



A L A B A M A

Full Fans & Sharp Spurs



WILD TURKEY REPORT 2016



Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources



2016 ALABAMA WILD TURKEY REPORT

Welcome to *Full Fans & Sharp Spurs*, the third edition of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, 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.

This year we saw an increase in participation in the avid turkey hunter survey, and 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 Steve Barnett, Alabama Turkey Project Leader at steve.barnett@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 expenditures and 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 sponsors a reward program for people who provide significant information that leads to 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



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division (WFF) is pleased to share the third 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 over time will reveal trends in our wild turkey population. We hope you enjoy this data 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 I&E 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 Division 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.

Steve Barnett & Joel D. Glover

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Robert Bentley – *Governor*

The restoration of the wild turkey in Alabama and across the nation is considered one of America's greatest conservation success stories. Until conservationists intervened, poaching and habitat destruction had drastically reduced the population of the Eastern wild turkey in the United States.

The Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries wants to make sure this conservation success story continues. In this publication, the division is documenting the turkey's status through research and reporting data from hunters. This information will be key to making sure the Eastern wild turkey is here for generations to come.



N. Gunter Guy, Jr. – *Commissioner, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources*

The remarkable comeback of the wild turkey in the United States is an amazing accomplishment. Through the hard work of landowners, hunters and wildlife managers, the turkey population expanded at an amazing rate and is now found in 49 states.

As with most wildlife species, populations tend to rise and decline in cycles. It appears the turkey population may be in a decline cycle, which makes devoted turkey hunters like me take notice.

Because defining turkey populations is a difficult proposition, the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division started the Full Fans and Sharp Spurs publication to focus on the Eastern wild turkey that makes Alabama home.

With the recruitment of a group of diehard turkey hunters, WFF has been able to expand its knowledge of turkeys in our great state.

With the advent of the mandatory Game Check system, which will require hunters to report turkey harvests this 2017 season, wildlife managers will have another valuable tool to keep track of one of our most valued wildlife resources. Game Check applies to all hunters who harvest turkeys, whether you're a newcomer or an old pro.

For those who spend a great deal of time in the turkey woods each spring, sign up today to join our Avid Turkey Hunter Team.



Chuck Sykes – *Director, Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries Division*

With the turkey project in full swing, more and more hunter/landowner participants collecting data in the brood and avid turkey hunter survey, and Game Check, the future is looking bright for turkeys in Alabama. These data will assist WFF staff in making sure our turkey population remains healthy and abundant. As a die-hard turkey hunter and landowner, I'm very pleased to see the direction Alabama is headed and I can't wait to get to the woods and hear that first gobble of spring. Be safe and enjoy the sounds of spring. I hope each of you have a season filled with full fans and sharp spurs.



Steve Gullledge



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WILDLIFE AND FRESHWATER FISHERIES TURKEY COMMITTEE – Formed 2014



Alabamians have enjoyed a healthy wild turkey population for decades. Through trapping and relocation, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFF) replenished and bolstered wild turkey numbers throughout Alabama and in other states as well.

Turkey hunters in Alabama are afforded one of the longest spring seasons and most liberal bag limits in the country.

In the past, Alabama's turkey management team has consisted of primarily a turkey project leader and an assistant. These biologists have monitored the population trends in Alabama and surrounding states. Recently, neighboring states have reported a decline in their turkey populations. Furthermore, our

statewide surveys have indicated a downward trend in our reproductive success. These factors prompted the wildlife section to form a turkey committee with representation from each WFF district.

These wildlife biologists have conducted stakeholder meetings to solicit input from hunters and have met extensively with researchers from Auburn University. These collaborations have resulted in a Wild Turkey Research Project on a scale never attempted in Alabama. We are measuring survival, productivity and movements of turkeys in the three most significant landscapes for turkey populations in the state. This information will provide valuable insights for future wild turkey management. Working together, we hope to ensure 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.
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256-435-5422
dcnr.d2wff@dcnr.alabama.gov

District 3

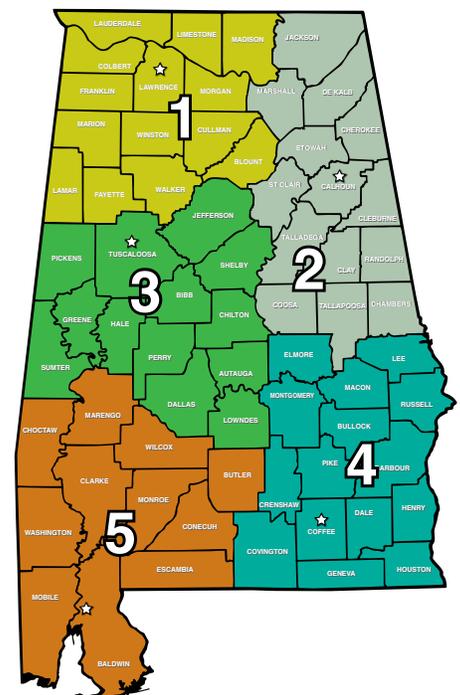
8211 McFarland Blvd., West
Northport, AL 35476
205-339-5716 (Northport)
334-289-8030 (Demopolis)
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District 4

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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



ADCNR COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Matt Brock — *District 1 Wildlife Biologist*

Matt Brock earned his B.S. degree in Wildlife Science from Mississippi State University in 2007. He began his career as a Regional Wildlife Biologist with Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. He assisted with and coordinated habitat management activities on private and public lands. In December of 2011 he joined the ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division where he serves as a wildlife biologist in the Technical Assistance Group, assisting private landowners in north Alabama. Matt is a valuable asset to the turkey committee due to his knowledge of upland habitat management and interests in continuing turkey hunting opportunities for generations to come.



Joel D. Glover — *District 2 Wildlife Biologist*

Joel D. Glover is a Certified Wildlife Biologist® who has recently retired from the ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division after 30 years of service. Joel served as the Area Biologist on Coosa WMA for over 17 years and served as the Regional Private Lands Biologist for central Alabama for 13 years. Joel received a B.S. degree in Environmental Biology from the University of North Alabama and M.S. degree in Wildlife Ecology from Mississippi State University. He served as the assistant turkey project leader, a member for the National Wild Turkey Federation Technical Committee, and on the Southeast Wild Turkey Working Group for the past five years.



Jeff Makemson — *District 3 Wildlife Biologist*

Jeff Makemson is a Certified Wildlife Biologist® and has been employed by the ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division for 24 years. He earned his B.S. degree in Wildlife Science from Auburn University in 1989. Jeff has worked as the wildlife biologist on Oakmulgee WMA his entire career. Through his management efforts, and with the partnership of the U.S. Forest Service, the 45,000-acre Oakmulgee WMA is one of the state's top public turkey hunting areas. He is the newest member of the State Turkey Committee and has assumed the responsibilities of Acting District III Wildlife Supervisor, covering a 14-county region of West Central Alabama.



Adam Pritchett — *District 4 Wildlife Biologist*

Adam Pritchett earned his B.S. degree in Wildlife Sciences from Auburn University in 2002. He began his career as a wildlife biologist with the ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division in 2005 at Barbour WMA, where his continued efforts to enhance habitat for wildlife populations on the 29,000-acre WMA has made it one of the more popular public turkey hunting areas in southeast Alabama. Adam provides technical assistance to landowners for managing the wildlife on their property.



Steve Barnett — *District 5 Wildlife Biologist*

Steve Barnett is a Certified Wildlife Biologist®. He earned a B.S. degree in Wildlife Management from Auburn University in 1984 and has worked for the ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division since 1986. He is the Supervising District Wildlife Biologist for an 11-county region in southwest Alabama and serves as the Wild Turkey Project Leader coordinating programs such as the Avid Turkey Hunter Survey and Brood Survey. Steve leads the ADCNR Wild Turkey Committee, composed of wildlife biologists representing each region, in making statewide turkey management recommendations. He also serves on the Technical Committee of the National Wild Turkey Federation coordinating grant funded projects and has been involved in several cooperative wild turkey research projects in Alabama. Steve and wife Victoria co-authored the book, *The Wild Turkey in Alabama*, in 2008.

NWTF & AWF COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Brandon Bobo — National Wild Turkey Federation Wildlife Biologist

Brandon Bobo received his bachelor's degree from Auburn University in Wildlife Sciences while working for the National Park Service. He has served as the Mississippi Regional Biologist for the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) since February 2013. With NWTF, Brandon is primarily responsible for giving technical assistance and providing guidance on management plans to landowners. He has served on the Mississippi Longleaf Council, Mississippi Prescribed Fire Council, ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Turkey Committee, and Talladega Longleaf Implementation Team.



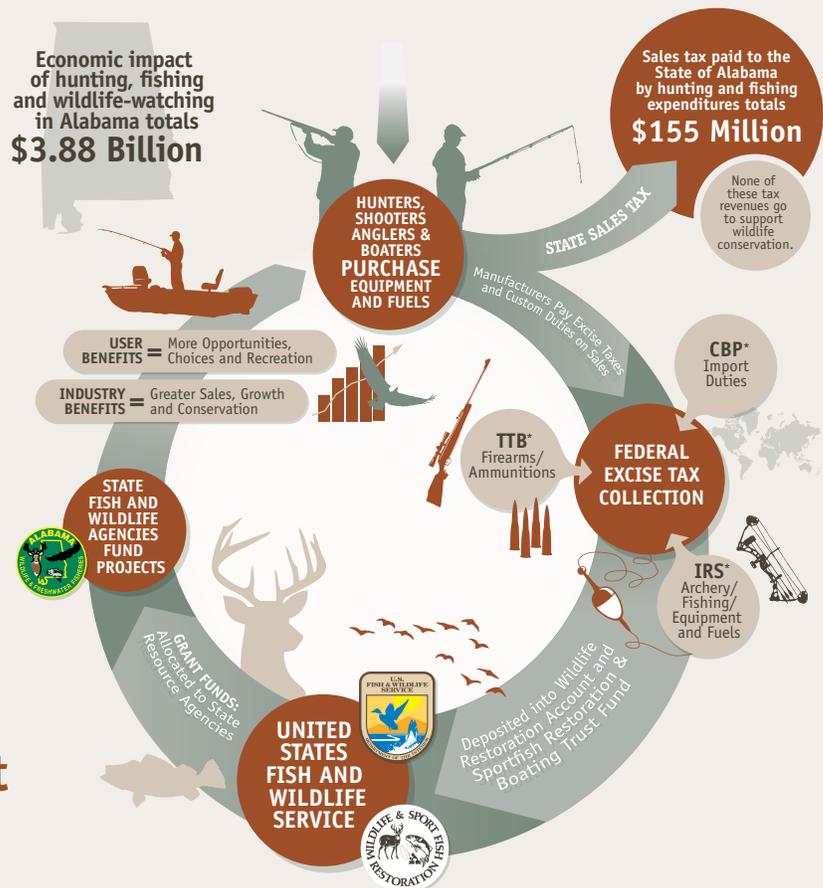
Kyle Marable — Alabama Wildlife Federation Wildlife Biologist

Kyle Marable holds a B.S. in Wildlife Sciences from Auburn University and a M.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Science from Mississippi State University. Between undergraduate and graduate school, Kyle primarily worked to establish upland quail habitat as part of a Habitat Improvement Team in western Kentucky. His passion for ecosystem establishment, restoration and management led him to join the Alabama Wildlife Federation as a Resource Stewardship Biologist. Kyle is excited to represent AWF on the turkey committee and work toward improving the habitat and understanding of wild turkeys in Alabama.

