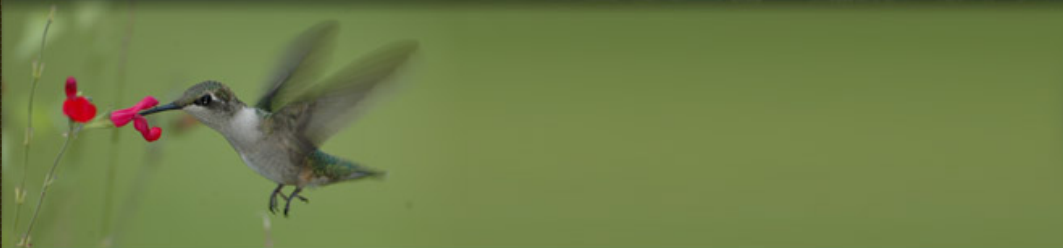




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## Turkey Production Survey

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### Wild Turkey Production and Population Survey Results for 2010

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The 2010 hunting season was the 32nd year of our annual turkey population survey. The continuing cooperation of turkey hunters has made the survey possible. Your assistance is vital to managing wild turkeys in Georgia. We greatly appreciate this partnership.

#### Turkey Production Index Survey

Historically, this survey was conducted from May through August from 1978 thru 1990. Beginning in 1991, the annual survey period was shortened to June through August. Field personnel of the Game Management, Law Enforcement, and Fisheries Management Sections of the Wildlife Resources Division are involved in data collection. All observations of turkey broods and hens, with and without poults, are reported.

During the summer of 2010, 356 broods were seen, which was up 15.5% from 308 in 2009. The average brood size of 8.9 poults observed in 2010 was 41% greater than 2009 (6.3) and 8.5% greater than the previous 5-years average (8.2). The statewide production index of poults per observer (16.4) was 82% greater than last years 9.01 and 21.4% greater than the 5-year average (13.5). The production index 'poults + hens' was 4800 in 2010, which was 29% greater than the 2009 index of 3709 and 2% greater than the 5-year average of 4708. The average number of poults per hen was 1.93 in 2010 up 75% from 1.1 in 2009. This was 21% greater than the previous 5-years average (1.6). An average of 3.0 poults/hen or above is usually considered an indicator of good production in expanding turkey populations. The past several years of production data and harvest data indicate that reproductive levels around 2 poults per hen or slightly less have been able to maintain our current population level for the past 10 years. A production index of 1.93 poults/hen should produce a noticeable increase in adult gobblers in the population in some turkey populations around the state by 2012.

Reproduction data suggests that turkey production was good in many parts of Georgia in 2010. Particularly, reproduction in the lower coastal plain was up 250% from 2009 with poults/hen indexes of .57 in 2009 and 2.0 in 2010. The upper coastal plain saw a 98.8% increase, from .90 poults/hen in 2009 to 1.78 poults/hen in 2010. Other parts of the state were up as well the piedmont up 70%, the Blue Ridge up 41%, and the Ridge and Valley was up 15%. The right amount of spring rainfall at the right time set the stage for a great hatch. Overall, the turkey population is going to benefit from a good hatch this past summer, but high 2011 expectations should be tempered by the fact that 2009 and 2007 were the worst reproduction years ever recorded and we will continue to feel the effects of bad reproduction this year.

#### 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 huntercooperators is the date, hours hunted, county or region of the state hunted, the number of turkeys seen, the number of gobblers heard, and the number of gobblers killed.

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.

Usable hunt data was supplied by 452 cooperators. Of these, 415 came from the permanent cooperator list and 37 from the NWTF list which resulted in a reporting rate (after deleting wrong addresses, deceased, quit hunting, incorrect data collection, etc.) of 37.3% and 4.6% from the permanent and NWTF list cooperators, respectively. These cooperators reported spending a total of 16,635.9 hours hunting. The average season hunter effort was 10.9 trips totaling 37.1 hours. They reported observing 10,007 turkeys and hearing 9,224 gobblers. The statewide population index of 1.7 was 12% less than last year (1.5 hrs hunted/turkey seen [the lower the number the greater the population]). The effort per gobbler heard of 1.8 was the best recorded

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since the start of the survey, which corresponds with a best ever recorded 21.2 hours/turkey harvested. The least hunting effort per turkey seen occurred in the Ridge and Valley, Upper and Lower Coastal Plain. The effort per gobbler heard was least in Upper and Lower Coastal Plain and greatest in the Piedmont.

Statewide peak gobbling activity, 2.6 gobblers heard per trip, occurred during the first (March 20-21) and third (April 3-4) weekends. The next highest period recorded 2.5 gobblers heard per trip was the fourth weekend (April 10-11). This season there were 6 periods with greater than or equal to 2.0 gobblers heard per trip, whereas last year there was only one. For most of the state the greatest amount of gobbling activity was the first 7 days (Mar 20 – March 26) and the 7-day period of March 29- April 4. Peaks of gobbling by region occurred during the fourth weekend (April 10-11) for the Ridge and Valley, the first week (March 22-26) for the Blue Ridge Mountains, the first weekend for the Piedmont, fourth weekend for the Upper Coastal Plain, and the first weekend for the Lower Coastal Plain.

The statewide gobbler harvest during the first seven days of the season amounted to 25% of the total season harvest, which was lower than the last 3 years (2009 = 28%, 2008 = 35% and 2007 = 36%). Peak harvest was generally seen within the first seven days of the season in all parts of the state.

The greatest number of trips was made during the first seven days of the season; this was similar to past seasons. Only minor variations in hunting effort have occurred over the years.

Hunter success increased from 64.4% in 2009 to 67.3 % in 2010 with 304 of 452 hunters reported taking or assisting in taking at least one gobbler. Of the successful hunters, 92 (20.4 %) took or assisted in taking one bird, 90 (19.9 %) took or assisted in taking two birds, and 122 (27.0 %; the greatest reported) took or assisted in taking three birds. Cooperators reported 238 gobblers killed by companions.

#### 2010-11 Season Forecast

According to a post-season telephone survey, Georgia's estimated 47,275 resident turkey hunters had another good spring season in 2010, harvesting about 34,001 gobblers statewide. The average harvest per hunter (0.72 turkeys) increased 47% in 2010 and was 28.5 % better than the previous 5 years averaged (.56). Not surprising, 72.3% of turkey hunters surveyed rated Georgia turkey hunting good or excellent. The turkey population in Georgia has declined since 2003, primarily due to poor reproduction and loss of quality habitat. I think we are experiencing normal population cycles typical of a stable population at or near capacity. We recently estimated the population at about 335,000 turkeys and harvest rates remain good. Reproduction was good in many parts of the state in the summer of 2010. This should mean a lot of vocal 2-year-old birds available for the 2012 season. Unfortunately, reproduction was very low in 2009 due to heavy May rainfall and this will result in fewer 2-year-old birds available for harvest this season.

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