



No.	Author	Date
2035	Steven E. Backs, Wildlife Research Biologist	8/10/2017
	Title Spring Wild Turkey Harvest Results - 2017	

Abstract: Hunters harvested 13,069 wild turkeys in 90 of 92 Indiana counties during the 2017 spring season. The 2017 spring harvest was an 8% increase over the 2016 spring harvest of 12,081. Spring harvests increased in 60 counties with 30 exceeding 200 birds. Most birds were harvested in the early part of the season and the early morning hours. A total of 1,455 birds (11% of total harvest) was taken during the youth-only weekend prior to the regular season. The proportion of juveniles in the spring harvest was 13% with 39% 2-year-olds, and 48% ≥ 3 year-olds. All regions had proportional increases in harvests ranging from 4 to 13% except east-central Indiana where no change occurred. The estimated number of hunters afield was 58,980 in 2017 with an estimated hunter success of 22%.

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Hunters harvested 13,069 wild turkeys in 90 of 92 Indiana counties during the 48th spring wild turkey season as reported to the “Check-IN-Game” harvest reporting system (98% on-line and 2% tele-check). The 2017 harvest was an 8% increase over the 2016 harvest of 12,081. There were 30 counties with harvests ≥ 200 birds compared to 25 in 2016. Overall, 60 counties showed increased harvests, 26 decreased, and six experienced no change in turkeys harvested. The top 10 counties were Harrison (406 birds), Steuben (359), Greene (344), Jefferson (332), Dearborn (328), Orange (314), Warrick (320), Noble (317), Switzerland (311), Franklin (310), Marshall (303), and Perry (301) (Table 1; Figure 1).

A total of 1,455 birds (11% of harvest) was taken during the youth-only weekend (4/22 & 4/23/2017) with 58% of the regular season harvest (11,614 birds occurring during the first five days of the 19-day season and 42% occurring on the three weekends. Approximately 63% of the harvest occurred by 10 am, 73% by noon, 13% from noon to 5 pm, and 14% occurring from 5 pm to sunset. Resident spring turkey licensees harvested 47% of the birds, followed by Lifetime (32%), Youth (15%), license exempt Landowners/Military (7%), and Non-Resident spring turkey licensees (3%). The harvest primarily occurred on private land (91%), followed by State lands (5%), Federal lands (4%), and Military (0.5%).

Male gobblers made up 98.4% (12,855) of the harvest with 1.6% (214) bearded hens. The age structure of the male harvest (Table 2) was 13% juvenile gobblers (1 year-old birds; "jakes"), 39% 2-year-olds, and 48% ≥ 3 -year-olds. The 13% juvenile proportion was a new low, although similar to the 14% in 2006 and 2012. The age structure reflected the variation in brood production from 2014-2016 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 (Backs 2017). 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 19% ($F_{1,28} = 15.4$; $P = 0.0005$). The 13% juvenile proportion in 2017 spring harvest was also less than the 20% of the previous 10 years ($P < 0.001$).

All regions had proportional increases in harvests ranging from 4 to 13% except east-central Indiana where no change occurred (Table 3). The overall statewide harvest increased 8% from 2016. As noted, the proportion of juveniles in the statewide harvest declined to 13% statewide with the lowest proportion (8%) in south-central Indiana likely reflecting lower brood survival from severe summer flooding in 2016 (Figure 2). Although overall harvests increased for the second consecutive year, the low proportion of juveniles in 2017 does raise concern for future hunter success and satisfaction. The 2017 harvest age structure would suggest even fewer 2-year-old gobblers in 2018 than the 39% in 2017,

which was also lower than the previous 10-year mean of 48%. Two-year-old gobblers are the most active gobbler cohort and generally the most vulnerable to harvest. 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 (Deifenchbach et al. 2012). Poor summer production in 2016, apparently manifested in the 2017 spring harvest age structure, also suggests a decrease in the adult hen cohort next year that could influence production 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 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 2017 spring harvest was the third highest with an estimated 58,980 hunters afield with an estimated success rate of 22%, which was the third consecutive year of slightly improved hunter success with the 5-year mean trend leveling off just above 20% (Figure 4). Relative hunter success and harvest levels may not accurately reflect trends in wild turkey abundance unless hunter effort is taken into account (Parent et al. 2016).

Reasons for the 8% increase in the 2017 spring harvest and increase in hunter success were likely related to summer production in 2014 and 2015 that was slightly greater than long-term trends but still below the production levels observed earlier in the restoration era (Bucks 2017; 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 have occurred in populations 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 increased harvests and higher proportion of desirable adult gobblers in the 2016 and 2017 harvests were welcomed by hunters, the low proportion of juveniles in the 2017 spring harvest, in light of the lower production in 2016, raises concerns regarding the harvest trend and hunter success in the several years.

