

# GAME MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT



*Photo credit: Guerry Doolittle/GNPA*

**FY2022**

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Photo credit: Paul Thomas/GNPA

# A Message from *the Chief*



"The thing I love most about working for the Department of Natural Resources is the people." I have lost track of how many times I have heard this statement. We do have some amazing people and it is a joy to work with and serve with each of you.

I recently completed a short study on service. It was enlightening because it made me realize the great value in serving others. Each of us are called to serve in some way. Though service has a slightly different meaning for each of us, the character qualities of someone who serves well are the same. They are loving, gracious, humble, selfless, and faithful. As I travel around the state, I see these qualities personified in each of you. Despite many challenges, you continue to press on and finish well every year. Thank you for closing out another amazing year. Well done!

Alan Isler  
Game Management, Chief



# Who We Are

## The Game Management Section

Manages over one million acres of land and 125 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) for hunting, fishing, wildlife enhancement, bird watching, hiking, camping and conservation education. Game Management conducts research and surveys to monitor hunter harvests, wildlife populations and habitats. These efforts support setting regulations and other management activities as well as providing technical assistance to landowners, private organizations, and governmental agencies.



### WRD Mission

Conserve and promote fishing, hunting and wildlife resources through management, education, and scientific research.

### WRD Vision

Conserving diverse, healthy populations of fish and wildlife while maintaining related outdoor opportunities for every generation to enjoy.

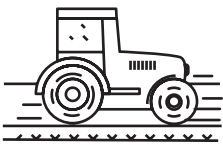
# Annual Summary

Game Management leveraged additional license revenue with federal wildlife restoration funds to increase services and technical assistance to citizens, to improve habitat and access on WMAs and to create more awareness through educational programs. In FY22, the Game Management Section:



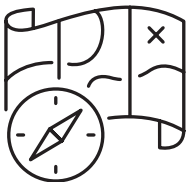
## Prescribed Fire

Used prescribed fire on 75,500+ acres to enhance wildlife habitat on public land.



## Habitat Management

Managed 9,246 acres of wildlife openings, 3,184 acres of dove fields, and managed 5,269 acres of wetlands.



## Access

Improved and maintained 2,000+ miles of roads and firebreaks, 1,482 bridges, fords, and culverts, 942 miles of trails, 153 campgrounds, 292 parking areas, and 2,353 gates and water control structures.



## Urban Wildlife Program

The Urban Wildlife Program aided 2,404 callers and provided on-site technical assistance to 532 wildlife conflicts in metro Atlanta.



## Disease Monitoring

Collected 1,351 samples from white-tailed deer to monitor for chronic wasting disease, which has not been detected in Georgia.



## Private Lands

Provided technical assistance to 266 new contacts and completed 249 follow-up contacts for landowners that manage over 194,000 acres in 114 counties.



## Deer Management

Assisted 117 cooperators across over 160,000 acres with site-specific deer management needs as part of the Georgia Deer Management Assistance Program.



## Population Monitoring

Banded 2,900 ducks, doves, and geese, checked 981 black bear bait station for black bear activity, and surveyed 184+ miles of rivers, creeks, coastal areas, and reservoir shorelines monitoring American alligator populations.

# Annual Summary

Hunters and shooting sports enthusiasts provide 80 percent of funding for all wildlife species — not just big game. Since 1937, hunters and target shooters have been the primary source of funding for wildlife conservation through license fees and an excise tax on sporting goods made possible through the hunting and sporting arms industry.



## Hunting

- 642,545 residents hunt in Georgia.
- Hunters spend more than 8.9 million days a year in the field.
- Hunters account for \$977 million in retail sales in Georgia, with a \$1.6 billion ripple effect each year.
- Hunting in Georgia is responsible for 23,996 jobs, \$600 million in salaries/wages/earnings, \$106 million in state and local taxes, and \$145 million in federal tax revenue.



## Shooting Sports

- More than 1.2 million people participate in recreational target shooting in Georgia.
- Shooters account for more than \$532 million in retail sales with a total economic impact of \$644 million.
- Shooting provides over \$243 million in salaries.
- Shooting provides \$41 million in state and local taxes and \$58.8 million in federal taxes each year.



209,742 hunters harvested  
257,454 deer



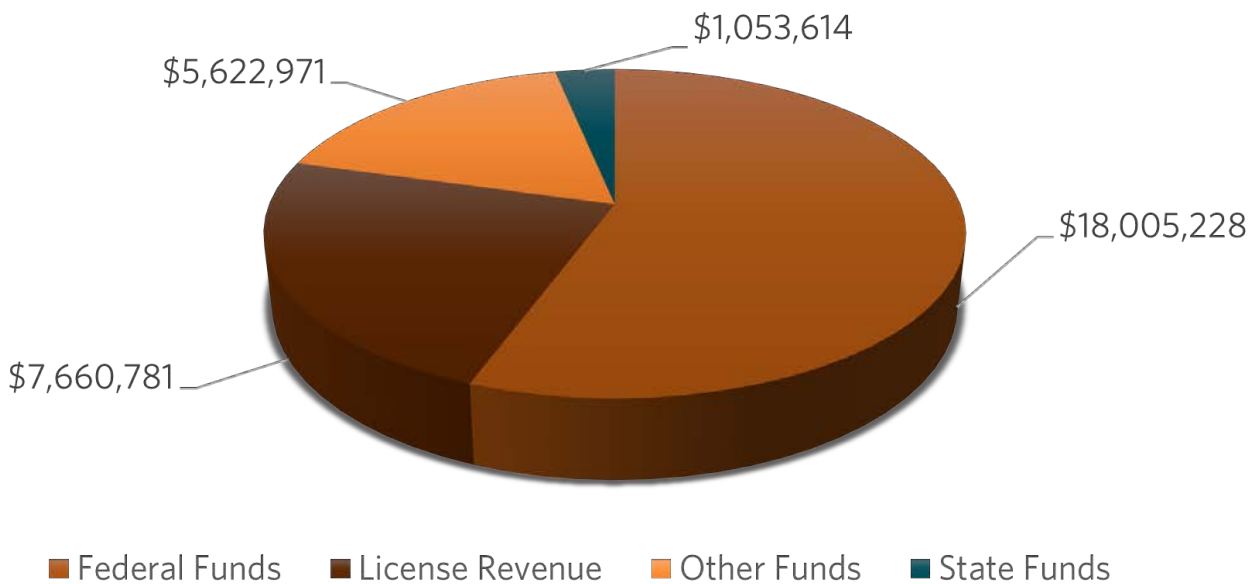
37,568 hunters harvested  
10,970 turkeys



75,500 acres of  
prescribed fire

# FY22 Expenditures

Expenditures from FY22 provided habitat development, operation and maintenance of 1,149,872-acres of Wildlife Management Areas, 48-miles of dikes that surround 5,269-acres of waterfowl impoundments, 9,246-acres of wildlife openings and food plots, 3,184-acres of dove fields, 2,093-miles of roads and 145 campgrounds.



These funds play a vital role in providing population monitoring and surveys for: white-tailed deer, Eastern wild turkeys, black bears, alligators and migratory birds such as waterfowl, woodcock and mourning doves.

The Game Management Section also provided over 5,900 hours of Wildlife Technical Assistance to over 10,000 citizens to minimize human wildlife conflicts in addition to the operation and maintenance on 17 Shooting Ranges and 21 Archery Ranges.



West Point WMA turkey banding project.



# Region 1

Region 1 is comprised of 29 counties and staff manage over 270,000 acres across 24 Wildlife Management Areas (WMA). Hunting continued to be a popular activity in FY2022. The region harvest of 196 turkey was lower than recent years, but this can be partially attributed to the decrease in season length across all WMA's and the introduction of quota hunts on several areas. Region staff also participated in the ongoing turkey research project.



Tallapoosa River VPA.

This year Region 1 completed a land acquisition project in Paulding County adding over 900 acres to Paulding Forest and Sheffield WMAs. Region 1 also enrolled 8,926 acres at Treat Mountain, Tallapoosa River and Charles B. Henson Voluntary Public Access areas.



Prescribed burn at Paulding Forest WMA.

The region's most valuable tool for habitat management is prescribed fire. This year staff accomplished many goals by burning 11,494 acres on 13 different properties.



Successful hunt at Rich Mountain WMA.

This past season hunters signed in 17,161 times to hunt big game on Region 1 WMAs and VPAs. They harvested 1,275 deer, 43 bear, and 196 turkey.

## Other Accomplishments

- Planted and manipulated 456 acres of dove fields on 9 WMA's.
- Region staff spent 327 man-days handling 2,843 wildlife nuisance calls.
- Maintained and monitored 322 nest boxes.
- Spread 1,000 tons of gravel improving access on 6 DNR managed properties.
- Maintained 309 miles of WMA roads, 481 culverts and 623 gates.
- Maintained 789 wildlife openings totaling 1,586 acres.





# Region 2



Storm clean-up on public roads in Rabun County.



Chapman Farm VPA.

Northeast Georgia was impacted with several winter weather events, including Winter Storm Izzy in late January. Not only did staff attend to damage on Region WMAs, but also assisted local county Emergency Management Agencies and Public Works Departments for road debris clearing and other cleanup operations.

Region 2 added Chapman Farm Voluntary Public Access (VPA), a new property in Franklin County, that provided late season dove hunting opportunity.

## Other Accomplishments

- Documented 2,795 wildlife technical guidance contacts comprising 1,941 personnel-hours of assistance to the public and other local and state government agencies.
- Staff on Redlands WMA and Dawson Forest WMA converted approximately 12 and 5 acres, respectively, of log loading decks from recently completed timber harvests into permanent wildlife openings.
- Planted and cultivated 446 acres of dove fields and planted and/or maintained 662 acres of wildlife openings.

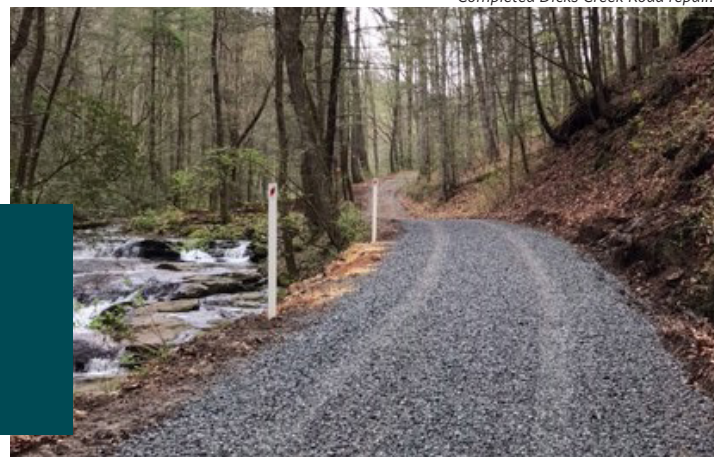


Kathy Church shows scarlet kingsnake to students.

This year was a record-breaking year for programs provided by Interpretive Specialist & Programming Coordinator, Kathy Church, of the Smithgall Woods Regional Education Center (SWREC). In FY22 she provided 819 programs consisting of 450 outreach events and 362 onsite & 7 online programs reaching 23,190 people.

Enhanced the cooperative relationship with the U.S. Forest Service by providing them much needed assistance in terms of labor and funding in addressing critical road work on Chattahoochee, Chestatee, Lake Russell, and Warwoman WMAs.

