



2015 VERMONT WILDLIFE HARVEST REPORT – WILD TURKEY



VERMONT

FISH & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

(802) 828-1000 / www.vtfishandwildlife.com



Most of the programs described in this report are funded through the *Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program*. This program was initiated in 1937 as the Federal Aid in Wildlife Act and created a system whereby taxes are paid on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment by the public who hunts. Today this excise tax generates over a hundred million dollars each year that are dedicated to state wildlife restoration and management projects across the United States. The State of Vermont uses these monies for acquiring land, and for restoring and managing wildlife. These excise tax dollars, coupled with state hunting license fees, have been the predominant source of money funding the successful restoration and management of Vermont's wildlife resources.

2015 Vermont Wild Turkey Harvest Report

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The MISSION of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont.

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

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2015 Wild Turkey Report

Wild Turkey Population Status

Vermont's wild turkey population was estimated at 45,000 to 60,000 birds in the fall of 2015. Wild turkeys occur throughout the state and are hunted in all 21 Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) during the spring and fall seasons. Examination of long-term trends of harvest and hunter effort suggests that

Vermont's turkey population may have recently stabilized following a fairly dramatic population increase from the mid-1990s through 2008. However, with the exception of 2013, wild turkey populations in Vermont have experienced a slow decline since 2008 (Figures 1 and 2). The reasons for these declines are unknown at this time but could be related to stabilizing population levels after reintroduction, shifts in climate, disease, or other unknown causes.

Department staff conduct a brood survey during August and September. The results of the survey are important in tracking annual poult production in the population, as winter severity and spring weather conditions influence chick survival and overall population size. The wild turkey brood Production Index (PI) is the total poults/total adult hens (poults:hen ratio) compiled from the August data. In 2015, the statewide ratio was 3.1 poults:hen (PI). Results of the August brood surveys indicate that overall production was slightly above the rolling 3-year average of 2.9 (2012-2014).



FIGURE 1. TOTAL SPRING WILD TURKEY HARVEST SHOWING DECLINING TREND.

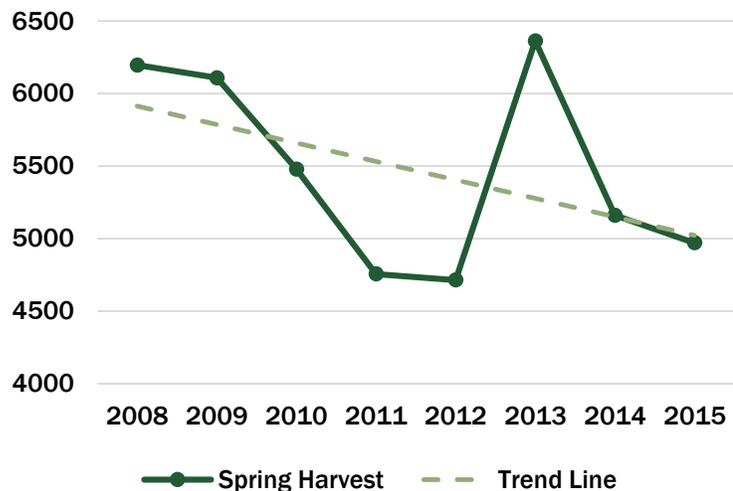
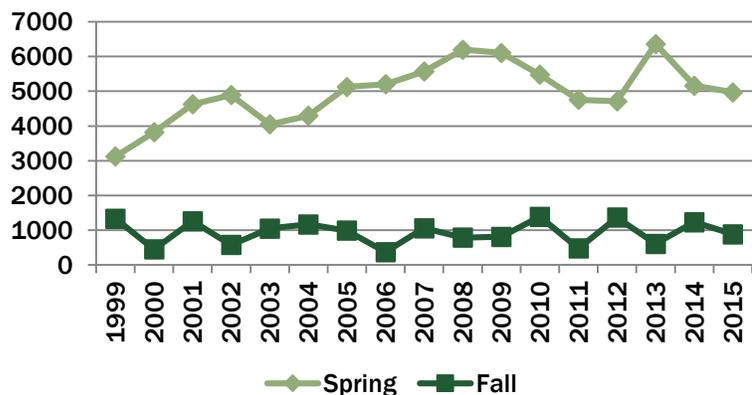


FIGURE 2. TOTAL WILD TURKEY HARVEST TRENDS BY SEASON IN VERMONT. SPRING NUMBERS INCLUDE YOUTH WEEKEND HARVEST.



