



No.	Author	Date
1998	Steven E. Backs, Wildlife Research Biologist	6/14/2018
	Title Spring Wild Turkey Harvest Results - 2018	

**Abstract:** *Hunters harvested 11,306 wild turkeys in 92 of 92 Indiana counties during the 2018 spring season. The 2018 spring harvest was a 13% decrease from the 2017 spring harvest of 13,069. Spring harvests decreased in 65 counties with 22 counties exceeding 200 birds compared to 30 in 2017. Most birds were harvested in the early part of the season and the early morning hours. A total of 1,097 birds (10% of total harvest) was taken during the youth-only weekend prior to the regular season. The proportion of juveniles in the spring harvest was 15% with 38% 2-year-olds, and 47%  $\geq 3$  year-olds. All regions had proportional decreases in harvests ranging from -6% in the North to -25% in South-central Indiana. The estimated number of hunters afield was 58,916 in 2018 with an estimated hunter success of 19%.*

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Hunters harvested 11,306 wild turkeys during the 49<sup>th</sup> spring wild turkey season as reported to the “Check-IN-Game” harvest reporting system (98% on-line and 2% tele-check) with at least one wild turkey harvested in each of the 92 counties. The 2018 harvest was a 13% decrease from the 2017 harvest of 13,069. There were 22 counties with harvests  $\geq 200$  birds compared to 30 in 2017. Overall, 65 counties showed decreased harvests, 23 increased, and four experienced no change in turkeys harvested. The top 10 counties were Steuben (338), Switzerland (312), Harrison (283 birds), Greene (277), Marshall (267), Warrick (267), DeKalb (264), Dearborn (257), Jefferson (257), and Perry (253) (Table 1; Figure 1).

A total of 1,097 birds (10% of harvest) was taken during the youth-only weekend (4/21 & 4/22/2018) with 57% of the regular season harvest (10,209 birds) occurring during the first five days of the 19-day season and 37% occurring on the three weekends. Approximately 68% of the harvest occurred by 10 am, 77% by noon, 10% from noon to 5 pm, and 13% occurring from 5 pm to sunset. Resident spring turkey licensees harvested 44% of the birds, followed by Lifetime (32%), Youth (13%), license exempt Landowners/Military (7%), and Non-Resident spring turkey licensees (4%). The harvest primarily occurred on private land (92%), followed by State lands (5%), Federal lands (4%), and Military (0.5%).

Male gobblers made up 98.1% (11,096) of the harvest with 1.9% (210) bearded hens. The age structure of the harvest (Table 2) was 15% juvenile gobblers (1 year-old birds; "jakes"), 38% 2-year-olds, and 47%  $\geq 3$ -year-olds. The 15% juvenile proportion was a slight improvement of the record low of 13% in 2017. The age structure reflected the variation in brood production from 2014-2017 and the greater vulnerability of adult gobblers to harvest (Wright and Vangilder 2005, Chamberlain et al. 2012). Summer brood production in 2016 was extremely poor in many regions of the state, especially in the south with a slight improvement in 2017 (Backs 2018). The shift toward older gobbler age classes in Indiana’s spring harvests began about 10-12 years ago, when summer brood production levels dropped off from the higher mean levels during the wild turkey restoration era (1956-2004 in Indiana) to a “new normal” post restoration characterized by reduced brood productivity and declining or stabilized spring harvests (Casalena et al. 2016, Byrne et al. 2016, Eriksen et al. 2016, Parent et al. 2016). The mean proportion of juveniles in Indiana’s spring harvest from 1988-2005 was 28% and has since declined substantially to a mean of 18% ( $F_{1,29} = 17.2$ ;  $P = 0.0002$ ). The 15% juvenile proportion in 2018 spring harvest was also less than the 20% of the previous 10 years ( $P < 0.05$ ).

All regions had proportional decreases in harvests ranging from -6% in the North to -25% in South-central Indiana (Table 3). The overall statewide harvest increased 13% from 2017. As noted, the proportion of juveniles in the statewide harvest increased slightly to 15% statewide (Figure 2) and considered below normal reflecting the cumulative impacts on consecutive years of poor production. The low proportion of juveniles in the 2017 and 2018 spring harvests raises some concern for future hunter success and satisfaction. The 2017 and 2018 harvest age structures would suggest progressively fewer 2-year-old gobblers in subsequent spring harvests with a lower proportion of 2-yr-olds than the current 10-year

mean of 48%. Two-year-old gobblers are the most active gobbler cohort and generally the most vulnerable to harvest, so the change in the age structure would likely have a negative impact on hunter success and satisfaction subsequent years unless turkey production improves. The higher harvest rates for adult gobblers may, however, be offset by a greater recruitment of juveniles into adult age classes in subsequent years allowing for a sustainable level of harvest (Deifenbach et al. 2012). More importantly the lower proportion of juveniles in spring harvest age structure also suggests a comparable decrease in the proportion of the more productive adult hen cohort that could influence production and statewide populations levels for several years, even if weather and habitat conditions are conducive to poult survival.

