

Minnesota's Wild Turkey Harvest – Fall 2020, Spring 2021

Tim Lyons
Farmland Wildlife Populations and Research Group
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Madelia, Minnesota
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Summary of Season Structure

The fall 2020 turkey season opened on October 3, 2020 and closed November 1, 2020. Though an unlimited number of permits were available, regulations limited hunters to the harvest of a single turkey (any sex). Beginning in 2020, hunters were required to declare a permit area (TPA; Figure 1) at the time of purchase, but were able to harvest a bird anywhere throughout the state.

The spring 2020 hunting season was open April 14 through May 31, 2021. The season was comprised of 6 week-long time periods (A-F). General license hunters declared a TPA and were limited to a single time period during the first 5 weeks but unsuccessful hunters were able to hunt during the final (F) time period. Archery-only and youth licenses were valid during all time periods. All hunters were limited to a single bearded turkey (any sex). An unlimited number of general permits were available throughout all time periods, except for 3 TPA's (502, 511, 512) that maintained a lottery during the A-C time periods. All hunters had to declare a TPA at the time of purchase, but could harvest a bird within any TPA.

Fall 2020 Season

Permits Issued

The number of fall turkey hunters in 2020 (8,408) increased approximately 45% compared to 2019 (6,719; Table 1). The number of fall turkey hunters in 2020 exceeded the 10-year average (7,634; +10%). The proportion of youth licenses remained steady when compared to fall 2019 (23%).

Harvest

The fall 2020 turkey harvest (1,136; +33%) increased compared to 2019 while hunter success (13.5%) remained steady compared to the previous season (Table 1). Permit areas 501, 503, 507, 508, and 510 comprised 73% of the total fall harvest with total permit sales and harvest being greatest in areas 507 and 508 (Table 2). The fall 2020 total harvest and hunter success were only slightly below 10-year averages (1,150 and 15%; respectively).

Hunter participation increased substantially in fall 2020, potentially related to ongoing precautions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The proportional increase in general license holders from fall 2019 to fall 2020 was similar to the increase seen when comparing the number of spring turkey hunters in 2019 and 2020, when a “stay-at-home” Emergency Executive Order (Minnesota EO 20-20) was in place. Long term, the number of permits has fallen since the quota system was ended in 2012, but remains above the number issued following the permit area and quota increase enacted for the fall 2008 season (Figure 2). The total fall harvest has increased since the first fall season in 1990, but has fallen since its peak in 2012 (Figure 2).

Spring 2021 Season

Permits Issued

The number of permits issued across all license types decreased in 2021 from 63,194 hunters in 2020 to 58,084 in 2021 (Tables 3 and 4). The number of general permits issued fell by nearly 1,700 to 32,520 in 2021 and was similar to the 10-year average (32,324; Table 4). Although the overall number of hunters declined from 2020, permit sales among youth and archery hunters remained near all time-highs (Table 4) with a similar total number of permits issued for youth and archery in 2021 (12,598 and 12,966, respectively; Table 3). The total number of permits issued in 2021 is second only to the record number of sales in 2020 (Figure 3). All hunters had to declare a permit area in 2021, but were not restricted to harvesting a bird in the declared area. Across all permit areas, all permits decreased or remained constant in all TPA’s except for general permits, which increased in TPA 502 and 509. Permit areas 502, 511, and 512 still instituted a lottery during the A-C time periods (Table 5.)

Harvest

During the 2021 spring turkey season, 12,070 turkeys were harvested. The harvest total declined compared to 2020, but remains the third highest season harvest total for the modern turkey season (since 1978; Table 4, Figure 3). Permit areas 507 and 508 saw the greatest harvest but 501, 503, and 510 all reported near or more than 1,000 birds harvested (Table 5). Harvest success remained relatively constant compared to 2020 declining only 3.3% and 2.3% among youth and archery license holders (respectively), and by less than 1% among general license holders (Table 3).

