

# Fall Turkey Harvest Report 2007

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## **Abstract**

Wisconsin's fall turkey hunting season was the longest on record. The season ran for 62 days, from 15 September through 15 November. The number of permits available increased from 90,600 in 2006 to 94,800 in 2007. Total permits issued through a random drawing process and "over-the-counter" sales was 80,036. Permitted hunters harvested 12,010 turkeys for a success rate of 14.9%. This rate is similar to success rates from the fall hunt of 2006 when 15.4% of permit holders killed a bird. Good nesting success and brood survival led to a healthy turkey population heading in the fall season. Forty-five turkey management zones and the Fort McCoy zone were open to hunting in the fall of 2007.

## **Methods**

Harvest information was obtained through mandatory registration of harvested turkeys. Turkey registration stations were paid either \$35 for the season or 35¢ per bird registered, depending on which amount was greater at each station. Registrars were required to collect the zone, date of kill, sex and age of each turkey killed. Registration records were entered into the DNR UNIX production server by regional personnel and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

## **Results**

The fall hunting season structure was changed in 2007, with the season opening concurrent with the opening of the archery deer season. This was done to allow hunters to enjoy an extended season and increase their chances of bagging a bird. Past modern fall hunts have ranged from 7-45 days.

### **Hunting Zones**

One Turkey Management Zone (TMZ 45) was open to fall hunting for the first time in 2007. Forty-five turkey management zones and Fort McCoy (Figure 1) were open to fall hunting in 2007. Mill Bluff and Buckhorn State Parks were the only state parks open to fall turkey hunting.

### **Permit Levels**

Permit levels vary depending on the spring hunting success, amount of timber, hunter interference, and turkey population densities and distributions within zones. With turkey brood production about average for most of the state in 2007, and spring success leveling off, the WDNR Wild Turkey Committee only increased permit levels in a few zones for the 2007 fall season (Table 1).

### **Permit Selection**

All applicants were required to pay a \$3 fee for an application. Preference for permits was given first to landowners (up to 30% of permits available), followed by residents who applied for but did not receive a permit in the fall of 2006, other residents, and finally non-residents. Applications were randomly selected, but first choice zones of all applicants within each preference category were issued available permits before second, third, fourth, etc. choices were filled.

Like in the spring, left over permits were sold (\$10 for resident, \$15 for non-residents) over the counter at DNR license sales locations on a first come first served basis at a rate of one permit per day. This continued until all permits available for a zone were issued. A total of 13,071 permits were issued this way.

#### Harvest and Success Rates

Fall turkey hunters harvested 12,010 turkeys in the fall of 2007. This is a slight decrease from the 12,108 harvested in the fall of 2006. Data on the historical fall turkey harvests are summarized in Table 2 and Figure 2.

The start of the fall turkey season was moved up from the 1<sup>st</sup> of October to the beginning of the archery season in mid-September. This was done to give hunters more opportunity to hunt fall turkeys. The fall turkey season also overlapped a statewide 2-day youth deer hunt, and the southern 1/3 of the state had a special CWD gun deer hunt which overlapped 4-9 days of the fall turkey season. All hunters are required to wear blaze orange during these deer seasons, except archery, which probably had the effect of eliminating days of turkey hunting.

Hunting of fall turkey with the aid of dogs was allowed on a trail basis in 9 counties in the west central part of the state. The administrative rule which allowed the hunting of turkey with dogs did not pass the Wisconsin legislature in time to be in place at the beginning of the season. From 1 October till the end of the fall hunting season it was legal to fall turkey hunt with the aid of dogs in the following counties: Crawford, Richland, Sauk, Vernon, La Crosse, Monroe, Juneau, Jackson, and Wood (Fig. 1).

The fall hunter's success rate (percent of permit holders that harvested a turkey) decreased from 15.4% in 2006 to 14.9% in 2007 despite the longer season. Two zones had a success rate of 20% or greater while 3 zones had a success rate of less than 10% (Figure 2, Table 1). Another factor that may have an effect on success rates is availability of permits; as permits become more common, they may fall into the hands of the less devoted turkey hunter, primarily bow hunters who may apply for a turkey permit on the off chance that one might walk under their tree stand while bow hunting. These less dedicated hunters may never go out with the sole purpose of hunting turkeys. Lastly, the sale of second tags to hunters could have an effect on success rates, as they may feel more "invested" in harvesting a turkey as had to pay some amount for the permit as opposed to getting it free from the DNR. Fall Turkey Hunter surveys show that hunter participation in 2007 was 69%, lower than the average between 1989 and 2006 of 74% of fall permit holders. Hunter success rates are uncorrected for non-active hunters, actual success rates are higher.