Annual statewide spring harvests have generally stabilized since the peak harvest in 2010 (13,742) with totals during the previous decade generally ranging from 11,000 to 12,000 birds and 56,000 to 61,000 hunters in the field experiencing success rates from 18 to 24% (Table 4; Figure 3). The 2018 spring harvest appeared to be another up and down oscillation around a new normal mean level following restoration that is lower than previously observed during the accelerated population growth of the restoration years with the 5-year mean trend leveling off around 20% (Figure 4). Relative hunter success and harvest levels, however, may not accurately reflect trends in wild turkey abundance unless hunter effort is taken into account (Parent et al. 2016).

Reasons for the 13% decrease in the 2018 spring harvest are likely manifestation of the annual fluctuations and generally lower long term production trends that are below the production levels observed earlier in the restoration era (Backs 2018; Figure 3). The general decline in production that has occurred the last 10-12 years in Indiana has also occurred throughout the eastern United States as wild turkey populations stabilized in the post-restoration era with subsequent declines in harvests to levels below peak years (Porter et al. 2011, Eriksen et al. 2016). The greatest declines in Indiana wild turkey populations have occurred in the southern half of the state where the restoration work was generally completed earlier than the northern half of the state. The apparent increased sensitivity or influence of annual summer production in recent years on subsequent turkey harvests creates a level of uncertainty about sustainable harvest levels and management strategies in the future (Byrne et al. 2016, Stevens et al. 2017). While the higher proportion of adult gobblers in recent spring harvests is likely welcomed by hunters, the continued low proportion of juveniles in the spring harvests raises concerns about future harvest trends and hunter success unless there is a significant upswing in production for several consecutive years.

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Table 1. Indiana wild turkey harvest by county, spring 2017 and 2018.

County	2017 Reported* Harvest	Percent of Harvest	2018 Reported* Harvest	Percent of Harvest	Difference from prior year	Percent Change
Adams	15	0.2%	17	0.2%	2	13%
Allen	104	0.8%	119	1.1%	15	14%
Bartholomew	108	0.9%	89	0.8%	-19	-18%
Benton	9	0.0%	10	0.1%	1	11%
Blackford	13	0.1%	9	0.1%	-4	-31%
Boone	10	0.1%	5	0.0%	-5	-50%
Brown	187	1.2%	146	1.3%	-41	-22%
Carroll	41	0.3%	44	0.4%	3	7%
Cass	77	0.5%	75	0.7%	-2	-3%
Clark	265	2.1%	236	2.1%	-29	-11%
Clay	110	1.0%	111	1.0%	1	1%
Clinton	3	0.0%	3	0.0%	0	0%
Crawford	262	2.4%	183	1.6%	-79	-30%
Daviess	107	0.8%	93	0.8%	-14	-13%
Dearborn	328	2.7%	257	2.3%	-71	-22%
Decatur	58	0.5%	42	0.4%	-16	-28%
DeKalb	281	2.2%	264	2.3%	-17	-6%
Delaware	2	0.0%	3	0.0%	1	50%
Dubois	169	1.4%	134	1.2%	-35	-21%
Elkhart	219	1.7%	199	1.8%	-20	-9%
Fayette	59	0.4%	62	0.5%	3	5%
Floyd	111	0.8%	83	0.7%	-28	-25%
Fountain	120	0.9%	102	0.9%	-18	-15%
Franklin	310	2.2%	214	1.9%	-96	-31%
Fulton	188	1.3%	170	1.5%	-18	-10%
Gibson	133	1.2%	121	1.1%	-12	-9%
Grant	5	0.1%	7	0.1%	2	40%
Greene	344	2.5%	277	2.5%	-67	-19%
Hamilton	0	0.0%	1	0.0%	1	---
Hancock	4	0.0%	4	0.0%	0	0%
Harrison	406	3.0%	283	2.5%	-123	-30%
Hendricks	44	0.3%	35	0.3%	-9	-20%
Henry	13	0.0%	10	0.1%	-3	-23%
Howard	13	0.0%	7	0.1%	-6	-46%
Huntington	58	0.4%	52	0.5%	-6	-10%
Jackson	244	1.8%	186	1.6%	-58	-24%
Jasper	176	1.2%	156	1.4%	-20	-11%
Jay	46	0.4%	43	0.4%	-3	-7%
Jefferson	332	2.7%	257	2.3%	-75	-23%
Jennings	193	1.5%	163	1.4%	-30	-16%
Johnson	37	0.2%	29	0.3%	-8	-22%
Knox	112	0.8%	83	0.7%	-29	-26%
Kosciusko	258	1.9%	244	2.2%	-14	-5%
Lagrange	273	2.1%	240	2.1%	-33	-12%
Lake	38	0.1%	26	0.2%	-12	-32%
LaPorte	219	1.6%	204	1.8%	-15	-7%
Lawrence	273	1.7%	201	1.8%	-72	-26%

