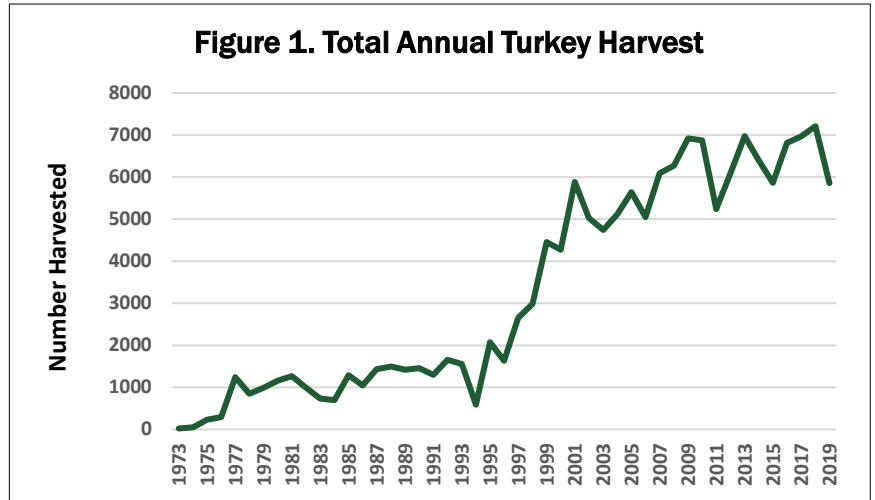




2019 Wild Turkey Summary



Vermont’s wild turkey population was estimated to be in excess of 45,000 birds in the fall of 2019. Examination of long-term trends of harvest and hunter effort data suggests that Vermont’s turkey population has 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.



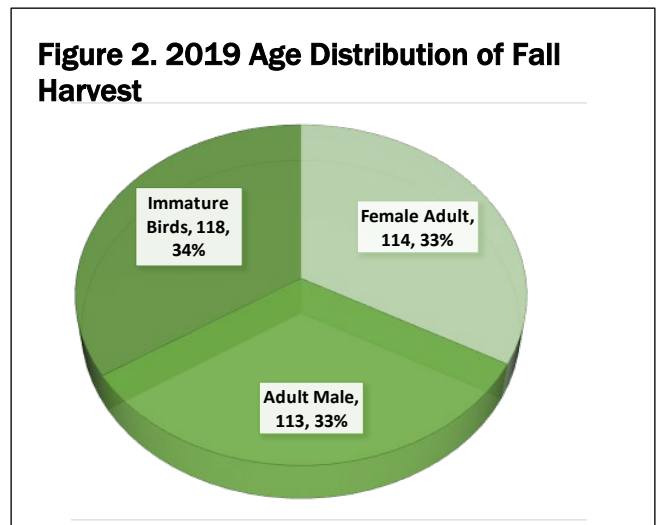
Turkey Harvest Summary

A total of 16,967 turkey licenses were purchased in 2019 (not including permanent licenses) for the youth, spring, and fall turkey seasons combined leading to a total annual harvest of 5,851 wild turkeys (Table 1). Consistent with recent trends, turkeys taken during the youth weekend accounted for 10% of the total annual harvest while the majority (84%) of birds were harvested during the regular spring season. Spring turkey hunters experienced a 24% success rate overall and an impressive 34% of successful spring hunters harvested two birds. During the 2-day youth season, youth hunters enjoyed a 30% success rate harvesting 579 bearded turkeys. The 2019 fall season (shotgun and archery combined) harvest of 355 either-sex birds was significantly less than the previous year (1,304) and was the lowest recorded fall harvest since 1996 (295). The decline in fall harvest was likely in part a result of the poor brood rearing conditions experienced in the spring and early summer, as discussed further below, and the abundant fall food sources (i.e. acorns, seeds, etc.) which may have influenced the harvest susceptibility of fall birds. Despite the lower harvest, an evaluation of sex and age ratios of fall harvested

