

# DELMARVA 20 TURKEY REPORT 24

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THE LAND GROUP

**NON TYPICAL**

*Outdoor Supply*



# THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR

By Jason Hart, Director of Community Marketing, Mossy Oak

In 1973, Colonel Tom Kelly penned these words in his famed book, The Tenth Legion: “I do not hunt turkeys because I want to, I hunt them because I have to. I would really rather not do it, but I am helpless in the grip of my compulsion.” These words describe many of us and if you can relate, you are no doubt counting down the days to opening morning of wild turkey season anticipating that glorious sound that drives us: the gobble.

Sportsmen and sportswomen in Delmarva have a lot of opportunities – from great fishing, to great waterfowl hunting and abundant and large antlered deer. But in April and May when the dogwoods are blooming, turkey season becomes the focus for many who pursue the woods and waters of the Eastern Shore. Fortunately for us that hunt the Delmarva region, we may be experiencing what will one day be described as “the good ol’ days” of turkey hunting. With Delaware, Maryland and Virginia experiencing good harvest rates and non-declining turkey populations, turkey hunting in Delmarva is currently in a better state of the union than many other regions of the wild turkeys’ range in the United States.

Unfortunately, many parts of the country are experiencing declines in once abundant turkey populations and wild turkey researchers are scrambling to find solutions. Why are populations declining? Many factors may be contributing to the cause: decreasing habitat, changes in forestry and agricultural practices, expanding human populations, overabundant predator populations, years of over harvest and lastly, season structures that allow gobblers to be harvested before the peak of the breeding occurs. Some of the factors can be controlled by state agencies, while others can not. Fortunately, the season structure in Delmarva is later than many of the southeastern states that are experiencing these declines and that may be one of the factors why the region is doing well on the turkey front.

As a hunter, what can you do to insure that the quality of the turkey population and turkey hunting remains great? There are a number of things from habitat improvement, to setting personal or property limits to ensure that there are plenty of longbeards for next season, to even joining and volunteering with the National Wild Turkey Federation. If we all do our part to leave the land and wildlife populations better than we found them, we can rest easy knowing future generations will be able to similarly experience what we have now. Hunt safe this spring and enjoy your time in the Delmarva outdoors chasing America’s greatest game bird! In my opinion, it’s simply the most wonderful time of the year!



Jason Hart

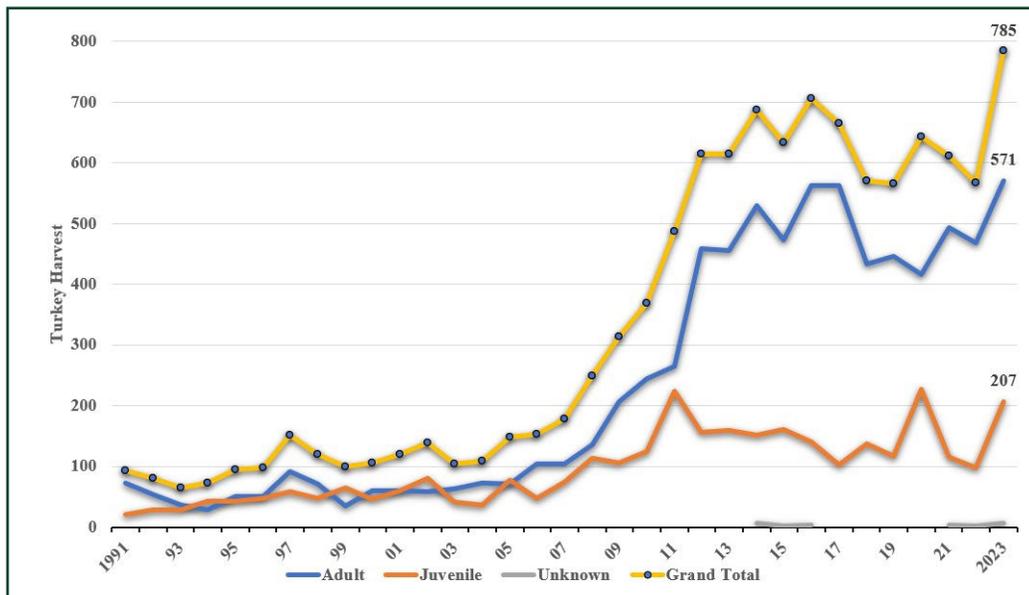
**In the next pages we will look at data collected for Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. The DNR does a great job of gathering data based on kills and poults per hen each year. This helps them in monitoring turkey populations and estimating reproductive success, which are both key in keeping a healthy turkey population on the Eastern Shore.**

**\*Note that Delaware did not conduct any reproductive data due to staffing shortages.**

# DELAWARE

A total of 785 wild turkeys were harvested during the 2023 season, a 37 percent increase over the previous year. This is also a Delaware turkey harvest record-high since the season was initially opened in 1991, and an 11 percent increase over the previous record set in 2016.

