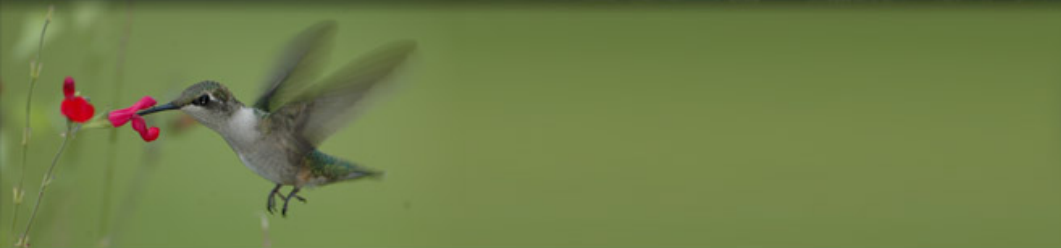




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Turkey Production Survey

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Wild Turkey Production and Population Survey Results for 2001

The 2001 hunting season was the 23rd year of our annual turkey population survey. The continuing cooperation of turkey hunters has made the survey possible. Your assistance is greatly appreciated. The information you provide is valuable in several ways.

Turkey Production Index Survey

In 2001, 493 broods were seen. However, brood totals can be misleading as a measure of production. The number of poults per observer is the best measure or index of relative reproduction success because it accounts for annual differences in number of observers and poults in broods. The average brood size of 6.96 poults seen in 2001 did not differ significantly from 7.15 the previous year. The statewide production index of poults per observer (21.34) was up slightly from last year's 18.22. The average number of poults per hen was 2.2 in 2001. An average of 3.0 or above is considered an indicator of good production. These data suggest that on a statewide basis turkey production is still somewhat depressed and can be considered at best fair, especially compared to the excellent reproduction in 1993-95. Cyclic, up-and-down trends are a natural aspect observed in wildlife populations, especially in turkeys as reproduction can be greatly affected by unpredictable, spring weather conditions. The continuing drought in Georgia can also impact reproductive success because of decreased insect production and reduced habitat quality. Managing for quality habitat should remain a priority to avoid additional limitations during seasons of low production and to take advantage of when production begins to cycle upward again. Overall, our total population is still excellent and should remain so in the foreseeable future.

Hunting Population Index Survey

This survey is conducted during the spring gobbler season with hunt data being supplied by hunter volunteers. Specific information requested about each hunting trip from our hunter cooperators is the date, hours hunted, county or region of the state hunted, the number of turkeys seen, and the number of gobblers heard. The number of gobblers killed is asked for but is optional.

The hours of hunting effort per turkey observed is used as an index of the hunting population. The correlation between this index and the production index is used in evaluating annual production and resulting hunting season populations.

Hunt information in usable form was supplied by 526 of the 2,000 hunters contacted in 2001. They reported making 4,603 trips totaling 16,883 hunting hours. The season hunting effort per cooperator was 9.0 trips totaling 32.1 hours. This is a decrease of 3 hours from the 2000 season average effort.

A total of 9,960 turkeys (hens and gobblers) were seen. The statewide population index of 1.7 hunting hours per turkey seen matched the previous year and was again among the lowest ever documented during the 21 years surveyed. The lowest effort per bird seen was in the Piedmont Plateau counties, and the greatest was in the Appalachian Highlands and Blue Ridge Mountain counties.

Cooperators reported hearing 7,374 gobblers. The hours of hunting per gobbler heard averaged 2.4 hours. Good to excellent reproductive success in 1993-95 along with an abundance of adult gobblers once

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again were factors contributing to the continued low hunting effort per gobbling bird in 2001. Similar to previous seasons, the least amount of time hunting per gobbler heard, 1.8 hours, was in the Piedmont Plateau, and the greatest amount of time, 5.4 hours, was in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Statewide, peak gobbling activity, 3.9 gobblers per trip, occurred during the middle of April.

The statewide harvest during the first seven days of the season accounted for 30.0% of the total season harvest. The average amount of hunting effort to kill a gobbler, 27.9 hours, increased by 1.3 hours from 2000. Statewide hunter success dropped significantly to 46.6% with 245 of the 526 cooperators taking at least one bird. Of these, 103 (42%) hunters took one bird, 79 (32.2%) took two birds, and 63 (25.7%) took three birds. Cooperators reported 42 gobblers killed by companions.

2002 Season Forecast

Georgia's estimated 83,923 turkey hunters had only a fair spring season in 2001 harvesting about 52,871 birds statewide. The average harvest per hunter (0.59) was down slightly from 0.63 in 2000. Across the state the 2002 spring season in general should be fair to good again depending upon the weather. Because reproduction has been down somewhat the past three years there are fewer jakes and two-year-old birds this season. However, overall the state's turkey population is still very strong. Hopefully, reproduction will rebound and the future will remain bright for Georgia's number one game bird. Good luck and good hunting.

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