Harvest during the A period remained nearly constant compared to 2020, and accounted for approximately 41% of the total spring 2021 harvest (Table 6) and was greater than 2019 (33.7%). Collectively, A-C periods account for slightly more than 75% of all spring turkey harvest. The F period had greater proportional harvest (11.2%) than either D or E (7.3 % and 4.7%, respectively) but ran for nearly twice as long as any other time period (Table 6).

Table 1. Permits available, number of applicants, permits issued, registered harvest, and hunter success rates for the ten most recent fall wild turkey seasons in Minnesota, 2011-2020.

Year	Permits available	Applicants	Permits issued	Registered harvest	Hunter success (%)^a
2011	10,430	3,538	5,382	953	17.7
2012 ^b	Unlimited	N/A	10,628	1,752	16.5
2013 ^b	Unlimited	N/A	8,060	1,137	14.1
2014 ^b	Unlimited	N/A	8,236	1,216	14.8
2015 ^b	Unlimited	N/A	8,109	1,213	15.0
2016 ^b	Unlimited	N/A	8,469	1,176	13.9
2017	Unlimited	N/A	7,650	1,015	13.3
2018	Unlimited	N/A	6,719	834	12.4
2019	Unlimited	N/A	6,481	855	13.2
2020	Unlimited	N/A	8,408	1,136	13.5

^a Total hunter success (all permits issued divided by registered harvest). Success rates not adjusted for non-participation or un-registered harvest.

Table 2. Permits issued, registered harvest by sex, and total registered harvest, during the 2020 fall wild turkey season in Minnesota.

Permit area	General permits issued ^a	Youth permits issued	Toms ^a	Jakes ^a	Hens ^a	Total registered harvest ^a
501	866	248	23	14	62	99
502	94	26	4	1	5	10
503	636	160	26	15	59	100
504	154	48	12	4	4	20
505	317	89	8	8	35	51
506	280	67	16	11	24	51
507	1,583	522	93	57	203	353
508	1,521	415	67	41	157	265
509	287	144	15	11	47	73
510	633	157	30	16	60	106
511	88	15	2	1	2	5
512	48	10	2	0	1	3
TOTAL	6,507	1,901	298	179	659	1,136

^a Total harvest for all license types.

Table 3. Total permits issued, harvest, and success rate by permit type during the spring 2021 wild turkey season in Minnesota.

	Total permits issued	Harvest	Success (%) ^a
General	32,520	8,400	25.8
Youth	12,598	2,085	16.6
Archery	12,966	1,585	12.2
Total	58,084	12,070	20.8

^a Success rates not adjusted for non-participation.

Table 4. Permits issued, registered harvest, and hunter success rates for the ten most recent spring wild turkey hunting seasons in Minnesota, 2012-2021.

Year	General permits issued	Youth permits issued	Archery permits issued	Registered harvest ^a	Success (%) ^b
2012 ^c	30,238	8,839	3,441	11,276	27.2
2013 ^c	35,202	5,965	4,014	10,321	23.3
2014 ^c	35,451	7,374	4,893	11,425	24.4
2015 ^c	34,554	7,042	5,046	11,694	25.6
2016 ^c	32,535	7,101	10,336	12,277	25.0
2017 ^c	31,605	6,984	11,237	11,803	24.1
2018 ^c	28,667	6,022	11,399	10,706	23.6
2019	28,295	6,169	11,794	10,699	23.0
2020	34,173	14,292	14,729	13,996	22.1
2021	32,520	12,598	12,966	12,070	20.8

^a Includes all license types.

^b Total hunter success (registered harvest divided by all permits issued). Success rates not adjusted for non-participation or un-registered harvest.

^c Permits issued, derived issued %, registered harvest, and derived hunter success (%) were reviewed and adjusted to address inconsistencies in data query and previous reporting.

Table 5. Permits issued by license type and registered harvest within each TPA during the 2021 spring wild turkey season in Minnesota^a.

