Since 1987 the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) has sought the assistance of avid spring gobbler hunters to participate in this long-term survey that provides important information for the Department’s wild turkey management program. Furthermore, the survey provides an excellent platform to explore hunter attitudes and opinions regarding spring hunting. The survey also provides a lot of information that many hunters find useful, and at times, opportunities to share good laughs and the miracles of nature. This year will mark the 33rd anniversary of the Spring Gobbler Season (SGS) survey, and special thanks are extended to those individuals who have participated since the survey began and others who have participated for many years.

As a token of appreciation for your participation in the 2019 Spring Gobbler Hunter Survey, the Department provides cooperators with a copy of our Virginia Wildlife Calendar. If you participated last year and did not receive a calendar, please contact Katie Martin at katie.martin@dgif.virginia.gov. Sometimes cooperators forget to include their mailing address or sometimes surveys are damaged in the mail such that names and/or addresses are missing. Thanks to Jimmy Poole, VDGIF Volunteer, for summarizing your comments and remarks (see Appendix 1).

Results and Discussion

The number of survey cooperators in 2019 (222) decreased slightly from 2018 (225). Cooperators in the 2019 survey submitted information on 2,837 hunts, about the same as 2018 (2,845 hunts). The geographic distribution of survey respondents was good, as reports were submitted from 93 counties and cities.

Statewide Gobbling and Harvest Rates

The average number of gobblers heard per hour declined 7% compared to 2018 (Table 1). The 2019 gobbling rate was 18% below the 7-year average (Table 1).

The average number of birds killed per hour increased 5% compared to 2018 (Table 1). The 2019 harvest rate was 12% below the 7-year survey average (Table 1). The decline in gobbling and harvest rates was similar to the decrease in the statewide harvest of gobblers reported through the electronic checking system since 2013 (-7%).

Gobbling rates have been declining 1.7% annually over the past 10 years ($P = 0.045$, Fig. 2). Harvest rates are also showing a downward annual rate (-2.3%) that is statistically significant ($P = 0.036$). The primary cause in the recent decline in the turkey population is believed to be below-average reproduction (Fig. 3). Poul/hen ratios have been below-average since 2014 (Fig 3).

Research has shown that harvest rates are a better population index than gobbling rates. Monitoring both gobbling and harvest rates is recommended, given the importance of gobbling to hunters while harvest rates reflect population status and trends.

Gobbling and Harvest Rates by Region

In 2019, gobbling rates were slightly higher in counties east of the Blue Ridge Mountains (0.42) than west of the Blue Ridge Mountains (0.39; Table 2). Since 2013, average gobbling rates have been higher in EBR (0.51) counties than WBR (0.47).
Table 1. Statewide gobbling (gobbles/hour) and harvest rates (kill/100 hours) in Virginia from 2013-19.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gobbling/Hour</th>
<th>Kill/100 Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015*</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2015* was record statewide harvest.

EBR and WBR harvest rates were identical (2.2) in 2019. However, harvest rates over the past 7-years have been higher in EBR (2.5) than WBR (2.2) counties (Table 2). The 2019 harvest rate in EBR counties was below the regions 7-year average (2.2 vs. 2.5). However, 2019 WBR harvest rates were the same as the regions 7-year average (2.2; Table 2).

Table 2. Gobbling and harvest rates by region of the state from 2013-19.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gobbling Rate (heard/hour)</th>
<th>Harvest Rate (killed/100 hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EBR</td>
<td>WBR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For this report, six physiographic regions were used to investigate estimates at smaller spatial scales (Fig. 1). Gobbler hunters in the Tidewater Region (0.46) and Western Piedmont (0.45) heard more birds per hour than other regions of the state in 2019 (Fig. 4). The second tier of regions included the Northern (0.40) and Southwest (0.39). The Eastern Piedmont (0.37) and Central Mountain (0.35) rounded out the balance of the regions in 2019. Readers can see gobbling rates over the past 4 years in Figure 4.