HOW HUNTING AND 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.





ALABAMA TURKEY SURVEYS



ALABAMA AVID TURKEY HUNTER SURVEY (2016 RESULTS)

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 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 2-year-old gobblers often lends itself to a good gobbling year. ♡



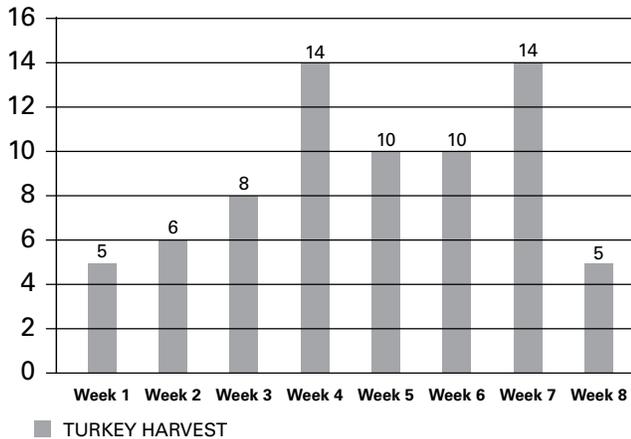
DISTRICT 1

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.

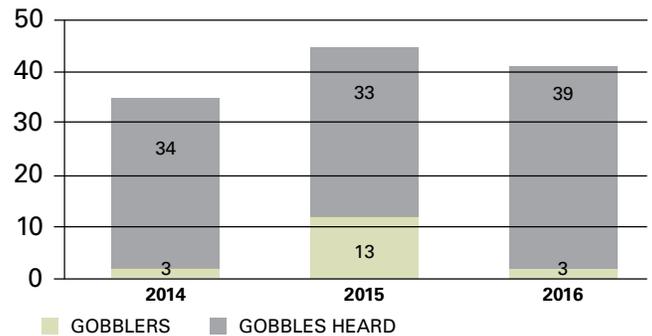
Harvest and Observations

Cooperators in District 1 reported hearing 11,699 gobblers from 921 gobblers and harvesting 72 birds during the 2016 spring turkey season. Within the district, harvest intensity was greatest during mid- and late- season, with peak harvest activity occurring during weeks four and seven.

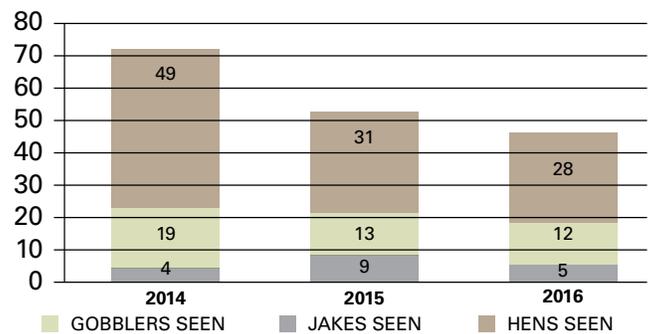
Spring Season Harvest by Week



Gobblers and Gobblers Heard per 10 Hours Hunted



Turkey Observations per 100 Hours Hunted



District 1 - Wildlife Management Areas that Provide Turkey Hunting

LAUDERDALE WMA

By Daniel Toole, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Lauderdale WMA encompasses 20,343 acres in Lauderdale County acquired under the Forever Wild Program and the Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFF). The WMA consists of mature hardwoods, loblolly pine plantations, short-leaf pine reforestation areas, and recently harvested areas. Hardwood drains of various sizes and shapes designated as stream-side 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 compartments

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 on Lauderdale WMA, contact the District 1 Wildlife office at 256-353-2634.

RIVERTON COMMUNITY HUNTING AREA

By Daniel Toole, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Riverton Community Hunting Area (CHA) encompasses approximately 5,500 acres in Colbert County acquired by the Forever Wild Program. 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 on Riverton CHA, contact the District 1 Wildlife office at 256-353-2634.

FREEDOM HILLS WMA

By Daniel Toole, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Freedom Hills WMA occupies approximately 33,000 acres in Colbert County acquired by the Forever Wild Program 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 is being used on a three year interval to improve and maintain habitats beneficial to wild turkeys. In addition to wildlife openings, early successional units are being managed with prescribed fire, bush hogging and disking to provide turkey habitat. For more information on Freedom Hills WMA, contact the District 1 Wildlife 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 within 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 oak/hickory and mixed

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 on the Black Warrior WMA, contact the District 1 Wildlife office at 256-353-2634.

SAM R. MURPHY WMA

By Kevin Pugh, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Sam R. Murphy WMA contains approximately 17,625 acres located near Guin, Ala., 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 on the Sam R. Murphy WMA, contact the District 1 Wildlife office at 256-353-2634. ✎



Tes Randle Jolly



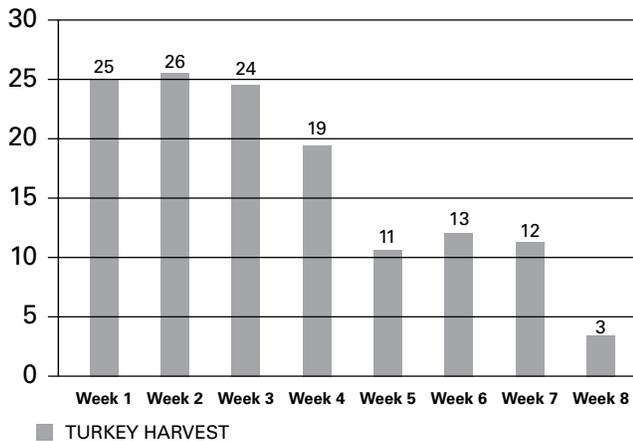
DISTRICT 2

District 2 consists of 14 counties stretching from east central Alabama to the northeast corner of the state. It is a diverse linear area that encompasses the Piedmont, Interior Plateau, Appalachian Plateau, and Ridge and Valley Physiogeographic Regions. The lower portion of the district is mostly rolling hills and becomes more mountainous as you move north. The flora is very diverse. Longleaf pine is found in the lower portion of the area while loblolly and shortleaf pine is more dominant further north. Deciduous forests of primarily oak and hickory are located throughout the region often in drainages and on steep ridges.

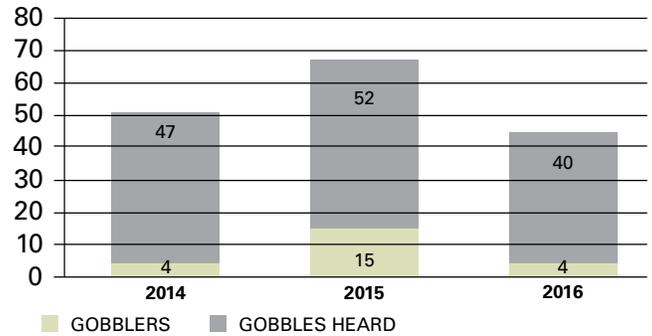
Harvest and Observations

Cooperators in District 2 reported hearing 20,270 gobblers from 2,133 gobblers and harvesting 113 birds during the 2016 spring turkey season. Within the district, harvest intensity was greatest during the first half of the season, with peak harvest activity occurring during weeks one and two.

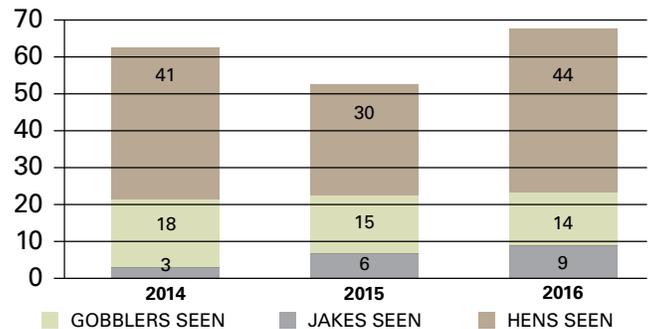
Spring Season Harvest by Week



Gobblers and Gobbles Heard per 10 Hours Hunted



Turkey Observations per 100 Hours Hunted



District 2 - Wildlife Management Areas that Provide Turkey Hunting

JACKSON COUNTY WMAS AND REFUGES

By Seth Maddox, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Jackson County WMAs and Refuges are comprised of three WMAs and two Refuges totaling 26,934 acres, located between the towns of Scottsboro and Stevenson in Jackson County. These WMAs and Refuges are provided through a partnership between WFF and Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). One of the WMAs, Raccoon Creek WMA, contains a tract acquired by the Forever Wild Program named the Coon Gulf Tract. This Tract is comprised of 3,500 acres of mountainous terrain with mixed hardwood timber on the slopes and plantations of planted pines on the plateau. Native warm season grass openings occupy a couple hundred acres among the planted pines where prescribed fire is conducted on a two-year interval to manage and maintain

the plateau in suitable nesting and brood-rearing habitats for wild turkeys. Only the Coon Gulf Tract offers turkey hunting opportunities on the Jackson Co. WMAs and Refuges. For more information about the Coon Gulf Forever Wild Tract, contact the Jackson Co. WMAs and Refuges Office at 256-437-2788.

JAMES D. MARTIN – SKYLINE WMA

By Frank Allen, WMA Wildlife Biologist

James D. Martin–Skyline WMA is located approximately 17 miles North of Scottsboro in Jackson County. The WMA represents a cooperative partnership of the landowners including Alabama Power Company, the Forever Wild Land Trust, The Na-

District 2 - Wildlife Management Areas that Provide Turkey Hunting - (Continued)

ture Conservancy, and WFF. The 60,732-acre area represents a varied collection of habitats including mature hardwood forests, upland pine stands, recently harvested areas, fallow areas, and agricultural fields. The area is actively managed for wild turkeys through prescribed burning, management of cool and warm season wildlife openings, timber stand improvements, native warm season grass establishment, and roadside bugging area improvements through fall disking and mowing. Habitat diversity across this north Alabama landscape allows for suitable nesting, brood-rearing and winter range habitats across the WMA. For additional information about hunting at James D. Martin-Skyline WMA, please contact the WMA biologist at 256-587-3114.

