77,000 in grants were awarded to fund 20 WFF Super Fund projects statewide, many of which were matched 3:1 with federal aid dollars. Close to \$168,000 were donated statewide in 2019.

A snapshot of WFF projects approved in 2019 and completed in 2020 reveals habitat related projects such as a Firminator used to plant chufa and other wildlife food and cover crops at Autauga WMA; drip torches and radios for staff communication to conduct prescribed fire activities at Coosa, Hollins, and Choccolocco WMAs in a safe and effective manner; a mulcher rented at the Coon Gulf Tract located in the Jackson County Waterfowl WMAs to open old fields inundated with invasive trees and shrubs to provide brood habitat for wild turkeys; a mulcher rented at Portland Landing SOA to open up roadside woodlands to provide sunlight for brood rearing forbs and grasses; flame torches for prescribed fire conducted at Cedar Creek SOA to promote brood rearing habitat in a longleaf pine stand; and a food plot spreader designed to spread lime in wildlife openings to correct soil pH at Uchee Creek SOA and Yates Lake WMA. Keep in mind this is just a small sample of the thousands of highly diverse projects funded by the State Chapter over the years.

Land acquisition for public use including hunting has been and continues to be a high priority with ADCNR. The Forever

Wild Land Trust is a testament to these efforts. In 2000, following brainstorming sessions between WFF staff and the Alabama NWTF State Chapter, the Board of Directors approved 20% of annual Super Fund deposits to be earmarked for public land purchases at the Board's discretion. This unique and collaborative initiative has led the State Chapter to assist ADCNR with 39 land purchases totaling close to 40,000 acres added to the WMA and SOA systems. The NWTF provided over \$392,000 for those land purchases. Although the annual contribution has not commanded huge sums of money, those dollars have facilitated land appraisals allowing ADCNR to make purchases in a timely manner. Some smaller tracts to provide hunting access have also been purchased outright using NWTF Super Fund dollars and Turkey Transfer dollars. The Turkey Transfer funds are replacement costs provided to donor states such as Alabama and other states who have assisted with wild turkey restoration efforts. These Super Fund dollars are generated from states receiving wild turkeys and allocated to donor states. The program is administered by the NWTF. The ADCNR has received over \$39,000 in Turkey Transfer dollars.

Other noteworthy contributions by the Alabama NWTF State Chapter include providing a Super Fund grant of \$10,000 to help WFF launch a five-year wild turkey research study in cooperation with Auburn University concluding in 2020 to investigate survival, reproduction, and harvest rates. The study enabled us to update Structured Decision Making models to develop a Decision Support Tool to guide season and bag limit recommendations; using a \$5,000 grant to help fund the cost of printing *The Wild Turkey in Alabama* book pertaining to historical and contemporary accounts of wild turkey conservation and management; providing over \$7,000 in Super Fund dollars each year to pay the printing cost of *Full Fans & Sharp Spurs* annual wild turkey report that provides results of the Avid Turkey Hunter Survey and Wild Turkey Brood Survey; and providing annual funding of \$5,000 each for the National Archery in the Schools Alabama State Tournament and Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) events.

The Alabama NWTF State Chapter continues to be a valuable partner in the wildlife arena statewide. We are proud of the long-standing, collaborative relationship that has built a high level of trust between WFF and NWTF. Partnerships with a common goal are important to us and we appreciate and value all our NGO partners. Thank you to all who have stepped up to the plate to support Alabama wildlife programs and help leverage costs. We should strive to work together to meet future challenges. It is up to all of us to do no less. 🍃



» Firminator equipment used to plant chufa and wildlife food at Autauga WMA



» NWTF Super Fund money was used to purchase the proper equipment to conduct prescribed burns at several WMAs across the state



» Drip Torchers provide the ability to conduct prescribed burns at Coosa, Hollins, and Choccolocco WMAs



NWTF HUNTING HERITAGE SUPER FUND AND TAG FUND 2020




As a bit of background regarding the Hunting Heritage Super Fund, these funds are generated through our fundraising events such as banquets, major donor events, gun blasts, etc. This is why it is imperative that our volunteers continue to remain the driving force behind our organization, and it becomes increasingly important to become an active NWTF member in your local chapter if you are not already.

Of the Super Fund dollars raised every year, the State Chapter earmarks 20% of the total funds towards a land acquisition account. This account is maintained for the specific purpose of handling upfront expenses of newly obtainable lands for due diligence and appraisals. Without the NWTF, ADCNR would likely not be able to make the necessary initiation of the acquisition process, which is a real life example of how encouraging the partnership between NWTF and ADCNR has become for sportsmen and women in Alabama. We are currently in the process of obtaining some additional WMA inholdings, and we're also excited about opportunities for the acquisition of additional Special Opportunity Areas (SOA) in the state. For more information on these new and innovative SOAs, please visit outdooralabama.com.