Table 1. 2019 Turkey Harvest per Season

Season	Number of Turkeys Harvested	Percent of Total Harvest	Percent of Total Harvest Previous 10-year Average (2009-2018)
Youth	579	10%	10%
Spring	4,917	84%	75%
Fall Total	355	6%	15%
Total Harvest	5,851	100%	100%

Figure 2. 2019 Age Distribution of Fall Harvest



birds indicates a stable population structure with indices closely approximating long-term trends (Figure 2).

turkeys were harvested in all 21 WMUs and in 240 of Vermont's 253 towns. WMUs B, O and 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).

2018 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 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 2019, the statewide PI was 2.06 poults/hen indicating poor brood production compared to the previous 3-year average of 2.73 (2016-2018). In fact, the 2019 statewide PI was the lowest ever recorded since the inception of the survey in 2005. The lower than normal temperatures and higher than normal precipitation experienced in May and June apparently had the expected impact on brood production and survival as evidenced by this record

low PI. Although an evaluation of PI values across the state revealed that Franklin, Lamoille and Windham counties experienced better than average brood production in 2019, the observed PI values for the majority of the state were well below the 3.0 threshold that is considered indicative of an average brood production year. (Figure 3).

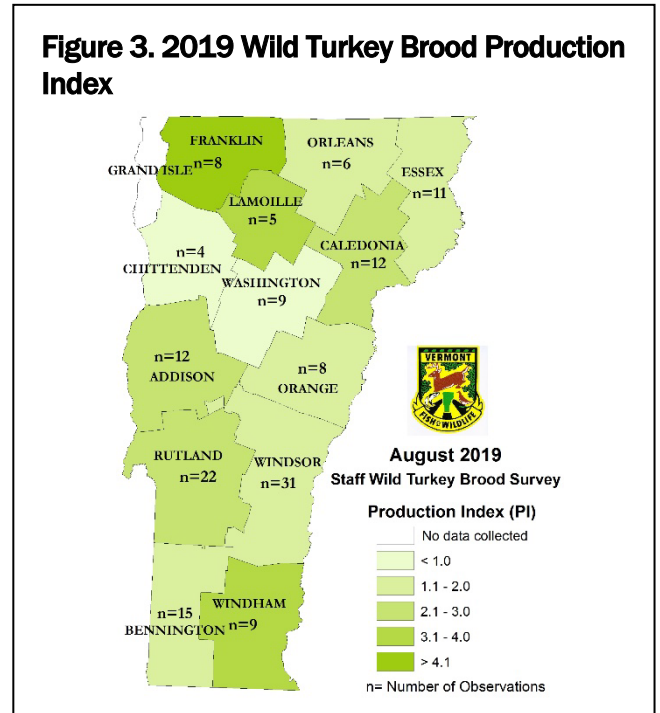


Table 2. 2019 Season Harvest by Wildlife Management Unit

WMU	Spring Youth	Regular Spring	Fall Archery	Fall Shotgun	Total Harvest	Spring Harvest per Mi ² of Habitat
A	2	40	0	0	42	1.31
B	80	540	15	17	652	1.52
C	26	153	3	0	182	0.51
D1	51	320	4	37	412	0.83
D2	29	201	5	39	274	0.67
E1	2	37	0	0	39	0.13
E2	6	62	3	0	71	0.21
F1	33	228	3	12	276	2.53
F2	33	230	2	9	274	1.71
G	15	123	2	7	147	0.38
H	28	309	5	29	371	0.73
I	10	110	1	1	122	0.30
J1	37	425	7	26	495	1.00
J2	69	492	11	35	607	0.89
K	34	337	6	11	388	1.05
L	8	116	1	5	130	0.36
M	11	217	0	6	234	0.54
N	36	231	2	11	280	0.98
O	40	524	10	19	593	1.19
P	11	90	0	4	105	0.23
Q	18	132	1	6	157	0.69
TOTAL	579	4,917	78	277	5,851	