Special thanks go to Karl P. Eliason, who facilitated the harvest data transfer from the Check-IN-Game harvest reporting system.

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Table 1. Indiana wild turkey harvest by county, spring 2016 and 2017.

County	2016 Reported* Harvest	Percent of Harvest	2017 Reported* Harvest	Percent of Harvest	Difference from prior year	Percent Change
Adams	19	0.2%	15	0.2%	-4	-21%
Allen	93	0.8%	104	0.8%	11	12%
Bartholomew	113	0.9%	108	0.9%	-5	-4%
Benton	6	0.0%	9	0.0%	3	50%
Blackford	12	0.1%	13	0.1%	1	8%
Boone	10	0.1%	10	0.1%	0	0%
Brown	145	1.2%	187	1.2%	42	29%
Carroll	37	0.3%	41	0.3%	4	11%
Cass	64	0.5%	77	0.5%	13	20%
Clark	248	2.1%	265	2.1%	17	7%
Clay	126	1.0%	110	1.0%	-16	-13%
Clinton	1	0.0%	3	0.0%	2	200%
Crawford	285	2.4%	262	2.4%	-23	-8%
Daviess	94	0.8%	107	0.8%	13	14%
Dearborn	330	2.7%	328	2.7%	-2	-1%
Decatur	59	0.5%	58	0.5%	-1	-2%
DeKalb	268	2.2%	281	2.2%	13	5%
Delaware	0	0.0%	2	0.0%	2	---
Dubois	165	1.4%	169	1.4%	4	2%
Elkhart	202	1.7%	219	1.7%	17	8%
Fayette	53	0.4%	59	0.4%	6	11%
Floyd	94	0.8%	111	0.8%	17	18%
Fountain	107	0.9%	120	0.9%	13	12%
Franklin	262	2.2%	310	2.2%	48	18%
Fulton	157	1.3%	188	1.3%	31	20%
Gibson	141	1.2%	133	1.2%	-8	-6%
Grant	8	0.1%	5	0.1%	-3	-38%
Greene	303	2.5%	344	2.5%	41	14%
Hamilton	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Hancock	5	0.0%	4	0.0%	-1	-20%
Harrison	363	3.0%	406	3.0%	43	12%
Hendricks	40	0.3%	44	0.3%	4	10%
Henry	6	0.0%	13	0.0%	7	117%
Howard	6	0.0%	13	0.0%	7	117%
Huntington	53	0.4%	58	0.4%	5	9%
Jackson	217	1.8%	244	1.8%	27	12%
Jasper	140	1.2%	176	1.2%	36	26%
Jay	47	0.4%	46	0.4%	-1	-2%
Jefferson	324	2.7%	332	2.7%	8	2%
Jennings	180	1.5%	193	1.5%	13	7%
Johnson	29	0.2%	37	0.2%	8	28%
Knox	92	0.8%	112	0.8%	20	22%
Kosciusko	227	1.9%	258	1.9%	31	14%
Lagrange	259	2.1%	273	2.1%	14	5%
Lake	15	0.1%	38	0.1%	23	153%
LaPorte	197	1.6%	219	1.6%	22	11%
Lawrence	209	1.7%	273	1.7%	64	31%

Table 1. continued on next page.

Table 1. Indiana wild turkey harvest by county, spring 2016 and 2017. *Continued.*