Within regions, gobbling rates were higher in 2019 than 2018 in the Tidewater and Western Piedmont Regions. Gobbling was down in other regions in 2019 when compared to recent years (2016-19, Fig. 4).

Harvest rates (kill/100 hrs) increased in the Tidewater, Western Piedmont, and Southwest Regions (Fig. 5). Little change in harvest rates were seen in the Northern and Central Mountain Regions, while a decline was seen in the Eastern Piedmont Region (Fig. 5).

Gobbling and Harvest Rates by Week and Day

Gobbling rates (heard/hour) were higher during the first three weeks of the season while harvest rates (kill/hour) were higher in Weeks 3 and 5. Gobbling rates in 2019 were highest on opening day, April 13, with subsequent peaks on April 24, May 1, May 14, and May 17-18 (Fig. 7). Gobbling rates were similar between counties East and West of the Blue Ridge Mountains (Fig. 8).
Harvest rates (kill/100 hours) were high at the beginning of the season; they did a roller-coaster ride changing direction about every 5-7 days. Mirroring gobbling rates, there was a mid-season spike in harvest rates around 5/1, and after another a late season decline, harvest rates peaked finally on 5/13 – 5/14. Clearly, there is hope for late season hunters.

Gobbling Intensity

Gobbling intensity was grouped into three categories (No Gobbling, Roost/Poor, or Fair-Good; Figure 9). Throughout the five-week season, more than 46 percent of hunts were reported as Roost/Poor, 26% were rated as Fair-Good, and 27% of hunts ended with no gobbling. These ratings are nearly identical to last year.

Fair-Good gobbling peaked in week 3. Roost/Poor gobbling generally declined through the season while no gobbling peaked in the last two weeks of the season.

Cooperator Profile

Cooperators averaged hunting nearly 13 days. Hunters reported hearing 4,327 gobblers for an average of 19 birds per hunter. Cooperators or their partner killed 8 percent of birds they heard.

Cooperators primarily hunt on private lands (85%). Many hunted on federal (USFS, Military) lands (10%), while about 5% hunted on state-owned (DGIF, State Forests, Parks) lands. Gobbling was better on private lands (0.43 gobbles/hour) than on state (0.35) or federal lands (0.37). Harvest rates were higher on private lands (2.4 killed/100 hours) than on state (1.1) or federal (1.5) lands.

Most cooperators did not scout before the season; however, those who did averaged scouting 3.2 days before the season opener. A majority of cooperators (51%) passed up at least one jake (juvenile gobbler) in the 2019 season.

There were 5 Sundays during the 2019 season (excluding Youth and Apprentice weekend). Sunday participation in 2019 was modest, accounting for 8% of all the hunts taken, just like in 2018. Unlike last year, however, most of this effort in 2019 took place on the second and third Sundays (most Sunday hunting in 2018 took place on the first Sunday). Poor weather during the first Sunday of the 2019 season likely influenced this difference.

Most (69%) cooperators did not take a youth hunting during the Youth/Apprentice weekend, for several reported reasons: they did not know any eligible youth to take (74%), did not have enough time (15%), considered the weather a problem (6%), were not interested (3%), or were uncomfortable taking a youth (2%).

Most cooperators (64%) only hunted during the spring season. Of those cooperators who hunted in both fall and spring seasons, many (44%) hunted during the January season. The average number of fall hunts taken was 5.0. Those who hunted in the January season went 2.6 days in 2019.

Cooperators averaged seeing 1.5 other hunters during the 2019 spring season and indicated that the number of other hunters they encountered has remained stable (47%) or increased (28%). Only 13% reported seeing fewer spring hunters.

Cooperator Opinions and Miscellaneous Results

The 2019 spring gobbler survey once again included a questionnaire for cooperating hunters to express their opinions about turkey populations, attributes of the season, or hunting opportunities they pursued.

