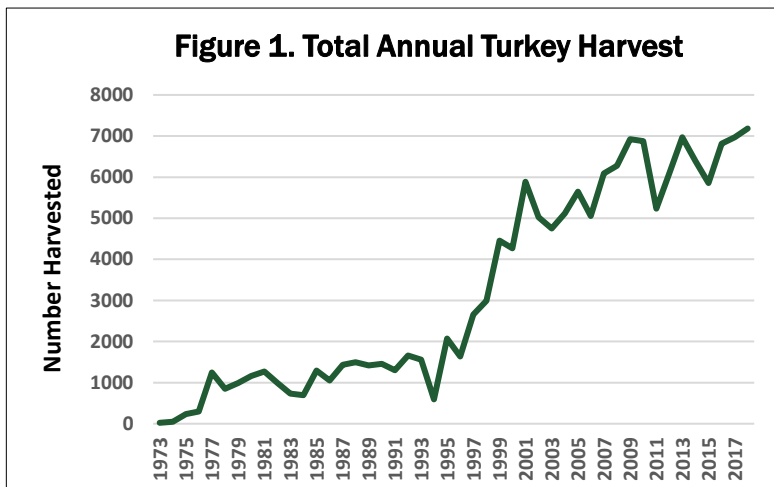




2018 Wild Turkey Summary



Vermont’s wild turkey population was estimated to be in excess of 45,000 birds in the fall of 2018. Examination of long-term trends of harvest and hunter effort data suggests that Vermont’s turkey population may have recently stabilized following a dramatic population increase from the mid-1990s through 2008 (Figure 1). The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department continues to monitor the turkey population using hunter-sourced data and brood production indices as detailed below.



Turkey Harvest Summary

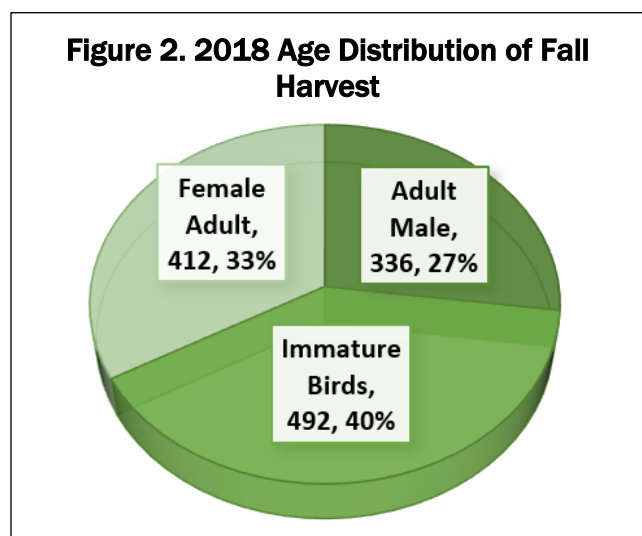
A total of 17,495 turkey licenses were purchased in 2018 for the youth, spring, and fall turkey seasons combined leading to a total annual harvest of 7,182 wild turkeys (Table 1) – the highest total annual turkey harvest ever recorded. As in previous years, the majority (75%) of wild turkeys were harvested during the regular spring season. Although the percentage of turkeys taken during the regular spring season closely approximated the previous 10-year average, fall harvested birds accounted for a higher proportion of the total harvest while youth season birds accounted for less. Spring turkey hunters experienced a 23% success rate overall and an impressive 40% of spring hunters harvested two birds. During the 2-day youth season, youth hunters enjoyed a 27% success rate harvesting 525 bearded turkeys. The 2018 fall season (shotgun and archery combined) harvest of 1,304 either-sex birds was a significant increase from the previous year (367) and was near a record high (1,391 in 2010). The increased fall harvest was likely in part a result of the excellent brood rearing conditions experienced in the spring and early summer, as discussed further below, and the near absence of fall food sources (e.g., acorns, seeds) which may have influenced the harvest susceptibility of fall birds foraging in more visible

Table 1. 2018 Turkey Harvest per Season

Season	Number of Turkeys Harvested	Percent of Total Harvest	Percent of Total Harvest Previous 10-year Average (2008-2017)
Youth	525	7.3%	10.3%
Spring	5,353	74.5%	75.4%
Fall Total	1,304	18.2%	14.3%
Total Harvest	7,182	100%	100%

areas. Despite the higher harvest, an evaluation of sex and age ratios of fall harvested birds indicates a stable population structure with indices closely approximating long-term trends (Figure 2).

Figure 2. 2018 Age Distribution of Fall Harvest



Turkeys were harvested in all 21 WMUs and in 243 of Vermont's 253 towns. WMUs J2 continued to lead the state in having the highest total numbers of turkeys harvested (Table 2) while WMUs F1 and F2 continued to report the highest harvest densities (turkeys harvested per mile² of habitat).

2017 Brood Production Index

Cold temperatures and excessive precipitation in May and June can negatively affect nest success and brood survival. Department staff conduct an annual wild turkey brood survey during August and September in order to assess the influence of weather on poult production and chick survival, and to help predict and explain harvest trends. The turkey brood Production Index (PI) is the ratio of total poults observed by survey participants to the total number of adult hens. In 2018, the statewide PI was 3.29 poults/hen indicating good to excellent

brood production compared to the previous 3-year average of 2.64 (2015-2017). While average daily temperatures throughout May and June were near long-term averages, below average precipitation during these months likely benefitted newly hatched broods. An evaluation of PI values per county revealed that Franklin, Washington and Windham counties experienced the highest poult production and chick survival during 2018).

Beginning in 2017, the legal shooting hours for the youth season were expanded from half day (one-half hour before sunrise to noon) to full day (one-half hour before sunrise to 5PM). During the 2018 youth season, ten percent (54) of the total harvest was taken during the expanded hours (noon through 5PM). Like the previous year, turkeys were harvested with relative consistency throughout the extended hours of the youth season (Figure 3).

Table 2. 2018 Season Harvest by Wildlife Management Unit

WMU	Spring Youth	Regular Spring	Fall Archery	Fall Shotgun	Total Harvest	Spring Harvest per Mi ² of Habitat
A	3	25	0	0	28	0.88
B	70	488	21	64	643	1.37
C	11	136	2	0	149	0.42
D1	55	367	15	133	570	0.95
D2	40	213	5	80	338	0.73
E1	2	43	3	0	48	0.15
E2	7	67	0	0	74	0.23
F1	35	207	4	15	261	2.35
F2	29	231	8	66	334	1.69
G	7	126	10	60	203	0.37
H	32	353	15	79	479	0.83
I	5	135	9	37	186	0.35
J1	32	460	28	146	666	1.06
J2	63	611	17	133	824	1.07
K	31	405	11	55	502	1.23
L	8	146	5	22	181	0.45
M	11	245	10	51	317	0.61
N	27	264	3	19	313	1.07
O	38	589	27	82	736	1.32
P	9	99	9	24	141	0.25
Q	10	143	5	31	189	0.70
TOTAL	525	5,353	20	1,097	7,182	