Completed Dicks Creek Road repair.





# Region 3



In addition to running bear survey routes, Region 3 personnel are also catching and tagging bears for the latest research project on the central Georgia bear population in cooperation with the University of Georgia.

The demand for dove hunting opportunity in Region 3 has always been high. In efforts to provide more public hunting opportunity, Region 3 personnel worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers J. Strom Thurmond Lake Project staff to expand the existing 20-acre dove field at Clarks Hill WMA to over 40-acres.



## Other Accomplishments:

- Handled over 1,400 requests for technical assistance with 95% of those being conflict wildlife calls. Most of those calls came from Bibb, Columbia and Richmond Counties in the metro Macon and Augusta areas.
- Participated in Hunt and Learn programs, Teacher Workshops, 4H wildlife judging team training programs, and other informational and educational programs in schools across the region.
- Collected 516 county level white-tailed deer data and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) samples.
- Coordinated and analyzed data from 3 WMA deer surveys.
- Surveyed 151 bait stations for the Central Georgia bear survey.
- Conducted and analyzed quail covey call count surveys.
- Surveyed early successional habitat for selected songbird species.
- Maintained and/or planted over 3,000 acres in food plots & openings including 618 acres of dove fields.
- Removed over 150 feral hogs from region WMAs.
- Officially measured over 85 sets of deer antlers.
- Prescribe burned 10,276 acres exceeding the annual regional average of ~9,000 acres but slightly down from the previous year's high of over 12,000 acres.
- Improved 1,400 acres by seasonally disking, mowing, and/or chemically treating overgrown vegetation in fields, field borders and timber stands that prescribed fire did not control.
- Chemically treated around 90 acres of invasive exotics.
- Created, stumped, cleared, and manipulated 102 acres of wildlife openings on Alexander, Clybel and Rum Creek WMAs.
- Reclaimed a 55-acre old clearcut at Clybel for fallow field management.
- Mowed 400 miles of hunter access trails, completed 200 acres of seasonal disking, chemically improved 96 acres of timber, roller chopped 85 acres, and spot sprayed 41 acres at Di-Lane.

As might be expected following the record number of outdoor users during the Covid-19 shutdown, Region 3 saw a decrease in overall WMA users this past year. While user numbers were down, hunter success remained stable for deer harvest at 17%. Also as expected, turkey harvest decreased because of the changes to the overall bag limit and WMA limit. Cedar Creek WMA was the best Region 3 area for turkeys with hunters harvesting 15 turkeys this year.





# Region 4



Laurens County Youth Hunt and Learn at Rosemont Plantation.

Region 4 Game Management and Shooting Sports staff and Rosemont Plantation in Treutlen County worked together to host a youth Hunt and Learn program in December 2021. The youth were part of the Oconee Community Mentoring Association Dream Team from Dublin, GA. This was the first experience any of the youth had with firearms or hunting. The group leader, Christopher Johnson, worked with WRD staff to help make this event happen by meeting with the youth 2-3 times a week for several weeks to ensure they completed Hunter Education requirements. The youth practiced with firearms on Friday afternoon and participated in deer hunts Saturday morning and evening. It was a success in so many ways, including the harvest of one deer to be shared among the hunter's families. It came together as a great community event with many local donors offering donations to help procure hunting clothing and boots for youth to use and take home with them at the end of the hunt. At the end of the hunt, the youth were all asking, "when can we go hunting again?". Thanks to the host, John Rood, and his Rosemont staff for making this hunt possible.



GM and WCS staff after burn on Tuckahoe WMA.

Region 4 set a new record for prescribed burn acres this season, surpassing last year's total by 5,371 acres (an increase of 54%). This year's total of 15,214 acres burned on WMAs sets a second consecutive region record. A number of burns were collaborative efforts with participants from across WRD regions and sections as well as other management partners. WMAs with a significant increase in burn acres this year included Canoochee Sandhills and Tuckahoe. As an example of the exceptional dedication exhibited by staff in achieving burn goals, when planned helicopter burns at Tuckahoe had to be cancelled due to pilot illness, the staff assembled, put in a long day, and still burned over 900 acres.

## Other Accomplishments:

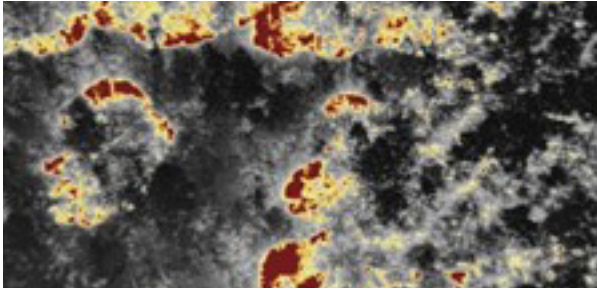
- Installed 339 miles of firebreaks on WMAs to provide control of prescribed burns and protect unburned areas.
- Processed through to approval 2,571 acres of forest management proposals using the new GIS-based process, including 280 acres of timber harvest and 2,291 acres of understory herbicide treatment.
- Coordinated with contractor on 633 acres of understory herbicide treatment to prepare stands for prescribed burning.
- Coordinated with the Wildlife Conservation Section and The Nature Conservancy on 192 acres of site prep herbicide treatment and roller chopping to prepare sites for longleaf pine planting.
- Graded, sprayed, or rocked 47 miles of roads to improve public access to WMAs. Mowed and cleared debris from 618 miles of roads in preparation for hunting season.
- Harvested 900 deer and 80 turkeys (hunter success 14% and 5%, respectively) on 115,053 acres of WMA land.
- Answered 714 requests for nuisance wildlife abatement including 503 deer crop damage permits.
- Made 27 contacts for diseased/injured wildlife.
- Trapped and banded 318 mourning doves and 34 wood ducks.
- Completed 123 miles of survey lines in Regions 4 and 6 to gauge alligator, black bear, and quail population trends.
- Collected 105 CWD samples from processors, road kills, and Big Buck contests and 347 county deer data samples from processors.
- Managed 724 acres of dove fields for public access.
- Managed 262 wetland acres for waterfowl through water level control and herbicide application.
- Planted, disked, or otherwise manipulated 682 acres of wildlife openings to provide forage and cover for wildlife.
- Improved WMA infrastructure including addition of deer skinning racks at Beaverdam and Horse Creek WMAs and addition of sheltered equipment storage at Bullard Creek WMA.

New skinning rack at Beaverdam WMA.





# Region 5



IR imagery from the burn drone showing fire location and intensity.



Burn drone taking off for a mission on Lannhassee WMA.

Prescribed fire is the primary management practice to create and maintain the desired wildlife habitat in Region 5. The region set the record for prescribed burn acres in FY2021 at 18,023 acres and broke that record this year by accomplishing 23,030 acres. Wildlife Technicians Matt Skinner and Taylor Winchell, and Wildlife Biologist Drew Zellner utilized Drone Amplified's IGNIS burn drone for aerial ignition on 2,940 acres of the total acres burned. There is tremendous potential for this technology to increase burn crew safety and overall productivity while reducing smoke related issues. The region has since added a second drone to increase the acres available for aerial ignition.



Legislative Environmental Academy at Chattahoochee Fall Line WMA.

Region 5 staff hosted the Legislative Environmental Academy at Chattahoochee Fall Line WMA. The Academy was composed of state legislators, bureaucrats, and the Garrison Commander of Ft. Benning, on a three day tour of sites in West Georgia.

## Highlights

Alligators continue to be a significant nuisance species especially with the lack of alligator trappers in parts of the Region. This has forced staff to respond to alligator calls, tagging 28 alligators that were relocated to public waters.

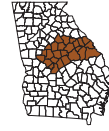
DNR E&C coordinated the design and construction of a new maintenance shop building on Lanahassee WMA near Plains. A storm system in west Georgia on April 5, 2022 generated several tornados, one struck the shop and pole barn on Sandhills WMA West Tract near Mauk, which is approximately 45 miles north of Lannhassee WMA. The site was cleaned up and the buildings were repaired and rebuilt by mid June 2022.



River Creek WMA Dove Field.

## Other Accomplishments:

- Manipulated 673 acres of dove fields with an additional 40 acres in development on CFLWMA Hilliard Plantation.
- Conducted a record setting 23,030 acres of prescribed burning during FY22 and assisted with 3,000 acres of prescribed burning on Region 1 WMAs.
- Purchased 11 new hunting structures for installation on Lanahassee WMA and Chattahoochee Fall Line WMA for additional youth and handicap wheelchair hunting opportunities. This was in addition to over 35 hunting structures already available on the property.
- Conducted an adult turkey and youth deer Hunt and Learn Program on Chattahoochee Fall Line WMA
- Collected 100 percent of the CWD samples and 95 percent of the deer cooler samples. Staff also collected 46 fetuses for the Southwest Georgia Deer Breeding Chronology Study.
- Trapped 137 geese and banded 46 new birds.
- Trapped 344 mourning dove and banded 321 new birds.
- Trapped and banded 9 wood ducks.
- Over 226 miles of road enhancements or improvements were made which included spreading approximately 5200 tons of rock.



# Region 6



Penholoway Swamp WMA prescribed burn at night.

Prescribed fire remains a high priority in the Coastal Region. In collaboration with Wildlife Conservation Section, Georgia Forestry Commission, The Nature Conservancy and the Student Conservation Association, we conducted burns on 143 units, enhancing wildlife habitat and reducing wildfire risk on over 11,650 acres.



Successful bear hunters.

Assisting with management of the South Georgia & Okefenokee bear population is an important task for the Coastal Region. Bait station surveys reported a 47% occupancy rate in 2021 and hunters harvested 136 bears during the 12-day hunting season.

Wildlife opening reclamation on Townsend WMA.



Staff completed significant progress in the reclamation of overgrown wildlife openings and savannas on Townsend WMA. The Region manages 1,406 acres of openings, food plot and fields.

Rhett's Island waterfowl impoundment repairs.



Progress continues in the repair of storm damaged waterfowl impoundments on Altamaha WMA and Sapelo Island WMA. Completion of the Reynolds Duck Pond repairs were a significant milestone, enhancing much needed freshwater habitat.

Barge to Ossabaw Island WMA.



Operations on Ossabaw and Sapelo Island require expert level logistical planning. Staff spent many hours preparing for the 32 barge runs required to keep island life moving forward.

Successful hog hunters at Ossabaw Island WMA.



Staff successfully hosted 49 managed hunts for deer, hog, bear and waterfowl. The extensive effort required 360 staff-days. Additional staff efforts and collaboration with USDA resulted in the removal of more than 2,255 hogs from WMA and state lands.

# Alligator Program



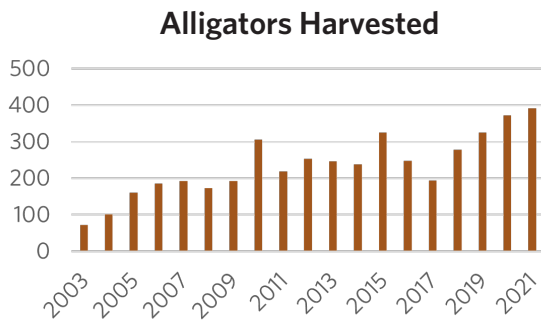
Alligator on bank at Altamaha WMA.

1,030 alligator hunters were drawn for the 2021–22 Quota Hunt.