2015 Harvest

A total of 17,655 turkey licenses were purchased for the spring and fall turkey seasons, leading to an annual harvest of 5,856 wild turkeys. Of those, 5,306 were bearded turkeys, including bearded females. Turkeys were harvested statewide in all 21 WMUs (Figure 3). The majority of turkeys were harvested during the regular spring season (76 percent). The 2015 fall season harvest of 886 either-sex birds was below the rolling 3-year average of 1,068.

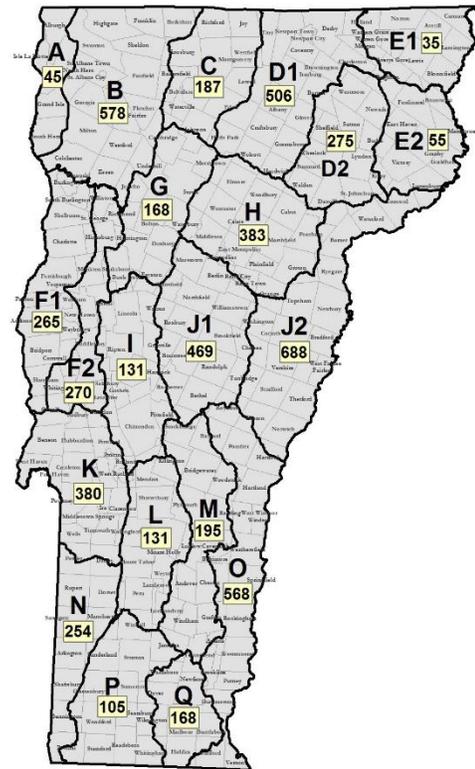
During the 2-day spring youth season, young hunters accompanied by older mentors harvested 510 bearded turkeys (Table 1) and enjoyed a success rate of 23 percent. Refinement of license sales reported in 2014 for more accurate youth weekend license totals has resulted in a lower calculated success rate than that of previous years.

Vermont allows only half-day hunting during both the youth season and the regular spring season. The youth season is the last weekend in April, the regular spring season is through the month of May, while the fall season occurs as either a 9-day or a 16-day season in October with the length varying by WMU. The bag limit is 2 bearded birds in the spring and 1 bird of any sex in the fall. Harvest registration is mandatory for all successful turkey hunters.

Spring Turkey Season Summary

Vermont's 2015 spring seasons resulted in a harvest of 4,970 bearded birds, which is below the rolling 3-year average of 5,413. The 2015 spring figure includes the 510 turkeys taken during the April youth turkey hunting weekend (Tables 1 and 3). The youth season contribution to the total spring turkey harvest was 10 percent, a

FIGURE 3. 2015 TURKEY HARVEST BY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UNIT



similar harvest proportion to that seen in 2014. Resident hunters took 93 percent of the total spring harvest.

Hunter success rates remained high in 2015 at 30% (or 30 turkeys harvested for every 100 licensed hunters). As in most years, an impressive 26 percent of successful hunters also harvested a second bearded bird to fill the 2-bird regular spring season bag limit. Hunting pressure in 2015, measured in terms of spring turkey license sales sold by June 1, 2015 (16,511), was slightly higher than the rolling 3-year average of 16,251 licenses.

TABLE 1. 2015 SPRING TURKEY HARVEST BY SEASON AND RESIDENCY

Season	Non-Resident	Resident	Total
Youth Turkey Season	8	502	510
Regular May Season	364	4,096	4,460
TOTAL	372	4,598	4,970

Adult turkeys comprised 61 percent of the total spring harvest, which is slightly higher than the rolling 3-year average of 63 percent. The 2015 spring seasons also included 30 bearded hens in the tally (Table 2). Birds were harvested in 239 of Vermont's 253 towns, 3 fewer towns than were reported for 2014 (Appendix).