LITTLE RIVER WMA

By Brandon Howell, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Little River WMA exists through a cooperative partnership between the Alabama Division of State Parks, National Parks Service, the Forever Wild Land Trust and WFF. Located just east of Fort Payne in Cherokee and DeKalb Counties, the WMA occupies a little over 13,000 acres and represents land tracts held by the cooperative agencies and programs. Habitat types range from plantations of loblolly pine on the plateau to the 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 are also established throughout the WMA to provide supplemental nutrition and provide additional habitat. For more information on the WMA, contact the District Office at 256-435-5422.

CHOCOLOCCO WMA

By Brandon Howell, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Choccolocco 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 56,000 acres. 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 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 Choccolocco 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 on the WMA, contact the District Office at 256-435-5422.

HOLLINS WMA

By Steven Mitchell, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Hollins WMA represents a cooperative partnership between the U.S. Forest Service, Evergreen Forest LLC, 19 private landowners and WFF. The WMA provides 28,802 acres of public hunting opportunity in the rolling Appalachian foothills near the small town of Hollins in Clay and Talladega counties. The area consists of mature longleaf pine stands, mixed hardwood-pine stands, and hardwood drains. Over 120 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 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 Hollins WMA, contact the District II Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Office at (256) 435-5422.

COOSA WMA

By Steven Mitchell, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Coosa WMA encompasses 22,988 acres near Rockford in Coosa County. The WMA is comprised of land acquired by the Forever Wild Program and WFF, and lands of our cooperative partners including Alabama Power Company, Kaul Lumber Company, Cahaba Timber, International Paper, and F. Perkins 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 inside the WMA. The WMA accounts for thousands of acres of mountain longleaf pine habitat interspersed with hardwood drains, mixed pine-hardwood, 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. 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 Coosa WMA, contact the District II Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Office at (256) 435-5422. ♡



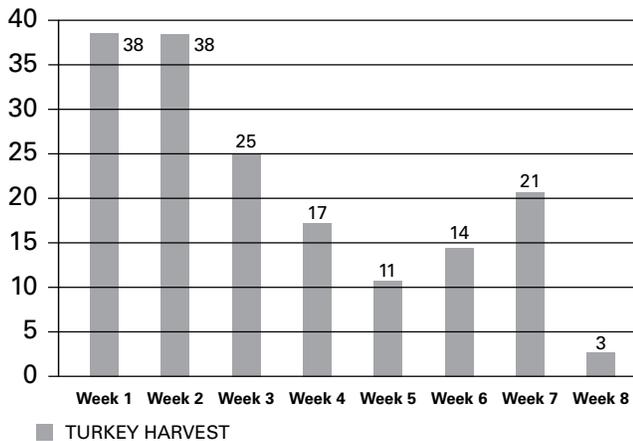
DISTRICT 3

District 3 consists of 13 counties in west central Alabama. The southern portion consists of Blackland prairie, bottomland hardwood, and industrial pine forest habitats. This area lies below the fall line and has mostly flat, to slightly rolling, terrain. The soils are typically not rocky. The northern portion of the district lies above the fall line and is hilly with rocky soils. It is comprised of oak/hickory, mixed pine/hardwoods, and industrial pine forest habitats.

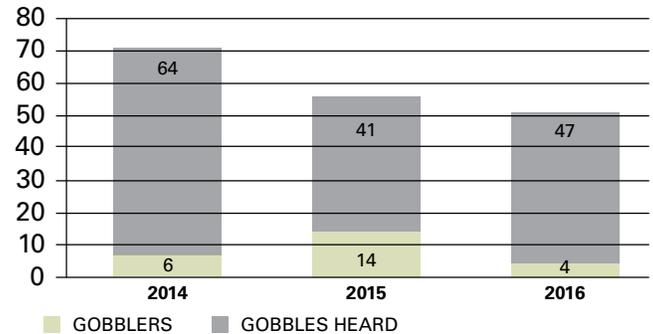
Harvest and Observations

Cooperators in District 3 reported hearing 24,320 gobblers from 2,134 gobblers and harvesting 167 birds during the 2016 spring turkey season. Within the district, harvest intensity was greatest during the first half of the season, with peak harvest activity occurring during weeks one and two.

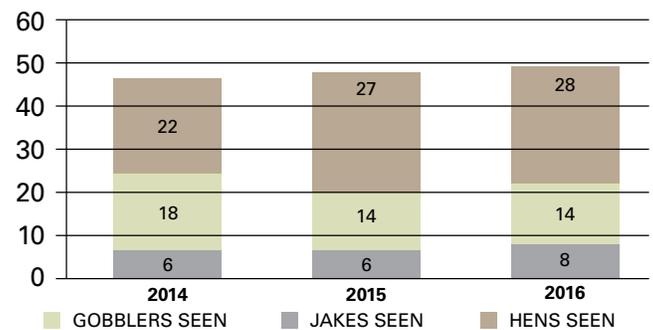
Spring Season Harvest by Week



Gobblers and Gobblers Heard per 10 Hours Hunted



Turkey Observations per 100 Hours Hunted



District 3 - Wildlife Management Areas that Provide Turkey Hunting

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 Program from Molpus Timberlands for WFF to manage and offer public hunting opportunities. 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. Stream-side 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 on hunting the Mulberry Fork WMA, please contact the District III Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries 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

District 3 - Wildlife Management Areas that Provide Turkey Hunting - (Continued)

encompasses a total land acreage of 40,738 acres. Molpus Timberlands owns 27,894 acres in which hunting rights have been acquired through the Forever Wild Program with WFF managing the hunting programs. Other valuable cooperative land-owning partners include Hancock Forest Management (5,585 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 25-30 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 are 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 on William R. Ireland, Sr.-Cahaba River WMA, contact the District III Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Office at 205-339-5716.

OAKMULGEE WMA

By Jeff Makemson, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Oakmulgee Wildlife Management Area represents the oldest WMA in Alabama, established in 1937 as a valued 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. This forest management regime is quite conducive for creating 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. For more information on Oakmulgee WMA, contact the District III Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Office at 205-339-5716.

LOWNDES WMA

By Jeff Makemson, Acting Supervising Biologist

Lowndes WMA encompasses 15,920 acres acquired as a cooperative partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,

the Forever Wild Program, and WFF to provide public hunting opportunities and other outdoor recreational activities. Special thanks go out to our partners, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Forever Wild Program, for supplying funding, equipment, assistance with wildlife management activities, and Lowndes WMA land acquisitions. 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. Permanent wildlife openings are scattered throughout the WMA and planted in a variety of small grains and clovers for wild turkey and other species. Loblolly pine stands on the area are prescribed burned on three year rotations to provide suitable habitat 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 on hunting on Lowndes WMA, call the District III Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries office at (205) 339-5716.

DAVID K. NELSON WMA

By Jeff Makemson, Acting Supervising Biologist

David K. Nelson WMA is located at the confluence of Tombigbee and Black Warrior rivers near Demopolis, Alabama. The funding for the land acquisition and management support is provided by our cooperative partner in conservation, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. The WMA is composed of nine tracts of land of various sizes comprising 8,557 deeded acres of primarily bottomland hardwood forest. While the majority of the WMA is occupied by alluvial river floodplains and bottomland hardwoods, some acreage is elevated sufficiently to be managed in pine stands and native warm season grasses. Numerous wildlife openings can be found scattered throughout the area planted in a collection of warm and cool season mixtures. Only the 2,500 acre Damsite Tract is accessible by vehicle. The remaining eight tracts can only be accessed by boat. For more information on hunting on David K. Nelson WMA, call the District III Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries office at (334) 289-8030. ♡



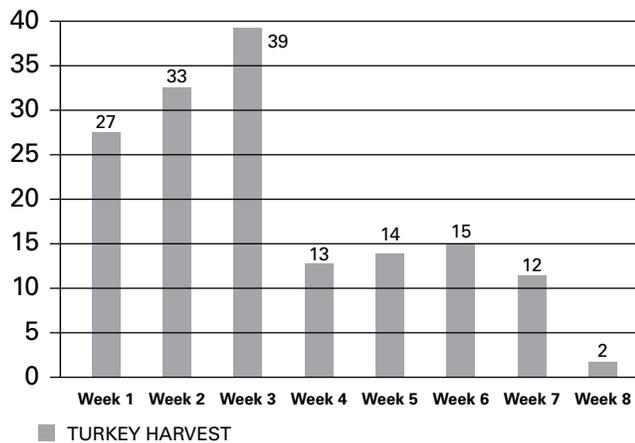
DISTRICT 4

This region 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.

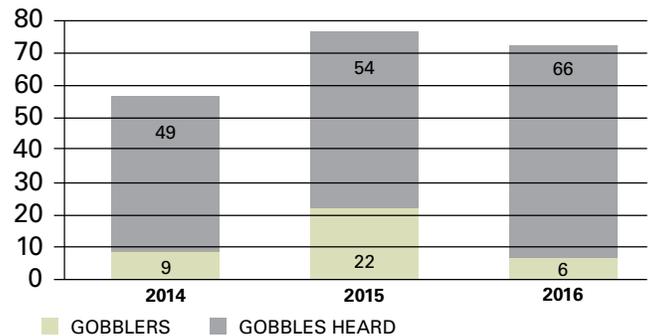
Harvest and Observations

Cooperators in District 4 reported hearing 23,692 gobblers from 1,980 gobblers and harvesting 155 birds during the 2016 spring turkey season. Within the district, harvest intensity was greatest during the first half of the season, with peak harvest activity occurring during weeks two and three.

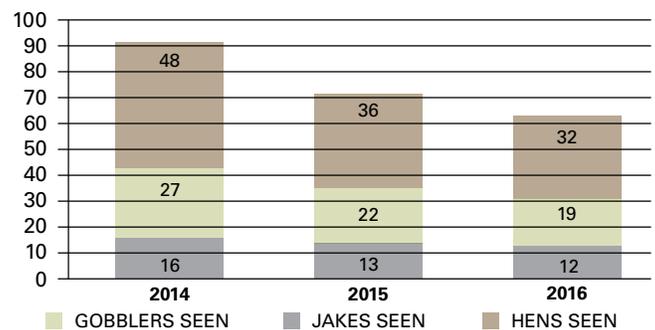
Spring Season Harvest by Week



Gobblers and Gobblers Heard per 10 Hours Hunted



Turkey Observations per 100 Hours Hunted



District 4 - Wildlife Management Areas that Provide Turkey Hunting

FOREVER WILD GOTHARD – AWF YATES LAKE WEST WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

By Brian Grice, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Forever Wild Gothard–AWF Yates Lake West WMA is located in Elmore County just north of the city of Tallassee. The WMA encompasses 5,606-acres acquired by the Forever Wild Program to provide public hunting opportunities and is cooperatively

managed by State Lands Division and WFF. 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 about Yates Lake WMA, please call 334-347-1298.