Decoys remain popular as most (68%) cooperators used them. The most popular set up was a Jake with one (62%) or Jake with two hens (32%). A few cooperators carried three (5%) or four (1%) hens. Some cooperators used gobbler decoys (16%). Many (42%) cooperators used decoys in fields, some in the woods (14%), or both (44%). Crow (46%) and owl (43%) were the most popular locator calls cooperators used. Peacock (5%) and a variety of other calls (6%) were also reported.

Although many cooperators (54%) roosted gobblers, the balance of cooperators had differing opinions on roosting gobblers. About 19% indicated roosting typically does not work for them while 14% have found roosting helpful. Some (14%) have never tried roosting.
Most cooperators (81%) did not travel over-night to hunt other parts of the state. Some (10%) travel 1-2 nights, while the balance (8%) travel 3+ nights to hunt. Some cooperators (14%) hunted DGIF Wildlife Management Areas; the average distance traveled to WMAs was 44 miles.

Most cooperators hunted only in Virginia (77%). Cooperators did travel to hunt easterns in other states (14%), Merriam’s (4%), Rio Grande (2%), Gould’s (1%) and Florida (1%) birds. Approximately half (51%) of survey cooperators hunted familiar areas in 2019 and did not hunt new locations. Of those who explored new area; 33% of them went to private lands, 9% tried out federal owned lands, and 7% went to state-owned lands.

Cooperators expressed that reproduction in their areas was about the same (32%) or declined (38%) since 2018. A few (3%) reported that reproduction increased from the previous year.

The most popular shotgun gauge cooperators used was 12 gauge (87%). Some used 20 gauge (7%), 10 gauge (3%), 16 gauge (1%) or 410 (1%). Six percent of cooperators reported using smaller gauge shotguns last year because of the advent of tungsten shot.

West Nile virus was introduced in Virginia around the year 2000. The virus affects a number of birds including ruffed grouse, crows, hawks and owls but has not been shown to impact turkey populations to date. Most cooperators in 2019 indicated crow populations in their areas were generally average (65%) or above average (16%). Only 10% of cooperators indicated crow populations were below average.

Feral cats have been shown to feed on a number of young birds. Fortunately, most (77%) cooperators did not see any free-ranging cats while hunting turkeys. However, some cooperators (19%) did see 1-2 cats and fewer (4%) saw 3 or more cats.

Cooperators rated the 2019 spring gobbler season as follows: excellent (20%), good (33%), fair (21%), poor (24%), and no opinion (2%). These ratings were about the same as 2018. The best ratings in recent years came in 2017: excellent (27%), good (34%), fair (24%), poor (14%), and no opinion (1%).

Cooperators reported observing nine dead turkeys in 2019, the same as 2018. The worst year for turkey mortalities was in 2017 when 22 dead turkeys were reported.

Thank You!

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this survey and I hope you find it useful and interesting. Amazingly, a few cooperators have participated in the spring gobbler survey since the beginning in 1987. I sincerely appreciate their dedication! I also cannot thank enough the good number of cooperators with 15, 20, or 25+ years of participation in the survey.

Best wishes to you for a safe and enjoyable spring season in 2020. I will be retiring April 1 so I may see you in the woods! I have been honored to be your Forest Game Bird Project Leader. I sincerely appreciate your and the Department’s support over the years. I have had the great privilege of working with and meeting many great people with a keen interest in wild turkeys, ruffed grouse, and wildlife conservation. Please continue to support this survey, the new Forest Game Bird Project Leader, and DGIF.
Figure 1. Regional boundaries for Virginia Spring Gobbler Season Survey.

Figure 2. Gobbling and harvest rates per hour reported by Virginia Spring Gobbler Season cooperators, 2009-19.
Figure 3. Turkey poult/hen ratio and 2007-2019 average poult/hen ratio in Virginia from 2007-2019 as observed by Department staff in routine fieldwork.