Connecticut River had the highest harvest with 561 birds reported. The second highest harvest came from WMU B in the northern Champlain Valley with 514 birds reported. Lastly, WMU O in the southern Connecticut River Valley had the third highest harvest with 492 birds reported.

Wild turkeys were harvested in all of Vermont's 21 WMUs during the spring seasons (Table 3), including those whose boundaries were adjusted in 2014. Wildlife Management Unit J2 along the

TABLE 2. SEX AND AGE OF TOTAL SPRING 2015 HARVEST

Sex	Adult	Immature	Unknown	Total
Bearded Female	26	3	1	30
Male	3,007	1,925	8	4,940
TOTAL	3,033 (61%)	1,928 (38%)	9	4,970

TABLE 3. 2015 SEASON HARVEST BY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UNIT

WMU	Mi ² of Habitat	Spring Youth	Regular Spring	Fall Archery	Fall Shotgun	Total Harvest	Spring Harvest Per Mi ² of Harvest***
A	32	2	43	0	—	45	1.14
B	407	56	458	19	45	578	1.26
C	349	20	165	1	1**	187	0.53
D1*	446	54	329	12	111	506	0.86
D2*	345	37	183	3	52	275	0.64
E1*	305	1	34	0	—	35	0.11
E2*	325	6	46	1	2**	55	0.16
F1	103	29	204	4	28	265	2.26
F2	154	26	205	3	36	270	1.50
G	360	12	134	6	16	168	0.41
H*	464	31	289	9	54	383	0.69
I	405	10	109	3	9	131	0.29
J1	462	34	344	13	78	469	0.82
J2*	630	55	506	9	118	688	0.89
K*	354	27	282	6	65	380	0.87
L	343	8	102	5	16	131	0.32
M*	423	15	157	4	19	195	0.41
N	173	21	202	3	28	254	0.82
O*	475	39	453	14	62	568	1.04
P	444	10	86	2	7	105	0.22
Q*	218	17	218	2	20	168	0.67
TOTAL	7,320	510	4,460	119	767	5,856	—

*indicate WMU boundary changed in 2014

**indicates possible illegal harvest

***calculation based on total of youth and regular spring harvest

In conjunction with WMU boundary adjustments, updated analysis of land cover was also conducted in 2014 to model available turkey habitat

TABLE 4. 2015 REGULAR SPRING AND YOUTH SEASON HARVEST BY COUNTY

County	Adult	Immature	Unknown	Total
Addison	208	216	0	424
Bennington	184	91	0	275
Caledonia	273	142	2	417
Chittenden	166	92	0	258
Essex	54	41	0	95
Franklin	267	200	1	468
Grand Isle	27	18	0	45
Lamoille	143	93	0	236
Orange	325	198	1	524
Orleans	219	159	2	380
Rutland	291	165	1	457
Washington	212	171	2	385
Windham	255	132	0	387
Windsor	409	210	0	619
TOTAL	3,033	1,928	9	4,970

based on the new WMU boundaries. Based on these updates, WMU F1 recorded the highest density of turkeys taken with 2.26 bearded turkeys harvested per square mile of forested habitat (Table 3).

Windsor County led among Vermont counties in 2015 with the highest harvest number reported (619 birds) followed by Orange County (524 birds), and Franklin County (468 birds). (Table 4).

Management strategies for wild turkeys in Vermont continue to emphasize high quality spring hunting. The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department believes this management strategy has helped stimulate a three-fold population increase over the history of the turkey project, resulting in an impressive string of record harvests.

Fall

Turkey Season Summary

The 2015 fall season resulted in a harvest of 886 either-sex turkeys, below the rolling 3-year average of 1,068 (Table 3). The fall harvest accounted for 17 percent of the overall harvest for 2014. The lower than average fall harvest may be a reflection of a variable mast production year. Overall, the fall mast crop was not as productive as in past years. However, soft mast production such as apples and berries was excellent, and southern Vermont saw better beechnut production than other parts of the state.