The Alabama State Chapter of NWTF also has a separate fund dedicated to the accommodation of requests and supplementation of sound habitat enhancement projects on the ground in Alabama, as well as the ability to meet the fiduciary needs of outreach events and educational programs such as Archery in the Schools Programs, mentored hunts, Jake's Days, Women in the Outdoors Events, disabled hunter events among many others. These funds are generated through the sales of NWTF

license plates in the state of Alabama, so keep in mind when buying your tag that almost \$50 of the purchase of that custom NWTF tag goes directly towards this account, and thusly, our Initiative to Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt.

In combination of the Super Fund, Land Acquisition Account and License Plate Fund, the Alabama Chapter of NWTF were able to devote an amount of \$406,805.12 towards conservation projects, outreach and education, as well as public land acquisition among various other areas of esteemed funding support.

NWTF utilized its abundance of partners nationally and within state boundaries to leverage dollars for the furtherance of our mission of wild turkey conservation and hunting heritage preservation. This past fiscal year of 2019 NWTF in Alabama was able to provide the initial dollars towards projects that total in excess \$1.4 million dollars. This means that for every \$1 raised and spent from NWTF through Super Fund dollars, almost \$6 were leveraged to be utilized for all the aforementioned uses. Another way we leverage these dollars is through the Wildlife Restoration Act, more commonly referred to as Pittman-Robertson dollars awarded to WFF, which allow the obtainment of a 3:1 match generated from licenses, ammunition and firearms sales in the state. NWTF uses these funds to leverage our funds in one regard, while we also utilize other partners such as the U.S. Forest Service on Stewardship Contracts to generate a 4:1 match allowing us to maximize conservation work on National Forests. Other agencies and non-government organizations supply a plethora of matching funds as well. 

For those of you interested in becoming an NWTF member please contact:

- Alabama Chapter Banquet Coordinator Howard Dahlem at howard.dahlem@gmail.com (North)
- NWTF Regional Director Tyler Briggs at tbriggs@nwtf.net (Central)
- NWTF Regional Director Matt Wilkins mwilkins@nwtf.net (South)



2020 ALABAMA STATE SUPER FUND EXPENDITURES

SCHOLARSHIPS	28 Local Chapter Scholarships	\$7,000.00
	1 State Scholarship	\$1,000.00
EDUCATION	Alabama's Archery in the Schools Program	\$1,612.00
	National Archery in the Schools Program Alabama state tournament	\$5,000.00
	Educational materials	\$3,422.00
	Full Fans and Sharp Spurs printing	\$7,376.00
	Conference and Educational Events	\$2,827.10
HUNTING HERITAGE & OUTREACH EVENTS	8 JAKES Days	\$2,000.00
	Becoming an Outdoors Woman Event	\$5,000.00
	Mentored Hunts and Shooting Ranges	\$10,950.00
CONSERVATION PROJECTS	Habitat Projects	\$105,877.45
	Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership Burn Crew support	\$10,000.00
	Talladega Mountain Longleaf Conservation Partnership Burn Crew support	\$20,000.00
	Seed Subsidy and Conservation Seed Program	\$27,474.07
	Auburn University Predator Research	\$9,266.00
TAG FUND PROJECTS	Additional Expenditures	\$188,000.00
	- JAKES Memberships	
	- Outreach Events	
	- Hunter Education Specialist Position Support	
	- Mentored Hunt Supplies	
	- Administrative (operational expenses)	
	- Local chapter committee meetings and incentives	
	- District NWTF Biologist Support	
	- Mail-out notifications, publications, and printing	
TOTAL		\$406,805.12



NWTF EXPENDITURES





» Buckhorn High School Archery Team

NATIONAL ARCHERY IN THE SCHOOLS PROGRAM (NASP)

COVID-19 has affected just about every individual and organization in the world in one way or another. Some of the difficulties are shared experiences and some are unique. Anyone who has children or works with kids can probably relate stories of disappointments about canceled parties, graduations, vacations or events. Students participating in the Alabama Archery in the Schools Program were not immune to these disappointments as the realities of lockdown became apparent. Just two weeks before the State Championship was supposed to be held in April, the lockdowns began.