Table 1. continued on next page.

Table 1. Indiana wild turkey harvest by county, spring 2017 and 2018. *Continued.*

County	2017 Reported* Harvest	Percent of Harvest	2018 Reported* Harvest	Percent of Harvest	Difference from prior year	Percent Change
Madison	1	0.0%	3	0.0%	2	200%
Marion	2	0.0%	1	0.0%	-1	-50%
Marshall	303	2.3%	267	2.4%	-36	-12%
Martin	195	1.5%	162	1.4%	-33	-17%
Miami	63	0.5%	68	0.6%	5	8%
Monroe	200	1.4%	128	1.1%	-72	-36%
Montgomery	76	0.5%	68	0.6%	-8	-11%
Morgan	119	1.0%	79	0.7%	-40	-34%
Newton	99	0.8%	133	1.2%	34	34%
Noble	317	2.2%	240	2.1%	-77	-24%
Ohio	104	0.8%	121	1.1%	17	16%
Orange	240	2.6%	176	1.6%	-64	-27%
Owen	251	1.1%	201	1.8%	-50	-20%
Parke	210	1.9%	191	1.7%	-19	-9%
Perry	301	2.0%	253	2.2%	-48	-16%
Pike	207	1.6%	200	1.8%	-7	-3%
Porter	64	0.4%	74	0.7%	10	16%
Posey	114	1.1%	127	1.1%	13	11%
Pulaski	163	1.5%	174	1.5%	11	7%
Putnam	187	1.6%	183	1.6%	-4	-2%
Randolph	7	0.1%	13	0.1%	6	86%
Ripley	228	1.9%	219	1.9%	-9	-4%
Rush	4	0.0%	6	0.1%	2	50%
Saint Joseph	187	1.5%	190	1.7%	3	2%
Scott	150	1.2%	122	1.1%	-28	-19%
Shelby	18	0.1%	14	0.1%	-4	-22%
Spencer	204	1.4%	160	1.4%	-44	-22%
Starke	236	2.0%	249	2.2%	13	6%
Steuben	359	3.0%	338	3.0%	-21	-6%
Sullivan	281	1.7%	220	1.9%	-61	-22%
Switzerland	311	2.6%	312	2.8%	1	0%
Tippecanoe	64	0.5%	62	0.5%	-2	-3%
Tipton	0	0.0%	1	0.0%	1	---
Union	72	0.6%	72	0.6%	0	0%
Vanderburg	58	0.5%	45	0.4%	-13	-22%
Vermillion	81	0.7%	90	0.8%	9	11%
Vigo	147	1.2%	146	1.3%	-1	-1%
Wabash	139	0.8%	117	1.0%	-22	-16%
Warren	103	0.9%	105	0.9%	2	2%
Warrick	320	2.3%	267	2.4%	-53	-17%
Washington	218	1.7%	164	1.5%	-54	-25%
Wayne	76	0.5%	65	0.6%	-11	-14%
Wells	16	0.2%	9	0.1%	-7	-44%
White	92	0.8%	81	0.7%	-11	-12%
Whitley	105	0.7%	91	0.8%	-14	-13%
Totals	13,069		11,306		-1763	-13%

\* Harvest data collected from hunter reports to "Check-IN-Game" (web-based and telephone).