BARBOUR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

By Adam Pritchett, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Barbour WMA is located in Barbour and Bullock counties near the small town of Clayton. It encompasses 28,213 acres, including property acquired through the Forever Wild Program and WFF. Most of the area consists of longleaf and loblolly pine timber with hardwoods in the streamside management zones. 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 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 about hunting Barbour WMA, contact the area biologist at 334-529-3222.

BLUE SPRING WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

By Griff Johnson, RF, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Blue Spring WMA is a cooperative partnership between the ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division (WFF) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Blue Springs WMA is 24,783 acres nestled within Conecuh National Forest. Longleaf and slash pine dominates the forest with some fire tolerant hardwoods in the uplands and bottomland stream corridors. The USFS 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 USFS utilizes prescribed fire on a 2- to 5-year rotation, and mechanical understory and midstory removal to help promote suitable habitat for a variety of species like Eastern wild turkey. In addition to USFS's forest management practices, WFF manages permanent wildlife openings to provide quality habitat for a variety of wildlife species. For more information about Blue Spring WMA, please call 1-334-898-7013.

GENEVA STATE FOREST WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

By Griff Johnson, RF, WMA Wildlife Biologist

Geneva State Forest WMA is a cooperative partnership between WFF and the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC). It spans 16,634 acres, in which AFC owns 7,280 acres. AFC acreage is forested with longleaf and slash pine, burned at 2- to 3-year intervals. Some mature hardwoods are present along small creek bottoms. Through timber management carried out by AFC, 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 about Geneva State Forest WMA, please call 1-334-898-7013. ✓



Tes Randle Jolly



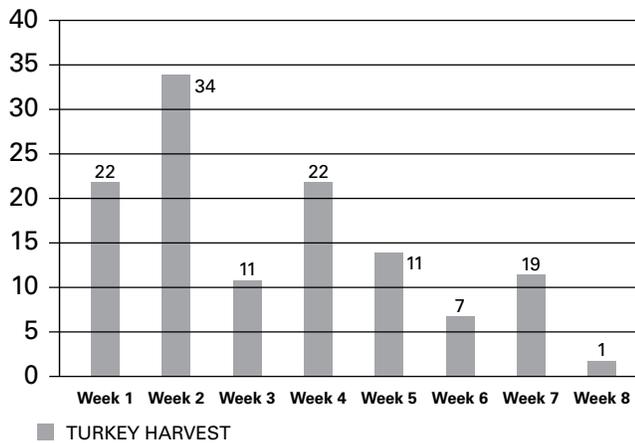
DISTRICT 5

District 5 consists of 11 counties in southwest Alabama. This ecoregion is part of the Coastal Plain, 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 scattered compartments of historic longleaf.

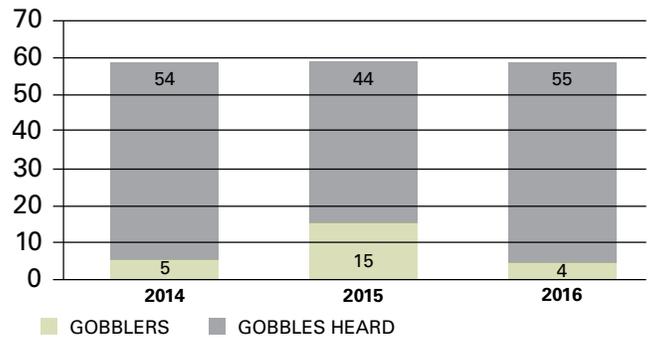
Harvest and Observations

Cooperators in District 5 reported hearing 19,998 gobblers from 1617 gobblers and harvesting 127 birds during the 2016 spring turkey season. Within the district, harvest intensity was greatest during the first half of the season, with peak harvest activity occurring during weeks one and two.

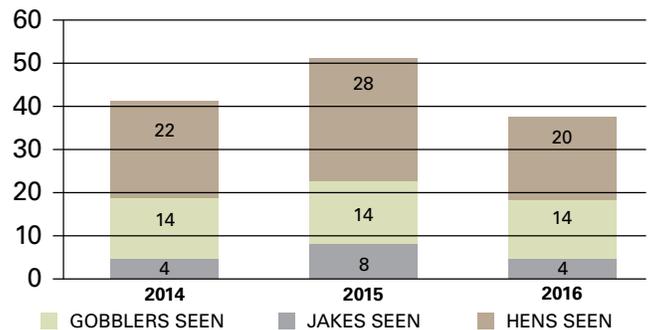
Spring Season Harvest by Week



Gobblers and Gobblers Heard per 10 Hours Hunted



Turkey Observations per 100 Hours Hunted



District 5 - Wildlife Management Areas that Provide Turkey Hunting

W. L. HOLLAND AND MOBILE-TENSAW DELTA WMA

By Thomas E Harms, WMA Wildlife Biologist

W.L. Holland and Mobile-Tensaw Delta WMA are located in the lower portion of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta south of Interstate 65 in Baldwin and Mobile counties. The area encompasses approx-

imately 51,040 acres of tracts acquired by the Forever Wild Program, 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

District 5 - Wildlife Management Areas that Provide Turkey Hunting - (Continued)

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 populations in providing early successional acreage to enhance nesting and brood rearing habitats. For more information, contact the District V office at 251-626-5474.

PERDIDO RIVER WMA

By Casey Norris, 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 Program and 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 V office at 251-626-5474.

UPPER DELTA WMA

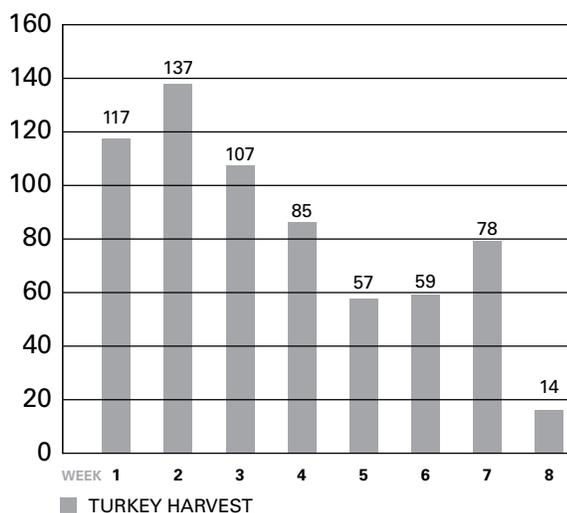
By Thomas E. Harms, WMA Wildlife Biologist

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 Program, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, Florida Gas 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 small tract composed of more upland habitats is located 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 V office at 251-626-5474. ♡

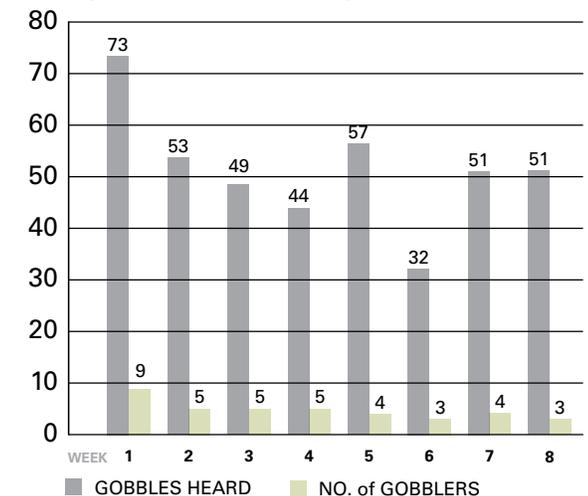
2016 Statewide Harvest and Observations

Cooperators statewide reported hearing 99,979 gobblers from 8,875 gobblers and harvesting 654 birds during the 2016 spring turkey season. Statewide harvest intensity was greatest during the first half of the season, with peak harvest activity occurring during weeks one and two.

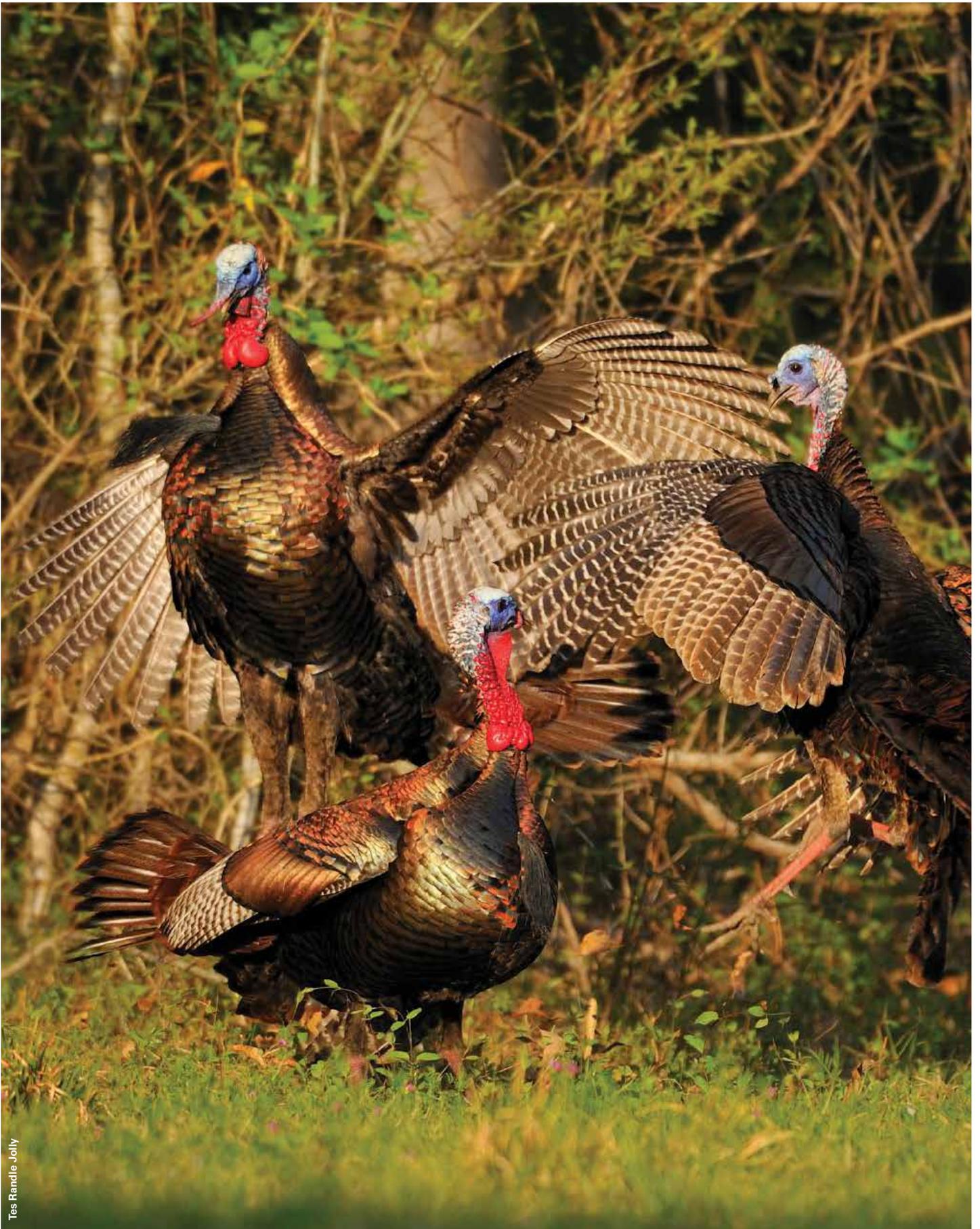
Spring Season Harvest by Week



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



* Harvest numbers compiled from 407 avid hunter survey respondents and represent only a subset of the total harvest within Alabama.



