

2015 South Carolina TURKEY HARVEST REPORT



SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT
OF NATURAL RESOURCES
TURKEY RESEARCH & MANAGEMENT PROJECT



DNR

Submitted by
Charles Ruth; Deer & Wild Turkey Program Coordinator

INTRODUCTION

Ranking only behind the white-tailed deer in popularity among hunters, the Eastern wild turkey is an important natural resource in South Carolina. The 2015 Turkey Hunter Survey represents the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Wildlife Section's ongoing commitment to conduct pertinent research related to the state's wild turkey population. The primary objectives of this survey research were to obtain valid estimates of; (1) the statewide spring gobbler harvest in 2015, (2) the harvest of gobblers in the constituent counties of the state, and (3) hunting effort related to turkeys. Information on hunter's opinions of the turkey resource and other aspects of turkey hunting are also presented.

Due to the importance of turkeys as a state resource, DNR believes that accurately assessing the harvest of turkeys, as well as hunter participation in turkey hunting, is key to the management of this species. Proposed changes in turkey-related laws and regulations should have foundations in biology, therefore, the population dynamics associated with annual hunting mortality cannot be ignored. Similarly, when issues arise that do not involve biological parameters, it is important to have information related to turkey hunter activities afield because they too form an important basis for managing wild turkeys.

Since the inception of the Statewide Turkey Restoration and Research Project (Turkey Project) the methods used to document the turkey harvest have changed. Historically, turkey harvest figures were developed using a system of mandatory turkey check stations across the state. This system yielded an actual count of harvested turkey and was, therefore, an absolute minimum harvest figure. Shortcomings in this system included deterioration of check station compliance, complaints from hunters regarding the inconvenience of check stations, and costs associated with the check station system. The requirement to check harvested turkeys in South Carolina was eliminated following the 2005 season. Prior to eliminating the check-in requirement, DNR conducted surveys in order to document the rate of noncompliance, as well as, to determine the relationship between harvest figures obtained from check stations and those obtained from surveys. As would be expected, harvest figures obtained from surveys are higher than those from check stations due to lack of compliance with the check-in requirement.

Survey Methodology

The 2015 Turkey Hunter Survey represented a random mail survey that involved a single mail-out. The questionnaire for the 2015 Turkey Hunter Survey was developed by Wildlife Section personnel (Figure 1). The mailing list database was constructed by randomly selecting 27,000 individuals who received a set of 2015 Turkey Transportation Tags which are required in order to hunt turkeys in South Carolina. Data entry was completed by Priority Data, Inc., Omaha, Nebraska.

Results from the mail survey were corrected for nonresponse bias using data collected during 2008-2013 by Responsive Management of Harrisonburg, Virginia using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview program (CATI).

Statistical analysis was conducted using Statistix 7 (Analytical Software, Tallahassee, FL).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Turkey Harvest

During the 2015 spring season it is estimated that a total of 12,741 adult gobblers and 2,496 jakes were harvested for a statewide total of 15,237 turkeys (Table 1). This figure represents a 6 percent decrease in harvest from 2014 (16,248) and a 40 percent decrease from the record harvest established in 2002 (16,348 check station, 25,487 estimated by survey). The overall reduction in harvest seen since 2002 can likely be attributable to one primary factor, poor reproduction.

Reproduction in wild turkeys has generally been poor over the last decade (Figure 2) leading to a long-term declining harvest trend (Figure 3). Of particular note as it relates to the 2015 season is the fact that reproduction in 2013 was the lowest ever documented since the summer turkey reproduction survey began in 1982. Hunters most frequently have success calling and harvesting 2 year old gobblers and with poor reproduction in 2013 there were simply few 2 year old birds available in 2015. The harvest of adult gobblers in 2015 was down 13 percent from 2014, however, the overall harvest of turkeys was bolstered by a 36 percent increase in the harvest of jakes compared to 2014. The percentage of jakes in the harvest in 2015 was the highest in a number of years. This overall association between changes in reproduction and its effects on harvest are rather remarkable in South Carolina's turkey harvest and reproductive data sets.

Unlike deer, wild turkeys are much more susceptible to significant fluctuations in recruitment. Lack of reproductive success is typically associated with bad weather (cold and wet) during nesting and brood rearing season. On the other hand, habitats are continually changing in South Carolina. Although forest management activities stimulated the growth in South Carolina's turkey population in the 1980s, considerable acreage is currently in even-aged pine stands that are greater than 10 years old, a situation that does not support turkeys as well due to decreases in understory vegetation which is important to nesting and brood rearing.