**Figure 1. Distribution of 2018 Spring Turkey Harvest**

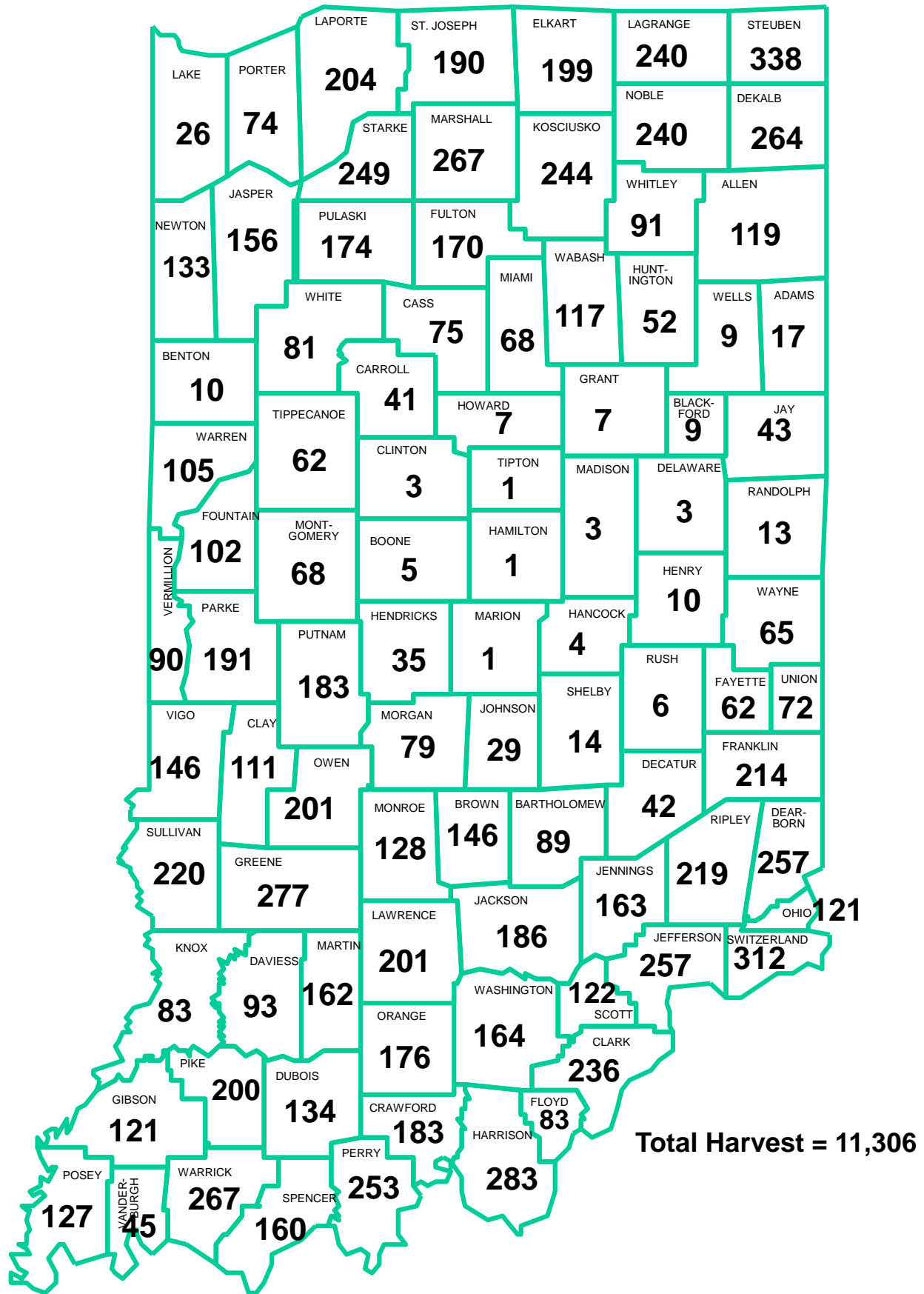


Table 2. Age structure of Indiana's spring gobbler harvests, 1988-2018.

