

Winter 2011 Turkey Flock Internet Survey

This internet survey was conducted for the third consecutive year. The news release soliciting flock observations was put out January 14th, the reporting period was through March 31st. There were 1,497 flock reports totaling 27,521 turkeys, compared to 1,279 flocks totaling 19,050 turkeys the previous winter. The data on habitat type, food usage and numbers per flocks was compared among the 18 wildlife management units.

Numbers of turkeys reported

Forty-two towns had winter flocks of 50 or more turkeys per flock reported. The largest flocks contained: 100 (four), 112, and 150 turkeys (two). The average sizes of all 1,497 flock reports was 18.4 turkeys (Table 1). The highest average of 30.0 turkeys per flock was in unit H2, the unit of the original turkey population restoration, followed by units J2 and K which had averages of 20.0 turkeys per flock, and which have the highest turkey harvests the past several years.

Type of setting in which flock observed

The flocks were observed in three types of setting as follows: rural-1,117 (75%), suburban-342 (23%), and urban-30 (2%). As would be expected, units K, L and M are the most developed portions of the state and had the highest percentages of flocks in the suburban setting.

Another breakdown of flock observations was into general habitat type as follows: farmland-212 (15.1%), residential-622 (44.3%), and woodland-571 (40.6%). Once again the southeastern units of J2, K, L and M had the highest percentages of residential observations because these units have the most development or human density. These four units also had the most observations at farm sites, compared to other wildlife management units.

Categories of food use

Table 2 breaks down the flock observations into eight general food use categories. Of 1,392 observations which referenced feeding activity, 305 flocks (21.9%) were not observed feeding, so that the food categories based on 1,392-305, or 1,087 observations. Another 312 (22.4%) of observed feeding observations were entered as "foods unknown".

It was quite revealing that by far the most flock observations of food usage were at backyard birdfeeders 477 (43.9%). The turkey project biologist has stated for many years that during a normal to hard winter, every flock throughout the state goes to backyard birdfeeders during deep snow periods.

The farm category corn usage may be relatively low compared to other food usage observations. However, farmland use is considerably more important than the numbers of observations, because some of the largest winter nuclear flocks in the various counties or wildlife management units reside at farm sites.

Table 1. Number of turkey flocks and size of flocks by WMUs – (Winter 2011 Internet Flock Survey).

unit	number flocks reported	total turkeys reported	maximum #s in a flock	mean # per flock
A	3	61	40	20.3
B	2	107	75	53.5
C1	7	52	24	7.4
C2	4	61	35	15.3
D1	26	250	25	9.6
D2	38	666	60	17.5
E	11	112	17	10.2
F	11	162	51	14.7
G	74	1,172	58	15.8
H1	24	390	50	16.3
H2	68	2,040	150	30.0
I1	61	963	70	16.1
I2	61	858	44	14.1
J1	54	850	55	16.4
J2	213	4,248	150	20.0
K	196	3,902	112	20.0
L	223	4,209	75	18.9
M	425	7,354	100	17.4
Total	1,497	27,521		avg.= 18.4

Table 2. 2011 Winter turkey flock internet survey – food usage categories.

food category	# of observations	percentage
Acorns/beechnuts	77	7.1
Apples/crabapples	38	3.5
Birdfeeder	477	43.9
Corn in manure	16	1.5
Ensilage corn	16	1.5
Dried berries/fruit on shrubs	42	3.9
Grasses/greens	103	9.5
Standing corn	6	0.6
Unknown foods	312	28.7
	1,087	100%