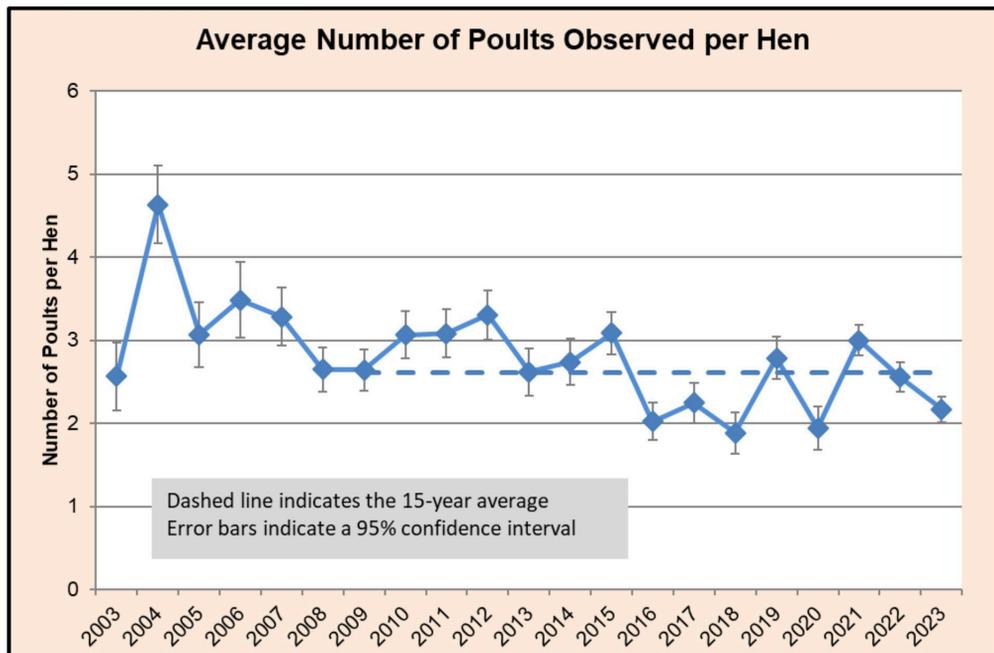
Delaware is divided into four wild turkey management regions, made up of 18 wildlife management zones. Nearly half (47.3%) of harvested wild turkeys in 2023 (371 birds) were taken in the interior region, which runs along the western side of the state from the C & D Canal south to the Seaford area.



# MARYLAND

Maryland hunters harvested 5,356 wild turkeys during the 2023 spring regular and junior turkey seasons, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources reported. This year's harvest was 27% higher than the 2022 harvest and surpassed the previous record harvest of 4,303, set in 2020.

Statewide, the 2023 primary reproductive index was estimated at 2.2 poult per hen. Regionally, the index was still above 2 poult per hen in most regions, which can be considered a general threshold where production should be adequate to replace annual adult turkey losses. The lowest poult per hen ratios were observed in the Lower Eastern Shore region and the Central region.