Harvest Per Unit Area County Rankings

Comparisons can be made between turkey harvests from the various counties in South Carolina if a harvest per unit area is established. Harvest per unit area standardizes the harvest among counties regardless of the size of individual counties. One measure of harvest rate is the number of turkeys taken per square mile (640ac. = 1 mile²). When considering the estimated turkey habitat that is available in South Carolina, the turkey harvest rate in 2015 was 0.7 gobblers per square mile statewide (Table 2). Although this harvest rate is not as high as it once was, it should be considered good and is similar to other Southeastern states. The top 5 counties for harvest per unit area were Cherokee (1.4 turkeys/mile²), Spartanburg (1.2 turkeys/mile²), Pickens (1.2 turkeys/mile²), Anderson (1.1 turkeys/mile²), and Newberry (1.1 turkeys/mile²) (Table 2).

Turkey Harvest Rankings by County

Total turkey harvest is not comparable among counties because there is no standard unit of comparison, i.e. counties vary in size and are, therefore, not directly comparable. However, some readers may be interested in this type of ranking. The top 5 counties during 2015 were Williamsburg, Berkeley, Fairfield, Colleton, and Newberry (Table 3).

Turkey Harvest by Week of Season

Gobbling by male wild turkeys occurs primarily in the spring and is for the purpose of attracting hens for mating purposes. Therefore, spring turkey hunting is characterized by hunters attempting to locate and call gobbling male turkeys using emulated hens calls. With respect to both biology and effective hunting, the timing of the spring gobbler season should take into account three primary factors; peak breeding, peak gobbling, and peak incubation. Considering these factors, seasons can be set to afford hunters the best opportunity to hunt during the best time (i.e. peak gobbling) without inhibiting reproductive success.

South Carolina currently has two spring turkey season frameworks. Throughout most of the state (Game Zones 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) the season is April 1-May1. This season is based on a recommendation from DNR following gobbling and nesting studies that were conducted in the 1970's. The other season framework is March 15-May 1 and is only in effect in Game Zone 6

(lower coastal plain). This season is socio-politically based. For additional information on setting spring turkey season refer to: <http://www.dnr.sc.gov/wildlife/turkey/springseason09.html>.

If seasons are set appropriately, the greatest proportion of turkeys should be harvested during the first week of the season because hens should be laying or nesting resulting in gobblers that are naïve and most responsive to hunter's calls. Harvest by week of season demonstrates that the timing of the April 1 opening season affords higher turkey harvests as most turkeys are harvested during the week following the April 1 opening date (Figure 4). When broken-out by specific season frameworks the results are similar. In areas where the season begins March 15, only 23 percent of the total harvest was accounted for during the first week of the season (Figure 5). This is likely due to the fact that late March is the time of peak breeding and males gobble less because "they are all henned up". On the other hand, 43 percent of the harvest occurred during the first week of the season in areas where the season begins April 1 (Figure 6). This is due to the fact that by the first week in April, a significant number of hens have left the gobblers and begun continuous incubation.

Comparing the first two weeks of each season format, we find that where the season opens March 15, 42 percent of gobblers were harvested while this figure is 65 percent where the season opens on April 1. Finally, the percentage of turkeys harvested in the first week of the season in areas where the season opens April 1 is the same as the percentage of turkeys harvested during the first two weeks of the season in areas where the season opens March 15. Again, this is a reflection of fewer available hens due to nesting and this lack of hens stimulates peak gobbling resulting in hunters being more successful in locating and calling responsive birds. These results have been consistent since this type of data has been available.

Number of Turkey Hunters

Even though all individuals receiving a set of Turkey Transportation Tags were licensed to hunt turkeys, only 54 percent actually hunted turkeys. Based on this figure, approximately 44,205 hunters participated in the 2015 spring turkey season, a 3.8 percent decrease from 2014 (45,949). Counties with the highest estimates for individual hunters include Fairfield, Newberry, Laurens, Union, and Chester (Table 4).

Hunter Effort

For the purposes of this survey hunter effort was measured in days with one day being defined as any portion of the day spent afield. Turkey hunters averaged approximately 5.0 days afield during the 2015 season (Table 4). Successful hunters averaged significantly more days afield (6.8 days) than unsuccessful hunters (4.5 days). Extrapolating to the entire population of turkey hunters yields a figure of 218,258 total days of spring gobbler hunting, down 4 percent from 2014 (227,069 days).

The number of days devoted to turkey hunting in South Carolina is significant and points not only to the availability and popularity of turkeys as a game species, but to the obvious economic benefits related to this important natural resource. Figures generated by a 2003 Survey by the National Wild Turkey Federation estimate that approximately 35 million dollars are added to South Carolina's economy annually from turkey hunting. The top 5 South Carolina counties for overall days of turkey hunting during 2015 were Fairfield, Newberry, Berkeley, Union, and Edgefield counties (Table 4).