The State Championship is held each year during the first week of April in Montgomery. 1,800 students from around 75 schools are invited to compete in the two-day event. Many of these students have been competing for years. Individuals and teams who do well at the State level often go on to compete at nationals held in Louisville, Kentucky, each year. Top finishers

can win scholarship money at both state and nationals. Every year there are also those students and teams who finally made it to state for the first time. It is often hard to tell who is more excited, the child who has been there before and shooting for a couple of thousand dollars in scholarship money, or the child who has never been and seeing a huge multiplex filled with targets, competitors and spectators. To qualify for the State Championship, WFF sponsors eight Regional Tournaments held around the State. Over 4,000 students competed in one of these tournaments in February and March 2020. Individuals and teams are ranked statewide based on those scores and invitations to the State Championship are extended.

The trophies and t-shirts were already ordered for the 2020 event. In fact, everything was in place for another successful tournament when the lockdown order was issued. The t-shirts and trophies could not be canceled and paying for them

wrecked our tournament budget. Federal funds cannot be used to directly pay for competitions, so the Division relies on registration fees, vendor fees and sponsorship money to pay for the trophies, catering, t-shirts, facility charges and the rest. Gratefully, the NWTF allowed the program to keep the \$5,000 Superfund money to cover these costs. We were also able to sell a fair number of t-shirts to schools and we were able to break even on the year.

Finally, we decided to award the State Championship trophies through a virtual tournament based on scores from the regional qualifying tournaments. The winners were identified, and awards based on these scores. A live tournament would have been ideal and the pressure of competing with spectators and competitors around cannot be matched. However, the virtual tournament at least allowed us to reward these students who had been working all season to improve their skills not only on the archery range, but in the classroom too.

After the scores were all ranked, we ended up with several ties, including for top overall boy. Normally the top overall boy and girl receive a \$1,500 scholarship, a special edition State Championship bow and a trophy. During a live tournament we would have a shoot off to decide any ties. Obviously, a shoot off could not be held during these times, so we purchased and awarded trophies to the tied students for the top shooters and through third place in the elementary, middle and high school divisions for boy and girl. We also purchased two additional bows so that all three top boys could receive their bow. The top female archer was Mia Cornelson from Alba Middle School in Mobile County. Mia shot a 293 out of 300 possible. We had a three-way tie for the top male archer. Justin Liveoak from Chilton County High School, Alex Coons from Buckhorn High School in Madison County and Tommy Boulter from Alma Bryant High School in Mobile County all scored a 295 out of 300. The top shooters were awarded special edition bows and First Place trophies. East Elementary, Vinemont Middle and Alma Bryant High were the state champion teams in their respective divisions. To see photos from past events and the full rankings for 2020, visit <https://www.outdooralabama.com/archery-schools/nasp-alabama-state-championship>

2021 will be the 18th year for the Alabama Archery in the Schools Program. We consistently rank in the top 5 nationally for participation and academic archer participation. Alabama has grown from 11 schools and 211 students to over 70 schools and 1,800 students in 2019 at the State Championships. We have programs in approximately 400 schools statewide. Some schools do not compete and only provide in-school lessons. Any school that does compete must

provide at least 10 hours of in-school instruction. The rule is designed to expose as many children as possible to the life sport of archery. Surveys have shown a large percentage of NASP students either end up going hunting or are interested in hunting because of their experience in NASP. Many students and their family members also go on to purchase bows and arrows contributing to our funding through the Pittman-Robertson Act.

NASP has developed pandemic guidelines and participation is increasing as schools get back in session. Thankfully, NWTF has again awarded us \$5,000 to help fund the 2021 State Championship. We are thinking positive and planning for normal competitions, but if we must, we will implement social distancing and stringent sanitation to ensure some type of live tournaments will take place. 🌱



» Boys State Champion Alex Coons from Buckhorn High School in Madison County



» Girls State Champion Mia Cornelson from Alba Middle School in Mobile County

SAVE THE HABITAT. SAVE THE HUNT.



It gives us at the NWTF great pride to know that we have exceeded the goals of our 10 year Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative. Thus far we've accomplished 4,007,920 acres of conserved or enhanced habitat, with Alabama contributing 387,840 acres contributed! We've also helped open 667,772 acres of public access to hunting, with Alabama accounting for over 8,065 of those acres. Finally, we've been able to recruit 1,530,162 million hunters across the country. The following is a list of the three main objectives for the initiative:

- Conserve or enhance at least 4 million acres of upland habitat.

- Create hunting access on at least 500,000 acres of new available lands.
- Create 1.5 million new hunters through outreach and legislation.