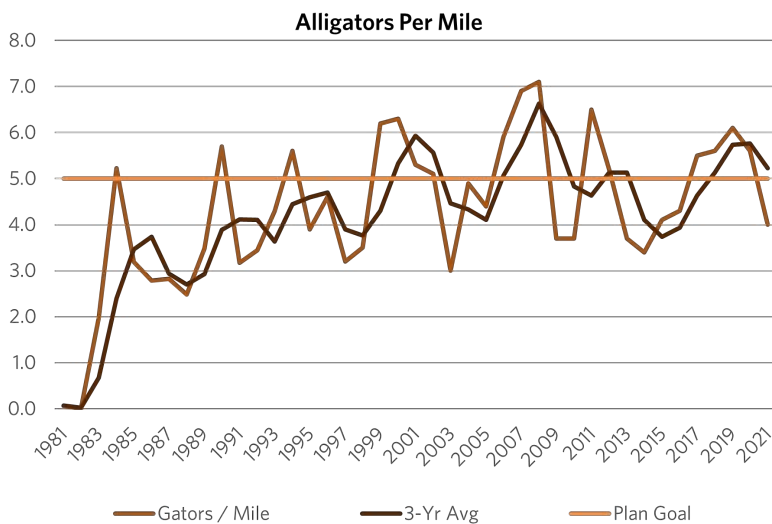
## Harvest Length

- Average length of harvested alligators was 97.1 inches, lower than the long-term average of 161 inches.
- The longest alligator harvested in 2021 was 180 inches. Alligator length is reported by the hunter, and this is the longest alligator reported since hunting began in the state.

Georgia hunters harvested a record 391 alligators continuing the trend of increased success for the 5th year in a row. Successful hunters averaged 3.6 nights on the water and most were accompanied by 2 assistants.

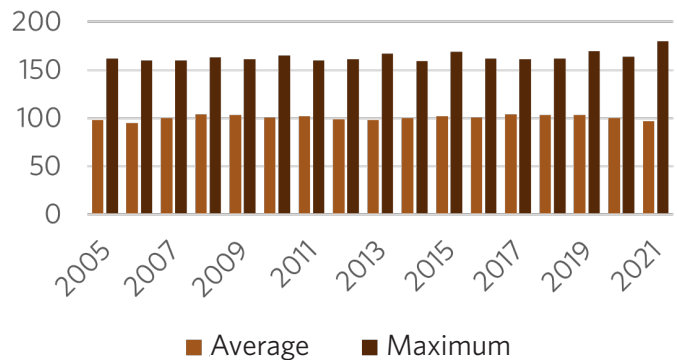


Number of alligators harvested between 2003-2021.



Georgia Alligator population data per mile from 1981 to 2021.

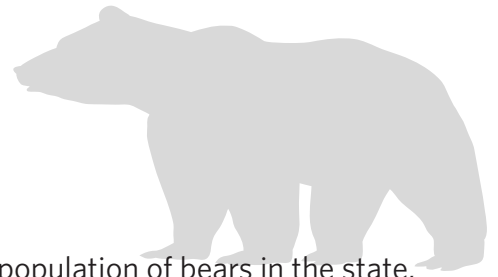
## Harvested Alligator Length



Length of alligators harvested.

Georgia WRD staff surveyed 279 miles of rivers, coastal areas and reservoir shorelines and counted 1,129 alligators, for a 2021 population index of 4 alligators per mile. This year's index brings the 3-year average to 5.23 alligators per mile, which is slightly above the alligator management plan's goal of 5 alligators per mile for the statewide average. Annual spotlight surveys are the best method to determine alligator population trends, however in 2021, with the assistance of Dr. Lora Smith of the Jones Center, WRD has begun to examine survey methodology to look for ways to improve data collection.

# Black Bear Program

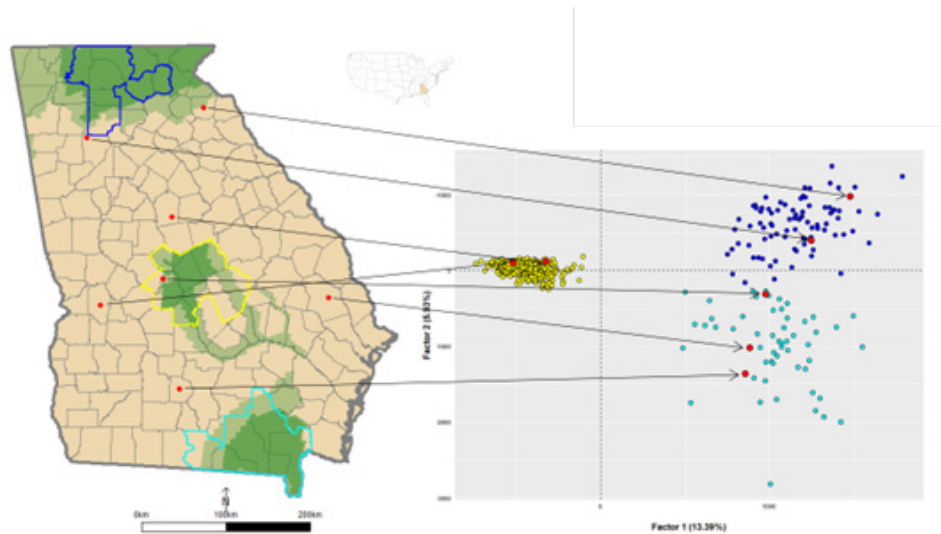


## Central Zone

The Central Georgia Bear Population (CGA) is the smallest, most isolated population of bears in the state, with no natural corridors directly connecting it to other bear populations. University of Georgia (UGA) research studies found it has low genetic diversity, which is confirmed by observation of genetic defects. In 2012–2014, approximately 7.5% of males handled displayed obvious testicular defects – i.e., cryptorchidism. This suggests bears in CGA may have experienced a genetic bottleneck and genetic drift over time.

A group of central Georgia private land hunters began expressing concern in July 2021 that the CGA population may be higher than previously thought, since they frequently see multiple bears on camera at their deer feeders. To address their concerns and answer questions, a public meeting was held near Cochran, GA in Bleckley County on Aug. 31, 2021.

Approximately 15–20 local hunters were in attendance. Dr. Tina Johannsen presented and shared data from DNR surveys and from UGA's two previous research studies in CGA. These discussions and heightened interest in CGA ultimately led to further evaluations of survey methodology and paved the way for additional research in CGA to help better understand the status of the population. In keeping with the Strategic Management Plan for Black Bears in Georgia (i.e., Bear Management Plan), a follow-up DNA capture-recapture study of black bears will be conducted in CGA through the University of Georgia in the summer of 2023. This study will estimate current population size and density of the CGA and evaluate possible genetic supplementation strategies.



*The first female collared during the "pilot phase" of the new bear study in central Georgia.*

Working cooperatively with partners at the National Parks Conservation Association and the Georgia Wildlife Federation (GWF), trapping efforts were initiated and "pilot research" began in CGA in late June 2022. Ben Carr, former DNR hourly employee and soon-to-be UGA graduate student will spend 5 weeks in central Georgia this summer leading field work activities and becoming more familiar with the study areas at Oaky Woods and Ocmulgee WMAs).

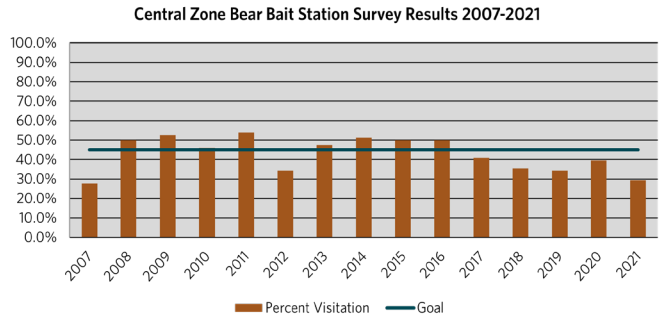


# Central Zone Population Monitoring



Black bear at bait station.

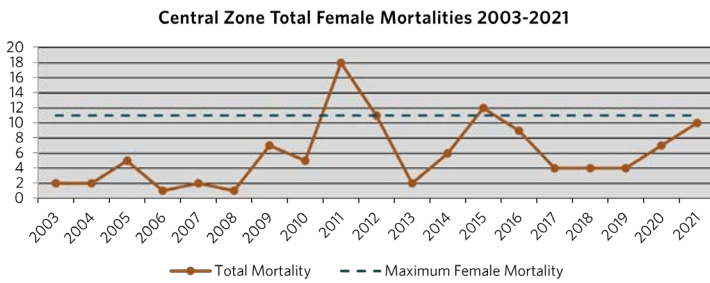
The CGA is monitored through a network of 180+ summer bait station survey sites (75 of which have been sampled since 2007).



Graph depicting bear bait station visitation rate over time in central Georgia.

Bait station survey results have been stable over that period. The blue line is the survey goal of 45% visitation, meaning at least 45% of stations show evidence of bear visitation.

The collection of biological data from road-killed and harvested bears is an important part of our monitoring efforts. According to the Population Viability Analysis for Central Georgia that was completed in 2019 by UGA and the Bear Management Plan, the most important parameter to track in central Georgia is annual female mortalities. Accordingly, if the population is to remain stable, total female mortality from all sources should not exceed 11 bears annually.



Graph depicting female bear mortalities in the Central Zone.

## Central Zone Bear Harvest

In 2021, 6 bears (1 male, 5 females) were legally harvested during the one-day, 4-county season. Harvest has averaged 8 bears since 2011. Since the private lands season began in 2011, 91 bears have been taken with 58% of them being female. Prior to 2011, harvest was restricted to a one-day hunt on Ocmulgee & Oaky Woods WMAs. Historical WMA hunts averaged <2 bears/year — 1989 was last year for Oaky Woods WMA and 2010 was last year for Ocmulgee WMA.

Adult black bear at bait survey station.

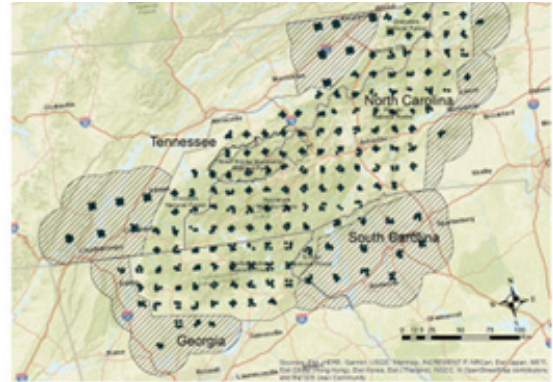




# Northern Zone

## Northern Zone Population Monitoring

The North Georgia Black Bear Population (NGA) is the largest population of bears in the state and part of the greater Southern Appalachian bear population. This population remains healthy and strong; however, there has been leveling off, or at least slowed growth, in recent years. This is encouraging, as this was a stated objective in the Strategic Management Plan for Black Bears in Georgia (i.e., Bear Management Plan). All data sources for NGA support this trend; however, this also was independently corroborated through research – a DNA capture-recapture study conducted by the University of Tennessee across the Southern Appalachian regions of Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee in the summers of 2017 and 2018. The Final Report was delivered in July 2020.