Hunting Success

For determination of hunting success only those individuals that actually hunted turkeys were included in the analysis and similarly, success was defined as harvesting at least one turkey. Overall hunting success in 2015 was 26 percent (Figure 7). Unlike deer hunting which typically has high success, turkey hunting can be an inherently unsuccessful endeavor, relatively speaking. As would be expected, the majority of successful hunters take one gobbler (Figure 7). However, the percentage of successful hunters who take two birds is quite high as well. This indicates that successful hunters had nearly the same chance of taking two birds as they did one bird.

The statewide bag limit in South Carolina is five gobblers. Obviously, most successful hunters harvest only one or two birds. However, it is interesting to note the relative contribution to the total harvest of turkeys by the few hunters that harvest many birds. Ironically, the percentage of hunters taking more than 3 birds was only 2.2 percent, however, this small percentage of hunters harvested 25 percent of the total birds taken in the state (Figure 8). These results have been consistent since this type of data has been available.

Hunter Opinion Regarding Turkey Numbers

The 2014 Turkey Hunter Survey asked participants to compare the number of turkeys in the area they hunt most often with the number of turkeys in past years. Participants were given 3 choices; increasing, about the same, or decreasing. Approximately 43 percent of hunters indicated that the number of turkeys in the area they hunted most often was about the same as in past years. A higher percentage of hunters (46%) believed that the turkey population was decreasing than increasing (11%). On a scale of 1 to 3 with 1 being increasing, 2 being the same, and 3 being decreasing, the overall mean rating of 2.3 suggests that hunters viewed the turkey population as decreasing. The opinion among hunters that the turkey population is decreasing is consistent with recent harvest trends and reproductive data.

Turkeys Shot but not Recovered

Harvesting game signals the end of a successful hunt and although most hunters do a good job of preparing their equipment and mental state, it goes without saying that a certain percentage of game is shot or shot at and not killed or recovered. This point is no different when turkey hunting.

In order to estimate the prevalence of errant shots at turkeys, the 2015 Turkey Hunter Survey asked hunters to indicate the number of turkeys that they “shot but did not kill or recover during the 201 season in South Carolina”. Approximately 9.9 percent of hunters indicated that they shot but did not kill or recover at least one turkey in 2015 (10.8% in 2014). There were approximately 44,205 turkey hunters in 2015 meaning that approximately 4,365 turkeys were shot or shot at and not killed or recovered. Therefore, approximately 22 percent of the total number of turkeys shot at were not killed or recovered. These results have been consistent since this type of data has been available.

This data is certainly not indicative of “dead and unrecovered turkeys”, however, it is clear that some percentage of the 4,365 turkeys that were shot at did eventually die. Although shot shells for turkeys have become increasingly sophisticated, accurate, and lethal it is a fact that the pattern of a shotgun is relatively broad and contains between 200 and 400 pellets. Therefore, a “clean miss” is not as clear-cut for turkeys compared to other big game like deer where there is typically a single projectile. Additional research is needed on this topic.

Turkey Harvest in the Morning VS. Afternoon

The typical spring turkey hunt is characterized by attempting to locate a gobbling bird prior to or just after sunrise. Once a gobbler is located most hunters position themselves as close as they can to the gobbler without scaring it away. Various types of callers that mimic the sounds of wild turkeys are then used to attempt to call the gobbler into gun range. This technique of locating a gobbling bird, setting-up, and calling is repeated as necessary.

Traditionally, spring turkey hunting was primarily carried out during the first few hours of the day. As the popularity of turkey hunting has increased, many hunters now hunt in the afternoon as well. Gobblers are generally not as vocal in the afternoon but they can be stimulated to gobble using the various turkey calls, particularly late in the afternoon near areas where turkeys frequently roost.

In order to gain a better understanding of the distribution of harvest with respect to time of day, the 2015 Turkey Hunter Survey asked hunters to identify the number of birds harvested in the morning compared to the afternoon. Results indicate that approximately 75 percent of gobblers were harvested in the morning compared to 25 percent in the afternoon. This data may be useful if discussions arise concerning the relative importance of morning compared to afternoon harvest of gobblers in the spring. These results have been consistent since this type of data has been available.

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Table 1. Estimated statewide turkey harvest in South Carolina in 2015.