Permit area	Archery permits declared	General permits declared	Youth permits declared	Total registered harvest
501	17,07	6,495	1,850	2,007
502	184	620	148	179
503	1,204	3,419	1,263	1,239
504	461	919	388	325
505	623	1,958	608	707
506	585	1,299	562	470
507	3,653	8,268	3,936	3,534
508	2,363	6034	2,289	2,053
509	448	942	531	475
510	1,496	2,245	860	993
511	147	198	94	54
512	95	123	69	34
Total	12,966	32,520	12,598	12,070

^a Beginning in 2020, all hunters declared but were not restricted to harvesting a turkey in their declared TPA.

Table 6. Permits issued and harvest by license type and time period for the spring 2021 wild turkey season in Minnesota.

Time period	Archery permits issued ^a	Youth permits issued ^a	General permits issued	Registered harvest ^b	Percent of total harvest ^b
Any	12,966	12,598			
A			11,576	4,983	41.3%
B			8,813	2,561	21.2%
C			6,163	1,718	14.2%
D			2,994	887	7.3%
E			1,935	573	4.7%
F			1,039	1,348	11.2%

^a Archery and youth permits were valid during any time period.

^b Includes harvest from all license types.

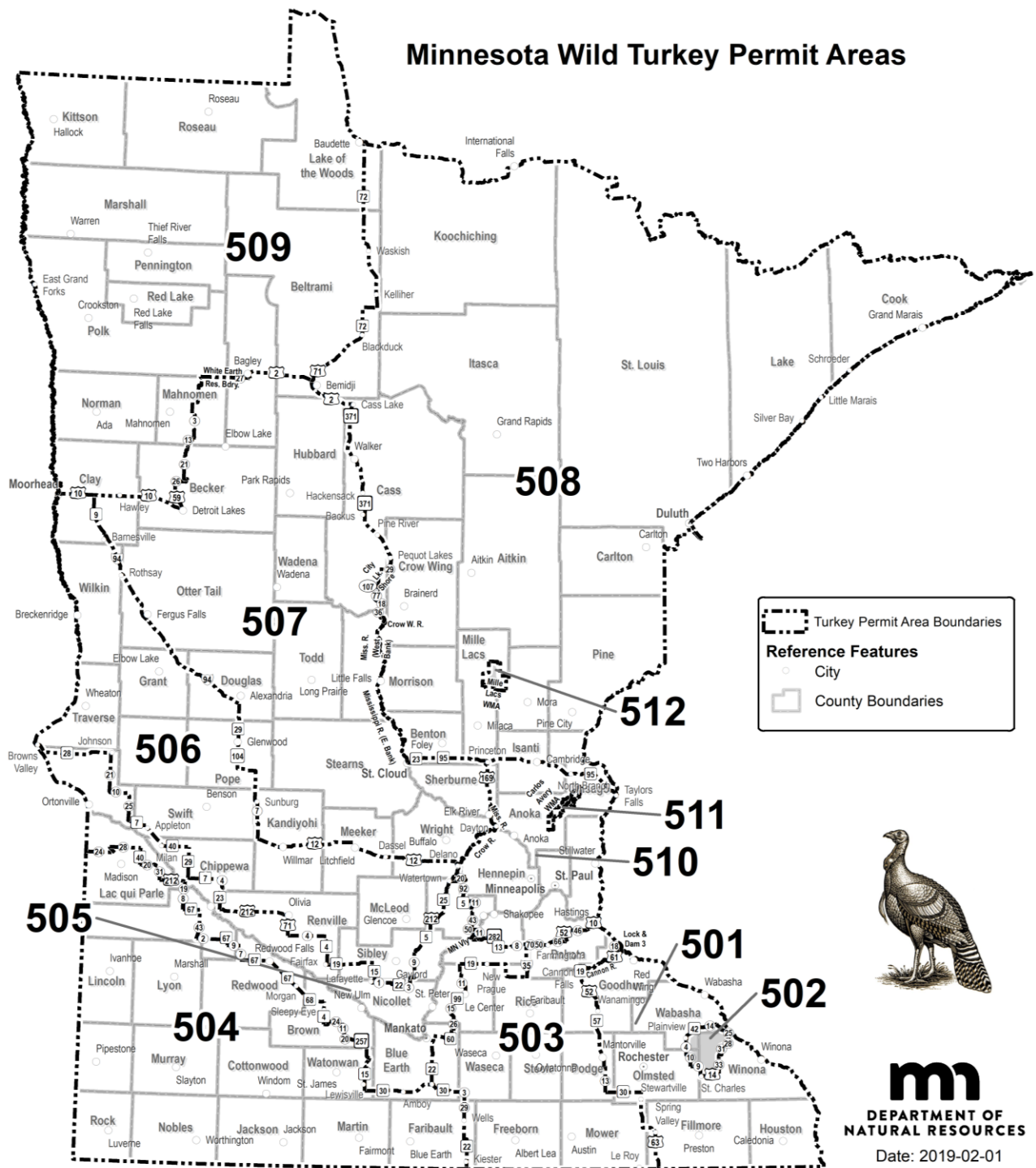


Figure 1. Permit areas open for hunting, fall 2020 and spring 2021 wild turkey seasons in Minnesota.

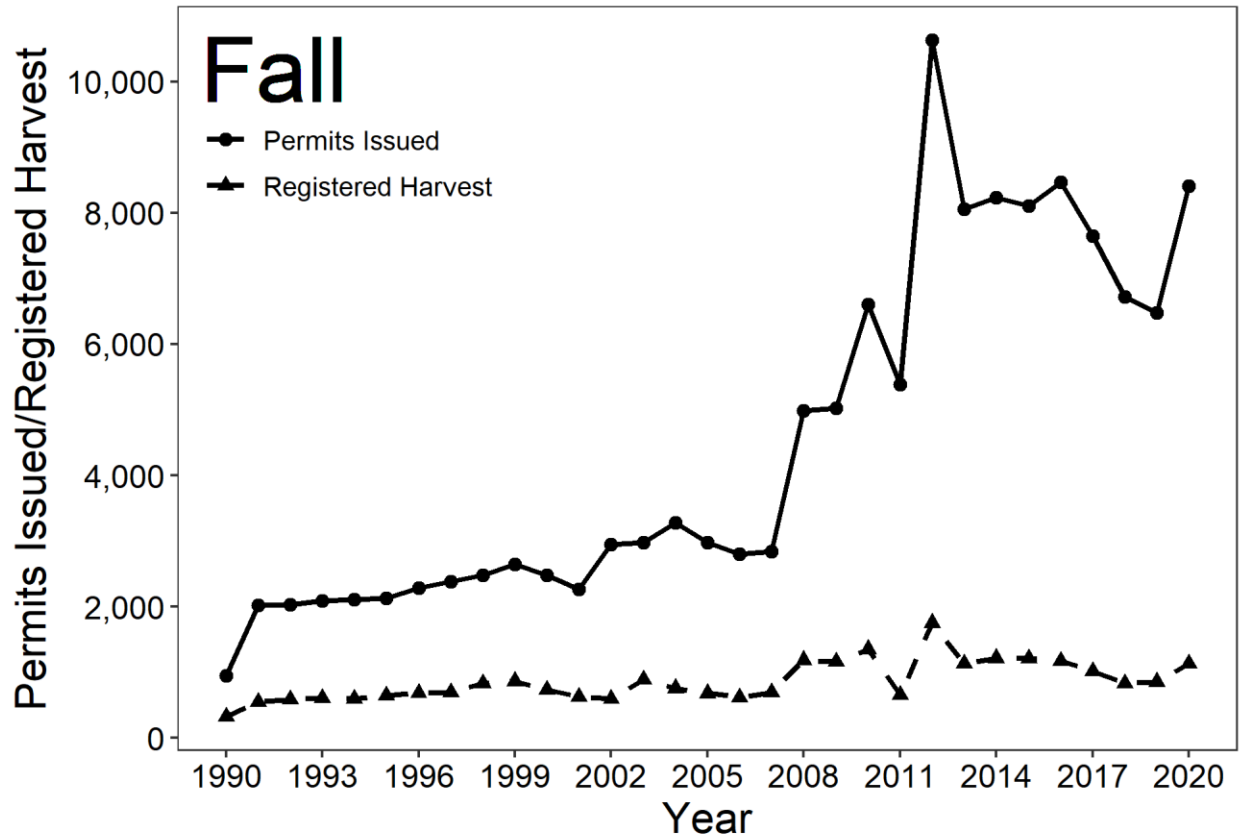


Figure 2. Permits issued and registered harvest for fall wild turkey seasons in Minnesota, 1990-2020.