*Hair snare sites used in 2017/2018 across the Southern Appalachian region.*

Bait station surveys have been conducted in north Georgia in July every year or every other year since 1983. Visitation rates rose steadily from a low of 12.3% in 1983 to a high of 76.7% in 2009. Since that time, we’ve seen visitation rates decline somewhat and level off. Approximately 2/3 of the bait station routes in north Georgia were completed in July 2021 yielding a visitation rate of 66.3% for completed routes; however, because bait station surveys are an index to population change over time and due to missing data, we are not able to compare 2021 summary data to previous years. Route by route comparisons may still be available for select routes.

Data collected during winter den surveys helps better understand denning habits, den types, litter sizes, & sex ratio of cubs. Den surveys provide an opportunity to evaluate collar fit and bear health.

### Summary of the Winter 2022 Bear Den Survey

- Dens worked up: 5 females with cubs of the year, 1 male
- Average litter size: 2.33 cubs per litter
- Sex ratio of cubs: 9 male, 3 female
- Percent of GPS-collared bears known to have spent time in a winter den: 100% of collared females, 92% of collared males.



*Anesthetized female black bear in a den on private land near Chatsworth, GA.*

	Excavated Ground Den	Tree Den	Ground Nest	Rock Den	Brush Pile	Den Not Located
Sows with cubs of the year (6)	2	3			1	
Sows with last year's cubs (5)	1	2	1	1		
Lone sows (3)		1				2
Males (14)	4	1	2	1	1	5
Combined (28)	25%	25%	11%	7%	7%	25%

## Northern Zone Bear Harvest

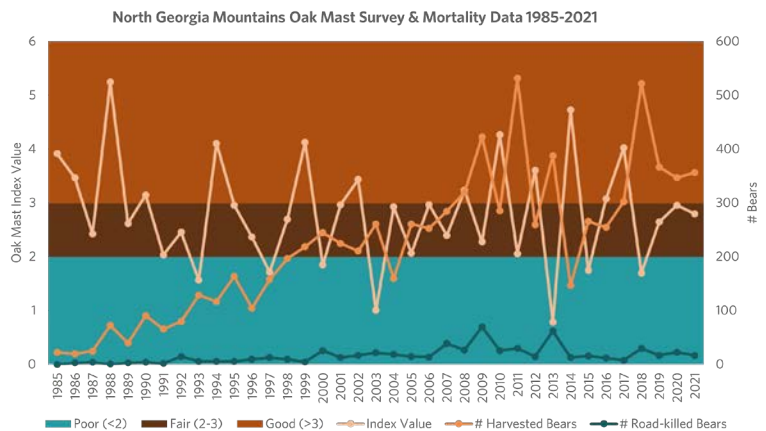


Successful Northern Zone dog-bear hunters.

Legal hunting is the best tool for managing bears in Georgia. Prior to 2019, in-state hound hunting opportunities for Georgia bear hunters only existed in southeast Georgia, in and around the Okefenokee Swamp. A 9-day quota hound hunting opportunity was added in 2019 in north Georgia on Chattahoochee and Chestatee WMAs. To better understand the effects, if any, of the dog hunt, staff began trapping and collaring bears in 2019. Since that time, approximately 80 bears have been collared on these two 'treatment areas,' and on Cohutta WMA, which serves as the 'control.' This cooperative research is part of an ongoing study through the

University of Georgia where Cat Carter is pursuing a master's degree on the project under the direction of Dr. Michel Kohl. Biological data from captured bears and harvested bears is an important part of our long-term monitoring efforts.

North Georgia bear harvest in 2021 was 357 bears (187 males, 170 females). The quota dog hunts on Chattahoochee and Chestatee WMAs accounted for 34 of these bears. The 4-yr average harvest (2018-2021) for north Georgia is 398 bears, which perfectly aligns with the Bear Management Plan (i.e., 4-yr running avg. of 400). Average age of harvested females in 2020 was 5 years.



North Georgia Mountain Oak Mast Survey and Mortality Data 1983-2021.

## Human Bear Conflicts

Handling human-bear conflicts continues to be a major challenge and time commitment for staff working the north Georgia mountains. A new challenge is bears infected with sarcoptic mange. February 2022 in Young Harris (Township County), staff received a report of a small, emaciated bear exhibiting mange-like symptoms of hair loss. After seeing photos, a trap was set and the bear was eventually captured, euthanized, taken to SCWDS for necropsy, and confirmed as our 2nd documented case. Several states (Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia) have dealt with sarcoptic mange in bears for many years. Whenever possible, staff continues to investigate reports of mangy bears, especially those reported as severely emaciated or showing crusty lesions and/or thickened skin. Skin scrapes collected in ethanol, sections of skin from dead bears, or whole carcass submissions are taken to SCWDS for diagnostic evaluation and mange testing.

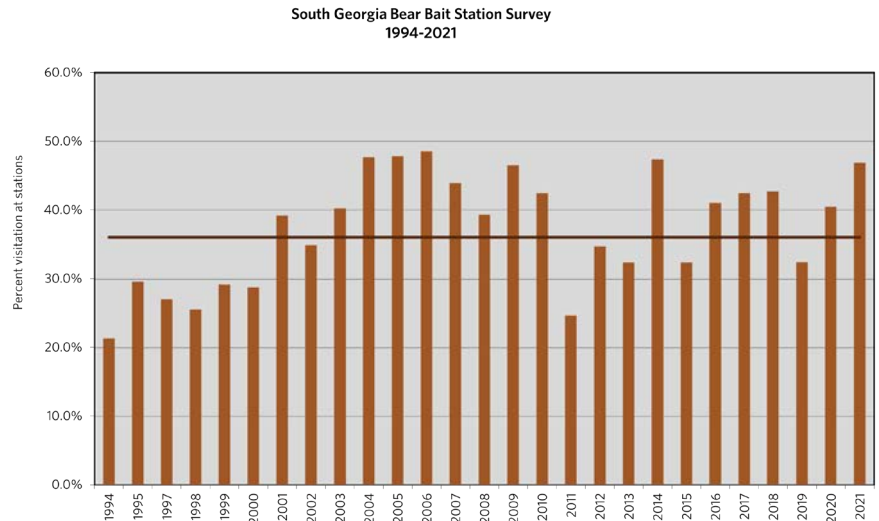


Bear caught and relocated from Marietta.

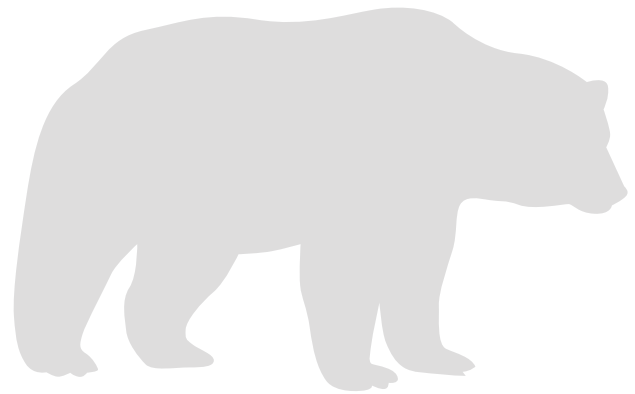
# Southern Zone

## Southern Zone Population Monitoring

The South Georgia Black Bear Population (SGA) is monitored in cooperation with Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge staff through a network of 173 bait station survey sites and the collection of data from harvested bears at fall check stations. Bait station surveys have been conducted across designated routes in southern Georgia every year since 1994. While trending up through 2006 and tracking well with increasing harvests, bear visits to summer bait station sites have flattened in recent years in the wake of habitat changes brought about by 3 major wildfires that encompassed the entire Okefenokee Swamp and much of the surrounding private timberland. The 10-year survey goal is 36%.



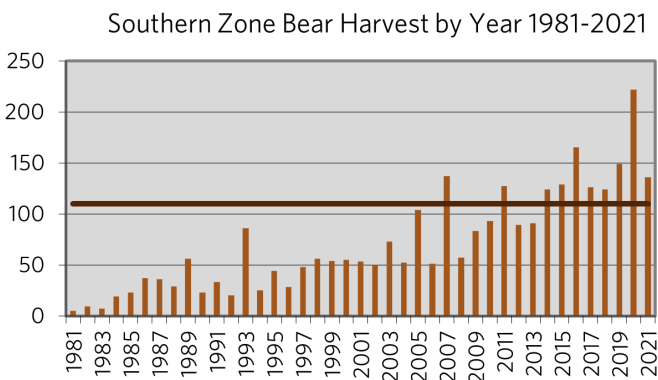
Graph depicting bear bait station visitation rate over time in southern Georgia.



## Southern Zone Bear Harvest

Harvest opportunities in southern Georgia are available on private lands in the 8-county area around the Okefenokee Swamp with some opportunity available to public land bear hunters on Dixon Memorial WMA. Hunting bear with dogs is a long-standing tradition in southeast Georgia and is allowed on private lands over four 3-day weekends in late September/early October. Only still hunting is allowed on Dixon Memorial WMA with open dates in archery, primitive weapons, and firearms season.

Total southern zone harvest for 2021 was 136 bears (102 male, 34 female). The 4-yr average harvest is 158, which is well above the goal of 110 bears, as presented in the Strategic Management Plan for Black Bears in Georgia. Harvest is trending up and has averaged 135 during the last 10 years. Average age of harvested females in 2021 was 6.33.

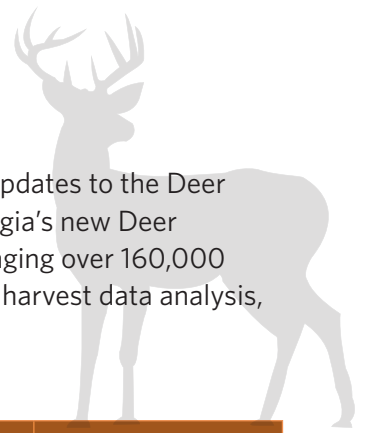


Graph depicting annual black bear harvest in southern Georgia.



Successful bear hunter checks his bear at the check station.

