



2001 Spring Season Arkansas Wild Turkey Harvest Report



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Introduction: The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission added an extra week of turkey hunting to the 2001 spring season in Arkansas, resulting in more hunting opportunity than recent seasons. The “general” statewide season began on April 2 and ended on May 6 (zone 1, most of the state). Very limited hunting occurred prior to April 2 (special youth hunts, a WMA permit hunt and zone 17). Some areas in SW and NE Arkansas with fewer turkeys had shorter seasons (2 weeks--zone 2). Bag limit was two gobblers or bearded hens statewide, with only one turkey allowed in zone 2. Only one jake was allowed in the bag in spring 2001. Mandatory checking of harvested turkeys is required in Arkansas, and this report is based on those data.

AGFC extends a special Thank You to volunteer checkstation operators.

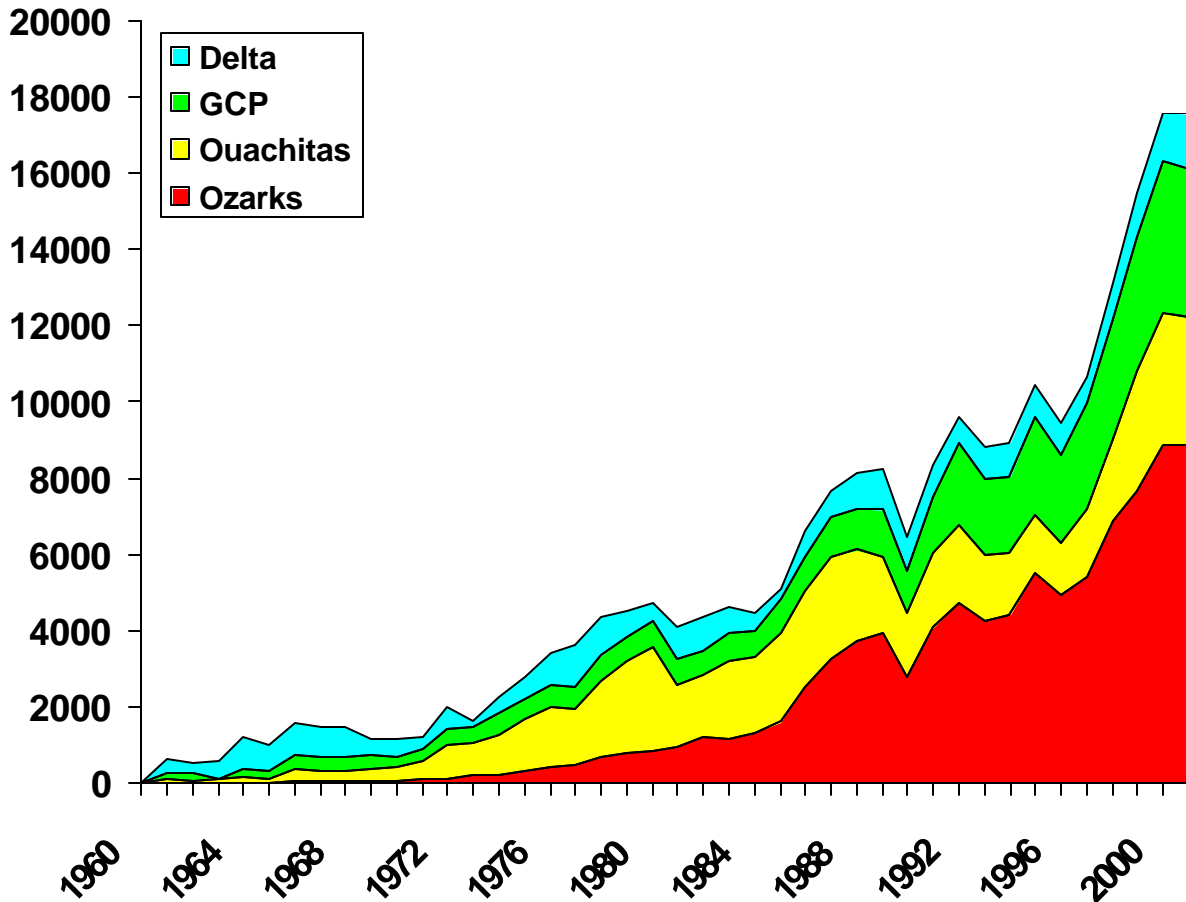
Results:

Statewide: A harvest of **17,557 turkeys** consisting of 17,413 gobblers and 144 bearded hens occurred in spring 2001 (Table 1). This total was a 0.4% decrease from the spring harvest of 2000, and a 13% increase over harvest in 1999. Eight record harvests have occurred in the eleven spring seasons since 1990 (Fig. 1). Archery/crossbow hunters accounted for three turkeys, muzzleloader hunters four and modern gun hunters 17,550. (Continued, next page)

Table 1. 2001 Arkansas spring season turkey harvest by region.