Figure 4. Gobbling rates (heard per hour) by region in Virginia, 2016-19.
Figure 5. Harvest rates (killed/100 hours) of gobblers by region in Virginia, 2016-19.

Figure 6. Gobbling (heard/hour) and harvest (killed/100 hours) rates reported in 2019 in Virginia.
Figure 7. Moving averages of daily gobbling rates (heard/hour) and harvest rates (killed/100 hours) in Virginia, 2019.

Figure 8. Gobbling by counties that are east and west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, 2019.
Figure 9. Percentage of spring gobbler hunts for intensity category by week in Virginia in 2019.
Appendix A. Cooperator observations and comments from 2019 season. Numbers following comment are Cooperator’s ID Number. Comments on rifles are not included nor questionnaires without names.

WEATHER
Good: 1964, 9341
Bad or not very good: 9999, 9999
Warm: 6931
Wet or cold spring: 1831, 3080, 6415
Rainy: 2338, 6202, 4336, 6355, 3057, 0753
Windy: 1964
Unusual weather: 7612, 6789
Fog: 6415

GOBBLING
Good: 4023, 9401, 0137
Fair: 6931, 4341, 6918, 3877, 6415
Poor: 5927, 9713, 8070, 9336, 5992, 1153, 1305, 7943, 1171, 1470, 2198, 0472, 9219, 9472, 6352, 4796, 5186
Less than before: 5927, 0929, 9713, 4408, 9602, 0198, 8041, 8646, 0776, 9999, 7000, 5615, 2719, 8511
Gobbled on roost then not on ground: 9999, 1062, 1548, 2719
Gobbled on ground: 6855
Gobbling early in morning: 9777
Gobbled late in morning: 6855
Toms silent coming in: 5337
No gobbling first week: 2174
Gobbled good first week: 1717
Gobbled good second week: 9880
Gobbled good 2-3 weeks: 3877
Gobbled good first 2 weeks: 8507
Gobbled none during season: 1002
Gobbled less at end of season: 2959, 1470, 9999, 8507, 5526
Gobbled more at end of season: 1831, 0783
Gobbled little before season: 6918
Gobbled good before season: 1717, 7042, 6415
Gobbled little on public lands: 5469
Gobbling varied in intensity: 8607
Gobbled none in some areas: 8947

POPULATION
Population down or low: 9588, 4796, 9401, 0487, 2339, 9341, 9864, 5036, 8511, 4756, 3080, 1927, 1647, 1153, 1964, 7612, 2198, 8947, 0873, 5429, 9999
Lots of jakes: 9777, 0584, 9341, 5321, 9161, 1927, 9999
Few jakes: 4023, 9880, 1927, 0776, 8511, 9999
Few gobblers: 9588
Populations OK: 9999, 9159, 1755, 9999, 1608, 1776, 0137, 6415
Plenty of hens: 9159, 3394, 3080, 6415, 8854
Very few or not many hens: 1171, 0472, 9999, 7612
More hens than gobblers: 7766
SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Need column for jakes: 2592, 4408, 7943
Enjoyed survey: 1007, 6415
Did not receive survey: 6951
Keep doing surveys and early surveys: 3416, 4948, 0198, 6415
Category for fog: 3825, 6415

LIKED SEASON OR NOT

Enjoyed the season: 2626, 1717, 4189, 9472, 6406, 3353
Good season: 1831, 3707, 9341, 6918
Difficult: 9336
Worst Season: 9999, 1339, 8964, 7825, 5339, 2719, 8501, 4716