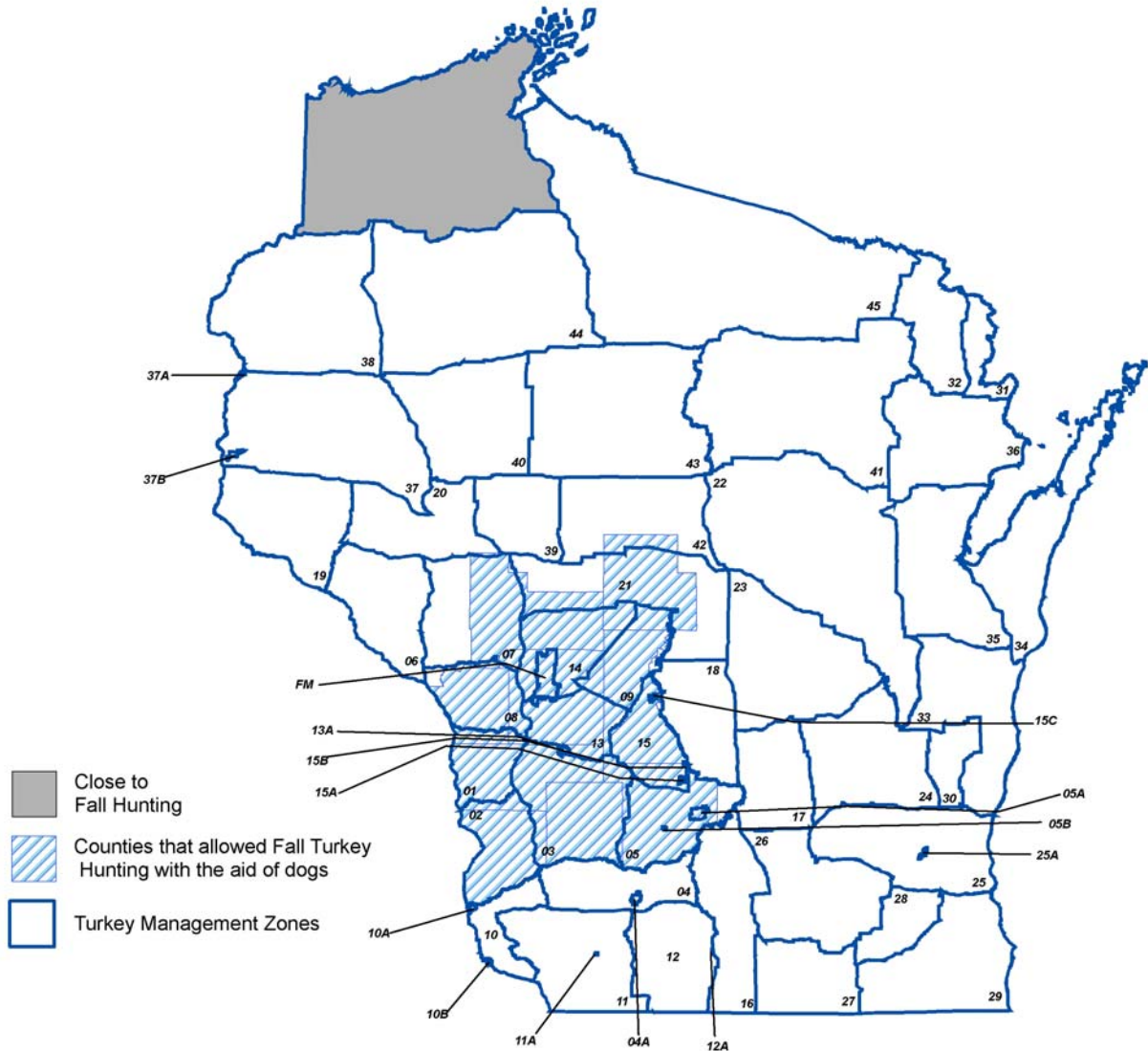
#### Age and Sex Ratios

The number of adult turkeys harvested (63%) was slightly higher than in 2006 (61%). Females comprised 55% of the harvest while males accounted for 44%. Adult females comprised 32% of the fall harvest, juvenile hens 24%, gobblers 31%, jakes 12%, and unknowns 0.8%. Adult males comprised a larger part of the harvest than in 2006 (27% gobblers).