# Deer Program



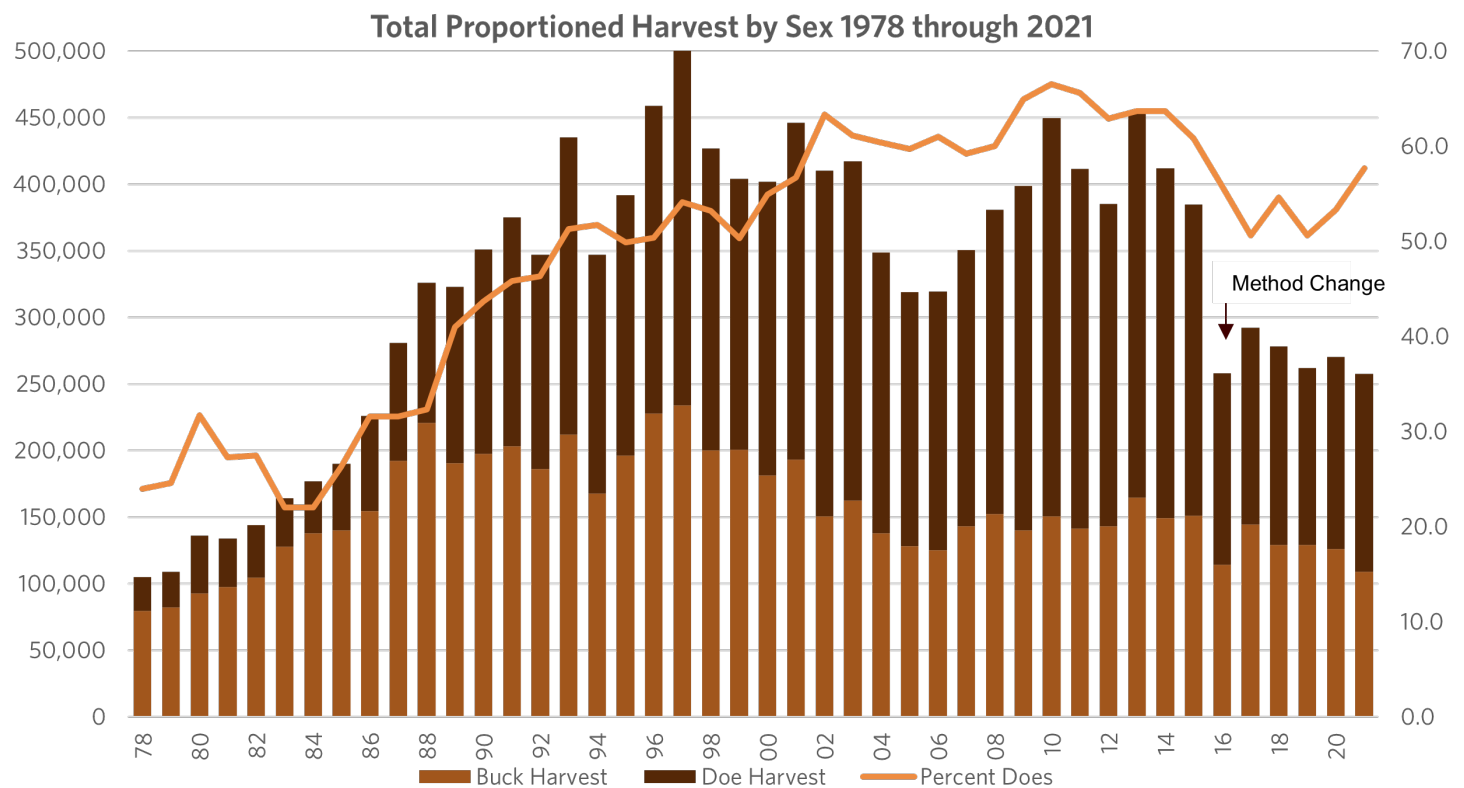
The 2021–22 deer season was excellent with 209,742 deer hunters taking 257,441 deer. Updates to the Deer Harvest Dashboard show total harvest estimates adjusted for reporting compliance. Georgia’s new Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) is progressing well with 117 cooperators managing over 160,000 acres of land. Program participants receive detailed habitat and herd management plans, harvest data analysis, and assistance with camera surveys.

2021-2022 Deer Harvest Summary

		Archery	Muzzleloader	Firearm
<b>Total Hunters</b>		83,314	24,819	187,797
<b>Total Harvest</b>	Buck	18,320	3,023	90,578
	Doe	27,485	3,090	114,766
<b>Weapon Subtotal</b>		<b>45,805</b>	<b>6,113</b>	<b>205,344</b>
<b>Percent Success</b>		11.4%	2.4%	47.1%
			<b>Statewide Total</b>	<b>257,441</b>

**92%**

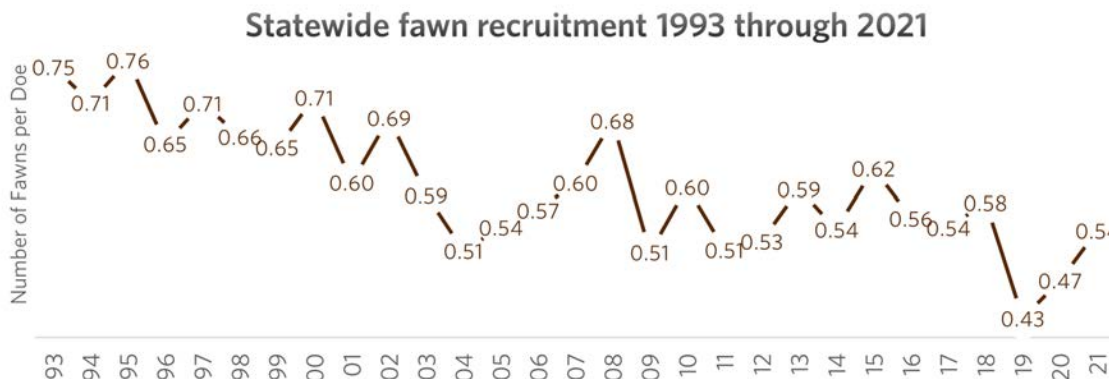
Hunter satisfaction for the 2021–22 deer season was excellent with 92% of survey respondents rating their season as satisfactory, good, or excellent.



Total proportioned harvest by sex from 1978 to 2021.

## Research

The southwest Georgia breeding study completed another field season of data collection. Potential regulation changes will be discussed at the upcoming biologists meeting. WRD is currently working with UGA to develop a human dimensions project for opinions and attitudes towards Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) management. This project already has a significant financial contribution from Safari Club International. Staff are also exploring options for improving deer populations in the north Georgia deer research project.



Statewide fawn recruitment from 1993 to 2021.

## Disease Monitoring

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) has not been found in Georgia to date, however recent discoveries in Alabama and North Carolina have increased the level of concern. Deer Program biologists are continually monitoring the population and adapting the disease surveillance strategy whenever new scientific information becomes available. In 2021-22, WRD staff collected 1,404 samples for CWD testing. WRD and agency partners completed a CWD tabletop exercise and are revising the CWD response plan to prepare in the event CWD detected in the state. A new law was also passed in 2022 expanding deer carcass import restrictions to all areas outside Georgia.



WRD staff and agency partners met to complete a CWD tabletop exercise.

DMAP Biologist Matt Goode meets with cooperator.

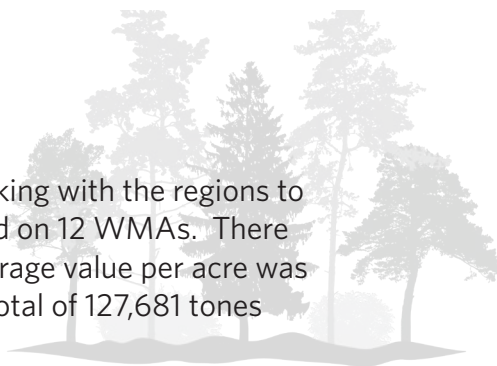


## Deer Management Assistance Program

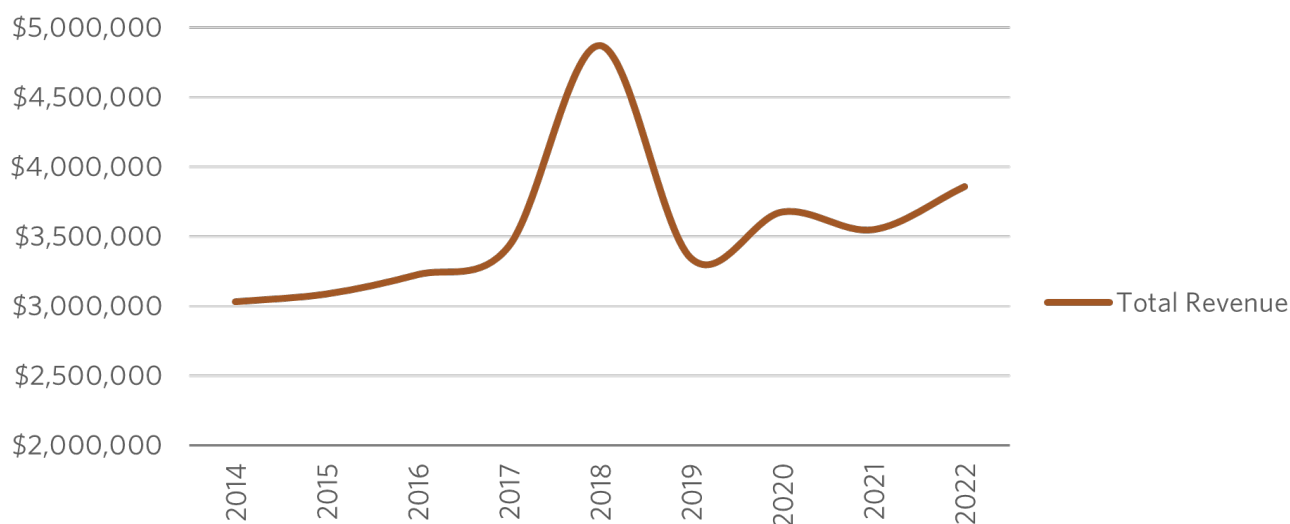
Georgia's DMAP is administered by 3 experienced wildlife biologists under guidance of the State Deer Biologist. Since the launch of the program in November of 2019, DMAP biologists have provided technical guidance to over 275 customers with a total impacted land area of 294,000 acres. Of those, 117 customers have enrolled their private property or hunting club in DMAP with a total 163,162 acres in the program. Georgia's DMAP was designed to provide assistance to everyone regardless of property size.

# Forest Management Unit

This year the focus of the Forest Management was to concentrate on working with the regions to accomplish their wildlife habitat goals. This year harvests were conducted on 12 WMAs. There were 2,546 acres thinned and 279 acres of regeneration harvest. The average value per acre was \$1,365 per acre with an average value per ton of timber being \$30.21. A total of 127,681 tones were harvested for a total value of \$3,857,141.



## Timber Revenue History



Timber revenue history from 2014 to 2022.

## Other Accomplishments:

- Inventoried 13 WMAs and produced a timber harvest schedule for 63 WMAs.
- Conducted 40 miles of roadwork for timber egress.
- Reforested 236 acres.
- Conducted seedling survival checks on 156 acres.
- Marked 2,489 acres for sales.
- Cruised 1,503 acres for sales.
- Prescribed burned 4,778 acres.
- Completed 52 hours of continuing education.
- Drove 81,041 miles without an incident.
- Worked with GIS department to develop GIS dashboards for timber data access and search options.
- Worked with GIS department to develop and implement the online timber proposal process.
- Worked with State Archeologist to develop a MOU for herbicide treatment clearance for timber proposals.

Timber harvest operation at Oaky Woods WMA.



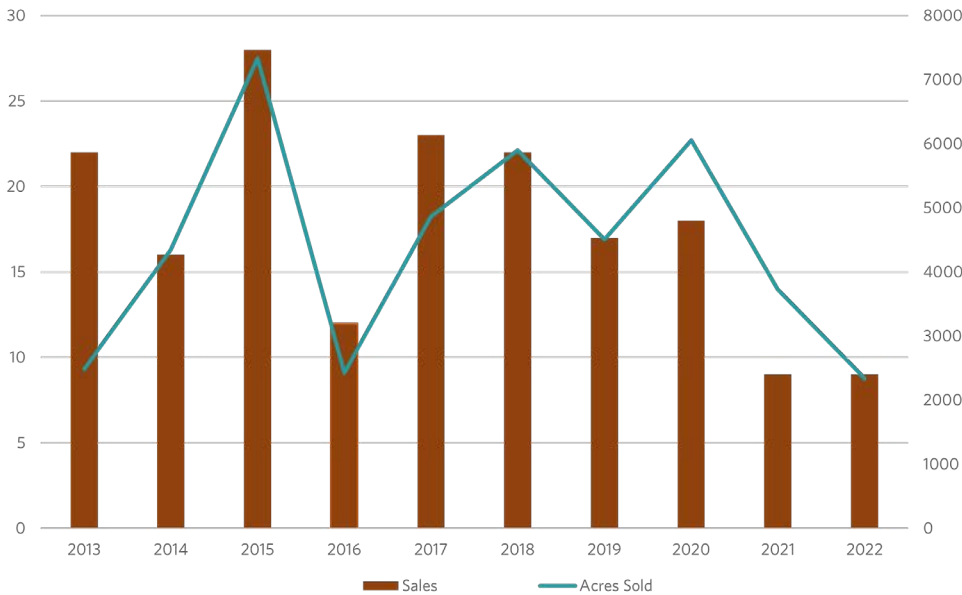


Low water crossing installed at Bullard Creek WMA.