Year	Reported Harvest	Age Class Percentages and Mean Weights (lbs) *					
		1Yr	Wt.	2Yr	Wt.	3+Yr	Wt.
1988	905	45%	15.4	39%	20.7	16%	21.8
1989	1,359	20%	15.5	63%	20.7	17%	22.2
1990	1,505	31%	15.2	41%	21.0	28%	21.9
1991	2,318	25%	15.5	53%	21.1	22%	22.2
1992	2,531	38%	15.1	43%	20.8	19%	22.2
1993	3,500	18%	15.9	60%	20.9	22%	22.4
1994	3,741	41%	15.2	37%	21.2	22%	22.4
1995	4,706	28%	15.6	55%	20.6	18%	22.1
1996	4,859	24%	15.6	53%	21.6	23%	22.7
1997	5,790	21%	15.7	56%	21.5	24%	22.7
1998	6,384	22%	15.5	51%	21.1	28%	22.5
1999	6,548	25%	15.5	49%	21.1	26%	22.6
2000	7,822	27%	15.2	44%	20.7	28%	21.9
2001	9,975	26%	15.7	50%	20.1	24%	22.1
2002	10,575	27%	15.7	47%	21.3	27%	22.5
2003	10,366	24%	15.3	49%	21.3	28%	22.4
2004	10,765	24%	15.8	49%	21.4	27%	22.8
2005	11,159	33%	14.9	44%	20.9	23%	22.3
2006	13,193	14%	14.5	67%	20.7	19%	22.1
2007	11,163	22%	15.5	42%	21.5	26%	22.6
2008	12,204	22%	16.0	52%	21.7	26%	22.9
2009	12,993	19%	16.0	51%	21.7	30%	22.9
2010	13,742	18%	15.6	54%	21.4	28%	22.6
2011	11,669	21%	15.6	48%	21.3	31%	22.4
2012	12,655	14%	15.9	52%	21.1	34%	22.3
2013	11,374	24%	16.1	38%	21.8	38%	23.2
2014	10,872	17%	15.4	53%	21.7	30%	24.4
2015	11,853	21%	16.6	46%	22.0	33%	23.4
2016	12,081	19%	---	42%	---	39%	---
2017	13,069	13%	---	39%	---	48%	---
<b>Previous 10 Year Means</b>	<b>12,239</b>	<b>20%</b>		<b>48%</b>		<b>32%</b>	
2018	11,306	15%	---	38%	---	47%	---

\* Starting in 2016, age determination based primarily on spur length with secondary verification, if needed, using beard length class. Weights collected at check stations 1988-2015 were discontinued with implementation of web/telephone based "Check-IN-Game" system in 2016. Age class percentages based on harvested male turkeys only; legally harvested female turkeys generally make up <2% (range 1.3 to 2.0%) of harvest.

Table 3. Regional spring turkey harvest and age structure in Indiana, 2007-2018.

	Region						Statewide
	North	East-central	West-central	South-central	Southeast	Southwest	
<b>2008</b>							
Harvest	2,166	60	2,233	3,172	3,057	1,516	12,204
% of Total Harvest	18%	0.5%	18%	26%	25%	12%	---
Juvenile %	34%	25%	22%	19%	18%	18%	22%
<b>2009</b>							
Harvest	2,561	61	2,072	3,314	3,233	1,752	12,993
% of Total Harvest	20%	0.5%	16%	26%	25%	14%	---
Juvenile %	27%	22%	16%	25%	25%	14%	19%
<b>2010</b>							
Harvest	3,088	94	2,021	3,406	3,340	1,793	13,742
% of Total Harvest	23%	0.7%	15%	25%	24%	13%	---
Juvenile %	25%	28%	20%	15%	14%	17%	18%
<b>2011</b>							
Harvest	2,589	77	1,739	2,902	2,800	1,562	11,669
% of Total Harvest	22%	0.7%	15%	25%	24%	13%	---
Juvenile %	25%	27%	24%	20%	19%	16%	21%
<b>2012</b>							
Harvest	3,007	110	2,008	3,069	2,868	1,593	12,655
% of Total Harvest	24%	0.9%	16%	24%	23%	13%	---
Juvenile %	22%	20%	15%	11%	11%	12%	14%
<b>2013</b>							
Harvest	2,834	106	1,742	2,669	2,592	1,431	11,374
% of Total Harvest	25%	1%	15%	24%	23%	13%	---
Juvenile %	25%	31%	29%	22%	22%	24%	24%
<b>2014</b>							
Harvest	2,733	142	1,658	2,510	2,517	1,312	10,872
% of Total Harvest	25%	1%	15%	23%	23%	12%	---
Juvenile %	22%	28%	18%	14%	15%	15%	17%
<b>2015</b>							
Harvest	3,297	167	1,742	2,712	2,485	1,450	11,853
% of Total Harvest	28%	1%	15%	23%	21%	12%	---
Juvenile %	28%	24%	24%	18%	18%	17%	21%
<b>2016</b>							
Harvest	3,727	215	1,855	2,574	2,390	1,320	12,081
% of Total Harvest	31%	2%	15%	21%	20%	11%	---
Juvenile %	20%	22%	18%	18%	18%	19%	19%
<b>2017</b>							
Harvest	4,068	216	1,974	2,901	2,486	1,424	13,069
% of Total Harvest	31%	2%	15%	22%	19%	11%	---
Juvenile %	17%	21%	12%	8%	12%	10%	13%
<b>Previous 10-Year Means</b>							
Harvest	3,007	125	1,904	2,923	2,777	1,515	12,251
% of Total Harvest	25%	1%	16%	24%	23%	12%	---
Juvenile %	24%	25%	20%	17%	17%	16%	20%
<b>2018</b>							
Harvest	3,825	191	1,756	2,162	2,142	1,230	11,306
% of Total Harvest	34%	2%	16%	19%	19%	11%	---
Juvenile %	15%	20%	17%	15%	16%	15%	15%
<b>2017 to 2018 Differences</b>							
Change in Harvest	-243	-25	-218	-739	-344	-194	-1,763
Percent change in Harvest	-6%	-12%	-11%	-25%	-14%	-14%	-13%