Adults are generally believed to be less vulnerable to fall hunting than juveniles, particularly for hens. There are probable prestige biases at work also, where hunters are reluctant to admit to killing a juvenile bird. Registration station attendants confusing jakes as adult hens, or the hunting methods and selectivity of Wisconsin hunters toward adults could also be factors effecting adult to juvenile ratios.

## Accidents

There were no fall turkey hunting accidents reported for the 2007 season. Since fall hunting of turkeys began in 1989 there have been 26 non-fatal hunting accidents with an average of 1.5 per year.



**Figure 1.** Fall turkey hunting zones and counties open to hunting with the aid of dogs, 2007.

**Table 1.** The turkey zones open to fall hunting, turkey kill by age and sex, permits issued, and permit success rate for 2007.

Zone	Hens	Juv. Hens	Toms	Jakes	Unks	Total Harvest	Permits Issued	% Success
1	13	44	32	26	0	115	767	15.0%
2	51	41	37	18	0	147	1,145	12.8%
3	63	85	67	44	0	259	2,357	11.0%
4	22	35	31	14	2	104	1,000	10.4%
5	41	35	34	12	0	122	1,350	9.0%
6	26	24	21	11	0	82	1,065	7.7%
7	60	57	57	32	0	206	1,803	11.4%
8	35	36	28	18	0	117	999	11.7%
9	64	41	35	23	0	163	1,278	12.8%
10	27	24	8	9	0	68	501	13.6%
11	21	37	21	9	0	88	855	10.3%
12	52	9	31	14	0	106	1,745	6.1%
13	37	32	32	13	0	114	873	13.1%
14	52	47	16	14	0	129	1,166	11.1%
15	51	48	50	25	2	176	1,290	13.6%
16	67	34	49	27	2	179	1,628	11.0%
17	113	111	137	59	7	427	2,943	14.5%
18	122	94	89	55	2	362	3,082	11.7%
19	95	84	108	50	5	342	1,932	17.7%
20	75	69	69	36	2	251	1,393	18.0%
21	291	216	169	59	0	735	3,687	19.9%
22	396	259	441	158	11	1,265	7,985	15.8%
23	255	193	204	102	6	760	5,941	12.8%
24	77	57	106	34	5	279	2,000	14.0%
25	132	95	165	42	1	435	3,503	12.4%
26	40	28	31	15	2	116	1,000	11.6%
27	24	15	17	7	0	63	500	12.6%
28	30	23	33	9	1	96	800	12.0%
29	4	2	4	13	0	23	200	11.5%
30	54	52	63	23	0	192	1,200	16.0%
31	10	5	17	0	1	33	300	11.0%
32	7	3	11	7	0	28	200	14.0%
33	146	117	185	79	6	533	3,001	17.8%
34	325	198	366	89	23	1,001	3,808	26.3%
35	58	32	112	30	2	234	1,200	19.5%
36	82	38	106	35	4	265	1,500	17.7%
37	169	105	191	57	6	528	3,149	16.8%
38	117	90	108	57	0	372	2,411	15.4%
39	36	21	25	13	0	95	850	11.2%
40	66	48	66	25	0	205	1,346	15.2%
41	107	72	101	39	1	320	1,800	17.8%
42	105	56	113	26	0	300	1,583	19.0%
43	94	88	119	29	0	330	1,800	18.3%
44	40	40	43	21	0	144	800	18.0%
45	20	8	21	11	1	61	300	20.3%
46			Zone Closed				0	
FM	9	12	5	6	0	32	346	9.2%
UNK	4	2	2	0	0	8		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3,785</b>	<b>2,862</b>	<b>3,776</b>	<b>1,495</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>12,010</b>	<b>80,382</b>	<b>14.9%</b>