County	Acres*	Square Miles	Gobbler Harvest	Jake Harvest	Total Harvest	Percent Jakes	Harvest Rates	
							Ac/Turkey	Turkey/Mi. ²
Abbeville	223,113	349	246	69	315	21.9	708.3	0.9
Aiken	500,546	782	145	49	194	25.3	2580.1	0.2
Allendale	216,455	338	178	20	198	10.1	1093.2	0.6
Anderson	219,068	342	307	84	391	21.5	560.3	1.1
Bamberg	196,573	307	190	25	215	11.6	914.3	0.7
Barnwell	281,764	440	106	13	119	10.9	2367.8	0.3
Beaufort	147,441	230	106	16	122	13.1	1208.5	0.5
Berkeley	567,530	887	587	86	673	12.8	843.3	0.8
Calhoun	190,584	298	113	30	143	21.0	1332.8	0.5
Charleston	288,732	451	391	60	451	13.3	640.2	1.0
Cherokee	156,664	245	268	81	349	23.2	448.9	1.4
Chester	300,589	470	335	81	416	19.5	722.6	0.9
Chesterfield	372,478	582	251	55	306	18.0	1217.2	0.5
Clarendon	298,087	466	239	56	295	19.0	1010.5	0.6
Colleton	502,666	785	509	73	582	12.5	863.7	0.7
Darlington	286,228	447	113	19	132	14.4	2168.4	0.3
Dillon	214,069	334	95	12	107	11.2	2000.6	0.3
Dorchester	302,717	473	352	40	392	10.2	772.2	0.8
Edgefield	246,543	385	341	70	411	17.0	599.9	1.1
Fairfield	384,607	601	520	86	606	14.2	634.7	1.0
Florence	397,888	622	358	73	431	16.9	923.2	0.7
Georgetown	399,638	624	369	29	398	7.3	1004.1	0.6
Greenville	294,257	460	352	61	413	14.8	712.5	0.9
Greenwood	204,400	319	229	44	273	16.1	748.7	0.9
Hampton	324,840	508	378	54	432	12.5	751.9	0.9
Horry	533,336	833	347	57	404	14.1	1320.1	0.5
Jasper	309,889	484	201	36	237	15.2	1307.5	0.5
Kershaw	360,485	563	240	71	311	22.8	1159.1	0.6
Lancaster	266,382	416	190	68	258	26.4	1032.5	0.6
Laurens	317,916	497	408	87	495	17.6	642.3	1.0
Lee	220,106	344	119	54	173	31.2	1272.3	0.5
Lexington	280,742	439	44	15	59	25.4	4758.3	0.1
McCormick	212,021	331	201	26	227	11.5	934.0	0.7
Marion	216,907	339	132	28	160	17.5	1355.7	0.5
Marlboro	281,271	439	67	23	90	25.6	3125.2	0.2
Newberry	317,761	497	469	89	558	15.9	569.5	1.1
Oconee	284,348	444	235	38	273	13.9	1041.6	0.6
Orangeburg	504,516	788	486	60	546	11.0	924.0	0.7
Pickens	219,926	344	330	77	407	18.9	540.4	1.2
Richland	340,121	531	179	40	219	18.3	1553.1	0.4
Saluda	192,173	300	190	58	248	23.4	774.9	0.8
Spartanburg	265,939	416	402	91	493	18.5	539.4	1.2
Sumter	338,968	530	215	39	254	15.4	1334.5	0.5
Union	258,111	403	285	103	388	26.5	665.2	1.0
Williamsburg	513,851	803	673	55	728	7.6	705.8	0.9
York	276,650	432	250	95	345	27.5	801.9	0.8
Total	14,028,896	21,920	12,741	2,496	15,237	16.4	920.7	0.7

95% Conf. Interval for harvest

(+) 1,405 (+) 442 (+) 1,494

* Acreage shown represents the acreage of forested land and acreage of row crops considered to be significant turkey habitat within each county.

Table 2. County rankings based on turkey harvested per unit area in South Carolina in 2015.

County	Acres*	Square Miles	Gobbler Harvest	Jake Harvest	Total Harvest	Percent Jakes	Harvest Rates	
							Ac/Turkey	Turkey/Mi. ²
Cherokee	156,664	245	268	81	349	23.2	448.9	1.4
Spartanburg	265,939	416	402	91	493	18.5	539.4	1.2
Pickens	219,926	344	330	77	407	18.9	540.4	1.2
Anderson	219,068	342	307	84	391	21.5	560.3	1.1
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Table 3. County rankings based on total turkeys harvested in South Carolina in 2015.

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Table 4. Estimated number of turkey hunters, average days hunted, and total hunting effort in South Carolina in 2015.