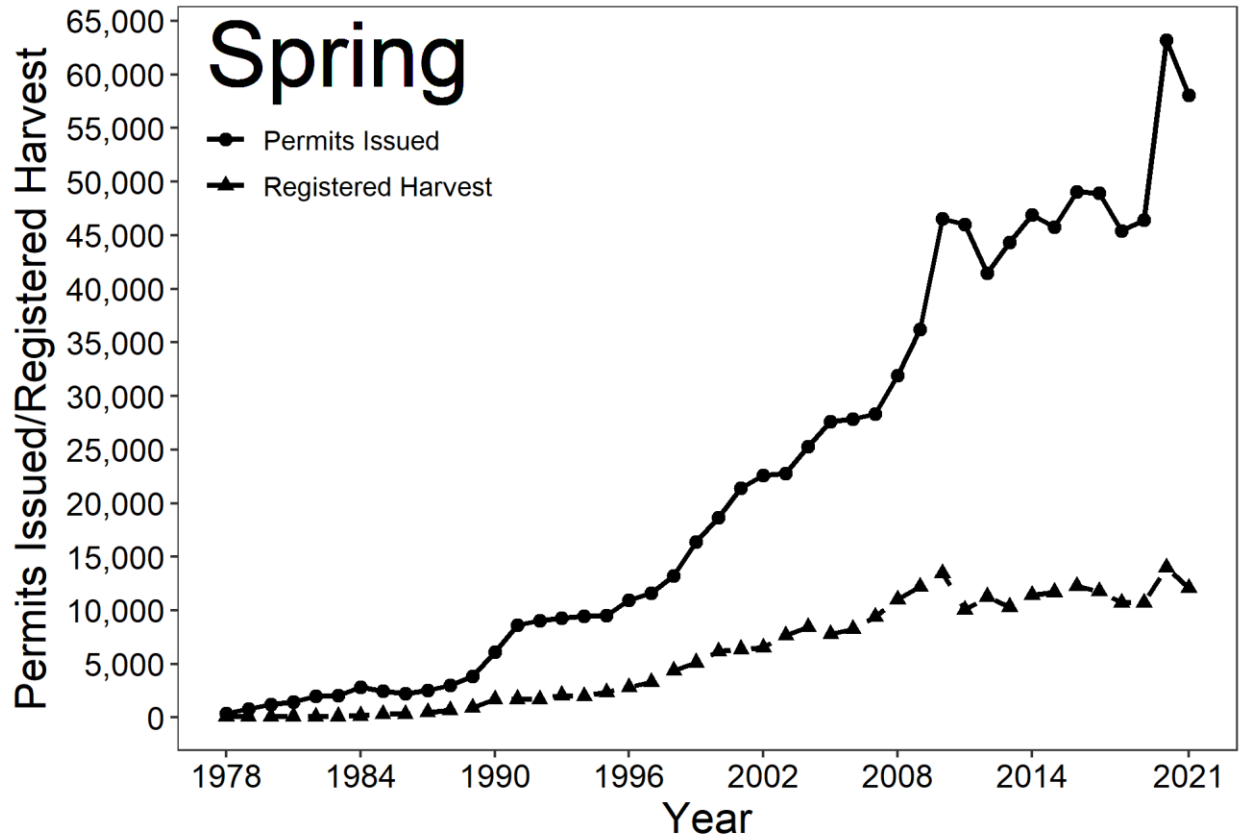


Figure 3. Permits issued and registered harvest for spring wild turkey seasons in Minnesota, 1978-2021.