Chemical site prep conducted at Paradise PFA.

### Number of Sales and Acres Sold



Number of timber sales and acres sold over the last ten years (2013-2022).

Prism cruising timber at Riverbend WMA.



The FMU, as other programs and regions, was short staffed this past year. The absence of a Forest Technician and a Forester for most of the year did not stop the staff from meeting the goals of the Division. Many thanks and much appreciation is given to this group of dedicated and hardworking individuals who put in extra time and effort to get the job done.

# Hunter Development Program

## National Archery in the Schools Program

The Georgia National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) season began with a local tournament at Hahira Middle School. A total of 45 local Bullseye and 13 local 3D tournaments were held with 5,259 archers competing in Bullseye and 663 archers competing in 3D during the regular season.

The virtual National Qualifying Event for Georgia was held from February 5 through March 22, 2022. Twenty-two qualifying events for bullseye and eight qualifying events for 3D were held throughout the state. Six hundred sixty-five archers competed in the bullseye event and 207 archers competed in the 3D event.

The top ten high school teams who participated in the Bullseye National Qualifying Event for Georgia were invited to participate in the 2022 NASP Georgia Shootout, held at the Georgia National Fairgrounds on April 7. Seventy-two archers competed in the event. Wynnbrook Christian School won the event with a score of 3326.



HDP Program Manager Jennifer Pittman and WRD Director Ted Will present NASP student with a check



Scholastic Clay Target Program.

## Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP)

The Hunter Development Program (HDP) continues to support the Scholastic Clay Target Program. This year HDP certified 56 coaches. This was our first year teaching the Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation Curriculum which involves an online portion and an in-person course for certification. Over 700 students participated in the program last school year.

## Hunt and Learn Program

Hunter Development Program continues to support the Hunt and Learn program across the state. This year HDP staff helped with 8 different Hunt and Learns combined with Region 2, Region 5, Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center and Safari Club International. In November, HDP teamed up with Region 5 to conduct an adult and youth deer hunt and learn at the Chattahoochee Fall Line WMA (Hilliard Plantation & Fort Perry tracks). The Hunt and Learn was a great success. There were 12 participants (7 adults and 5 youth), and 9 of these participants had no prior hunting and very little shooting experience in the past. Participants spent time on the range learning firearm safety and practiced handling/firing their rifles before hunting. DNR staff also served as guides for the hunters, sharing stories and their own experiences as ethical hunters while guiding the participants in the stands. By the end of the hunt on Sunday, everyone saw deer with eight of the nine hunters harvesting their very first deer.



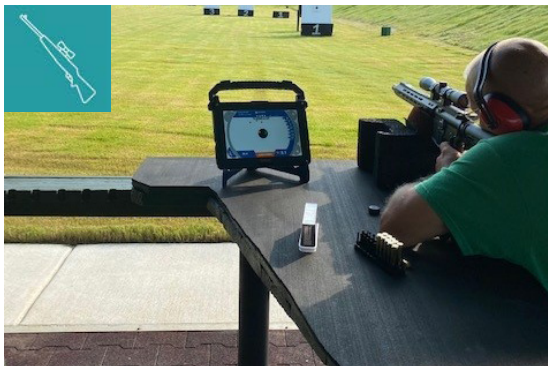
Successful hunter at the Hunt and Learn Program.



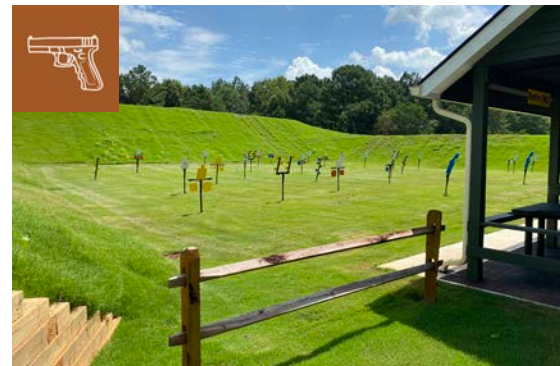
## Clybel Shooting Range Upgrades

The range underwent 8 months of complete renovation and reopened in August 2022. The rifle and pistol ranges were reclaimed for lead to meet the standards of our Environmental Stewardship Program; resulting in over 45,000 pounds of lead recovered. A range visitor center was built to expedite and standardize range safety briefings and to allow customers to buy licenses and clays without leaving the property. The rifle and pistol range berms were reshaped and corrected to a 1:1 slope and erosion control material installed.

*New Clybel Shooting Range visitor center.*



The 100-yard rifle range was upgraded to 10 Kongsberg digital targets with bullet catchers, offering shooters a more precise and streamlined shooting experience with no cold time.



The pistol range was shortened to 35 yards and converted to reactive steel targets for each individual firing position with distances from 7 yards to 30 yards.

Renovations were also carried out on the shotgun fields, with shaded covers being installed on trap and skeet fields and the skeet houses and blocking walls were rebuilt on each range. Clybel shooting range offers shooters 2 trap and skeet fields, a 5-stand, and a 45-yard patterning range. Archery enthusiasts have access to a 5-target known distance static range, 32 target 3D archery trail, and a 3D archery tower. All these upgrades and renovations were done with the customer's best interest in mind, offering the customer the most modern equipment and private club atmosphere with the accessibility of a public range.

## Give It A Shot Program

Hunter Development Program provided 15 Give It A Shots throughout the state. These programs offered 6 different types of firearm and 2 different types of archery programs. The handgun Give It A Shots continue to be the best attended events but this year new offerings were received really well. Clybel Shooting Range offered Give It A Shots teaching the different shotgun sports on the Shotgun Range.

*Give It a Shot program.*



# Migratory Bird Program



## Wood Duck Banding

Banded 561 Wood Ducks and conducted several additional catches outside of the regular banding season to assist with Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza surveillance.



## Mourning Dove Banding

Captured and banded 1,280 Mourning Doves. These data allow WRD to estimate annual harvest rates and are used to inform hunting season dates and bag limits.

Repairs and improvements to Altamaha WMA infrastructure continue. Additional improvements to another 230 acres of impoundment have been greenlit as part of a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant project partnership with Ducks Unlimited.



Ongoing repairs to infrastructure at Altamaha WMA.

Nuisance geese at marina.



Issued 56 permits to allow landowners to manage nuisance problems caused by Canada Geese. This number will likely increase as goose complaints continue throughout the summer. Permits are valid through August 31st.

# Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve

## Research Program

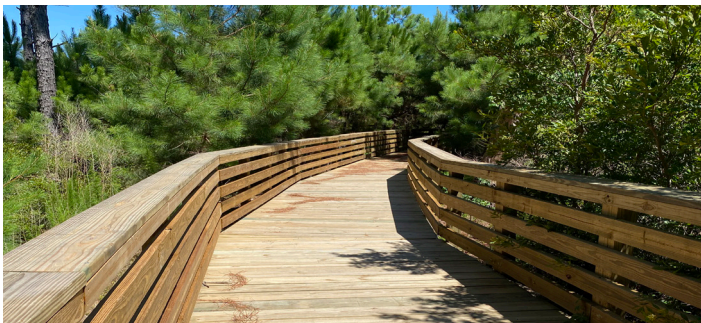
The Estuarine Fish Monitoring Cooperative (EFMC) led by Rachel Guy completed a year and a half of sampling local tidal creeks. Researchers recorded over 85 unique species and counted tens of thousands of individuals. In addition, the EFMC has hosted two training classes, creating a pool of volunteers to assist in monitoring efforts.



Staff sampling tidal creek.

## Education

Education Coordinator Adam McKinnon and new Assistant Education Coordinator Corinne Zelle trained professionals with the Institute for Georgia Environmental Leadership, the DNR Leadership Academy, the GA Association of Marine Educators and environmental educators from Jekyll and Tybee Island.



New SINERR nature trail boardwalk.

## Coastal Training Program

SINERR'S Coastal Training Program Coordinator Brittany Dodge conducted two successful trainings for Fisheries students at the College of Coastal Georgia on the EFMC trawl process. In collaboration with UGA, UGA Marine Extension/GA Sea Grant, and the SINERR Research Sector, over 50 participants learned how to safely conduct water-based research and ecological monitoring trawls.

## Other Accomplishments:

- Welcomed 5,989 “walk-in” guests at the Visitors Center who did not travel to Sapelo.
- Installed new metal roof on the Sapelo Island Visitors Center.
- Hosted 37 groups who stayed at the Reynolds Mansion or Cabretta Campground.
- Conducted educational programming for 436 school groups.
- Led 19 adult group tours.
- Collected monthly aerial imagery of the new Ashantilly Living Shoreline.
- Installed 6 new trail cams as part of a NERRS-wide new monitoring program.
- Identified 24 separate ditch segments in Hog Hammock.
- Reached out to 50 coastal Georgia partners as part of the Partnership Assessment Survey.
- Completed new draft CTP Prog. 2-Year Guidance Plan
- Reinstalled 3 out of 4 SWMP stations due to various external impacts and retrieved 1 SWMP station using scuba gear.
- Replaced 720 feet of 900 total feet of wooden boardwalk along SINERR's Nature Trail.
- Renovated 120 feet of the Ashantilly Living Shoreline using new “flexamat” technology.
- Surveyed 417 participants in SINERR's Public Tours for feedback.

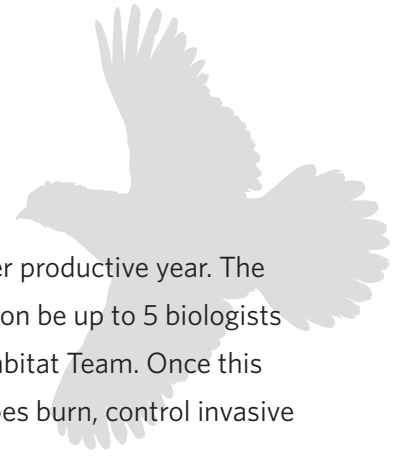


Renovated Ashantilly Living Shoreline.

## Stewardship Program

SINERR'S new Stewardship Program Coordinator Colby Peffer began working immediately on long-range planning for two major new habitat restoration projects. These projects will likely to be funded by the new Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act monies from NOAA.

# Private Lands Program & Bobwhite Quail Initiative



The Private Lands Program (PLP) and Bobwhite Quail Initiative (BQI) enjoyed another productive year. The program's key partnership with Quail Forever (QF) has continued to grow and will soon be up to 5 biologists in the state. PLP and BQI have also entered into an agreement with QF to create a Habitat Team. Once this team is up and running, they will be able to help landowners in high priority landscapes burn, control invasive species, and plant habitat for quail and other wildlife.