County	Total Harvest	Number Hunters	Avg. Days Hunted	Total Man/Days
Abbeville	315	1,254	4.5	5,586
Aiken	194	944	4.0	3,792
Allendale	198	672	5.4	3,629
Anderson	391	1,397	4.4	6,134
Bamberg	215	687	4.9	3,365
Barnwell	119	430	4.2	1,815
Beaufort	122	264	4.2	1,117
Berkeley	673	1,427	6.1	8,700
Calhoun	143	589	4.0	2,383
Charleston	451	1,080	5.3	5,674
Cherokee	349	657	5.8	3,819
Chester	416	1,435	5.2	7,448
Chesterfield	306	967	5.2	5,037
Clarendon	295	755	4.3	3,230
Colleton	582	1,178	6.1	7,238
Darlington	132	468	4.8	2,228
Dillon	107	219	5.7	1,239
Dorchester	392	763	5.8	4,442
Edgefield	411	1,322	5.7	7,556
Fairfield	606	1,994	5.0	9,912
Florence	431	959	4.7	4,550
Georgetown	398	740	4.6	3,372
Greenville	413	1,103	4.9	5,349
Greenwood	273	906	4.7	4,266
Hampton	432	1,012	6.1	6,202
Horry	404	891	4.4	3,920
Jasper	237	634	5.9	3,731
Kershaw	311	1,004	4.5	4,550
Lancaster	258	816	4.6	3,717
Laurens	495	1,684	4.2	7,062
Lee	173	702	4.4	3,060
Lexington	59	340	3.7	1,253
McCormick	227	914	5.1	4,678
Marion	160	423	4.3	1,815
Marlboro	90	363	4.5	1,639
Newberry	558	1,881	5.0	9,492
Oconee	273	921	5.8	5,335
Orangeburg	546	1,269	4.8	6,066
Pickens	407	1,012	4.8	4,855
Richland	219	823	4.5	3,710
Saluda	248	861	5.0	4,272
Spartanburg	493	1,405	4.3	5,978
Sumter	254	937	4.8	4,502
Union	388	1,465	5.5	8,016
Williamsburg	728	1,329	4.3	5,681
York	345	1,307	5.2	6,845
Total	15,237	44,205	5.0	218,258

Figure 1. South Carolina Department of Natural Resources 2015 Turkey Hunter Survey.

2015 South Carolina Turkey Hunter Survey

- Did you turkey hunt in SC this past season (2015)? **1. Yes 2. No**
If you answered **No** to this question please **go to question # 8.**
- Did you harvest any turkeys in SC this past season? **1. Yes 2. No**
- Even if you did not harvest a turkey, please record the SC counties you turkey hunted and the number of days hunted in each county this past season (2015). If you harvested turkeys please record the number of adult gobblers and jakes taken in each county. A day of hunting is defined as any portion of the day spent afield. Please do not give ranges (i.e. 5-10), rather provide absolute numbers (i.e. 5). Provide information only for yourself - not friends, relatives, or other people you may have called or guided for. See the diagram below if you are unsure how to determine an adult gobbler or "longbeard" from a juvenile gobbler or "jake".



**HELP MANAGE
TURKEYS IN S.C.
COMPLETE YOUR
HUNTER SURVEY**

DNR



TURKEY HUNTER SURVEY
SCDNR
PO BOX 167
COLUMBIA SC 29202-0167
www.dnr.sc.gov

SC Counties You Turkey Hunted	# Days Hunted	Number Turkeys Harvested
1		Adult gobblers _____ Jakes _____
2		Adult gobblers _____ Jakes _____
3		Adult gobblers _____ Jakes _____
4		Adult gobblers _____ Jakes _____
5		Adult gobblers _____ Jakes _____

If you did not harvest any turkeys in SC this past season please go to question 6.

- If you harvested turkeys in SC this past season, please indicate as best you can the number of turkeys killed by week of season.

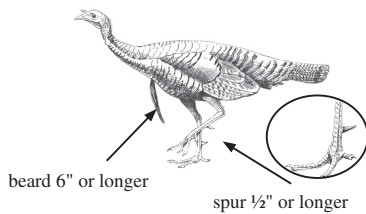
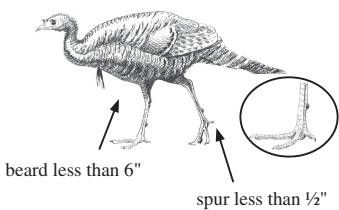
Week of Season	# Turkeys Harvested	Week of Season	# Turkeys Harvested
1 March 15-22		4 April 8-14	
2 March 23-31		5 April 15-21	
3 April 1-7		6 April 22-May 1	

- How many turkeys did you kill in the morning _____ after 12:00 noon _____?
- How many turkeys did you shoot but not kill or recover in SC this past season? _____
- Compared to past years, how would you describe the number of turkeys in the area that you hunted most often this spring? **Circle one**
1. Increasing 2. About the same 3. Decreasing
- Are you a resident of SC? **1. Yes 2. No**
- If yes, which county _____

Separate and return this portion of the survey. Postage is prepaid. Please do not staple this form.