Figure 2. 2018 Spring wild turkey harvest and age structure by region.

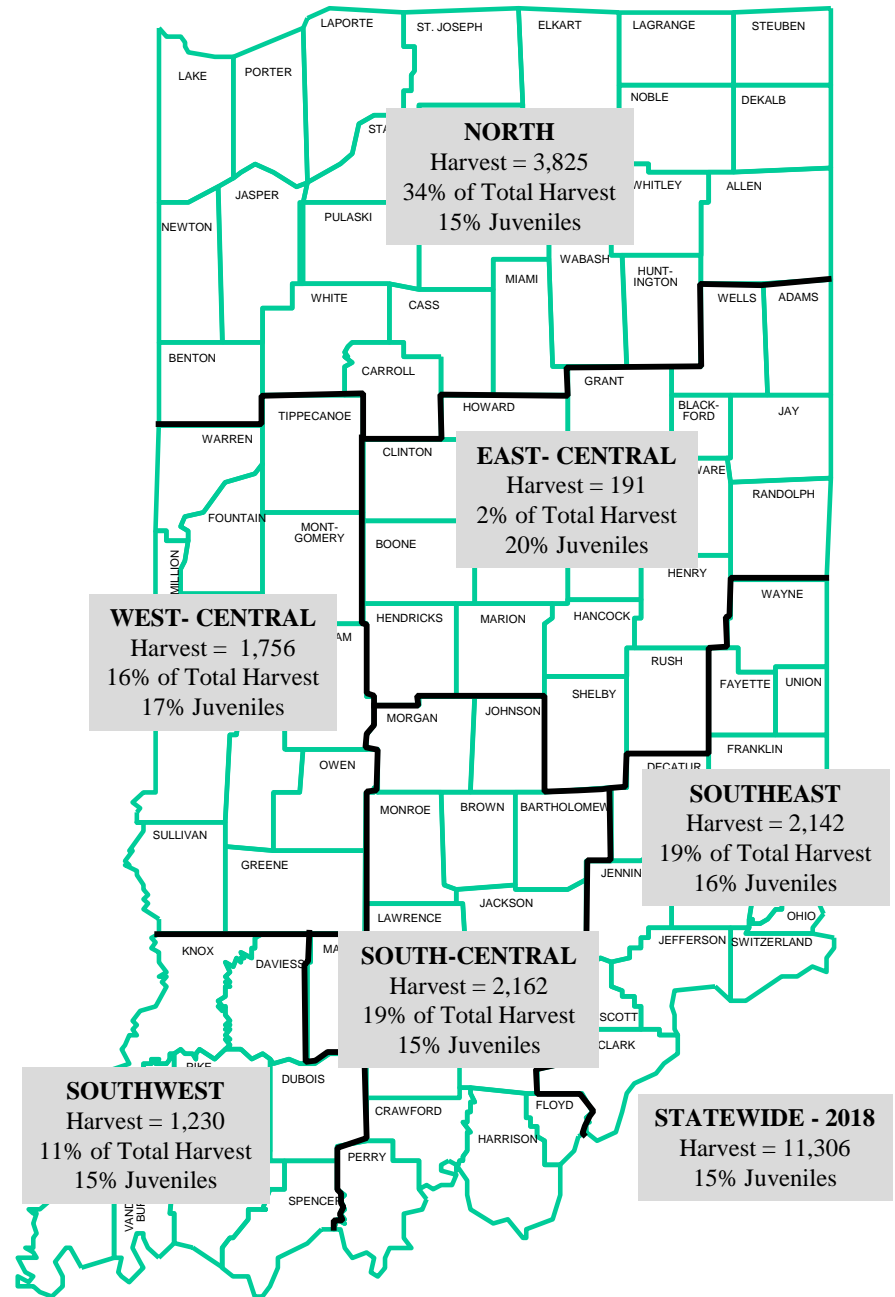




Table 4. Indiana's spring wild turkey hunting seasons, 1970 to 2018.