THANK YOU

Thanks Gary Norman for good work: 8854, 9851, 4539, 1411, 9999, 1627, 7921, 3475, 0487, 7612, 1002, 3353, 5434, 9336, 0349, 2157, 2450, 9159, 2592, 8964, 6342, 2929, 2765, 6415, 1608, 0753, 7000, 4408, 5036, 5461, 5321, 6631, 0456, 0076, 5761
Thanks Gary Norman, VDGIF & NWTF: 9999
Thanks VDGIF: 1706, 6415, 7191, 5599, 5927, 4517, 5223, 9072, 4517, 5593, 1007, 1305, 6631, 1831, 6352, 6931, 1755, 7000, 9588, 4408, 3748, 9999, 6164, 5599, 0349, 0929, 2765, 3877, 6342, 5469
Good turkey management plan: 3825, 0137, 6415
VGDIF is doing a great job for disabled veterans: 6415
Thanks for Calendar: 9072, 9999, 0137
Thanks to Gary Norman and Jimmy Poole for quality survey reports: 5036
Thanks Bob Duncan: 4157
Thanks for considering hunters opinions: 0137

LAW ENFORCEMENT

CPOs needed in SW Virginia: 9999
Need more CPOs: 3080
Road hunting: 5036
Need CPO in Northumberland County: 2959
Need CPO in Lancaster County: 2959
General Assembly needs to increase CPO pay like State Police: 6415
Have CPOs enforce parking at gates at Parkers Branch North side of Rt 604: 5339
Have CPO check permits at Big Woods State Forest at deer season: 5339
Little poaching where I live: 6415
Hunter carry multiple license: 6951
Hunter pulled into field and shot gobbler I was calling: 6961
Need more Law Enforcement in Northumberland and Lancaster Counties: 2959
Fewer CPOs contribute to game law violations: 8511

HUNTER PRESSURE AND CHECK IN SYSTEM

More hunters this season: 9713, 9602, 1548
Fewer hunters this season: 1964, 1153, 6415
National Forest has many hunters: 5036
Lots of hunters on weekends: 3199
Lot of hunters on Carlisle Tract, Hog Island: 5339
Never heard another shot: 2672
Heard 2 shots and never saw another hunter: 0753, 6415
DOGS
No running deer dogs in spring gobbler season:  9327, 9999
Dogs being trained in turkey season:  3466
Free running dogs messes up hunters:  0137
Two pit bulls would not let me get out of truck:  6239

LENGTH OF DAY HUNTING AND SUNDAY
Sunday hunting on all lands and not just private land:  5339, 0349, 0256
No to Sunday hunting: 5434, 6951, 0137
All day hunting one week earlier:  0198
Likes all day hunting:  7670, 9164, 3508, 9336, 2090
Hunt all day full season:  2526, 9846, 8041
Allow hunting to 1 PM:  6956, 5434, 5615
Keep 12 Noon first 3 weeks and all day hunting last 2 weeks:  0776
Out of state hunters do not like noon closures:  6918

SEASON DATES
Open 1 week earlier: 9072, 3437, 5434, 9999, 9999, 0887, 1171, 2090, 9999, 1470, 8522, 5468, 7725, 6972
Open 2 weeks earlier: 9999, 9999, 2929, 8764, 0347, 7825, 7725, 3080
End season 1 week earlier: 5434, 1171, 5468, 8511
End season 2 weeks earlier:  3080
Leave season as is: 0137, 7921, 0487, 9999, 6415, 1411, 5233, 3229
Shorten season:  2339, 9602
Extend season early with archery: 2526
Liked season the way it used to be:  1831

FALL SEASON
Stop fall season ion Alleghany Highlands:  9588, 7219, 9472
Fall season too long or spread out:  1964
Increase fall season: 3475
Reduce fall season:  1927
No overlap of turkey in muzzle loader and general firearms season:  5339, 6631
Thanksgiving season should be Thursday, Friday and Saturday:  2215
Move January season to Thanksgiving week:  2215
Shorten season in fall and simplify:  1755
End hunting of hens in fall:  3316, 5469
Decrease hunting pressure on hens in fall:  3250
Increase fall hunting in New Kent:  3475