Juvenile "Jake"

Adult "Gobbler"



**PRESORTED
FIRST CLASS
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PERMIT 535**

Figure 1. continued

May, 2015

Dear Sportsman:

Eastern wild turkeys are one of the most important game species in South Carolina. Therefore, it is important that this species be monitored for population status and harvesting activities. Wildlife resource managers require current and accurate information about wild turkey harvests to aid in successfully managing this important natural resource and to optimize future hunting potential. To obtain this needed data, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) is conducting a survey of hunters who received a set of turkey tags during spring 2015.

You are one of a group of randomly selected hunters asked to participate in this survey. To draw accurate conclusions it is very important that you complete the survey and return it. Please take time to read each question. Even if you did not hunt wild turkeys this spring please indicate this by answering the appropriate questions and moving on to the next set of questions.

Please note that complete confidentiality will be given to you. There is no number on your survey form, therefore, there is no way to link your responses to you. Keep in mind that the purpose of the survey is to determine the wild turkey harvest in South Carolina and not to determine whether game laws are observed. By accurately answering the survey questions you will enable SCDNR biologists to better manage the Eastern wild turkey resource for you and other citizens of the state. Therefore, it is very important that you take a few minutes to complete this survey and mail it. Return postage is prepaid.

Results of this survey will be posted on the SCDNR web site once completed. The results from the 2014 survey can be found at: www.dnr.sc.gov/wildlife/turkey/2014TurkeyHarvest.html

Thank you for your assistance.

Charles Ruth
Wildlife Biologist
Deer/Turkey Project Supervisor

PLEASE MAIL YOUR SURVEY AFTER SEPARATING THIS HALF FROM THE SIDE ON WHICH YOUR ANSWERS HAVE BEEN ENTERED. NO POSTAGE IS NECESSARY.

If you have questions regarding this survey, please call 803-734-3886 or write 2015 Turkey Hunter Survey, SCDNR, P.O. Box 167, Columbia, SC 29202.

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, disability, religion or age. Direct all inquiries to the Office of Human Resources, P.O. Box 167, Columbia, SC 29202

15-10437



**TURKEY HUNTER SURVEY
SC DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PO BOX 167
COLUMBIA SC 29202-9976**

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
FIRST CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO 1371 COLUMBIA SC
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Figure 2. Summer wild turkey recruitment ratio in South Carolina 1982-2014. Recruitment ratio is a measure of young entering the population based on the number of hens in the population. Note declining trend since 1988. Average recruitment prior to 1988 = 3.5. Average recruitment since 1988 = 2.2. This represents a 37 percent decrease.

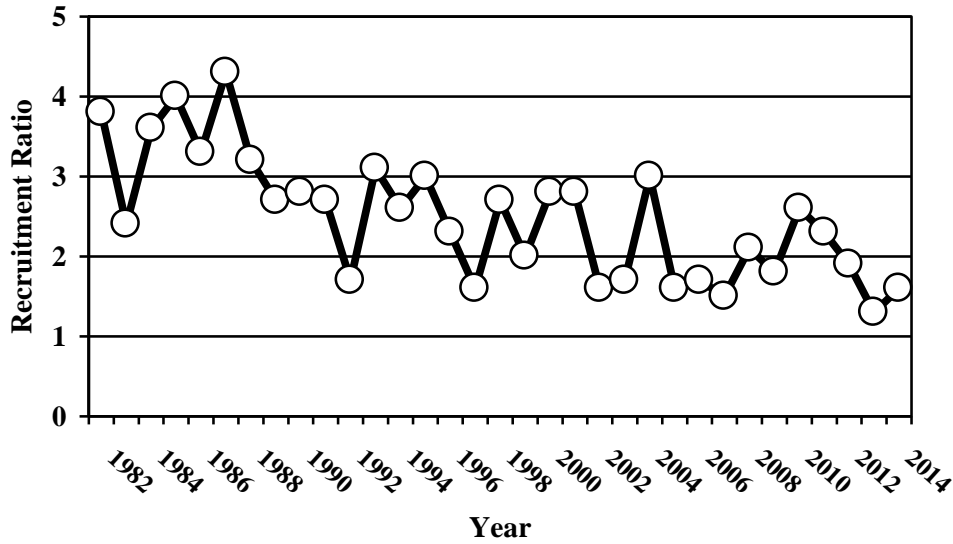


Figure 3. Spring wild turkey harvest in South Carolina 1982-2015. Note declines in harvest associated with years of poor recruitment (Fig. 2 above) and improved harvests associated with years of improved recruitment.