Tes Randle Jolly

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

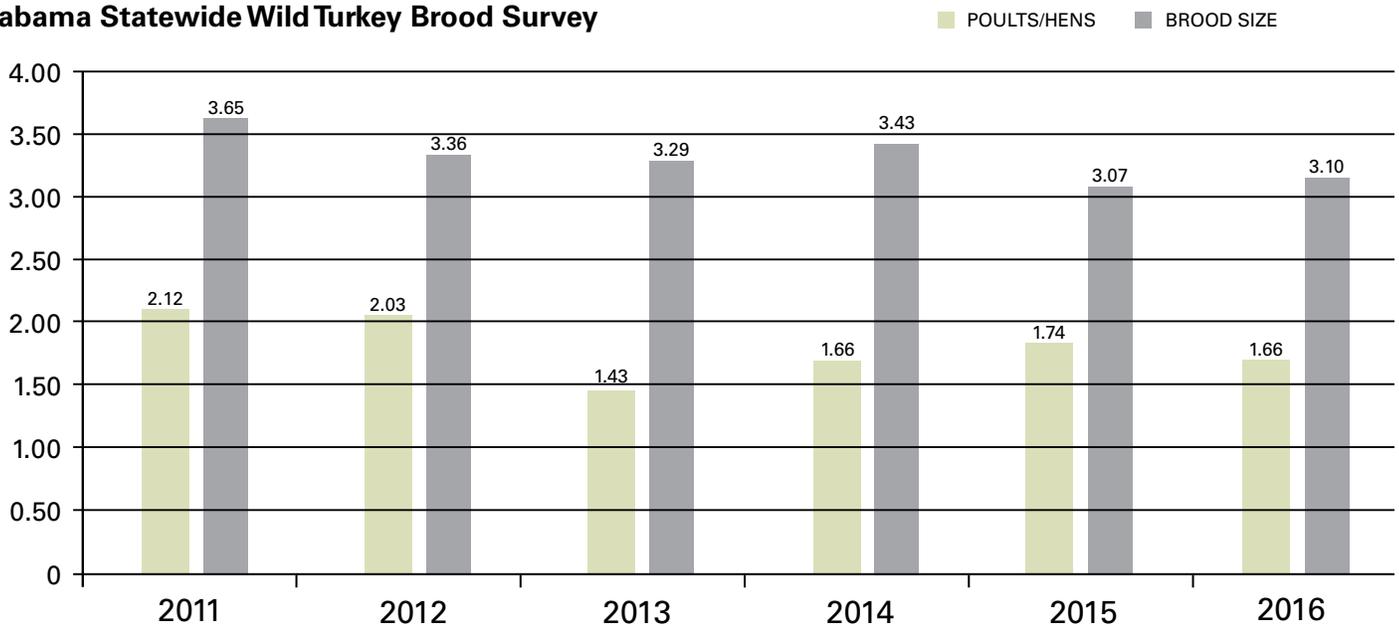
per hen is poor, researchers contend that as long as hens are successful, a turkey population can be maintained. However, the goal is to optimize conditions through habitat enhancement and other management applications to promote optimal reproductive success and high turkey populations.

Although it is not considered scientific data, results of the brood survey play a critical role in our assessment of turkey populations. Therefore, it is imperative that we receive the most accurate data possible. In order to make a viable estimate of reproduction, we need input from every county in the state. If you have the time and desire to take part in the brood survey, we would like to talk with you.

The survey begins July 1 and ends August 31. During that time, we ask that you record any turkeys you encounter in your normal daily activities. If poults are seen, we ask that you provide a size estimate. In addition, we need to know the date and location. Our brood survey packet will provide a guide sheet to assist you in entering your data online.

If this is something you are interested in, please contact Steve Barnett at steve.barnett@dcnr.alabama.gov.

Alabama Statewide Wild Turkey Brood Survey



2016

2016 WILD TURKEY BROOD SURVEY OBSERVATIONAL DATA SUMMARY

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

	OBSERVATIONS	TURKEYS OBSERVED					POULTS PER HEN	BROOD SIZE	PERCENT OF HENS WITH POULTS	GOBLER TO HEN RATIO
		GOBLERS	HENS - Without Poults	HENS - With Poults	POULTS	Unknown				
STATEWIDE	1010	887	674	776	2402	185	1.66	3.10	53.52%	1:1.63
DISTRICT 1 TOTALS	293	274	189	242	675	38	1.57	2.79	56.15%	1:1.16
DISTRICT 2 TOTALS	63	52	41	55	164	19	1.71	2.98	57.29%	1: 1.57
DISTRICT 3 TOTALS	113	99	84	95	387	48	2.16	4.07	53.1%	1: 1.85
DISTRICT 4 TOTALS	285	195	193	191	631	38	1.64	3.30	49.74%	1: 1.97
DISTRICT 5 TOTALS	136	97	104	124	546	39	2.39	4.40	54.39%	1: 2:36
Piedmont	192	155	119	162	383	27	1.36	2.36	57.65%	1: 1.81
Southeastern Plains	634	545	436	488	1578	120	1.71	3.23	52.81%	1: 1.70
Ridge & Valley	57	72	39	53	164	20	1.78	3.09	57.61%	1: 1.28
Southwestern Appalachians	105	89	65	62	231	16	1.82	3.73	48.82%	1: 1.88
Interior Plateau	21	26	15	11	42	2	1.62	3.82	42.31%	1: 1.00
Southern Coastal Plain	1	0	0	0	4	0	0.00	0.00	0.0%	- :0.00
Hunting Club	31	17	21	14	57	6	1.63	4.07	40.0 %	1: 2.06
Private	618	520	417	491	1607	89	1.77	3.27	54.07%	1: 1.75
WMA	352	339	226	270	737	90	1.49	2.73	54.44%	1:1.46
Public	9	11	10	1	1	0	0.09	1.00	9.09%	1: 1.00



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 we have 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 questions such as should the season or bag limit be changed or left the same? 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 Turkey Program Biologist 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:

Steve Barnett, Alabama Turkey Project Leader
steve.barnett@dcnr.alabama.gov



THE ESSENCE OF HUNTING

By Steven W. Barnett, Certified Wildlife Biologist

If you search the word “hunting” on the internet, Wikipedia defines it as “the practice of pursuing any living thing, usually wildlife, for food, recreation...”. Word definitions often portray only the extrinsic value or meaning. But, if you slice through the surface layer to what something really means or its true intrinsic worth, a much deeper understanding or essence becomes evident. One can only fully appreciate the core value of hunting through one of life’s greatest teachers, experience. Please allow me to share a few personal memories and attempt to translate feelings and emotions into words that define hunting to me.

A vivid early childhood memory comes to mind of riding piggyback on my father’s back as he trampled through brush and briars in pursuit of small game. I did not carry a firearm, but there was an exuberant joy from being outdoors with my daddy. The eager child-student was being introduced to the outdoor classroom and my father was the teacher. These early experiences helped germinate the seed that grew into a yearning for the outdoors, shaping my life’s journey. Early outdoor “courses” included how to interpret game sign and being safe with a gun. The exhilaration of my first harvested game animal, a cottontail rabbit, provides a visualization of that special moment in time.

The bark of my son’s squirrel dog takes me back to days afield with my grandfather as we walked the hills and hollows along Clear Creek squirrel hunting. His tales of hunts as a boy along that same stretch of stream captured my imagination, especially the part about moonshine stills tucked away in the hemlock shaded coves back in those days. Today, those memories are relived as my son and I are in the company of his treeing feist, Hunter. The anticipation of quickly getting to a treed squirrel is still just as strong. Memories are never more vivid than those spent afield with a child. I attest that family hunting traditions are noble and fuel the spirit through the generations and build powerful bonds.

THERE ARE FEW THINGS IN THIS WORLD THAT HEIGHTEN THE SENSES, SHARPEN THE FOCUS, AND CREATE UNIMAGINABLE FEELINGS OF EXHILARATION LIKE THE GOBBLE AND DRUM OF A WILD TURKEY.

Most folks who hunt have at least one favorite game animal that stirs an obsession. If the true meaning or essence of hunting is ever more alive in me, it is when I chase longbeards. There are few things in this world that heighten the senses, sharpen the focus, and create unimaginable feelings of exhilaration like the gobble and drum of a wild turkey. I am confident that these same emotions are shared by the deer hunter hearing the grunt of a buck chasing a doe, the duck hunter watching mallards respond to his calls and decoy spread, and the list goes on.

Although the harvest creates a level of euphoria, it is the hunt that defines the experience. One of my most cherished turkey hunting memories is an exhaustive effort undertaken in the Sipsey Wilderness Area many years ago. Fortunately, the turkey gobbled relentlessly that spring morning because it took me well over an hour to cross three deep gorges and negotiate several blufflines before setting up and ultimately harvesting the bird. I remember very little about the bird, but I can recount in detail, during the pursuit, sprinting to get to the bird before he quit gobbling and lying down periodically before cresting each ridge, soaked with perspiration to catch my breath.

Hunting pumps millions of dollars into Alabama’s economy and helps support local communities each year. However important the value of hunting is to the economy, the worth of hunting will never be measured by dollars. As I have attempted to describe, hunting is much more than the pursuit of game. Hunting clears the mind, sharpens awareness, provides focus on the moment, and nurtures the soul. In these moments, we are truly connected to nature, and for me God’s magnificent creation. This is what hunting means to me. What does it mean to you?