Year	Regular Season Dates	Season Length (Days)	No. of Counties	No. of Permits Sold*	Est. No. of Hunters**	Reported Harvest	Hunter Success
1970	5/2-5/5	4	3	75	62	6	9.7%
1971	5/1-5/5	5	9	298	224	11	4.9%
1972	4/26-4/30	5	9	585	422	12	2.8%
1973	4/25-4/29	5	11	625	503	27	5.4%
1974	4/24-4/28	5	11	665	496	26	5.2%
1975	4/29-5/5	7	11	722	501	15	3.0%
1976	4/29-5/5	7	13	666	500	32	6.4%
1977	4/28-5/5	8	16	668	520	46	8.8%
1978	4/26-5/7	12	18	852	619	33	5.3%
1979	4/25-5/6	12	19	932	860	48	5.6%
1980	4/23-5/4	12	17	706	670	54	8.1%
1981	4/22-5/3	12	18	922	814	90	11.1%
1982	4/21-5/2	12	18	1,125	696	73	10.5%
1983	4/20-5/1	12	18	1,218	984	93	9.5%
1984	4/25-5/6	12	18	1,320	1,205	104	8.6%
1985	4/24-5/5	12	25	1,882	1,302	255	19.6%
1986	4/23-5/4	12	25	2,523	1,648	293	17.8%
1987	4/22-5/6	15	33	3,348	2,619	741	28.3%
1988	4/27-5/11	15	33	10,894	4,677	905	19.4%
1989	4/26-5/10	15	39	11,442	6,068	1,359	22.4%
1990	4/25-5/9	15	39	14,379	7,860	1,505	19.1%
1991	4/24-5/8	15	43	16,387	9,643	2,318	24.0%
1992	4/22-5/6	15	43	18,735	13,110	2,531	19.3%
1993	4/28-5/16	19	48	21,078	15,673	3,500	22.3%
1994	4/27-5/15	19	48	23,357	18,622	3,741	20.1%
1995	4/26-5/14	19	52	28,858	20,861	4,706	22.6%
1996	4/24-5/12	19	52	28,733	21,442	4,859	22.6%
1997	4/23-5/11	19	74	32,703	23,085	5,790	25.1%
1998	4/22-5/10	19	74	32,889	22,876	6,384	27.9%
1999	4/21-5/9	19	74	38,730	27,285	6,548	24.0%
2000	4/26-5/14	19	74	<b>40,801</b>	<b>28,615</b>	7,822	<b>27%</b>
2001	4/25-5/13	19	74	<b>43,815</b>	<b>36,103</b>	9,975	<b>28%</b>
2002	4/24-5/12 <sup>†</sup>	19	90	44,333	37,919	10,575	28%
2003	4/23-5/11	19	90	<b>48,857</b>	<b>40,110</b>	10,366	<b>26%</b>
2004	4/21-5/9	19	90	<b>50,839</b>	<b>41,996</b>	10,765	<b>26%</b>
2005	4/27-5/15	19	88	<b>50,839</b>	<b>49,684</b>	11,159	<b>22%</b>
2006	4/26-5/14	19	88	<b>67,290</b>	<b>50,880</b>	13,193	<b>26%</b>
2007	4/25-5/13 <sup>††</sup>	19	91	69,861	53,402	11,163	21%
2008	4/23-5/11	19	91	<b>71,052</b>	<b>55,022</b>	12,204	<b>22%</b>
2009	4/22-5/10	19	92	<b>75,161</b>	<b>59,000</b>	12,993	<b>22%</b>
2010	4/21-5/9	19	92	<b>73,089</b>	<b>56,891</b>	13,742	<b>24%</b>
2011	4/27-5/15	19	92	<b>72,323</b>	<b>56,220</b>	11,669	<b>21%</b>
2012	4/25-5/13	19	92	<b>71,836</b>	<b>57,631</b>	12,655	<b>22%</b>
2013	4/24-5/12	19	92	<b>74,966</b>	<b>60,889</b>	11,374	<b>19%</b>
2014	4/23-5/11	19	92	<b>73,279</b>	<b>59,237</b>	10,872	<b>18%</b>
2015	4/22-5/10	19	92	<b>69,192</b>	<b>55,531</b>	11,853	<b>21%</b>
2016	4/27-5/15	19	92	<b>70,484</b>	<b>57,332</b>	12,081	<b>21%</b>
2017	4/26-5/14	19	92	<b>72,775</b>	<b>58,980</b>	13,069	<b>22%</b>
2018	4/25-5/13	19	92	<b>72,609</b>	<b>58,916</b>	11,306	<b>19%</b>
2019	4/24-5/12	19	92				