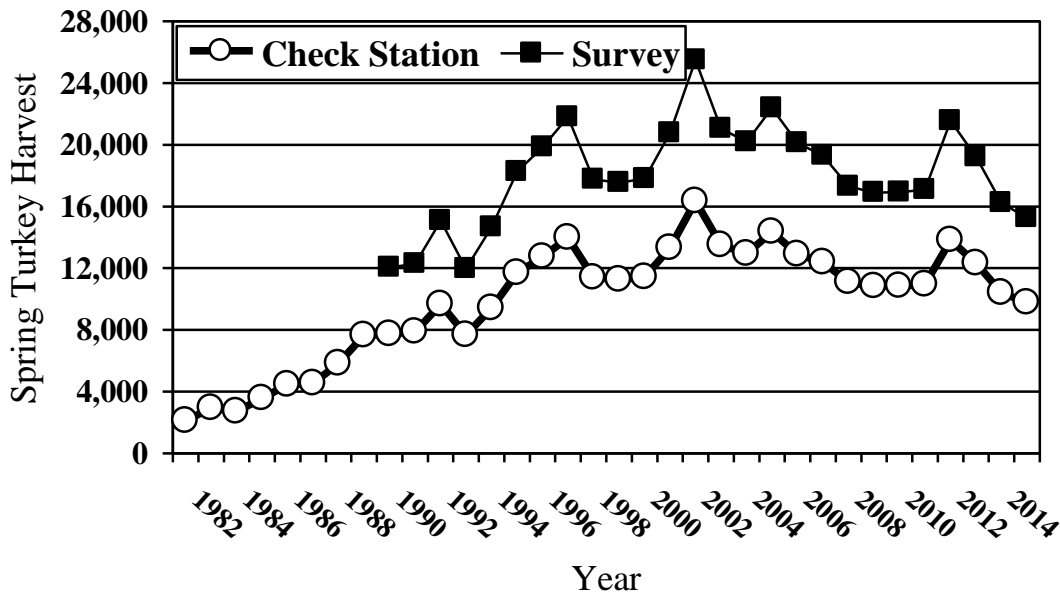


Figure 4. Percentage of gobblers harvested by week of season in South Carolina in 2015.

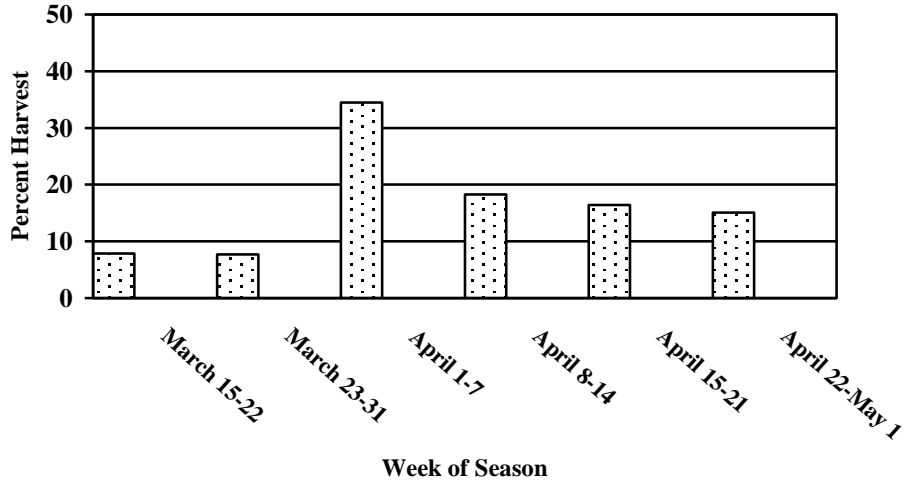


Figure 5. Percentage of gobblers harvested by week in areas with March 15-May 1 season.