For more information on Alabama’s rich hunting heritage visit www.outdooralabama.com or contact Steven W. Barnett, Certified Wildlife Biologist, Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, 30571 Five Rivers Boulevard, Spanish Fort, AL 36527; phone 251-626-5474. ♡

TAKE A KID TURKEY HUNTING

By Joel D. Glover, Certified Wildlife Biologist

Like many, I think turkey hunting is serious business. If that is true, you may be addicted to the pursuit of one of the grandest of game birds. If you have pursued gobblers for very long you've probably experienced the thrill of victory and the aggravation of defeat. Of course even the defeats are still enjoyable – after you get over it! I don't know anyone who would consider chasing gobblers as child's play, but that definitely doesn't mean children shouldn't experience it.

Turkey hunting, like all hunting, needs to recruit new hunters. With all of the activities available to youth today, the outdoors and hunting often take a backseat. Unfortunately, much of the youth in our country have never experienced the thrill of hearing a gobbler split the morning calm. While it is true that turkey hunting has a few more moving parts than the pursuit of some other species, there is a lot about turkey hunting that will appeal to a kid.

When you think about it, turkey hunting in some ways does resemble child's play. How is that? Kids enjoy playing dress up and what is better than dressing up in camo? Neat patterned shirts and pants, or my favorite overalls plus gloves, hats, and face masks. Come on – you know you enjoy that. Kids also love toys. Turkey hunters have some awesome toys. What other activity encourages you to hoot like an owl, squawk like a crow, and talk to a turkey using all kinds of neat calls. If you don't think a kid will enjoy a turkey call or owl hooter, just give them one!

So kids love this kind of stuff and you love turkey hunting – why not take a kid with you? Of course carrying a youngster turkey hunting may not be as simple as it sounds as there are several things to keep in mind. While turkey hunting is an extremely safe endeavor, anytime a firearm is involved safety must always be priority one. When taking a child hunting, one must have realistic expectations. I can't count the number of times I have moved at just the right time to spook a wary gobbler and I'm far from being a kid. When taking a youth hunting, keep in mind that you've already achieved a modicum of success simply by having them in the outdoors. Getting the opportunity to work a bird, much less harvest one would surely be icing on the cake.

Any veteran turkey chaser knows making a clean shot on a gobbler isn't always easy. Before taking a child turkey hunting they should be very familiar and competent with their shotgun. Anyone prone to flinching will likely miss something as small as a turkey neck or worse yet, may wound a bird. Taking anyone

turkey hunting without making sure they are ready to make a shot is setting them up for failure. Mentors must also keep in mind that a young hunter may decide they don't want to kill a bird or may feel some remorse after taking one. It is helpful to educate young folks concerning the role of hunting in managing wildlife populations.

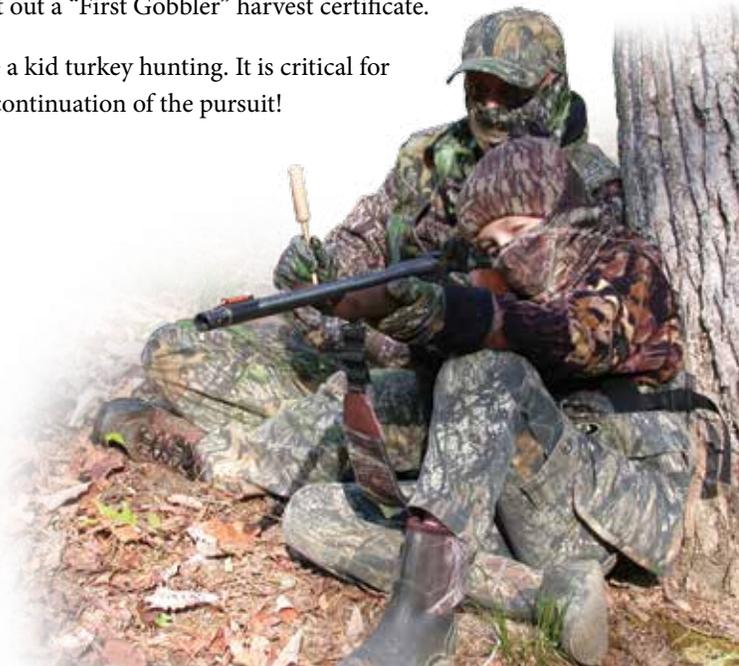
So if you decide to take a kid hunting, where will you go? If you have private hunting land, the youth turkey season normally opens the Saturday and Sunday prior to the opening of spring season. In addition, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has 19 wildlife management areas (WMAs) that offer a youth turkey season and these areas are well-distributed across the state. This is a great opportunity to get in the woods ahead of the crowd and give a child the opportunity to experience one of the most exhilarating events Mother Nature has to offer.

Another special opportunity for youth exists in southwest Alabama. A youth turkey hunting area is available in Mobile County in cooperation with the University of South Alabama Foundation. This partnership has been in place since 2004. Hunt dates are Saturdays and Sundays of the regular spring season and a few other selected dates.

For more information about youth hunts and locations or to find out how to register a child for a hunt visit www.outdooralabama.com/youth-hunting.

In the event you are fortunate enough to assist someone in taking their first gobbler, go to the same web page and print out a "First Gobbler" harvest certificate.

Take a kid turkey hunting. It is critical for the continuation of the pursuit!



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 given 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 STATE CHAPTER



NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION

Craig Scruggs, Alabama State NWTF Chapter President



One of my dad's greatest legacies was instilling in me a love of the land and God's creatures. From the time I was old enough to understand the importance of being quiet, my father took me hunting with him. Arriving in the pre-dawn darkness and waiting for the first rays of sunlight to come through the trees was almost as exciting as Christmas morning. I

killed my first turkey sitting between his legs as he leaned against the base of a big tree. When I got old enough, he'd drop me off at the edge of our hunting property in the morning, and I'd stay there sometimes all day. He was the first to teach me about conservation and the importance of preserving wildlife and forests for future generations. We enjoyed many years of hunting together, and without his influence I probably wouldn't be in the position I'm in today.

My first year as President of the Alabama Chapter of the NWTF has been busy and educational as well as exciting. The NWTF has been the recipient of two very generous donations of tracts of land in our state, and our Chapter is responsible for overseeing the property in Elmore County. This was the site of several youth deer hunts last year, with eight deer killed, and, so far, a couple of youth dove hunts this year. Educating our youth about the importance of wildlife conservation and hunter safety is high on the priority list for the NWTF, and our excellent staff and volunteers work hard to ensure that the boys and girls not only have a good time but also leave with a sense of accomplishment and appreciation for wildlife.

The Alabama Chapter of the NWTF recently allocated \$142,464 in Hunting Heritage Super Funds and Tag Funds for wild turkey projects in our state. Of that total, \$68,265 was donated to the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries to fund projects including wildlife habitat management and this publication. I hope you find Full Fans and Sharp Spurs informative, and happy hunting! 🦃

Brandon Bobo, NWTF Regional Biologist



Here we are entering into the third year of this publication, and I am happy to report that throughout these past three years we have seen accomplishments on the ground for wild turkey conservation, research, outreach and education abound more so than ever in our state's history. The Alabama State Chapter of the

National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) has seen the fruits of the labors of our volunteers, members, donors, and committee members put to excellent use

throughout the Heart of Dixie, and these achievements have been further expounded upon by working with several incredible agency partners such as Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Forest Service, Department of Defense, Alabama Forestry Commission, and United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Several other Non-governmental Organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, The Longleaf Alliance, Alabama Forestry Association, American Forest Foundation, and Alabama Cooperative Extension Services have also played vital roles in helping to deliver our mission of the conservation of the wild turkey and the preservation of our hunting heritage.

I owe an incredible debt of gratitude towards the aforementioned agencies and organizations as well as my friends and colleagues with the NWTF, my wife, Ashley and my daughter, Karlie. I also want to thank the gracious and driven Alabama State Chapter of NWTF Board of Directors, because they provide the driving force behind the projects that NWTF embarks upon in the state of Alabama. I am truly blessed to be afforded with such great people in my life!

This past spring season was one of the most erratic and unpredictable that I can recall in Alabama. I had some success when the weather would courteously cooperate, and in fact, I killed

my oldest turkey to date who gobbled a grand total of nine times over five miles of hills and hollers. I have entertained reports from people in the northwestern portion of the state, where turkeys have been declining, that they are starting to see turkeys again. This was not always the report from landowners, but one common theme emerged for those properties where it was the case, sound habitat management! Alabama's Turkey Management Committee continues the largest scale statewide turkey research project in this state's history with the assistance of Auburn University's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, which is positioned to attempt to provide some hard scientific data about the state of turkeys in Alabama. ♫



NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION "GUN OF THE YEAR" R E C I P I E N T

Alabama National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) State Chapter President Craig Scruggs and board member Mike Colquett are pictured presenting a NWTF Gun of the Year, Weatherby over and under 12 gauge shotgun, to Brett Loftin of Monroeville in appreciation and recognition of his hard work and dedication to NWTF. Loftin has been an active and enthusiastic participant in the organization for over 15 years. He currently serves as Monroe County Chapter President and Banquet Chairman, organizing annual fund raiser and recruiting new members. In addition to these duties, he arranges youth dove hunts and JAKES Days for young hunters in the area. Loftin and his wife Kaye attend the national NWTF convention in Nashville each year and will be attending a leadership conference for the conservation organization in Augusta, Georgia, in October.



ALABAMA STATE CHAPTER



NWTF

SHOTGUN WINNER



Randy Rose, left, receives a Winchester SXP Turkey Hunter 12 gauge pump shotgun from Alabama National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) State Chapter President Craig Scruggs and Board member Bev Leigh. Rose, an avid turkey hunter from Tuscaloosa, was randomly chosen from all 2016 Avid Turkey Hunter Survey participants. The



© Szeno | Dreamstime.com

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.



ALABAMA'S NWTf OFFICER OF THE YEAR



**Conservation Enforcement
Officer Micah Allison**

This year's National Wild Turkey Federation Officer of the Year from Alabama is Senior Conservation Enforcement Officer Micah Allison. Micah is currently assigned to Lee County in East Alabama.

Born and raised in the Los Angeles area, Allison forged a love of nature and the outdoors on the beaches of Southern California and in the extensive mountain ranges throughout the state. Allison spent her youth pier and freshwater fishing

California waters, hiking the waterfalls of Yosemite National Park and climbing boulders throughout the desert regions. Following an active duty tour in the U.S. Marine Corps, Allison moved to South Alabama where she took up hobbies of inshore and deep sea fishing and big game hunting.

