



TOP

2014 Spring Turkey Harvest Up for 3rd Year

MAY 19TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

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*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

Missouri - Hunters posted the third spring turkey harvest increase in a row, bettering last year's number by more than 1,000 birds.

Hunters checked 43,273 turkeys during Missouri's regular spring turkey season April 21 through May 11. Top harvest counties were Texas with 938 birds checked, Franklin with 921, and Laclede with 736.

Hunters age 6 through 15 checked 4,332 turkeys during the youth season April 12 and 13, bringing the 2014 spring harvest total to 47,605. That is the third consecutive increase since 2011, when the combined youth and regular season harvest was 42,226.

Favorable weather throughout much of this year's spring turkey season helped hunters, according to Resource Scientist Jason Isabelle with the Missouri Department of Conservation. He says this year's harvest was also affected by improvements in turkey production.

"Prior to 2011, the state's turkey population had struggled through four consecutive years of poor hatches," says Isabelle. "The improved hatches of

2011 and 2012 resulted in an increase in the number of adult gobblers available for hunters this spring.”

County-by-county spring turkey harvest totals are available at mdc.mo.gov/node/263.

The Conservation Department recorded seven firearms-related spring turkey hunting incidents during the regular season and one during the youth season. Two of the incidents in the regular season were fatal. Five of the seven incidents, including one of the fatalities, involved shooters who mistook other hunters for turkeys.

Missouri’s safest spring turkey season was last year, when the Conservation Department recorded only one incident, which was nonfatal. The worst was 1986, with 31 reported incidents and two fatalities.

In the 10 years from 1985 through 1994, the Conservation Department recorded an average of 17.3 spring turkey hunting incidents per year. The 10-year average from 2005 through 2014 was 4.8 per year. Fatal incidents averaged .6 per year during both 10-year periods. Conservation Department Hunter Education Coordinator Kyle Lairmore says these statistics demonstrate the importance of hunter education in preventing hunting injuries.

“Since the inception of hunter education training, which became mandatory in 1987, more than 1 million Missourians have received formal firearms and safety training,” says Lairmore. “They make up a larger percentage of the hunting public every year, and that increase has been paralleled by a more than five-fold decrease in spring turkey hunting incidents. A season like the one we just had reminds us that we still have work to do, but it’s important to remember how far we have come.”

Lairmore said volunteer hunter-education instructors and Conservation Department employees are responsible for dramatic gains in hunting safety over the past 27 years. Simply put, he says, “They save lives.”

The Conservation Department’s First Turkey Program lets turkey hunters commemorate their first turkey kill with a certificate suitable for framing. You can even add a photo of the proud hunter with his or her bird. To create a first-turkey certificate, visit mdc.mo.gov/node/10469. The same site has forms for a youth’s first deer, as well as first deer/turkey certificates for adults.

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