The 2014 fall archery-only season accounted for 119 (13 percent) of the fall harvested birds, with the balance of the birds (767) taken in the shotgun season. Fall birds were taken in 184 Vermont towns. Wildlife Management Unit J2 reported the highest number of fall birds with 127 taken, followed by WMU D1 with 123

birds, and J1 with 91 (Table 3). The region of the state with a 9-day season harvested 0.13 birds per square mile of habitat, while the region of the state open for a 16-day season reported a harvest of 0.22 birds per square mile of habitat (Table 5). The archery-only portion of the state (open for a 21-day season) harvested very few birds per square mile of habitat (0.01).

Immature birds comprised 47 percent of the fall hunting season harvest, while the female cohort accounted for 31 percent of the fall harvest (Figure 4). The adult female to immature ratio for the fall harvest was 1:1.11. A total of 195 adult males were taken in the fall season and 3,007 adult males taken in the spring season, for a total of 3,202 adult male birds in all of 2015.

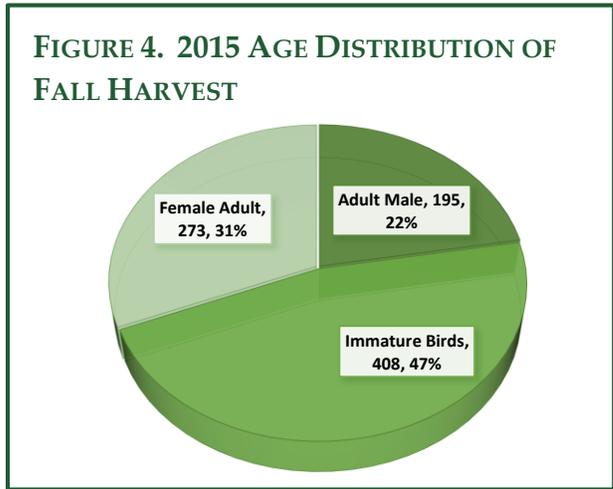


TABLE 5. 2015 FALL HARVEST BY SQUARE MILE AND SEASON LENGTH

Region (WMUs)	Season Length	Birds Harvested Per Mi ² Habitat
F ₁ , F ₂ , K, and N	16-day season	0.22
B, D ₁ , D ₂ , G, H, I, J ₁ , J ₂ , L, M, O, P, and Q	9-day season	0.13
Archery-only A, C, E ₁ , and E ₂	21-day season	0.01



APPENDIX. HARVEST BY TOWN (SPRING 2015 AND FALL 2015)

County	Town	Spring 2015 Harvest	Fall 2015 Harvest	Town Total
ADDISON	Addison	27	8	35
	Bridport	20	1	21
	Bristol	26	5	31
	Cornwall	28	2	30
	Ferrisburgh	35	2	37
	Goshen	8	0	8
	Granville	6	0	6
	Hancock	5	1	6
	Leicester	24	7	31
	Lincoln	17	0	17
	Middlebury	28	4	32
	Monkton	25	1	26
	New Haven	35	7	42
	Orwell	29	1	30
	Panton	10	11	11
	Ripton	1	0	1
	Salisbury	18	7	25
	Shoreham	38	4	42
	Starksboro	23	6	29
	Vergennes	3	0	3
	Waltham	3	1	4
	Weybridge	7	4	11
	Whiting	8	3	11
	TOTAL	424	65	489
BENNINGTON	Arlington	17	3	20
	Bennington	35	5	40
	Dorset	21	1	22
	Landgrove	3	0	3
	Manchester	14	0	14
	Peru	5	0	5
	Pownal	40	2	42
	Readsboro	18	2	20
	Rupert	39	0	39
	Sandgate	16	2	18
	Searsburg	3	0	3
	Shaftsbury	34	7	41
	Stamford	7	0	7
	Sunderland	10	0	10
Winhall	3	0	3	

APPENDIX. HARVEST BY TOWN (SPRING 2015 AND FALL 2015)