County	2016 Reported* Harvest	Percent of Harvest	2017 Reported* Harvest	Percent of Harvest	Difference from prior year	Percent Change
Madison	3	0.0%	1	0.0%	-2	-67%
Marion	0	0.0%	2	0.0%	2	---
Marshall	278	2.3%	303	2.3%	25	9%
Martin	178	1.5%	195	1.5%	17	10%
Miami	66	0.5%	63	0.5%	-3	-5%
Monroe	165	1.4%	200	1.4%	35	21%
Montgomery	66	0.5%	76	0.5%	10	15%
Morgan	118	1.0%	119	1.0%	1	1%
Newton	95	0.8%	99	0.8%	4	4%
Noble	269	2.2%	317	2.2%	48	18%
Ohio	101	0.8%	104	0.8%	3	3%
Orange	314	2.6%	240	2.6%	-74	-24%
Owen	136	1.1%	251	1.1%	115	85%
Parke	226	1.9%	210	1.9%	-16	-7%
Perry	243	2.0%	301	2.0%	58	24%
Pike	191	1.6%	207	1.6%	16	8%
Porter	49	0.4%	64	0.4%	15	31%
Posey	127	1.1%	114	1.1%	-13	-10%
Pulaski	176	1.5%	163	1.5%	-13	-7%
Putnam	194	1.6%	187	1.6%	-7	-4%
Randolph	15	0.1%	7	0.1%	-8	-53%
Ripley	235	1.9%	228	1.9%	-7	-3%
Rush	4	0.0%	4	0.0%	0	0%
Saint Joseph	185	1.5%	187	1.5%	2	1%
Scott	149	1.2%	150	1.2%	1	1%
Shelby	18	0.1%	18	0.1%	0	0%
Spencer	171	1.4%	204	1.4%	33	19%
Starke	247	2.0%	236	2.0%	-11	-4%
Steuben	362	3.0%	359	3.0%	-3	-1%
Sullivan	203	1.7%	281	1.7%	78	38%
Switzerland	309	2.6%	311	2.6%	2	1%
Tippecanoe	57	0.5%	64	0.5%	7	12%
Tipton	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Union	78	0.6%	72	0.6%	-6	-8%
Vanderburg	62	0.5%	58	0.5%	-4	-6%
Vermillion	81	0.7%	81	0.7%	0	0%
Vigo	140	1.2%	147	1.2%	7	5%
Wabash	98	0.8%	139	0.8%	41	42%
Warren	113	0.9%	103	0.9%	-10	-9%
Warrick	277	2.3%	320	2.3%	43	16%
Washington	204	1.7%	218	1.7%	14	7%
Wayne	62	0.5%	76	0.5%	14	23%
Wells	21	0.2%	16	0.2%	-5	-24%
White	101	0.8%	92	0.8%	-9	-9%
Whitley	83	0.7%	105	0.7%	22	27%
Totals	12,081		13,069		988	8%

