



Wild Turkey Summer Brood Survey Results

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Through the months of July and August, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) staff and cooperators completed the annual turkey brood survey. The survey provides an index to productivity of wild turkey reproduction and can assist in making management decisions. The survey counts the number of turkeys observed by staff and cooperators as they go about their normal day to day business and is expressed as the number of turkeys observed per 1,000 miles driven and the number of poults (juvenile turkeys) observed per hen. The Department would like to thank the many volunteers of the Virginia National Wild Turkey Federation chapters, numerous teachers, and the Virginia Master Naturalists for their survey participation in 2024! Data is also collected by partners from VA state parks, VA Dept. of Forestry, and several military installations.

In 2024, the Department received 195 reports by observers driving over 267,000 miles during July and August. Seventy-eight percent of observers reported seeing at least one turkey during the survey time period. The overall number of turkeys staff have observed in the summer has declined since 2015. In 2024, the total number of turkeys observed fell below the long-term average (17.4/1,000 miles) to 11.45 birds per 1,000 miles, but a rebound from the all-time low recorded in 2023 of 7.36 (Figure 2). This ratio peaked in 2014 (29.4) and 2015 (30) and has been declining since (Fig. 2), although 2020 noted a significant increase (24.91). The Tidewater Region had the highest ratio (30/1,000 mi.) and likely has the highest turkey population of any region in the state. The Southwest region had the next highest ratio with 10.5 birds per 1,000 miles. The North Mountains (9.1), South Piedmont (8.8) and North Piedmont (7.1) were all grouped closely together, and all showed significant improvement from record lows in 2023. The North Mountain region in particular continues to show increases in turkeys seen and broods, which is a bright spot for an area that has had lower turkey production.

The 2024 annual survey suggests reproduction for wild turkey increased to a statewide average of 2.1 poults/hen (Figure 1). This is still below the long-term survey average (2.4 poults/hen) but an improvement from the lows recorded in 2022 (1.9) and 2023 (1.8). The Poults/Hen ratio is currently our best measure of reproduction as it considers the number of poults produced by all hens. Complete brood loss is not uncommon, and those situations need to be incorporated when evaluating reproduction.

The Tidewater continues to lead the state in recruitment (P/H ratio) coming in well above the other regions and the statewide average at 4.3 in 2024. Below average recruitment (P/H ratio) was reported across the remaining regions in 2024, although the North Mountains (1.59) and Southwest (1.51) were close to the 2024 average (1.67). The Southern Piedmont (1.25) and Northern Piedmont (1.01) recorded the lowest ratios for the survey period in 2024.

Wild turkey success in hatching and raising broods plays an important role in wild turkey populations and is especially important in fall harvests. Further, the ratio of young birds (poults) to the number of females (hens) is a critical index to reproduction (P/H). Lack of suitable nesting and brooding habitat

continue to be likely factors in the decline of turkey reproduction across much of Virginia. For information on improving native habitats on your land visit: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/habitat/>

This information is intended to monitor turkey population trends and densities but does not infer high hunter success or satisfaction while hunting. Summary results for each region are found in Table 1.

Figure 1. Poults/Hen ratio (2007-2024) with long term survey average.

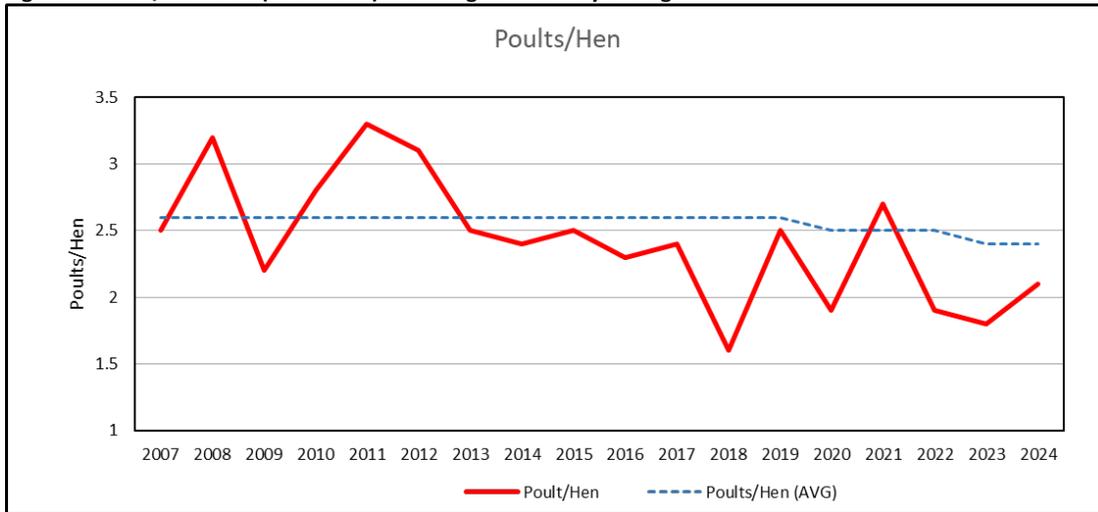


Figure 2: Turkeys observed per 1,000 miles by staff during July and August (2007-2024) with long term average.