County	Town	Spring 2015 Harvest	Fall 2015 Harvest	Town Total
BENNINGTON (cont.)	Woodford	10	0	10
	TOTAL	275	22	297
CALEDONIA	Barnet	39	9	48
	Burke	17	4	21
	Danville	42	15	57
	Groton	34	4	38
	Hardwick	38	21	59
	Kirby	17	3	20
	Lyndon	37	16	53
	Newark	5	0	5
	Peacham	24	9	33
	Ryegate	47	19	66
	St. Johnsbury	26	6	32
	Sheffield	13	2	15
	Stannard	2	1	3
	Sutton	16	3	19
	Walden	18	6	24
	Waterford	32	10	42
	Wheelock	9	6	15
	TOTAL	416	134	550
CHITTENDEN	Bolton	13	0	13
	Charlotte	26	2	28
	Colchester	9	6	15
	Essex	14	3	17
	Hinesburg	28	5	33
	Huntington	17	1	18
	Jericho	8	1	9
	Milton	46	9	55
	Richmond	27	0	27
	St. George	1	4	5
	Shelburne	7	1	8
	Underhill	14	1	15
	Westford	26	5	31
	Williston	22	2	24
	TOTAL	258	40	298
ESSEX	Bloomfield	5	0	5
	Brighton	16	2	18

APPENDIX. HARVEST BY TOWN (SPRING 2015 AND FALL 2015)

County	Town	Spring 2015 Harvest	Fall 2015 Harvest	Town Total
ESSEX (cont.)	Brunswick	4	0	4
	Canaan	3	0	3
	Concord	10	4	14
	East Haven	3	0	3
	Ferdinand	1	0	1
	Guildhall	11	1	12
	Lemington	2	0	2
	Lunenburg	22	0	22
	Maidstone	5	0	5
	Norton	9	0	9
	Victory	4	0	4
	TOTAL	95	7	102
	FRANKLIN	Bakersfield	18	1
Berkshire		36	7	43
Enosburg		47	0	47
Fairfax		31	4	35
Fairfield		51	7	58
Fletcher		26	1	27
Franklin		45	4	49
Georgia		30	4	34
Highgate		62	2	64
Montgomery		19	0	19
Richford		23	0	23
St. Albans		23	2	25
Sheldon		34	3	37
Swanton		23	0	23
TOTAL		468	35	503
GRAND ISLE	Alburgh	17	0	17
	Grand Isle	5	0	5
	North Hero	12	0	12
	South Hero	11	0	11
	TOTAL	45	0	45
LAMOILLE	Belvidere	1	0	1
	Cambridge	39	6	45
	Eden	25	1	26
	Elmore	12	1	13
	Hyde Park	37	7	44

APPENDIX. HARVEST BY TOWN (SPRING 2015 AND FALL 2015)

County	Town	Spring 2015 Harvest	Fall 2015 Harvest	Town Total
LAMOILLE (cont.)	Johnson	37	2	39
	Morristown	36	9	45
	Stowe	31	6	37
	Waterville	8	0	8
	Wolcott	10	8	18
	TOTAL	236	40	276
ORANGE	Bradford	38	12	50
	Braintree	35	8	43
	Brookfield	30	8	38
	Chelsea	28	4	32
	Corinth	33	4	37
	Fairlee	11	1	12
	Newbury	55	20	75
	Orange	12	4	16
	Randolph	38	10	48
	Strafford	19	0	19
	Thetford	40	7	47
	Topsham	33	7	40
	Tunbridge	47	6	53
	Vershire	18	0	18
	Washington	17	1	18
	West Fairlee	16	1	17
	Williamstown	55	19	74
TOTAL	525	112	637	
ORLEANS	Albany	17	5	22
	Barton	34	3	37
	Brownington	15	15	30
	Charleston	29	13	42
	Coventry	17	5	22
	Craftsbury	34	11	45
	Derby	25	7	32
	Glover	37	10	47
	Greensboro	27	8	35
	Holland	13	1	14
	Irasburg	21	3	24
	Jay	11	0	11
	Lowell	14	3	17
	Morgan	15	2	17