This longleaf stand became overwhelmed with volunteer loblolly due to poor advice given to the landowner. PLP staff put together a plan and helped the landowner secure USDA Farm Bill assistance to improve the stand.



*Timber stand improvement.*



*Learn and Burn event in Berrien County.*

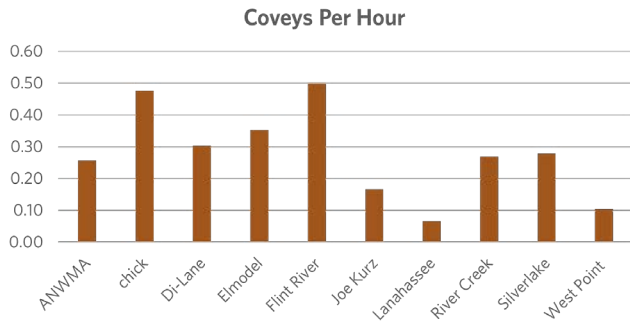
PLP staff helped put on four Learn and Burns for 100+ landowners in Georgia last year. These events are designed to give people with limited fire experience hands-on experience on how to plan and conduct a safe and effective prescribed fire.

The BQI program also signed 23 new cooperator contracts with landowners for a total of \$55,021 to enhance 4,130 acres. These contracts include 300,000 feet of firebreaks, 3,173 acres of prescribed burning, 698 acres of invasive brush and vegetation control, and 147 acres of timber stand improvement practices among others to improve habitat for quail within the BQI Focal Landscapes.

Setting aside unproductive farmland for wildlife habitat is a great way to increase farm profits and create valuable wildlife habitat. However, this practice is relatively uncommon in Georgia. One reason is that some producers feel these areas will be full of troublesome agricultural pests. To demonstrate that these areas are instead full of colorful flowers and beneficial insects, PLP staff began working with UGA extension farms in Burke and Mitchell Counties and GM Region 3 and 5 staff to develop pollinator/wildlife habitat plots. PLP will begin using these plots in the near future to show landowners the numerous benefits of this type of habitat management.

*Hand broadcasting native seed at Di-Lane WMA.*





Covey calls per hour on bobwhite quail focal areas.

BQI staff continued to collect data on hunter effort, harvest and satisfaction on 10 WMAs with good quail hunting opportunities. Overall quail hunter satisfaction was high with 79 percent of hunter rating the experience as excellent or good. These surveys also provide an estimate of the quail populations.



BQI staff continued a quail banding project on quail focal areas. The staff banded 75 birds at Elmodel and 47 birds at Chickasawhatchee WMA. One valuable piece of information this effort provides is estimates of average weight. If food were a limiting resource on one of these WMAs, there would likely be a large discrepancy in weights.

### Other Accomplishments:

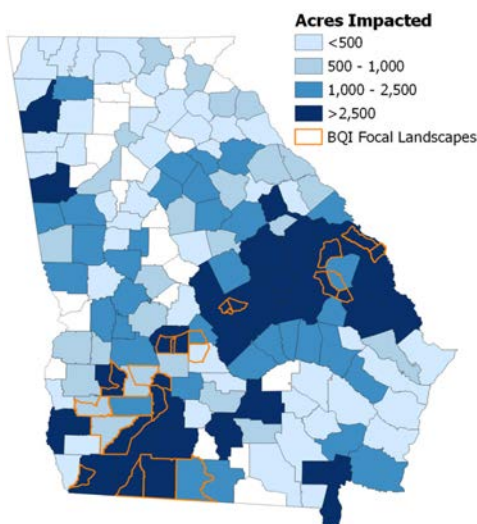
- Through agreements with Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC), BQI tag funds were used to help 24 landowners burn 4,000+ acres in southeast and west central Georgia.
- PLP staff participated in 47 outreach events reaching over 9,500 people.
- Helped organize training for 60+ NRCS staff on wildlife habitat management using Farm Bill Programs.
- Conducted Fall Covey Counts on 11 WMAs, 2 private properties and Oconee National Forest. Thanks to help from ABAC, Southern Regional Technical College Students, DNR and QF staff and many other volunteers.
- Spring counts were completed on 37 WMAs (up from 32 in FY2021), one private property and Oconee NF. Thanks to the help from Georgia Audubon volunteers, DNR and QF staff.

### FY2022 PLP and BQI Technical Assistance Summary

	Properties	Acres	Counties
<b>New</b>	266	79,862	
<b>Follow-up</b>	249	114,965	
<b>Total</b>	515	194,827	114

### FY2022 Planned Habitat Management Practices from PLP, BQI and QF private lands biologists

Practice	Amount
<b>Forest Stand Improvement</b>	24,496 acres
<b>Prescribed Fire</b>	73,514 acres
<b>Fire Breaks</b>	1,267,751 feet
<b>Early Successional Habitat</b>	6,340 acres



Private land acres impacted by county from PLP, BQI and QF private lands biologists.

Youth Quail Hunt and Learn.

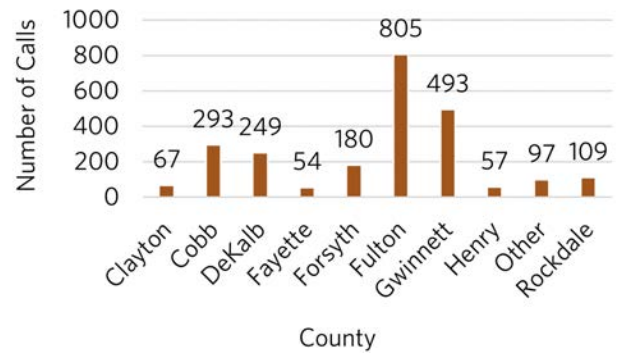


BQI staff hosted or helped with 6 youth quail hunts in Twiggs, Emanuel, Pulaski, Early, Turner and Bleckley. Through these efforts, 12 youth hunters got a great chance to experience hunting on some beautiful private properties.

# Urban Wildlife Program

The Urban Wildlife Program (UWP) continues to provide excellent and timely customer service to customers in the metro-Atlanta area. During the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year, UWP responded to 2,404 calls from the public, including 93 after hours response calls. Of those 2,404 calls, UWP staff provided an on-site response to 532. Fulton County remains the number one county UWP receives calls from. The majority of customer calls are related to sightings (44%) or sick, injured, or orphaned animals (39%).

**Calls by County  
July 2021-22  
(n = 2,404)**



Urban Wildlife Program calls by county for FY22.



Buck stuck in batting cage netting.

**Nature of Calls  
July 2021-22**

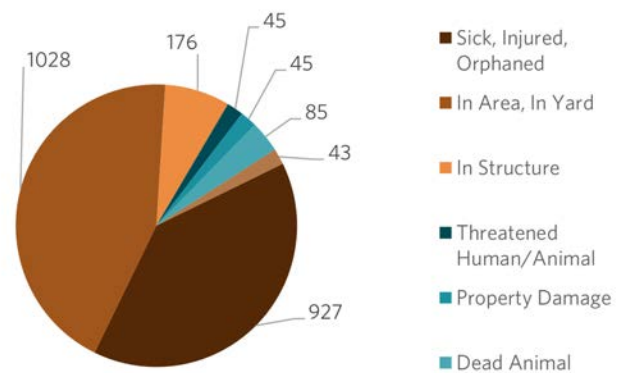
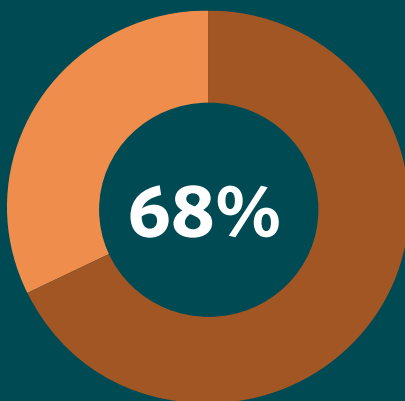


Chart of customer calls based on nature of call for FY22.



Deer related calls remain the number species customers call about (n = 446, does not include deer fawn calls). Of those, 68% are related to the deer being either sick or injured. During FY2022, UWP staff euthanized 158 deer. Sixty-three deer were euthanized due to injuries related to wrought-iron fences. UWP work with public affairs staff, local Home Owners Associations and governments to raise awareness about the issue.

## Outreach & Education

As Covid restrictions loosened, outreach events increased. The UWP conducted 26 outreach events, including 10 media interviews, 3 guest lectures at UGA, and 1 law enforcement training. The UWP was invited to the City of Milton's City Council meeting to receive the City's Earth Day Proclamation.



UWP staff receiving the City of Milton's Earth Day Proclamation.



UWP staff banding Wood Ducks.

## Big Projects

This fiscal year's big project was the creation of a "Human-Wildlife Interactions Book for Frontline Staff" to assist frontline staff in answering human-wildlife conflict questions from customers. The book contains information on each species, common questions and answers, and information on common wildlife diseases in Georgia.



## Illegal Wildlife

Atlanta continues to be a hotspot for illegal wild animals. The UWP assisted in removal of multiple such animals, including a serval and muntjac. UWP, also, assisted Gwinnett County Animal Control in the removal of illegal iguanas and the attempted trapping of an agouti.



Agouti (left) and Muntjac deer (right) encountered by UWP staff.

## Research and Monitoring

The UWP collaboration with UGA Deer Lab on immobilization research continued this fiscal year. UWP assisted in four treatments to temporarily immobilize deer with conducted electric weapons. All treatments were successful in immobilizing deer and all deer recovered successfully with no injuries. Staff is hoping to implement this tool in the field this coming fiscal year.

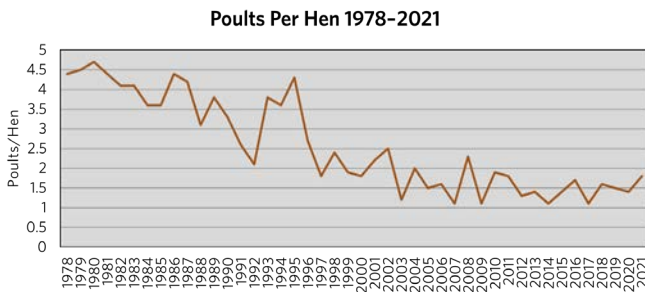
The UWP continues to assist in disease monitoring through the collection of carcass or samples and submission to Southeastern Wildlife Disease Cooperative, for Chronic Wasting Disease, Rabbit Hemorrhagic disease, Avian Influenza, Sarcocystis, Echinococcus and tick surveillance.

# Wild Turkey Program



## Production Survey

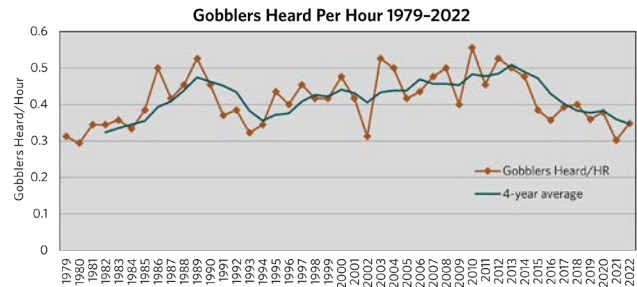
WRD has been monitoring wild turkey poult production statewide since 1978. As part of this monitoring, DNR personnel and volunteers record all turkeys seen with or without poults, during June, July, and August. Average observed poults per hen are calculated for each year as an index of turkey population health. Though poults/per hen values have decreased markedly since the survey began in 1978, in 2021 an average of 1.8 poults/hen were observed, which is the highest value observed since 2011.