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

Figure 1. Distribution of 2017 Spring Turkey Harvest

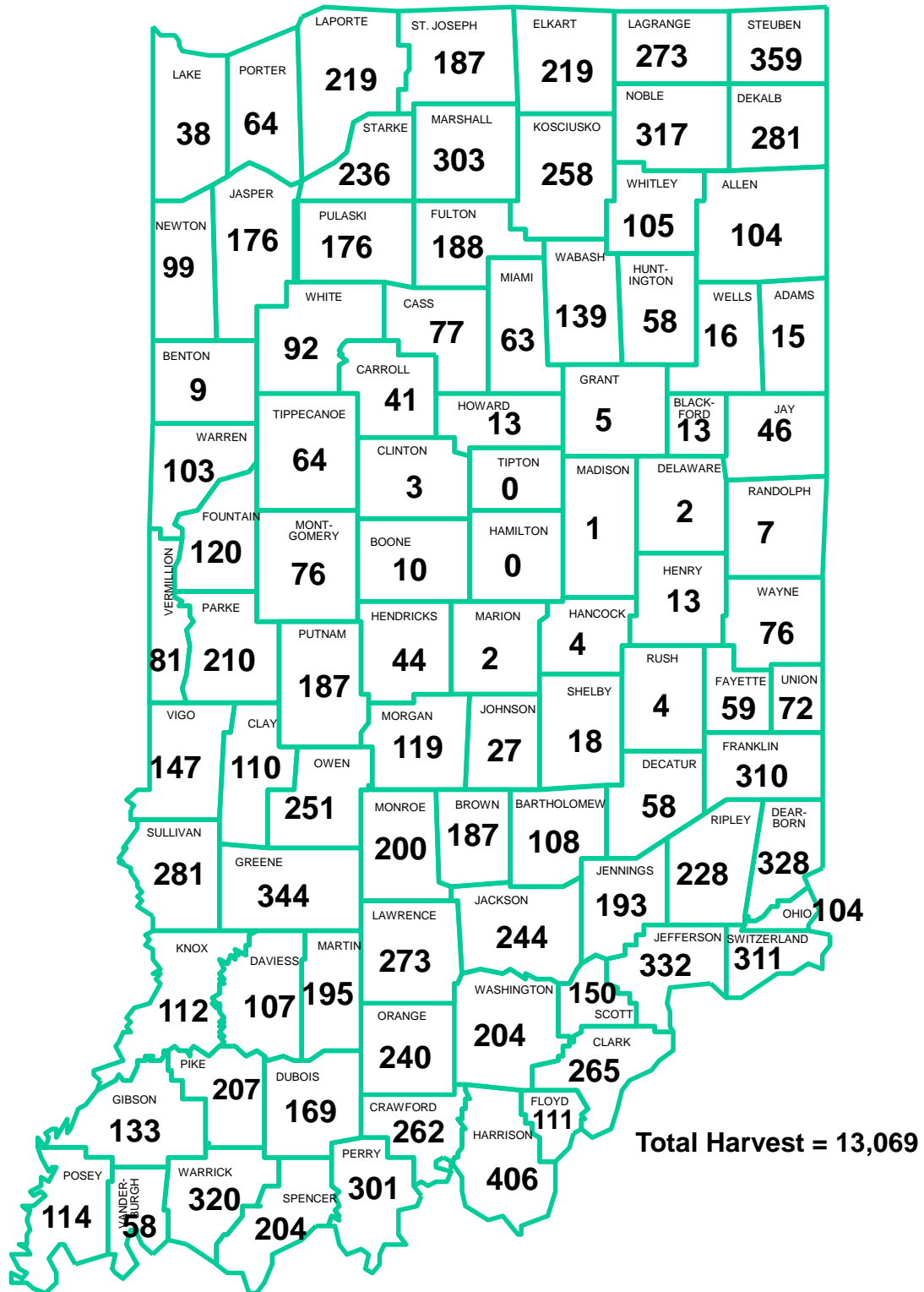


Table 2. Age structure of Indiana's spring gobbler harvests, 1988-2017.

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%	---
Previous 10 Year Means	12,080	20%		48%		32%	
2017	13,069	13%	---	39%	---	48%	---

* 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.

Table 3. Regional spring turkey harvest and age structure in Indiana, 2007-2017.

	Region						Statewide
	North	East-central	West-central	South-central	Southeast	Southwest	
2007							
Harvest	1,758	51	2,104	2,919	2,831	1,500	11,163
% of Total Harvest	16%	0.5%	19%	26%	25%	13%	---
Juvenile %	32%	38%	23%	18%	18%	22%	22%
2008							
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%
2009							
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%
2010							
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%
2011							
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%
2012							
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%
2013							
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%
2014							
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%
2015							
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%
2016							
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%
Previous 10-Year Means							
Harvest	2,776	108	1,917	2,925	2,811	1,523	12,061
% of Total Harvest	23%	1%	16%	24%	23%	13%	---
Juvenile %	26%	26%	21%	18%	18%	17%	20%
2017							
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%
2016 to 2017 Differences							
Change in Harvest	341	1	119	327	96	104	988
Percent change in Harvest	9%	0%	6%	13%	4%	8%	8%

Figure 2. 2017 Spring wild turkey harvest and age structure by region.