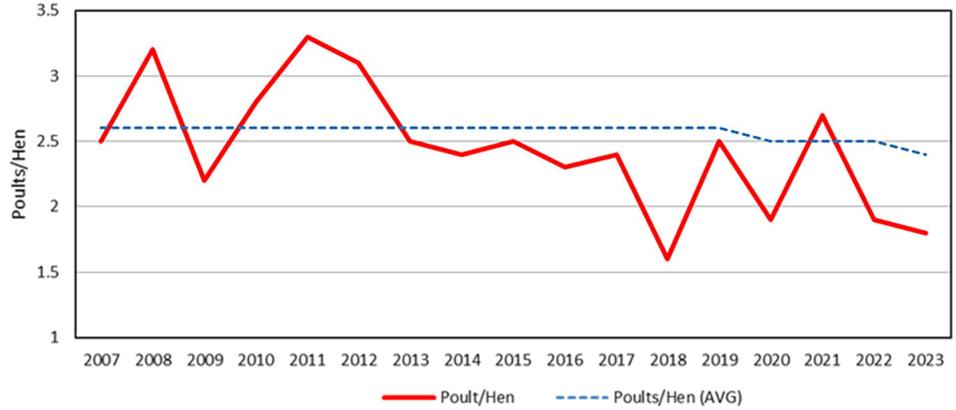


# VIRGINIA

The Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) announced a harvest of 24,447 turkeys during the 2023 spring turkey season. This represents the highest spring turkey harvest ever recorded in Virginia.

DWR biologists anticipated the spring turkey harvest would increase during the 2023 season as indicated by above average brood survey results in 2021. A Jake becomes a long beard in their second year, which is what we are all going after so that makes sense as to why the spring harvest was a record high.

The 2023 annual survey suggests reproduction for wild turkey declined to a statewide average of 1.8 poult/hen, falling below the long-term survey average of 2.4 poult/hen and nearly identical to the 2022 ratio.



Wyatt Revell



Logan Godwin  
Drake Greer  
Austin Murphy

# TO EACH HIS OWN

By Dallas Harrington



## What Does Turkey Season Mean to You?

I believe each hunting season has its purpose whether it be deer, duck, or turkey season. And each hunter has a different relationship with each season. There are strictly one game hunters that only focus on deer, or just duck hunters and so on. And then there are hunters that like to dabble in it all. Each season that comes along is my favorite game to hunt during that season, then it ends, and I see myself falling in love with the next season as it approaches and during that season as well. After this duck season I started looking forward to turkey season and began to realize what turkey season means to me.

For me, I grew up bowhunting for whitetails and waterfowl hunting. I only went turkey hunting once from when I started hunting as a kid up through college. And that was one of those hunts where I did not get the turkey hunting experience. So, for a

while that is all I knew. It wasn't until my buddy Bob Layton called in a bird for me that got me hooked. The communication shared between the hunter and a turkey truly is an art, and watching it unfold in front of me for the first time changed my outlook on turkey hunting. Watching him work that bird from 300 yards into our decoys was really something special!

Now I look forward to every spring. Turkey season acts as a nice change of pace from deer and duck season. You might have one chance a year to kill a big deer (and maybe not even one), so you better have it together. While I love bowhunting for Whitetails, it is more of an individual pursuit. Being an individual pursuit has its purpose as well, but you miss out on the camaraderie. To be able to chase turkeys with your friends is just a whole other dynamic. If you end up not making it happen that day, or you screw it up, oh well, you can get back at it the next day and try to fire up another bird. If you mess up a big whitetail you

are after, good luck getting another shot at that deer in the same year. I have had it happen but it doesn't happen that often.

If you are reading this and haven't tried your luck at turkey hunting, take this as a sign. Because I was once the guy that thought turkey hunting wasn't "all that." Once you experience the earth literally shake beneath you from the spitting, drumming and gobble of a turkey, you will begin to look forward to every spring. And if you have no one to introduce you to turkey hunt with, go yourself. When you must make all the decisions and have no shade tree there with you to fall back on, you end up learning from your failures and experiences way more.

So, in closing, for me turkey season is camaraderie, warm weather, endless chase, thrilling, expect the unexpected, stress-free hunting.

If you aren't a turkey hunter already and are thinking about getting into it, get out there and give it a shot – we all start somewhere. Good luck this season!



Riley McCabe



Carson Rayne and Dylan McGovern



Jake Emche

# FEATURED PROPERTY



Cardinal Drive | Salisbury, MD 21804

- 43.32 +/- surveyed acres
- Well managed pine stand with 25+ year old timber. Local forester states the tract should produce a decent volume of saw-timber in coming years
- Offers excellent wildlife habitat with an existing food plot strategically placed within the property
- An existing box stand overlooks the plots and several ladder stands are throughout the tract
- The recorded survey on file shows an approved Perc and approved SRA
- Ideal tract to build a home and enjoy nature and wildlife

**LIST PRICE: \$299,000**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

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doug@thelandgroup.us | 410-726-1831

From all of us at Non Typical and The Land Group, we hope you have a great turkey season. Get after it, it truly is a special time of year!

Happy Hunting,  
The Land Group and Non Typical

## THE LAND GROUP



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