Average poults per hen observed in Georgia 1978-2021.

## Avid Hunter Survey

The spring turkey population is indexed through cooperators reporting their daily hunting statistics throughout the turkey hunting season. Two metrics calculated include hours it takes to harvest a turkey (a measure of hunter effort), and gobblers heard per hour (an index of the male turkey population).



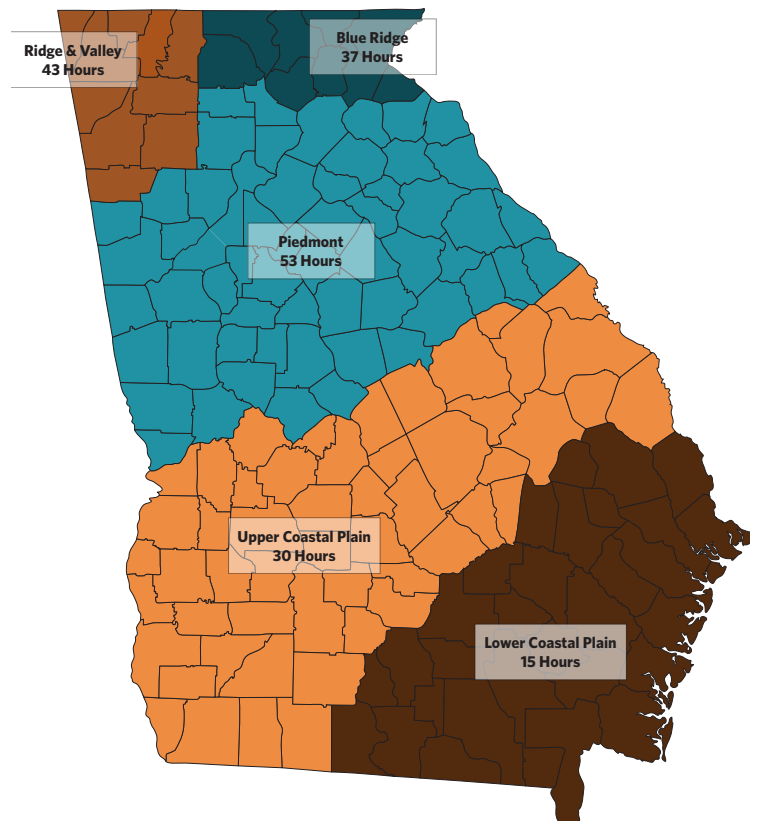
Gobblers heard per hour in Georgia 1979-2022.

## Gobbler Banding

Winter 2022 was the third season banding gobblers on WMAs to estimate spring harvest rates using band recovery data. Gobblers were banded on 4 WMAs this season. In total, 72 males were banded, and 13% of those bands were recovered. Recovery rate of bandings is defined as the number of banded birds that are reported harvested in the hunting season immediately following the banding of the bird. This year, a small set of reward bands were introduced to improve accuracy of harvest rate estimation. While small sample sizes



limit the interpretation of banding data, data suggest that harvest rates decreased on several areas, possibly due to decreases in pressure after regulation changes. This banding effort would not have been possible without tremendous commitment of time and effort from Region staff.



Hours to harvest a turkey by physiographic region in 2022. Statewide, it took an average of 36 hours to harvest a turkey in 2022, up from 32 hours in 2021.



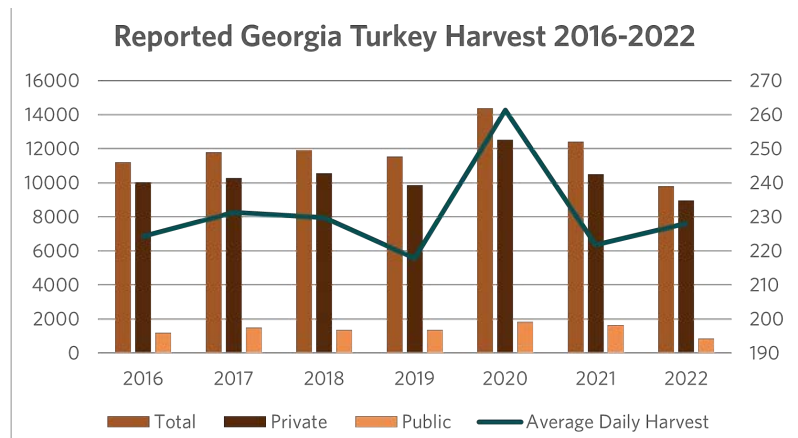
## Regulation Changes & Reported Harvest

The 2022 spring turkey season was the first season under the new statewide turkey regulations. As expected, total reported harvest decreased on both public and private lands. However, average daily harvest remained similar to previous years.

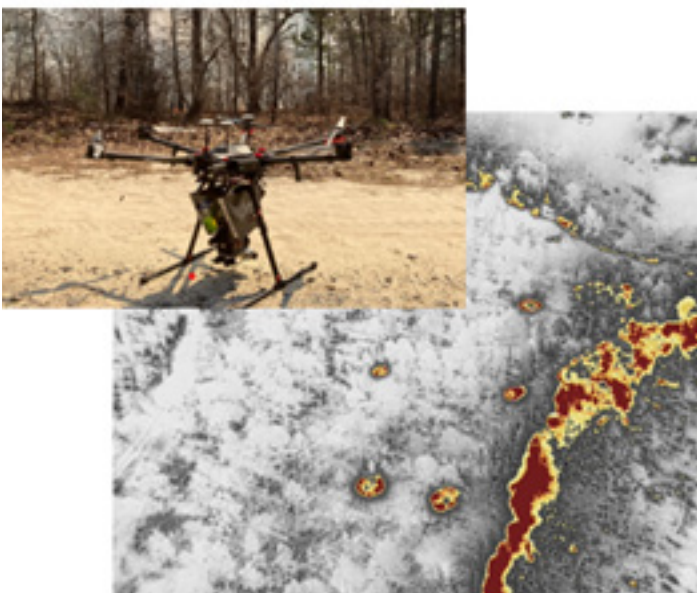


Successful hunter with their 2022 turkey harvest.

WMA	Same-Year Banded Males Harvested			Direct Recovery Rate		
	2020	2021	2022	2020	2021	2022
<b>Ceylon</b>	3	2	0	60%	50%	
<b>Dawson Forest</b>	3	3	5	50%		25%
<b>Di-Lane</b>	0	1	0	0%	100%	
<b>Yuchi</b>	1	4	0	13%	0%	
<b>Blanton Creek</b>	0	4	0	0%	80%	0%
<b>Bullard Creek</b>	0	11	1		34%	3%
<b>Coosawattee</b>	0	4	0		50%	
<b>West Point</b>	0	0	1			33%
<b>Reward Bands</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>			<b>40%</b>



Turkey harvest reported to Game Check, 2016-2022.



IGNIS Aerial Ignition drone and FLIR imagery of a WMA prescribed burn. Support for drone purchase was provided by NWTF.

## National Wild Turkey Federation Partnership

Each year, NWTF provides Super Fund support to habitat projects on WMAs throughout the state. In FY2022, NWTF donated over \$34,000 in WMA habitat projects and \$20,000 on WMA land acquisition. These projects included support for prescribed burning, understory restoration, and fallow field creation to improve turkey habitat across the state.

# Administrative & Personnel Changes

## Region 2

With 30 years creditable service, Senior Wildlife Biologist Scott Frazier, retired after a successful career with DNR. Scott started his career with EPD and then joined WRD in the late 1990's. He worked in the Special Permit Unit at WRD HQ before moving to Game Management Region 2 where he served for 16 years, finishing his DNR tenure as a Senior Biologist/Assistant Region Supervisor.



Scott Frazier officially measuring a white-tailed deer antler rack.

## Region 5

Linda Cumbie retired at the end of December as the Region 5 Administrative Assistant after serving in the position for 10 years.



Linda Cumbie

## Region 6

Region 6 added several new staff this year, almost getting them back to full strength. New staff added to the team include Aaron MacFarlane (Seasonal Technician), Gloria Wood (Seasonal Technician), Tripp Colter (Wildlife Technician Supervisor), Allison Colter (Wildlife Biologist II), Caleb Morgan (Wildlife Tech 2), Thompson Rose (Wildlife Tech 2), Shiann Warner (Wildlife Tech 1), Braxton Jarrett (Wildlife Tech 2), Emory Knight (Wildlife Tech 1), Camden Collins (Wildlife Tech 2) and Katie Faircloth (Administrative Assistant).

Patrick James, Houston Channell and Dustin Exum were each promoted to Wildlife Technician 3. Wanda DeJournett was promoted to Administrative Assistant II.

Shane Richardson left the department to join USDA Wildlife Services, near Orlando Florida.



John Bronson

John Bronson, another long-time cornerstone of the Region has retired. John worked for the Game Management Section for 25 years, starting on the Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area before finishing his final five years at Townsend WMA. In both locations, he played a vital role in prescribed burning, dove field preparation, disaster relief operations, road and ground maintenance, worked many of our managed hunts, and assisted with maintaining equipment and check stations on Townsend, Altamaha, Griffin Ridge, and Morgan Lake WMAs.

## Sapelo Island NERR

The Sapelo Island NERR (SINERR) had all of its core Program Coordinator positions – Research, Education, Coastal Training and Stewardship – filled for the first time in several years. They also added a new Assistant Education Coordinator position and welcomed Corinne Zelig to the role.

SINERR'S new Stewardship Program Coordinator Colby Peffer joined the Reserve after working as a biologist with DNR's Coastal Management Program for two and a half years.

SINERR also welcomed Brittany Dodge as the new Coastal Training Program Coordinator. Brittany Dodge and front desk staff, Justin Alexander to the Sapelo Island Visitor's Center.

# Great teams are made of great people.



Ken Martin

## Obituaries

The Coastal Region was struck with the loss of two of our long-time pillars and supports, Hazel Freeman and Ken Martin.

Hazel worked for the Game Management Section for 27 years, starting at the Region Headquarters on Sapelo Island and later making the transition



Hazel Freeman

to Brunswick when the Region Headquarters were relocated. She was a dedicated and knowledgeable member of our DNR family, personally handling the majority of nuisance wildlife

calls that came into the office, including alligators. Whether it was keeping up with family happenings or offering a hot cup of coffee, Hazel provided comfort and always took the time to reach out to her co-workers to be sure they were having a good day. She is greatly missed.

Ken worked for the Wildlife Resources Division for 22 years, most recently as the Wildlife Technician 3 on Dixon Memorial State Forest. He was a lifelong resident of the Waycross area and possessed an extensive knowledge of the Okefenokee Swamp and surrounding forests. Ken was well known for his enjoyment of fellowship with his co-workers and area Law Enforcement officers, who he often fed large meals during his management area hunts. Ken loved all forms of hunting, fishing and improving the outdoors that he loved to share with others. The loss of Ken has left a large set of boots to be filled.

# Acknowledgements

This annual report was developed and updated by Game Management and Public Affairs staff of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Resources Division. We thank the many individuals who helped compile and review the information provided.

Download a version with the latest updates:  
<https://georgiawildlife.com/about/what-we-do>



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