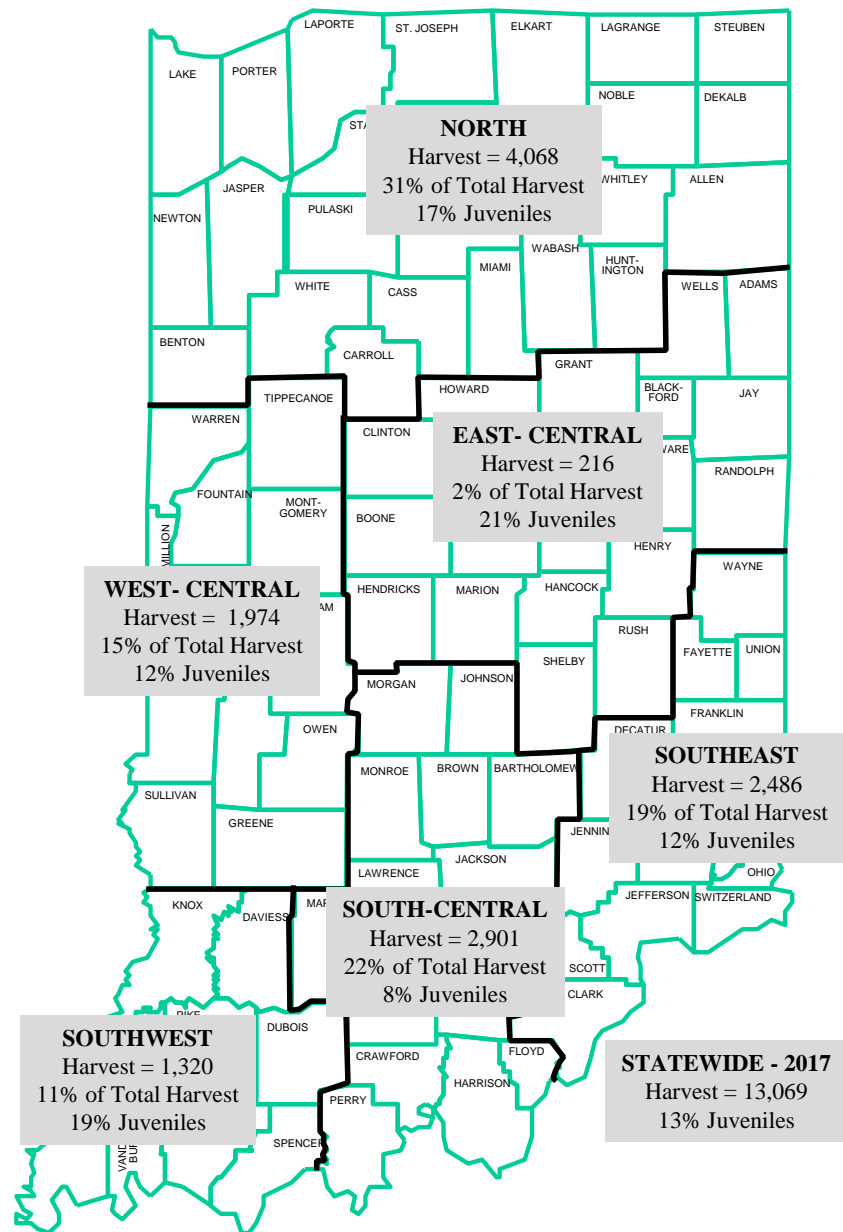


Table 4. Indiana's spring wild turkey hunting seasons, 1970 to 2017.

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	40,801	28,615	7,822	27%
2001	4/25-5/13	19	74	43,815	36,103	9,975	28%
2002	4/24-5/12 [†]	19	90	44,333	37,919	10,575	28%
2003	4/23-5/11	19	90	48,857	40,110	10,366	26%
2004	4/21-5/9	19	90	50,839	41,996	10,765	26%
2005	4/27-5/15	19	88	50,839	49,684	11,159	22%
2006	4/26-5/14	19	88	67,290	50,880	13,193	26%
2007	4/25-5/13 ^{††}	19	91	69,861	53,402	11,163	21%
2008	4/23-5/11	19	91	71,052	55,022	12,204	22%
2009	4/22-5/10	19	92	75,161	59,000	12,993	22%
2010	4/21-5/9	19	92	73,089	56,891	13,742	24%
2011	4/27-5/15	19	92	72,323	56,220	11,669	21%
2012	4/25-5/13	19	92	71,836	57,631	12,655	22%
2013	4/24-5/12	19	92	74,966	60,889	11,374	19%
2014	4/23-5/11	19	92	73,279	59,237	10,872	18%
2015	4/22-5/10	19	92	69,192	55,531	11,853	21%
2016	4/27-5/15	19	92	70,484	57,332	12,081	21%
2017	4/26-5/14	19	92	72,775	58,980	13,069	22%
2018	4/25-5/13	19	92				

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

** No. of hunters includes those permit holders who hunted ≥ 1 day. Since 1986, the number of hunters includes an estimate of license exempt landowners or military hunters on active leave participating in the spring season.

[†] "All-day" turkey hunting initiated; 1/2 hr prior to sunrise to sunset.

^{††} 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 Wild Turkey Harvests, 1990-2017

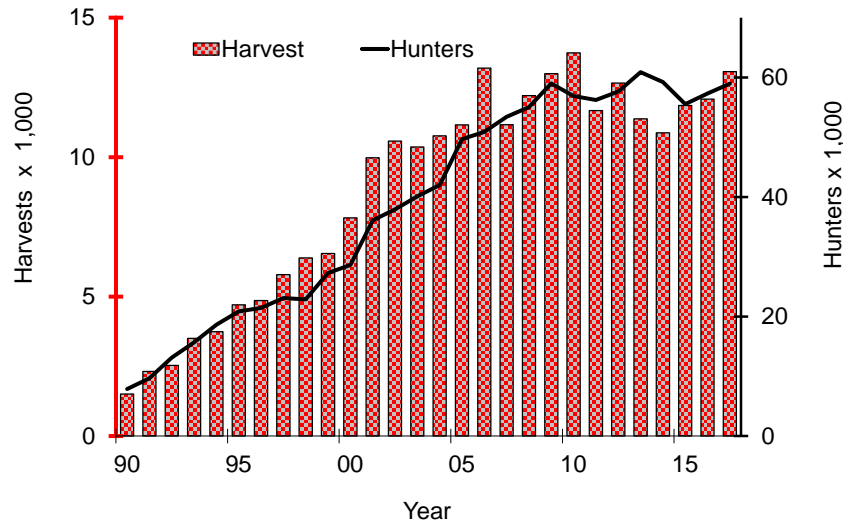


Figure 4. Estimated spring turkey hunter success, 1998-2017.