Allison's career within conservation began while working on the Deepwater Horizon oil spill incident at Mobile's Incident Command Post. It was there that she met several local Conservation Enforcement Officers. Realizing a Conservation Enforcement career was the best way to blend her love of wildlife and the outdoors with the draw she felt towards a law enforcement career, Allison initiated the process to become an officer. Less than two years later, Allison officially began what she now refers to as "a dream job."

Officer Allison's passion and determination, along with a love of the job and belief in the mission is what led her to make nearly two dozen cases during the 2016 turkey season and assisting in nearly that many with her partner, Wesley Croy. The majority of Allison's arrests and assists during this year's turkey season involved hunting by aid of bait, but also involved several cases of hunting out of season, hunting without permission, hunting from a public road, exceeding the daily bag limit and harvest record

violations. Officer Allison and her partner made a concerted effort to search the woods of Lee County prior to and during turkey season to pinpoint locations of potential or suspected turkey poaching. Cases included apprehending a hunter for harvesting two gobblers in the same day and arresting two adults found exiting a baited location during youth-only season with a loaded shotgun. Another incident which followed an investigation prompted by a complaint from a keen-eyed complainant resulted in one subject being arrested for hunting without permission, hunting without a license, hunting from a public road and three harvest record violations.

During her enforcement career, Officer Allison has made herself available to assist local, state and federal agencies. In addition to investigating hunting and fishing violations and responding to hunting accidents, Allison has assisted on cases ranging from narcotics, shootings, bank robbery, theft, vehicle accidents, probation violations, school threats and federal firearm and explosive violations.

Officer Allison is passionate about hunter safety and passing on the tradition of outdoor sportsmanship. She is a certified Hunter Education Instructor and regularly teaches traditional hunter education classes as well as teaching outdoor safety to employees of various local corporations. She has been involved with numerous youth hunts and fishing rodeos as well as urban outdoor outreach programs. Allison believes that it is the responsibility of today's outdoor men and women to pass the sports and traditions on to our younger generation. She encourages adults to not only take their own children hunting and fishing, but also the many youth who don't have the ability to participate in the outdoors with their own parents.

It is obvious Conservation Enforcement Officer Micah Allison diligently pursues every aspect of her profession. We are especially thankful for her dogged determination to apprehend those who illegally pursue the wild turkey in Alabama. We are proud to have her represent Alabama at the National NWTf Convention and wish her the best in the national competition. ♡

NWTF HUNTING HERITAGE SUPER FUND 2016

This year has once again exceeded the years past in terms of production for conservation on the ground as well as outreach and education for future hunters. Hunting Heritage Super Fund dollars are generated through 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. For those of you interested in becoming a member, contact a local NWTF Regional Director: Howard Dahlem at hdahlem@nwtf.net (North AL), Tyler Briggs at tbriggs@nwtf.net (Central AL) and Matt Wilkins mwilkins@nwtf.net (South AL).

Of the Super Fund dollars raised every year, the state chapter earmarks 20 percent of the total 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 backed our claim by putting those dollars to use this past year to spend \$76,225 towards appraisals and due diligence for the purchase of approximately 7,986 acres on Geneva State Forest WMA, Lowndes WMA and Autauga WMA.

The Alabama State Chapter of NWTF also has a separate fund dedicated to the accommodation of requests and supplementation of sound habitat enhancement projects 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 and many others. This fund is generated through the sale of NWTF license plates in the state of Alabama, so keep that in mind when buying your tag; almost \$50 of the purchase of that custom NWTF tag goes directly towards this account.

Through the Super Fund, Land Acquisition Account and License Plate Fund, the AL Chapter of NWTF was able to devote an un-



precedented \$383,821 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 furthering our mission of wild turkey conservation and hunting heritage preservation. In fiscal year 2016, NWTF in Alabama was able to provide the initial dollars towards projects that total approximately \$16.5 million. This means that for every \$1 raised and spent from NWTF, \$43 were leveraged to be utilized for all the aforementioned uses. Keep in mind that this surplus of matching funds were due largely in part to the millions of dollars spent on nearly 8,000 acres of newly accessible public lands. Another way we leverage these dollars is through the Wildlife Restoration Act, more commonly referred to as Pittman-Robertson. Dollars awarded to WFF allow them to obtain 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, which includes, but is not limited to, the Department of Defense, Auburn University, Alabama Cooperative Extension Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, The Longleaf Alliance, The Nature Conservancy and others. ✎

2016 ALABAMA STATE SUPER FUND EXPENDITURES

SCHOLARSHIPS	21 Local Chapter Scholarships	\$10,500.00
	1 State Scholarship	\$2,500.00
EDUCATION	Alabama's Archery in the Schools Program	\$10,017.00
	National Archery in the Schools Program Alabama state tournament	\$5,000.00
	Alabama Prescribed Fire Council Meeting Sponsorship	\$1,680.00
	Tuscaloosa Chapter Outdoor Education materials	\$8,291.00
	Full Fans and Sharp Spurs printing	\$7,806.58
HUNTING HERITAGE	Hunting Heritage Foundation	\$3,000.00
	United States Shooting Sports	\$2,500.00
	National Assembly of Sportsman Caucuses	\$2,000.00
OUTREACH EVENTS	15 Total Outreach Events (Hunts, Jake's Days, etc.) across the state	\$3,750.00
	2016 NWTF Convention AL State Chapter attendance	\$3,854.54
	Becoming an Outdoors Woman Event	\$5,000.00
ALABAMA SUPER FUND PROJECTS - WMAS, SEED SUBSIDY, REWARDS, & RESEARCH	Public Land Purchase appraisals	\$76,225.00
	Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries conservation projects (matched 3:1)	\$68,113.85
	Habitat Equipment for State Lands Forever Wild Property (1 piece)	\$3,170.00
	Public Land tree plantings for wildlife (1 total matched 3:1)	\$7,685.00
	Public Land Prescribed Burns (2 total)	\$7,500.00
	Solon-Dixon Center habitat enhancement equipment	\$1,500.00
	Private Land Program trapping materials	\$1,487.80
	Pelham Range Seed and Blinds for Wheelin' Sportsmen Hunt	\$8,772.44
	2016 Seed Subsidy Program	\$36,536.00
REMAINING TAG FUND PROJECTS		\$106,932.00
Total		\$383,821.00



NWTF EXPENDITURES





LICENSE to CONSERVE.

Show your support for the NWTF Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative by getting your own NWTF Alabama tag.

In the next decade, the National Wild Turkey Federation is committed to:

- conserve or enhance 4 million acres of critical upland habitat
- create 1.5 million hunters
- open access to 500,000 acres for hunting

We are committed to Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt.

www.nwtf.org/alabama

**SAVE THE
HABITAT.
SAVE THE
HUNT.**







National Archery in the Schools Program

The NWTF has been a strong supporter of the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) in Alabama for the past 10 years. Not only has the Alabama Chapter donated thousands of dollars to this highly worthwhile program, but its members have also participated as volunteers at the annual state tournament.

NASP is designed to teach Olympic-style target archery to fourth-12th grade students. Core content covers archery history, safety, technique, equipment, mental concentration and self-improvement. Students shoot at bull's-eye targets placed in front of an arrow-resistant net in their gymnasium. Equipment used is state-of-the-art and designed to fit every student. In addition, there are reading and writing assignments, physics and science projects, history lessons, and other essential scholastic achievements that turn a simple recreational activity into a fun and powerful learning experience. Archery is a life skill that people of all ages and physical abilities can participate in which can lead to better health and self-esteem.

The benefits of the program include much more than learning a new sport. Archery and other shooting sports have a direct benefit to wildlife conservation by way of money generated from the Pittman-Robertson excise tax applied to archery equipment. Many of the participants, their friends and families go on to become lifelong archers and contributors to wildlife conservation through the purchase of equipment.

Alabama was the second state to implement the curriculum into the public school system. The program is now entering its 13th year and continues to grow. Approximately 400 schools have purchased equipment and are conducting the program as part of the physical education curriculum. With a conservative estimate of just 150 children per school at 400 schools means approximately 60,000 Alabama school children are being exposed to archery programming each year. New schools enroll in the program continuously and we receive daily requests for information regarding the program from teachers, parents and schools.

This program culminates each school year with a state championship. The participation and enthusiasm at the state championship is exhilarating. We have grown from 200 youth attending the first state championship in 2004 to over 1,250 participating in 2016. Due to the popularity of the program and limited space at the state tournament, we hold regional events to qualify for state. Last year we conducted nine regional events where almost 4,000 students competed. Forty Alabama schools from the state tournament advanced to the national event in Kentucky.

The next state championship will be April 7, 2017. Roughly 3,000 people will attend the state event including students, teachers, parents, volunteers and spectators. And once again, it would not be possible without the generous support of the Alabama Chapter of the NWTF. ✓





CONTROLLED BURNING FOR WILDLIFE

*By Adam Pritchett, Wildlife Biologist ADCNR,
Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries*

The most effective way to improve your property for wildlife is through habitat management. Habitat management is not defined by planting a few acres of cool season plots to hunt over during deer season. Habitat management is manipulating the habitat to provide all necessary elements wildlife require on a year round basis. One of the most important tools for managing habitat on your property is controlled burning. By using controlled burns a property owner can maintain low-growing herbaceous plant diversity and provide excellent habitat for a large array of wildlife species.

Controlled burning, commonly called prescribed burning, is the planned use of fire to achieve specific objectives. The timing, fire return interval, and fire intensity of these burns, play important roles in achieving a landowner's objectives. Timing of the prescribed burn refers to what time of year the burn takes place. Cool season burns are conducted during winter months while most plants are dormant. Cool season burns are used to reduce forest litter to help prevent forest fires. They are also used to stimulate growth of forbs, legumes and native grasses that are beneficial as food and cover for a variety of wildlife species.

CONTROLLED BURNING FOR WILDLIFE



Growing season burns take place from early spring to late summer. A growing season burn is most often used to control choking underbrush in a stand of mature trees.

These resemble fires that occurred periodically across Alabama's landscape during Pre-Colonial times in the context of seasonality. Since most fires were started by lightning strikes, they would occur during the growing season. Those fires maintained forests in an open park-like landscape that provided a vast understory layer of food and cover for deer, ground-nesting birds, song birds and many reptiles. Understanding and using growing season burns on your property can help achieve this habitat type.

The interval at which a property is burned is also an important factor in using control burning to manage for wildlife. Fire return interval in Pre-Colonial times was generally less than five years. There are

recorded accounts from Spanish, French and English explorers from the 1500s to 1700s of individual fires that burned across vast areas for over a year.