\* Includes all allowable license types (e.g., lifetime, youth licenses sold by May, non-residents, and apprentice).

license exempt landowners or military hunters on active leave participating in the spring season.

<sup>†</sup> "All-day" turkey hunting initiated; 1/2 hr prior to sunrise to sunset.

<sup>††</sup> Beginning with the spring 2007 season, a special 2-day youth-only season is held the weekend prior to the regular season opening.

**Bold italics** = preliminary estimates based on projecting previous years' trends or means

Figure 3. Indiana Spring Turkey Seasons

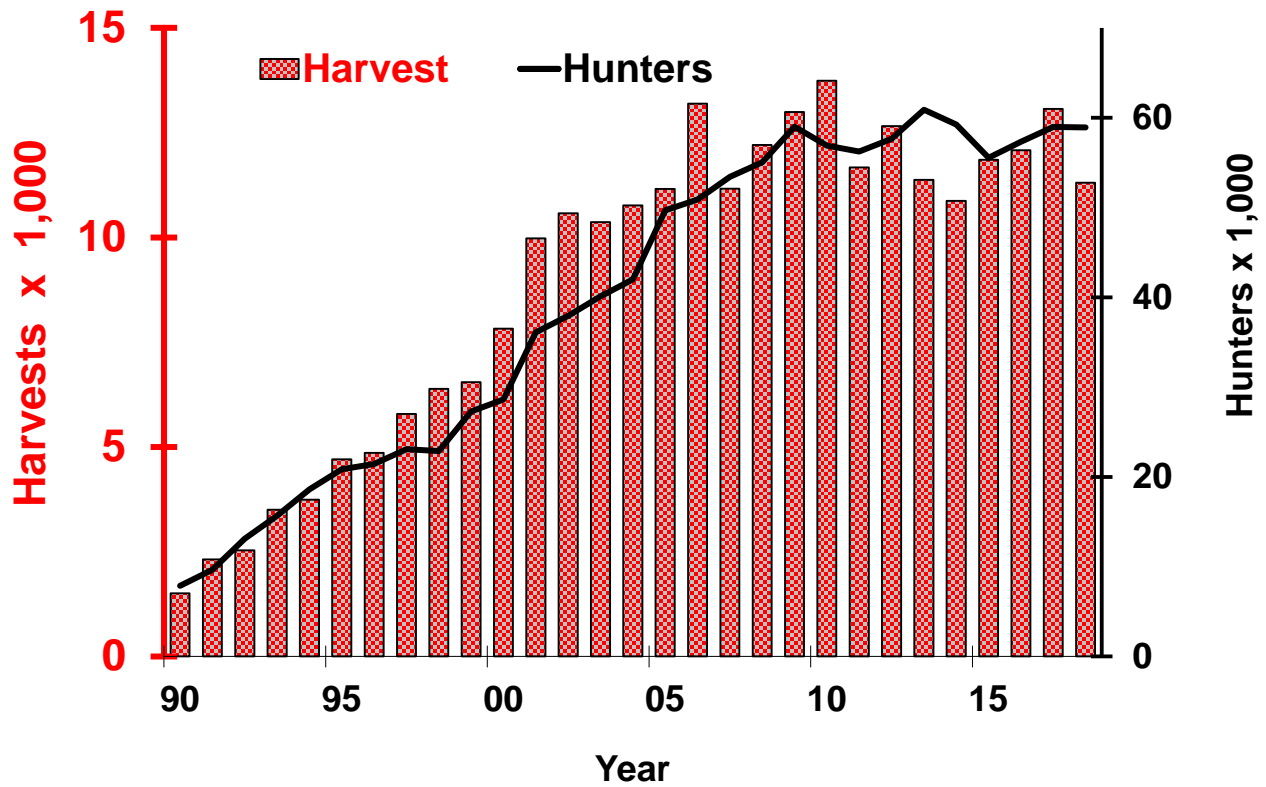


Figure 4. Estimated Indiana Spring Turkey Hunter Success