The following list of accomplishments should motivate any avid turkey hunter, volunteer, or just outdoor enthusiast to get involved and on-board with NWTF in its initiative to Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. With help from volunteers as well agency and organization partnerships, we have been able to boast an overabundance of accomplishments towards the Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative in 2020 as follows:

Alabama Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. 2020 Accomplishments

PROJECT NAME	CONSERVED ACRES	AL CHAPTER NWTF DOLLARS \$	PROJECT MATCH DOLLARS \$
Public Land Projects			
Pelham Range Wildlife Openings	36	5,100.00	11,505.00
Talladega RD Wildlife Openings	22	2,000.00	7,000.00
TMLCP Burn Crew	40,000	20,000.00	250,000.00
AL Forestry Commission Equipment	975	15,270.00	15,270.00
GCPEP Burn Crew	15,839.50	10,000.00	391,000.00
Autauga WMA Firminator	100	5,576.50	16,729.50
Coosa WMA Prescribed Burning	1,883	468.20	1,404.60
Prescribed Burning on Various WMAs	1,877	3,095.70	9,287.10
Geneva WMA Sprayer	480	5,000.00	15,000.00
Portland Landing SOA Mulching and Burning	620	11,658.00	34,974.00
Barbour WMA Mulching	40	9,194.64	27,583.92
Choccolocco WMA Fire Breaks/ Burning	423	3,408.90	10,226.70
Jackson County Coon Gulf Tract	61.38	8,820.08	26,460.24
Cedar Creek Flame Torches	600	1,058.00	3,174.00
CSP and Seed Subsidy			
Seed Program Total	11,051	27,474.07	27,474.07
TOTALS:	\$74,007.88	\$128,124.09	\$847,089.13

WILD TURKEY DISEASE MORTALITY FORM

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) is interested in documenting Wild Turkey Mortality caused by disease. Monitoring this mortality will provide information to assess the impacts of disease and help better manage the wild turkey resource. Sportsmen can play an important role by reporting sick or dead turkeys and assisting the ADCNR with obtaining birds for examination.

If you find any sick or dead wild turkey, please follow the procedures listed below. If you are unable to collect the carcass, reporting details and pictures of dead birds will provide valuable information. Also, please contact the ADCNR if you observe or have previously observed a sharp decline in a local turkey population.

HANDLING TURKEYS:

Sick turkeys should be reported to ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater staff. Fresh carcasses of dead wild turkeys should be cooled as soon as possible by refrigeration or by putting the bird on ice in a cooler (it is best not to freeze the turkey). Submit the bird as soon as possible. However, if the turkey cannot be turned in to the ADCNR within 48 hours, it can be frozen as long as necessary.

CONTACTING ADCNR:

Contact ADCNR Upland Game Bird Coordinator, Steven Mitchell at steven.mitchell@dcnr.alabama.gov or your local ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries District Office. Numbers are available on page 5.

RECORDING INFORMATION:

Please record the following information and submit this form with the turkey.

Name: _____

Address: _____

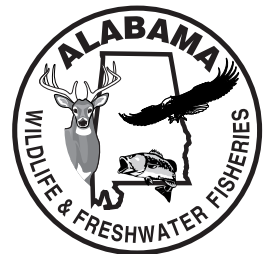
Phone: _____ Email: _____

Date turkey was found: _____ / _____ / _____

Location: (property, road, county, town) or GPS coordinates: _____

Description of turkey when found: _____

Additional Comments: _____



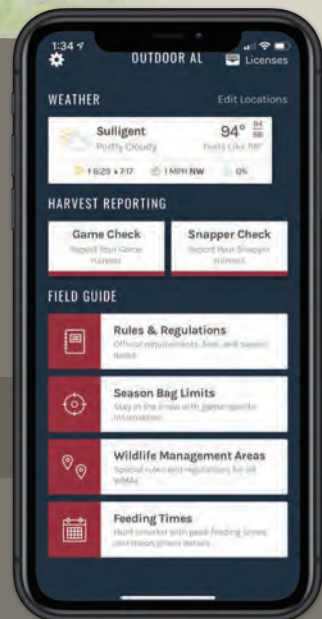
ALL ALABAMA TURKEY HUNTERS



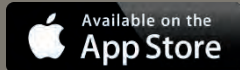
GAME CHECK IS MANDATORY

All hunters are required to report their turkey harvest using **Game Check**, which will help the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources effectively manage wildlife for generations.

Check your harvest at OutdoorAlabama.com/GameCheck or by using the official ADCNR mobile app **Outdoor AL**



Search **OUTDOOR AL** on your app store!





Full Fans & Sharp Spurs

WILD TURKEY REPORT

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources



The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age, gender, national origin or disability in its hiring or employment practices nor in admission to, or operation of its programs, services or activities.

www.outdooralabama.com