

Dept. of Natural Resources: Reports decrease in preliminary 2021 spring turkey harvest registrations

Posted on Thursday, Jun 17, 2021

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) today announced preliminary totals show Wisconsin turkey hunters registered 37,179 birds during the 2021 spring turkey hunting season, a 17% decrease from the 44,982 birds registered in the spring 2020 season.

“Wisconsin was under [Gov. Evers’ Safer at Home order](#) during the 2020 season which may have contributed to people having more time and opportunity to pursue turkey hunting while activities and events were canceled,” said Alaina Gerrits, DNR Assistant Upland Wildlife Ecologist. “Preliminary data suggests the level of people who won in the drawing and purchased a harvest authorization has decreased from 2020 back to the levels we experienced before the COVID-19 public health emergency.”

The 2021 youth season, included in the total, resulted in 3,308 birds registered, up nearly 15% from 2,881 in 2020. Overall turkey harvest decreased across all zones and time periods [compared to 2020 levels](#). While this preliminary count does not include harvest at Fort McCoy, that harvest typically represents less than 1% of statewide totals.

Weather conditions through winter and early spring favored a healthy turkey population going into the hunting season, with mild temperatures and few long-lasting cold snaps. Weather conditions were also optimal for hunters during most periods of the 2021 turkey season and were especially favorable for the youth hunt.

A total of 220,347 harvest authorizations were issued for the 2021 spring turkey

season, a 2% decrease from 2020, with 144,477 harvest authorizations awarded through the drawing and 76,200 sold over the counter. There were 16,215 fewer over-the-counter tags sold this year compared to 2020.

Zone 3 produced the highest overall harvest at 9,847 birds, followed by Zones 2 and 1. Hunters registered 9,302 birds in Zone 2 and 8,964 birds in Zone 1. Overall, the statewide success rate, not corrected for non-participation, was 16.9% compared to 20% in 2020.

The 2021 spring season started on April 17 with the youth hunt, followed by the first of six time periods of the regular season, which began on April 21 and ended on June 1 with the close of the sixth time period. Having separate time periods allows for maximum hunter opportunities with minimal interference while ensuring a sustainable harvest.

Biologists in Wisconsin closely monitor harvest, hunter interference rates, hunter satisfaction and other information to track turkey populations through time to maintain a successful, enjoyable and sustainable spring turkey hunt.

For more information about wild turkey hunting and management, [visit the DNR's Turkey Hunting and Management webpage](#).