APPENDIX. HARVEST BY TOWN (SPRING 2015 AND FALL 2015)

County	Town	Spring 2015 Harvest	Fall 2015 Harvest	Town Total
ORLEANS (cont.)	Newport	43	9	52
	Troy	15	1	16
	Westfield	7	0	7
	Westmore	6	1	7
	TOTAL	380	97	477
RUTLAND	Benson	28	9	37
	Brandon	20	1	21
	Castleton	25	5	30
	Chittenden	23	1	24
	Clarendon	34	1	35
	Danby	27	6	33
	Fair Haven	7	1	8
	Hubbardton	9	1	10
	Ira	7	0	7
	Killington	6	0	6
	Mendon	4	1	5
	Middletown Springs	18	5	23
	Mount Holly	19	8	27
	Mount Tabor	3	1	4
	Pawlet	39	11	50
	Pittsfield	4	0	4
	Pittsford	31	8	39
	Poultney	27	6	33
	Proctor	2	2	4
	Rutland	11	9	20
	Shrewsbury	11	1	12
	Sudbury	12	0	12
	Tinmouth	23	4	27
	Wallingford	16	6	22
	Wells	14	5	19
	West Haven	20	5	25
	West Rutland	17	6	23
TOTAL	457	103	560	
WASHINGTON	Barre	36	7	43
	Berlin	43	9	52
	Cabot	29	12	41
	Calais	24	3	27
	Duxbury	8	2	10

APPENDIX. HARVEST BY TOWN (SPRING 2015 AND FALL 2015)

County	Town	Spring 2015 Harvest	Fall 2015 Harvest	Town Total
WASHINGTON (cont.)	East Montpelier	44	8	52
	Fayston	4	0	4
	Marshfield	27	4	31
	Middlesex	17	4	21
	Montpelier	9	2	11
	Moretown	14	2	16
	Northfield	21	4	25
	Plainfield	22	3	25
	Roxbury	9	3	12
	Waitsfield	9	2	11
	Warren	15	3	18
	Waterbury	30	5	35
	Woodbury	10	0	10
	Worcester	14	1	15
		TOTAL	385	74
WINDHAM	Athens	2	2	4
	Brattleboro	15	2	17
	Brookline	4	1	5
	Dover	14	3	17
	Dummerston	23	1	24
	Grafton	16	6	22
	Guilford	29	5	34
	Halifax	20	5	25
	Jamaica	13	1	14
	Londonderry	12	3	15
	Marlboro	9	0	9
	Newfane	26	3	29
	Putney	18	0	18
	Rockingham	44	11	55
	Somerset	1	0	1
	Stratton	11	0	11
	Townshend	26	1	27
	Vernon	24	5	29
	Wardsboro	6	0	6
	Westminster	20	2	22
Whitingham	14	3	17	
Wilmington	26	7	33	
Windham	14	0	14	
	TOTAL	387	61	448

APPENDIX. HARVEST BY TOWN (SPRING 2015 AND FALL 2015)

County	Town	Spring 2015 Harvest	Fall 2015 Harvest	Town Total
WINDSOR	Andover	6	1	7
	Baltimore	6	1	7
	Barnard	12	2	14
	Bethel	26	0	26
	Bridgewater	12	2	14
	Cavendish	19	3	22
	Chester	41	7	48
	Hartford	26	7	33
	Hartland	44	4	48
	Ludlow	16	0	16
	Norwich	28	7	35
	Plymouth	19	4	23
	Pomfret	42	3	45
	Reading	16	1	17
	Rochester	24	5	29
	Royalton	16	3	19
	Sharon	21	4	25
	Springfield	68	15	83
	Stockbridge	23	1	24
	Weathersfield	50	9	59
	West Windsor	32	1	33
	Weston	12	2	14
	Windsor	28	5	33
Woodstock	32	9	41	
	TOTAL	619	96	715
UNKNOWN	TOTAL	0	0	0
STATE TOTAL		4,970	886	5,856