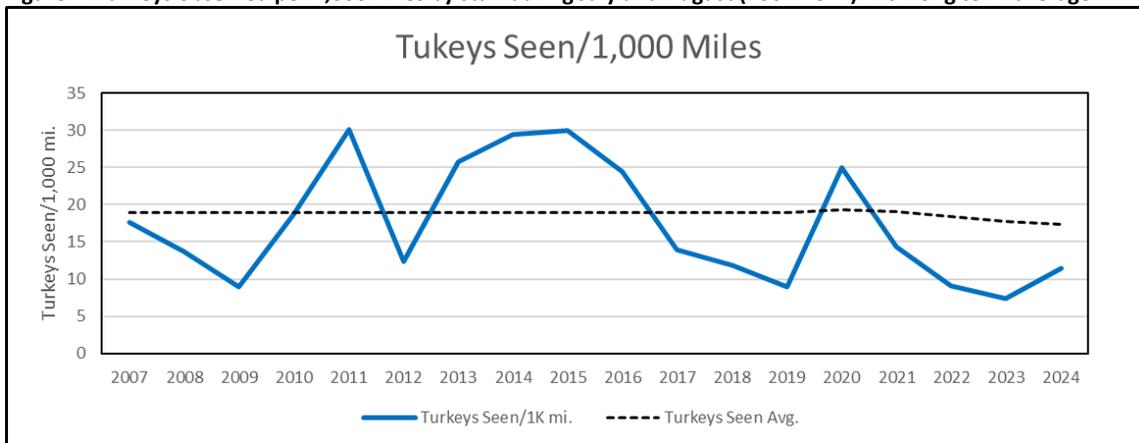


Figure 3: Poults/hen and Broods/1k Miles (2007-2024).

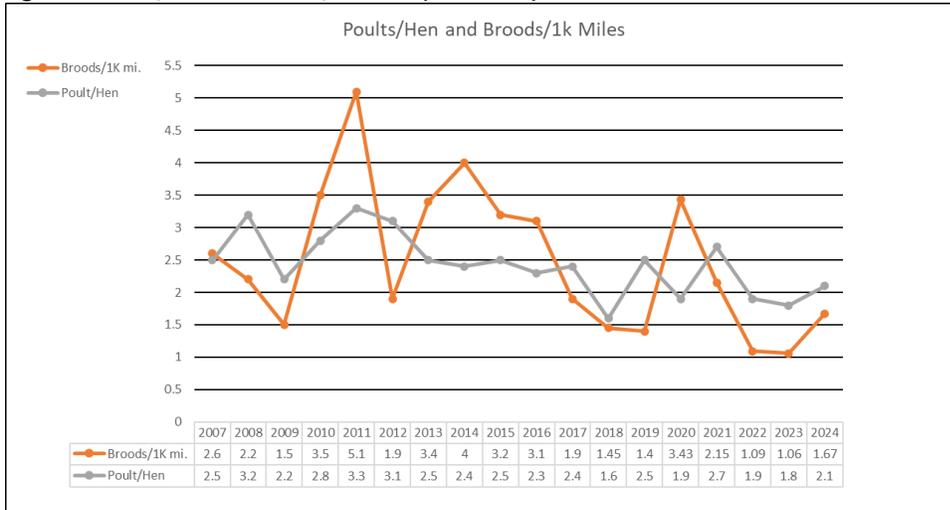


Figure 4: Wild turkey brood observations by region, 2024.

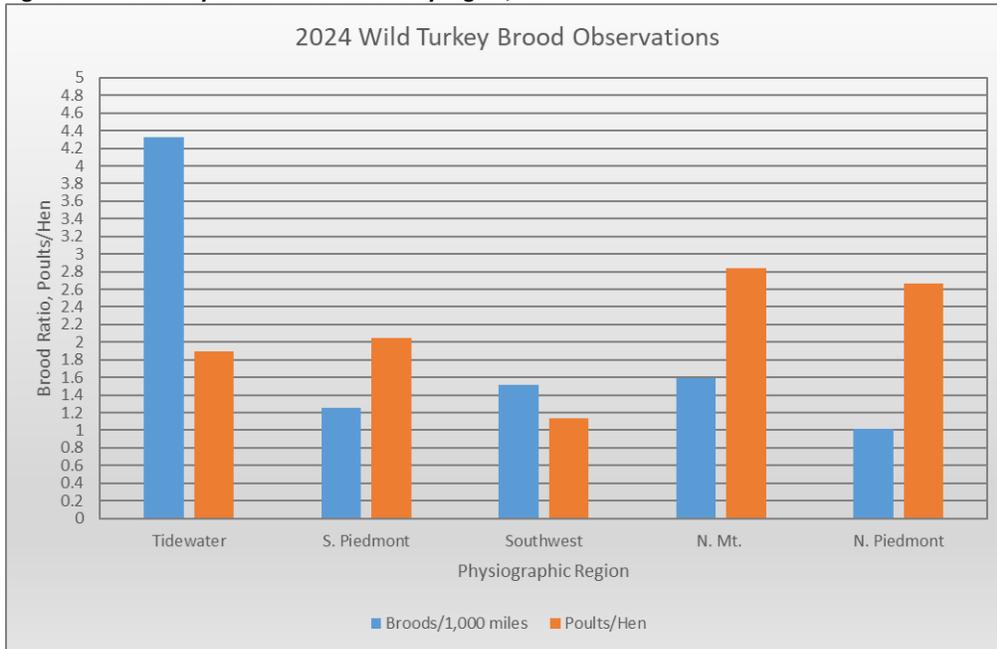


Table 1: Turkey brood data by region, July and August 2024.

Region	Mileage	Total Turkeys	Turkey Ratio	Broods	Brood Ratio	Poults	Total Hens	Poults/Hen
Tidewater	27256	783	30.31	136	4.33	364	201	1.89
S. Piedmont	97815	1153	8.78	194	1.25	597	319	2.05
Southwest	44163	412	10.46	58	1.51	139	159	1.13
N. Mt.	47607	470	9.14	82	1.59	290	120	2.84
N. Piedmont	50673	530	7.10	105	1.01	283	141	2.66
	267514	3348	7.36	575	1.67	1673	940	2.10