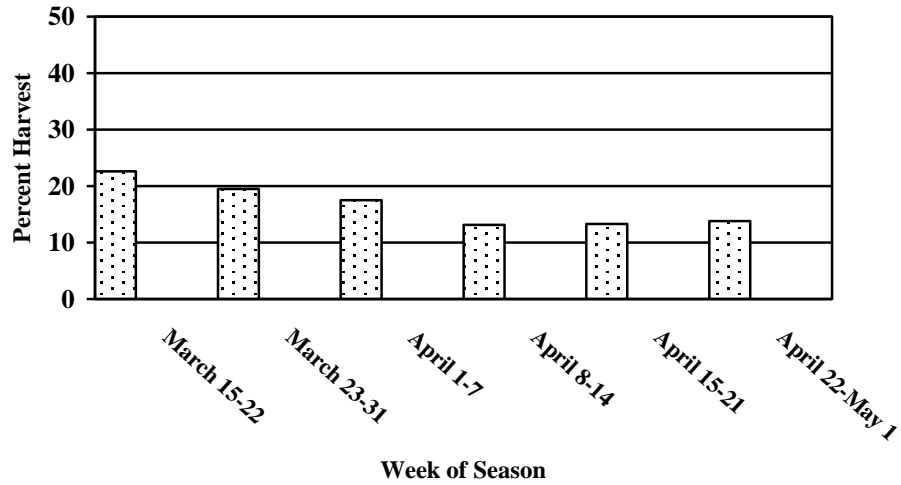


Figure 6. Percentage of gobblers harvested by week in areas with April 1-May 1 season.

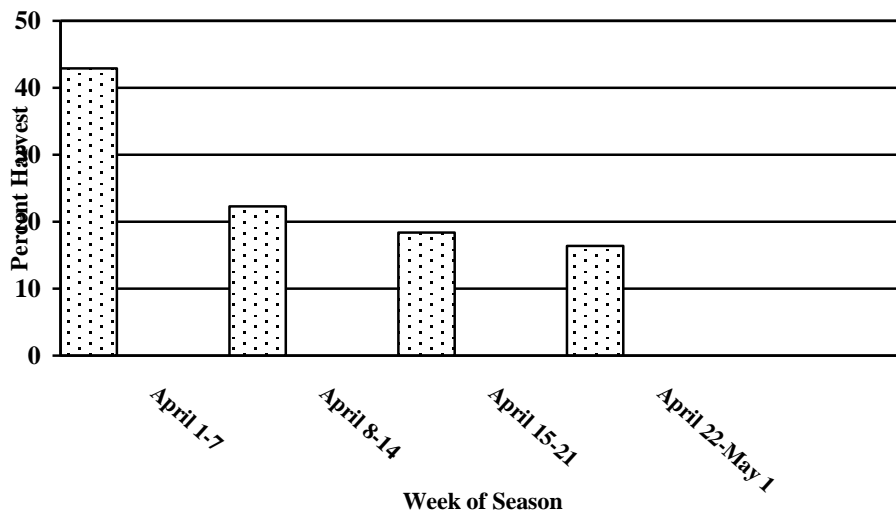


Figure 7. Hunter success during the spring turkey season in South Carolina in 2015. Overall success was 26 percent at harvesting at least one gobbler.

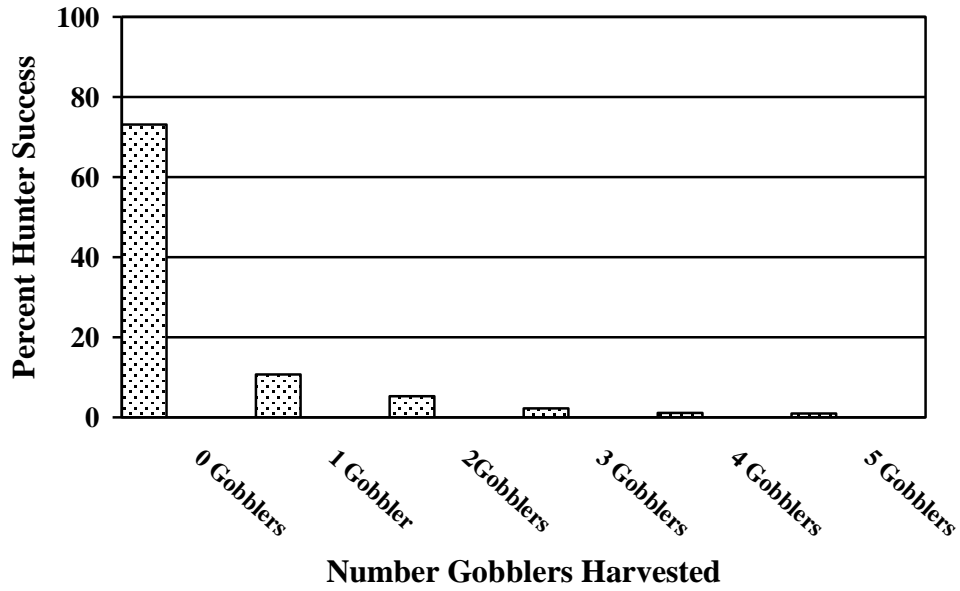


Figure 8. Relative contribution to the total turkey harvest by hunters taking between 1 and 5 gobbler in South Carolina in 2015. Hunters taking more than 3 birds accounted for 25% of total statewide harvest.