LIMITS AND LICENSE
Limit is good:  0137, 6415
Cut limit back annual bag limit to 2:  6931, 2959, 1963, 5434, 9401, 2339, 1176, 6918, 9999, 2765, 9472, 9881
Limit annual bag to 1 hen in fall two gobblers in spring:  5339
2 gobbler and 2 hen tags: 5434
Increase daily bag to two birds a day: 2763, 3611, 0349, 2090
Do not add one bird to daily bag limit:  0137, 3229
Regulations OK:  9341, 3394
Limit to 1 in fall and 2 in spring:  1963
Bonus Gobbler tag:  9999
Limit to 1 in fall and 1 in spring: 1963
Make website more friendly for license purchase: 0198
Add extra tags for fall where population is good: 3080

WEAPONS AND SHOT
Prefer 12 Gauge shotguns: 0137
Likes option of combination gun: 6415
No buckshot for turkey or deer season: 2959

FANNING
No to fanning: 9999, 7342
If fanning is legal then no rifles: 7670, 9999
Stop rifle hunting in spring if fanning allowed: 8718, 7000
Safety is a concern for fanning: 0137

OTHER ANIMALS
Seen more bear: 7612, 7191, 6789, 2174, 8766
Saw bear with 2 cubs: 6164
Saw bear sign: 9161
Saw sick young bear and found dead 3 days later: 1339
Saw large bear at 30 yards: 7745
Bear licked decoy and ruffed it up at 25 yards: 6164
Called in and shot coyote: 5887
Too many coyotes: 2339, 1171, 1470, 5468, 2174, 9999, 4590
Coyote bounty: 6664
Coyote killed: 9401, 3416
2 coyote killed: 4796
Coyote killed coming to dying rabbit that hawk attacked: 2959
Coyote came to calls: 0929, 9327
No coyotes called in: 2592
Hunting partner killed albino coyote: 6482
Hunting partner killed coyote: 5469
Coyote came to gobbler: 3416, 3748
Coyote flushed gobbler: 3508
Killed coyote that came to gobbler call: 3748
Coyote chased hen: 2929
Coyote killed coming to decoy:
Saw 2 coyotes: 0198
Saw 3 coyotes in season: 2193
Saw 4 coyotes: 7766
Saw more coyotes in middle of season and less turkeys: 3353
Coyote came running in after shot: 5469
Heard more coyotes on National Forest: 0256
Caught 37 coyotes this year in SW Virginia and 30 last year: 7191
Lots of coyotes on trail cameras, 2-3 sometimes: 2193, 5186
Saw fox with pouls in mouth on game camera: 0472
Saw red fox moving pups to new den: 6482
Copperhead snake almost bit me: 5434
Heard quail in Buckingham: 8511
Heard Bobwhites: 6664
Saw skunk and coyote sign: 9999
Bear came to decoy: 5884
Saw multiple bobcats: 8507
Saw bobcat in woods: 6789, 7937
Saw bobcat in down pour of rain: 3810
Saw flying squirrels: 1831
Lots of ticks: 5531
Saw gobblers fighting in food plots: 3810
Saw owl snapping beak then flew a short distance: 2370
Heard Whip-o-wills: 9161
Saw large bear 30 yards away: 7745
Saw bearded hen several times: 0198:
Saw more lightning bugs on 5/3: 5469
Saw no deer in turkey season: 0198
Saw both golden and bald eagles: 0151
Eagle took decoy: 0256
Flushed woodcock off ground: 5764
Found no mushrooms: 6415
Heard first grouse in 4 years: 0256
No grouse heard for 10 years: 7191
No grouse heard by hunting party after 8 days: 5036
Saw grouse hen with poult's: 9160
Heard less barred owls: 5321
Saw rabbit on National Forest, first time in 29 years: 9472
Albino gobbler spotted and photographed: 1755
Mature gobbler had no beard and with 2 hens in field: 3825
Almost stepped on 5 foot rattlesnake: 5036