Region	Number Harvested (% of Total)	% Change from Spring 2000	WMA Harvest (% of Region Total)
Ozarks	8,885 (51%)	0.2% Increase	863 (10%)
Ouachitas	3,316 (19%)	4.0% Decrease	313 (9%)
Gulf Coastal Plain	3,892 (22%)	2.3% Decrease	59 (2%)
Delta	1,464 (8%)	12.7% Increase	173 (12%)
Statewide	17,557 (100%)	0.4% Decrease	1,408 (8%)

Figure 1. Total Arkansas spring wild turkey harvest showing regional contribution to that total, 1961-2001.



Results: Statewide: cont.:

The majority of turkey harvest was checked in zone 1 (16,983), with 348 birds checked in zone 2 and 226 checked in zone 17 along the Mississippi River.

The top eight counties in checked kill were located in the Ozarks. Sharp County led the state with 752 turkeys checked, followed by Fulton (618), Pope (615), Cleburne (609), Van Buren (599), Izard (597), Stone (537), Independence (480), Union (472) and White (434). The kill of 752 turkeys in Sharp

County represents the first time since turkeys have been checked in Arkansas that a county has recorded a harvest of greater than 750 birds during the spring season. Thirty-one (31) of the 75 counties in AR had a record kill (Fig. 2).

Jakes made up 32% of the statewide harvest in 2001, up from 24% in 2000. The percentage of jakes in the harvest varied regionally from 39% in the Ozarks, 31% in the Ouachitas, 15% in the Gulf Coastal Plain (GCP) and to 37% in the Delta. The statewide figure of 32% jakes in spring 2001 is lower than the long-term statewide average of 39%.

WMA (273), Ozark NF WMA (206), Piney Creeks WMA (149), White Rock WMA (98), Winona WMA (76), Mt. Magazine WMA (72), Ft. Chaffee WMA (69), Norfolk Lake WMA (62), White River NWR (60), and Muddy Creek WMA (32).

2001 Special Youth Turkey Hunts:

For the sixth year, Special Youth Turkey Hunts were held on selected areas around the state. These very popular two-day hunts were held on March 24-25 on fifteen Wildlife Management Areas. In addition, three hunts restricted to youth only were held on Felsenthal NWR, Henry Gray/Hurricane Lake WMA, and Holland Bottoms WMA on other dates. All but 1 special hunt in spring 2001 were by

permit only with approximately 370 permits available.

Young hunters checked 28 turkeys on these youth hunts (Table 2). This number was below the 49 taken in 2000 and the 39 taken in 1999.

AGFC has been a national leader in offering youth turkey hunting opportunity. In 1999, AGFC was one of only nine states offering special youth turkey hunting, and our season offered the most opportunity of any state. The objective of our pre-season special youth hunts is to provide a quality hunting experience conducted in an ethical situation for youth. These hunts have proven to be very popular and almost all comments from the public have been favorable.

Table 2. 2001 Arkansas Special Youth Turkey Hunt harvest by Wildlife Management Area/National Wildlife Refuge.

Harold E. Alexander WMA	4	Holla Bend NWR	1
Henry Gray/Hurricane Lake WMA	4	Petit Jean WMA	1
Lafayette County WMA	4	Sulphur River WMA	1
Felsenthal NWR	3	Bayou Meto WMA	0
Scatter Creek WMA	3	Cut-off Creek WMA	0
Trusten Holder WMA	3	Holland Bottoms WMA	0
Norfolk Lake WMA	2	Madison County WMA	0
Black Swamp WMA/Cache R. NWR	1	St. Francis Forest WMA	0
Gulf Mountain WMA	1		
		Statewide Total	28

Comments on the Spring Season:

The spring 2001 was down slightly (-0.4%) from the record harvest set last year. Turkeys came through a fairly harsh winter in some areas, nesting activity was distributed throughout the season, gobbling activity was fair to poor and sporadic in some areas, weather was not optimum during the first part of the season, and gobblers were surrounded by hens for a majority of the season in some areas.

The percentage of jakes in the 2001 spring harvest was up from the record low percentage (24%) observed in 2000, however, it is still below the long-term average of 39%. Arkansas has a history of a

high percentage of jakes in the kill—in some regions jakes have exceeded 50% in some years.

Although, turkey harvest was down slightly for the 2001 spring season as compared to 2000, several reports were received after the spring season ended regarding hearing gobbling turkeys and seeing strutting toms. These observations may indicate that we have had a good carryover of gobblers for next year, resulting in a good supply of adult gobblers for next year's turkey season. Therefore, the decrease in harvest was most likely not related to a decrease in turkey numbers but based more on other factors, such as weather, nesting status, gobbling activity, etc.