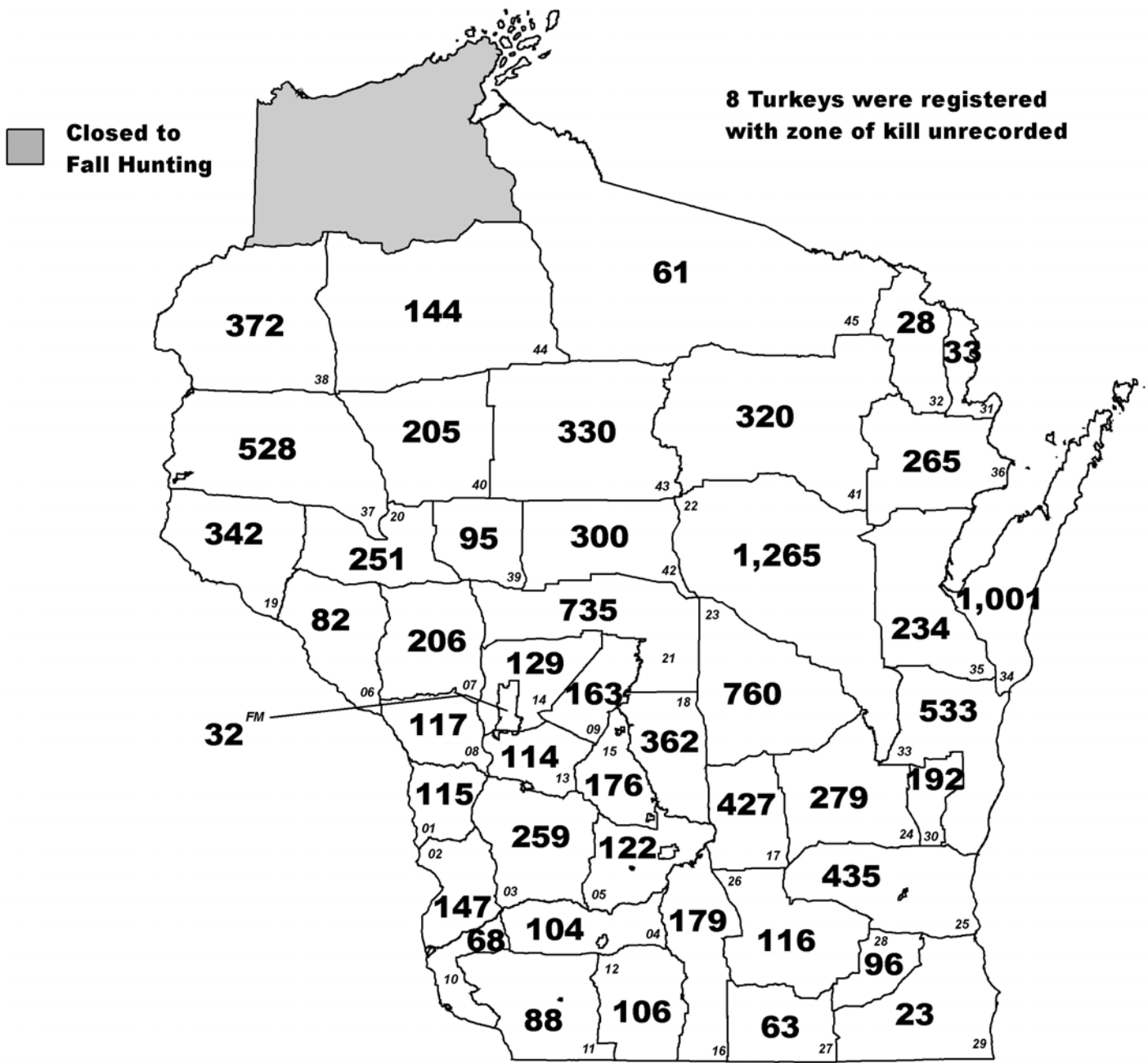
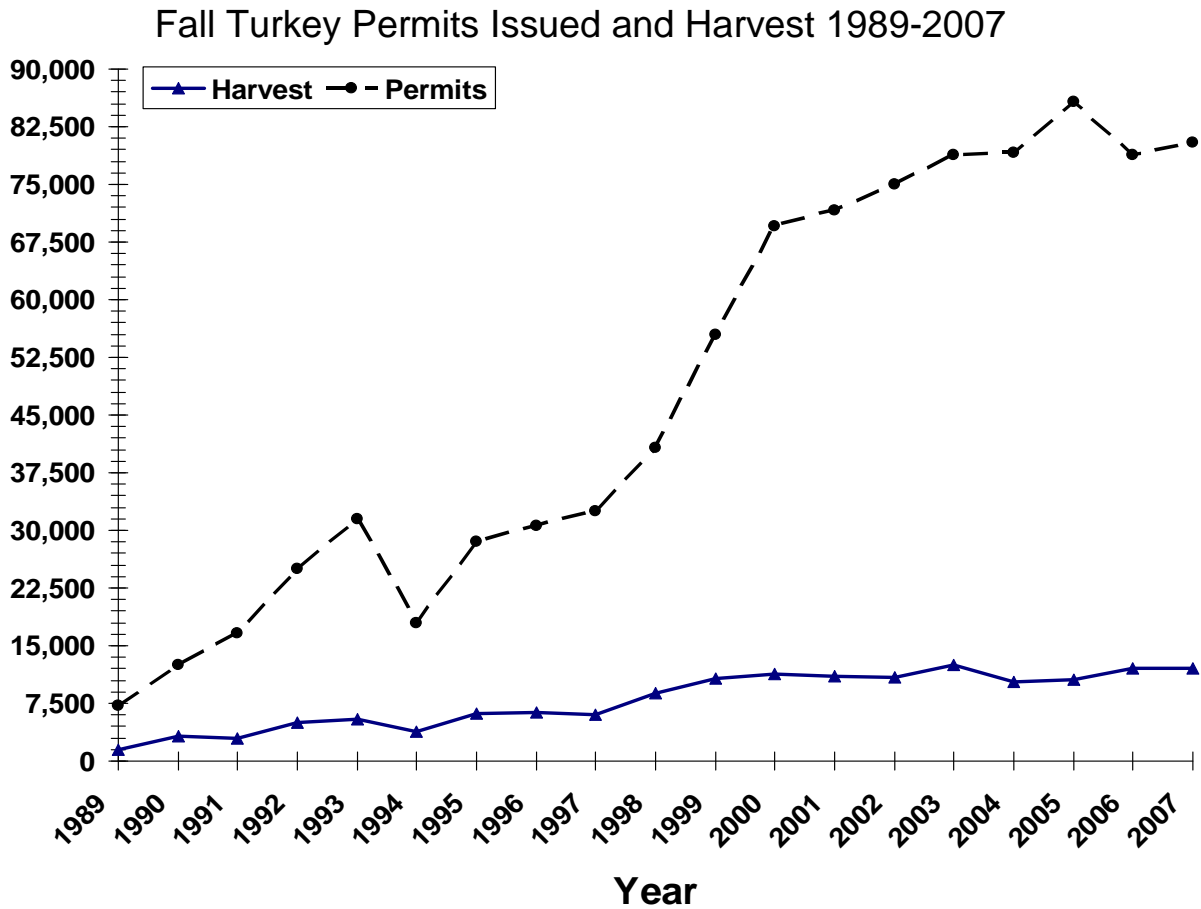


Figure 2. Fall turkey harvest by zone, 2007.

**Table 2.** Historical number of permits issued, harvest, and permit success for fall turkey hunting, 1989-2007.

Year	Permits Issued	Harvest	Permit Success
1989	7,260	1,570	21.6%
1990	12,465	3,433	27.5%
1991	16,668	2,904	17.4%
1992	24,997	5,024	20.1%
1993	31,449	5,625	17.9%
1994	17,889	3,896	21.8%
1995	28,555	6,241	21.9%
1996	30,779	6,305	20.5%
1997	32,569	6,004	18.4%
1998	41,131	8,845	21.5%
1999	55,479	10,825	19.5%
2000	69,566	11,263	16.2%
2001	71,601	11,029	15.4%
2002	75,040	10,860	14.5%
2003	78,831	12,554	15.9%
2004	79,178	10,362	13.1%
2005	85,678	10,650	12.4%
2006	78,782	12,108	15.4%
2007	80,382	12,010	14.9%



**Figure 2.** Fall turkey permits issued, and harvest, 1989-2007.