OPINIONS
Requested a paper copy of license from DGIF but did not receive it: 4187
Predator population too high: 7191, 3280
Too many bear: 9880
Coyotes affect gobbling as toms are wise to them: 2959
Coyotes affect turkey populations: 2193
Gobblers less responsive to decoys: 0957
Eradicate more coyotes: 5337
Birds seemed to move from one farm to another: 4517
Less gobblers, I got a 2 year old 15 Lbs: 5615
Difficult hunting due to timber harvest: 9159
85 years old but still hunt but cannot get to where I used to: 2450
Gobbler decoys increase the chance of someone being shot: 5599
Too many people and not enough land: 2719
Turkeys hard to call in: 9341
More shots fired by hunters this year: 3416
Hunted 6 days in Bath and Highland Counties and only heard 1 gobbler: 9472
Did not hear any gobblers in Spotsylvania County: 6855
Hens with gobblers some of the time: 9999
Gobblers reluctant to come within 75 yards: 4023
Warm weather in February and March change turkey patterns: 0347
Gobbled in March and with hens before season started: 8764
Went to red dot scope with my ageing eyes: 1755
2 gobblers taken were part of 6 gobblers:
Bear populations and coyotes affect turkey 3508, 6352
Saw bearded hen and chose not to shoot: 1927, 6406
Gobblers with hens whole season:  5884
Called to roosting gobbler and 2 flew down on me:   1007
Different year for hunting, looking to take bird on opening day:
Tail feathers on gobbler had light colored tips:  5884
Gobbler passed the decoy and flogged feeding hen:   7670
Gobblers with hens late season:  2338
Found 5 shed with grandson:  5337
A lot of two year olds in woods:  5223
Saw unusual varmit 16 inches long, no photo:  5337
Chased 2 gobblers out of road two different times:   9160
Turkeys would not come to call:  1927, 3508, 1315
Saw hen with 11 poults on May 15:  2157
More gobblers this year but fewer than 10 years ago:  9146
Never got to work a gobbler whole season:  1031
Peak breeding was before season and hens on nest first week:  6972
Gobblers with hens in March:  5186 , 7725
Saw 2 gobblers fighting for first time:  4559
Took a 72 year old and he heard his first gobbler:  5403
Love scouting last week of March and first week of April:  3353
Turkeys checked in at SE Outdoor Supply was down:  1647
Heard no turkeys 10 of 18 days:  8511
Gobbler gobbled for 2 ½ hours then came in silent:  6415
I contribute populations to liberal hen seasons:  2719
Hard to find a place to hunt due to posted land:  1647
Clear cutting and controlled burn have pushed gobblers to other tracts in Big Woods
State Forest WMA:  5339
No gobblers seen in Big Woods State Forest WMA:  5339
Mid 80’s and early 2000’s were best seasons:  2719
Ageing National Forest support little wildlife:  4796
Shell missed fired at turkey at 30 yards:  3825
Took 2 bearded gobbler with 10 inch beards:  1111
Saw gobbler with 12 inch beard in yard:  1608
Populations seems to be down in eastern part of state:  5036
Watched hunter working turkey with decoy far off:  5321
Lowering bag limits and reduced hunting pressure will not help populations:  5036
2 crows dismembered decoy:  9341
Hens still available to gobblers first week of May:  1627
Did not see many hunters on WMA in Carroll County:  3278
More rabbits:  2338
Neighbor killed gobbler I was calling from long distance:  5884
Partners got both 3 year old gobblers:  1627
Daughter killed gobbler with 1 5/8 inch spurs:  9880
All three birds I tagged were 4 year olds plus:  9880
Breeding season started early and ended early:  8041
Saw one dead raccoon and one box turtle dead:  7825
Harvested 24 pound gobbler:  6406
I hunt leased property:  5593
Less hardwoods and more predators: 2719
Tried roosting gobblers several times:  9161
Like call in system and APP:  0349
Like APP:  3611
Only worked 4 gobblers:  3877
Saw bearded hen: 9584
Called in 3 long beards at one time: 3427
Missed 3 gobbles completely due to cataract in eye: 6415