Generally, a three-year rotation is used when managing for wildlife, but this can change depending upon the objectives of the landowner's prescribed fire program. The first thing a property owner needs to consider is breaking the property into thirds or setting up a grid in which burned and unburned blocks are interspersed throughout the property. Ideally, no two adjacent blocks should be burned the same year – this arrangement creates a checkerboard effect across the property. By using a three-year rotation and block design, there will be recently burned blocks with a high quality layer of ground level vegetation; one-year post burn blocks that are excellent for ground-nesting birds such as turkeys; and two-year post burn blocks that provide more suitable cover for species such as deer.

Having this horizontal diversity increases the carrying capacity of the property for many wildlife species.

The intensity of a prescribed fire also plays an important role in reaching a landowner's desired objectives. Weather conditions along with fuel loading and type, and method of ignition are important factors considered by the prescribed burn manager when determining the desired intensity of the fire. A certified prescribed burn manager can tell you what weather conditions will produce the type of fire needed to meet a specific objective. High intensity fires or head fires will kill larger brush and tree saplings and reset the understory back to ground level. Low intensity fires or cool fires are most often used in young pine plantations and in areas that haven't been burned in a long time. Regardless of the type of fire prescribed, it is imperative that good fire breaks are in place and enough manpower is present to handle any problems that might occur.

A common purpose of using controlled burns for wildlife is to rejuvenate understory plant communities (where sufficient sunlight is reaching the forest floor) that provide high quality browse and cover. Prescribed burning releases nutrients into the soil, which stimulates growth of high quality native grasses, forbs and legumes. Many different species of wildlife rely on this high quality browse and cover for survival. Unlike most supplemental wildlife plantings, controlled burning can provide year round cover and food for the wildlife on your property.

For more information on controlled burning for wildlife, contact the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Wildlife Section or your county forester. ✎

SAVE THE HABITAT. SAVE THE HUNT.



The NWTF is fervently continuing its plan to save the habitat and save the hunt. This is an exciting time in our organization, as we are now all moving towards a goal. When all staff, volunteers, and partners work together towards a common goal, we can be much more efficient and effective with our efforts. This initiative quantifies what we are going to accomplish as an organization across North America over the next several years. These common goals are as follows:

- 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 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 as agency and organization partnerships, we have been able to boast an overabundance of accomplishments towards the Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. Initiative in 2016 as follows:

Alabama Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. 2016 Accomplishments

PROJECT NAME	CONSERVED ACRES	ACCESS ACRES	AL CHAPTER NWTF DOLLARS	PROJECT MATCH DOLLARS
Public Land Project				
Pelham Range	35	0	\$4,123.00	\$5,000.00
Choccolocco WMA	774	0	\$1,200.00	\$3,600.00
Red Hills Tract	1,000	0	\$3,750.00	\$3,750.00
Yates Lake WMA	1,258	0	\$3,750.00	\$3,750.00
Coosa County WMA	1,295	0	\$2,050.00	\$6,150.00
Oakmulgee R D	631	0	\$0	\$67,009.00
Freedom Hills WMA	1,356	0	\$2,413.00	\$7,239.00
Little River WMA	448	0	\$2,121.00	\$6,363.00
Skyline WMA	715	0	\$3,334.00	\$10,002.00
Geneva State Forest	5,770	5770	\$58,350.00	\$11,000,000.00
Lowndes County WMA	1,982	1982	\$10,975.00	\$4,895,000.00
Autauga County WMA	313	313	\$6,900.00	\$378,000.00
CSP and Seed Subsidy				
Chufa Sales	950	0	\$43,513	\$43,513.00
Seed Subsidy Mixes	539	0	0	0
Conservation Seed	22,565	0	0	\$168,093.50
TOTALS:	39,631	8,065	\$142,479	\$16,597,469.50



TURKEY RESEARCH PROJECT UPDATE FROM THE ALABAMA COOPERATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE RESEARCH UNIT

*James B. Grand, Unit Leader, U.S. Geological Survey,
Alabama Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Auburn University, Alabama*

We are now well into the third year of our study of the survival and productivity of turkey populations in Alabama. In this article, I share some of the progress we have made, a few of the pitfalls we've encountered, and some of our plans for the next few years.

Since January 2015, we monitored the survival and productivity of over 210 turkeys captured and marked on the four study areas in Clarke, Bibb and Hale, Barbour and Bullock, and Jackson counties. Every two weeks an attempt is made to locate every marked bird and determine whether it is still alive. In August we attempt to determine the number of poults produced by each marked hen. On each study area in 2015 and 2016, we conducted camera surveys just prior to the turkey hunting season in February and at the end of the breeding season in July, gobble count surveys March through May, and roadside surveys in July and August. Besides the data collected, we received approximately 500,000 images from camera surveys and gobble count data from all the other wildlife management areas across the state. We are testing auto-

ated recording devices for conducting gobble counts, and computerized methods for analyzing those recordings and the images collected from camera surveys.

Now, you are probably wondering why you have not seen any results from all that work. The truth is that it takes time to gather and analyze enough information to produce useful results in which we can place confidence; additionally, the conditions that affect turkey survival and productivity are different on every study area every year. We now have enough information and the capacity to start producing useful results and hope to start sharing them with the agency biologists, the scientific community, and you by this time next year.



ADCNR personnel in cooperation with Auburn University researchers establish a cannon net site in preparation for capturing turkey on the study areas.

Along the way we encountered several hitches that required us to adjust our methods; after all, it has been nearly 30 years since this type of study was conducted by anyone in Alabama, and never at the scale and scope of this project. For example, prior to the start of the project we tested the use of walk-in traps for turkeys. This is a very successful method for capturing Rio Grande wild turkeys, and has been employed occasionally with some success on Eastern wild turkeys. Over the years, cannon or rocket-propelled nets and drugged baits have been more productive than walk-in traps, but those methods present safety concerns – the narcotic-laced baits used in the 1970s and 1980s are now illegal for use on turkeys. Our initial tests with walk-in traps on Barbour Wildlife Management Area were promising. However, after several months of deploying walk-in traps of numerous designs, we switched exclusively to the use of cannon nets, although we continue to experiment with trapping techniques that are less stressful for turkeys.



Male turkey's captured in a walk-in trap during an active trapping session on J.D. Martin Skyline WMA.



Captured turkey outfitted with a leg band and backpack radio transmitter, released during an active trapping session on the study areas.

We also found that on our study areas, unlike most places across the country, turkeys will not respond to the bait necessary to lure them into capture sites during winter. There are a few possible explanations for this behavior including the high availability of hard (acorns, hickory nuts, etc.) and soft mast (persimmons, black gum drupes, etc.) in well-managed woodlands, and the intense hunting pressure during deer and small game seasons on wildlife management areas in the fall and winter. In any case, we resorted to capturing and marking turkeys in August through October, when nesting is over and poults are large enough to mark. However, the warm temperatures across Alabama this time of year places added stress on turkeys during capture and handling, which affect our results.

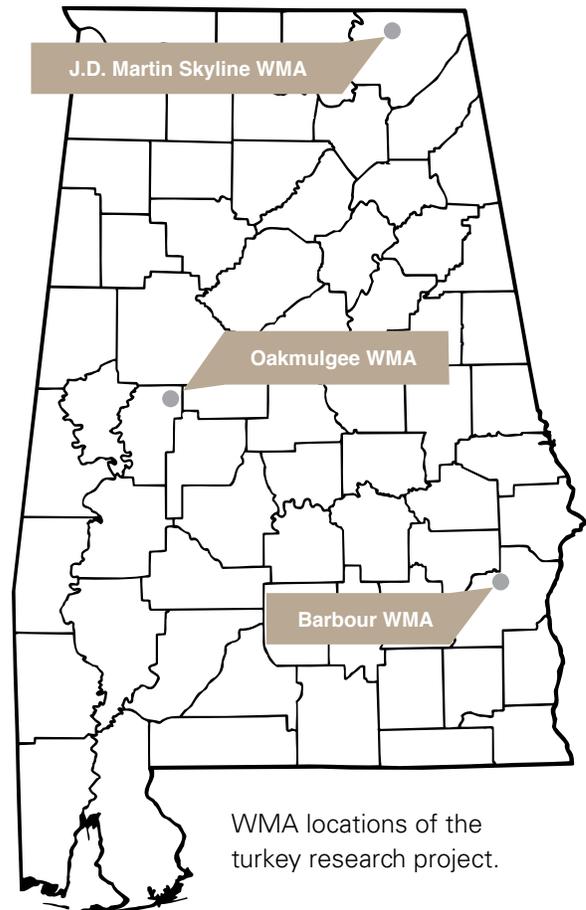
By this time next year, we will have some of the results we need to update the population models developed for Alabama turkeys. Those models could help form future recommendations made to the Conservation Advisory Board by agency biologists. However, some of our results

may only be representative of turkey population dynamics on public lands. This is due to the differences in habitat and predator management and hunting pressure on publicly- and privately-owned areas. Therefore, this winter and for the duration of this project, we will seek written permission to mark and monitor turkey populations from some private land owners. Until now, our work on private lands has largely been limited to monitoring the survival of turkeys marked on WMAs that venture on to private property. Just by listening to the signals emanating from most of the transmitters we place on turkeys we can tell whether they are alive or dead. To thoroughly understand the effects of differences in management on turkey populations, we need to determine the number of poults produced by marked females and compare them to the results of camera and gobbler count surveys.

For more information on participating in this research project, contact James B. Grand - grandjb@auburn.edu, Steve Barnett, or the District Biologist in your area. ✨



ADCNR personnel releasing a captured turkey outfitted with a backpack radio transmitter during an active trapping session. Breathable dark fabric sox's are placed over the turkey's head while banding to calm the birds and reduce stress while handling and are removed just prior to releasing the birds.



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 about the 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 THE ADCNR: Contact Turkey Project Leader Steve Barnett at 251-626-5474 as soon as possible. If you are unable to contact Steve Barnett, please call the Montgomery office at 334-242-3469 or your local ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries District Office. Numbers are available on page 6.

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

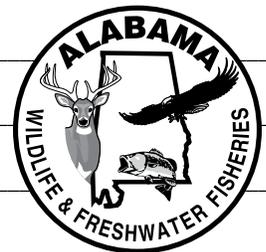
Phone: _____ Email: _____

Date turkey was found: _____ / _____ / _____

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

Description of turkey when found: _____

Additional Comments: _____





Tes Randle Jolly



ALABAMA GAME CHECK

NOW MANDATORY

All hunters are required to participate in Game Check, which will help the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources effectively manage wildlife for generations to come.



THE EASIEST WAYS TO CHECK YOUR HARVEST

- 1 Outdoor Alabama App
- 2 OutdoorAlabama.com

DOWNLOAD THE
APP TODAY!



Learn more at OutdoorAlabama.com/gamecheck

Photo courtesy of the National Wild Turkey Federation