YOUTH DAY
Current rules hinder taking my son: 9336
Keep youth day as is and not lengthen days: 0137
Took youth hunting and got 1 bird and other youth heard bird: 6338
Get more youth involved: 5884, 0151, 2339
Two youth both got birds: 0256
Took son hunting on youth day: 5599
All day season helps youth: 7670, 9336
If trend continues, logging, housing, predators; future for youth is questionable: 2719

NESTING
Weather and predators are threat to nesting: 0137
Raccoons and bear are just as hard on nest: 1831
Flushed hen off nest with 10 eggs: 8718
Hen built nest on floor of tree stand: 5245
Local hatch light: 9999
Reports says hatches light last 2 years: 2626
Saw several broken eggs: 9999
Rain hurts reproduction: 1831
Good hatch in 2018: 8766

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Sunday hunting everywhere
- Better management on National Forest
- Lease more private land for hunting
- Quit stocking muskies on James River
- Shorten season in Frederick and Shenandoah Counties
- VA should have Natural Resource Court separate from traffic ad criminal
- Bag limit to one bird and purchase two tags separately
- Purchase hen tag separately
- Longer full season
- Separate turkey license
- Keep off road vehicles out of forest
- Need better habitat on National Forest in Frederick County
- Transfer some eastern gobblers to mountains
- Open season later after turkeys mate
- Stop hen killing in spring
- DGIF should help with Harrisonburg Show
- Continue to study turkey and grouse
- Put parking areas in Oakley WMA
- Habitat improvements on Federal Land
- Continue to provide hunting, fishing, hiking and boating
- Mountain bikers should pick up their trash
- Need more clear cuts on National Forest
- Need more info on Turkeys like deer
- Need more places to hunt everything posted
- Don’t close off roads
- No turkey hunting during general firearms
- Provide more parking on Parkers Branch
- Charge a fee to hunt WMAs
- Maintain a healthy and growing turkey population
- Have same rules for Big Woods SFWMA as Parkers Branch except for use of slugs
- Clear cutting hurts turkey populations
- Simplification of season and license
- Hold Regional Public Meetings
- Limit all day hunting on National Forest or limit to one week
- Need turkey and deer help on GWNF
- Jordan’s Run road in bad shape, needs repair
- More plantings on State lands
- More plantings on National Forest
- Post results for previous year on line to save postage and paper
- Do not increase doe days East if RT 613 in Rockingham
- Youth should have a week to hunt
- Rely more on Biologist input rather than public input for setting season
- Need state wide bounty on coyotes
- Need better habitat on State and Federal Lands
- Monitor areas in Ferrum and Galloway that are declining
- Conduct controlled burns on National Forest and some logging
- Have wildlife food plots
- All government roads should be foot travel only including government vehicles
- Do not control burn prior or after turkey season
- Stricter laws on dog hunting
- Enforce road hunting
- Need bonus tag for spring gobblers
- GPS vehicle maps are not correct causing me to get ticket
- Don’t use tom tag in fall
- Need more parking places
- Better habitat on public land
- Do what is right and best you can
- Treat officers the same way you want to be treated
- Educate hunters on benefits of spring hunting
- Increase habitat quality
- Eliminate hog populations
- Reduce coyote population
- Change doe tags back to bucks
- No bonus deer tags
- Change limits to deer available some hunters take 6-8 does
- Bounty on coyotes by county
- Allow longer fall season
- Have more openings in National Forest
- Need habitat improvement in GWNF
- More public hunting areas archery only
- Make hunter safety a priority:
- Too much timber cutting in southern Piedmont