

RESULTS OF WINTER 2014 WILD TURKEY PUBLIC INTERNET FLOCK SURVEY

For the sixth consecutive year, the Fish & Game Department conducted a wild turkey flock survey in which the public reported their flock sightings on-line. The reporting period was January 1 through March 31, 2014. During that time there were 1,520 flock reports, totaling 21,352 turkeys. In comparison, the winter 2013 flock survey recorded 1,787 flocks totaling 28,389 turkeys. This was a decrease of 267 flocks (14.9%) and 7,037 turkeys (24.8%) from the 2013 survey.

Flock Reports and Turkey Numbers by WMUs and Towns

The Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) with the most flock reports, as well as the most total turkeys seen was unit M with 371 reports and 5,460 turkeys. This is understandable since this unit has the highest density of people to report turkeys. It does not mean this unit has the most wild turkeys, but rather that numerous people may report the same group of turkeys. This is evident because many reports at the same or very similar sites. The 4 units from southeastern NH (units J2, K, L, M) resulted in a combined 1,004 flock reports, 66.1% of the statewide total of 1,520 (Table 1), far more than any other part of the state. The average number of turkeys in a flock statewide was 14.05. This survey often lacks reports from some of the large dairy farms in western NH which have 100 or more wintering turkeys.

Table 2 records the towns from each county with the most flock reports from winter 2014. The same pattern occurs as with flock reports and total turkey numbers by WMU. Towns from southeastern NH (Hillsboro/Merrimack/Rockingham/Stafford counties) recorded the most flock reports. Towns and counties from western and northern NH have significantly lower numbers of flock reports.

It was interesting to look at the towns around the state which reported the highest numbers of turkeys in a flock (Table 3). Only 15 towns had 50 or more turkeys in a flock. The greatest numbers in flocks were 83, 75, 75, 57, 54 and 53 turkeys. The flocks with the larger number of turkeys per flock were again from southeastern NH.

Table 4 records the total flock reports and total turkeys from the six years of this public internet winter flock survey (2009 through 2014). The numbers have been fairly similar over the six survey winters. The 6-year averages were: 1,467 flock reports, 23,500 turkeys and 15.7 turkeys per flock.

General Habitat Use

Table 5 breaks down the flock reports where the turkeys were observed into three general categories: 221 flock reports (15.72%) were at farmland sites, 480 flock reports (34.14%) at woodland sites, and 705 flock reports (50.14%) at residential sites.

Of WMUs with 30 or more total reports, units D2 (33.33%) and H1 (36.11%) had the highest percentage of farmland site reports. This was predictable because the best remaining dairy farm numbers are in these two units. It was somewhat surprising that units J1 (22.22%) and J2 (24.17%) in eastern NH had the next highest flock reports at farmland sites. There is no surprise about the percentage of flock reports at woodland sites over the 18 wildlife management units. NH is the 2nd most forested state and most towns are 90% forested.

The highest percentage of flock reports statewide was 705 at residential sites (50.14%). This was not surprising because this is where the greatest numbers of people reside and birdfeeders are found. As

expected the most total flock reports came from units J2, K, L, and M from southeastern NH, which are the most developed areas of the state. Unit M which is the most developed or residential, had 262 flock reports (75.0%).

Winter Food Usage

Table 6 records the statewide food usage categories by turkey flocks. As expected, by far the greatest percentage of use was 432 flocks reported (59.4%) at back yard birdfeeders. The second highest category was 135 flocks reported (18.6%) of turkeys using corn/grain put out by people. If these two categories are combined, the total becomes 78.0% of the flock observations, from turkeys getting birdseed and grain provided at people's houses.

The next highest category of food usage is of 77 flocks (10.6%) using apples/crabapples, followed by 41 reports (5.6%) of acorn or beechnut use. If the use of corn in manure, corn in ensilage and standing corn are combined, this is a total of 26 flock reports or 3.5% corn usage from agriculture. There were another 181 flock reports which were recorded with the type of food usage listed as "unknown".

Table 7 compares the percentage use of birdfeeders for each wildlife management unit between the years 2013 and 2014. The number of flock reports was similar for both years – 400 in 2013 and 432 in 2014. However, the percentage of flocks using birdfeeders was quite different each year, being 22.7% in 2013, and 47.6% average in 2014. The birdfeeder use was low during winter 2013 because snow cover was relatively low that winter where 7 different thaws created bare ground sites.

For winter 2014 the most flock reports of birdfeeder use came from units J2, K, L and M in southeastern NH, with unit M with 123 reports (55.7%) being the highest. This is logical because this unit has the most houses and the most birdfeeders.

Avian Pox Information

The winter public internet flock survey is a good way to pick up observations and sites with avian pox turkeys because a maximum number of people are involved throughout the state. Table 8 records the sites at which flocks were reported which contained turkeys exhibiting avian pox, and includes the number of turkeys in the flock as well as the number exhibiting symptoms from each wildlife management unit. See <http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/Wildlife/turkey-virus.html> for additional information on avian pox.

There were a total of 25 flock reports from the 18 wildlife management units. Several reports were from the same street or site, so that the total was reduced to 21 sites from 16 towns. Merrimack and Dover had 3 reports each. The majority of the reports came from towns in southeastern NH or units L and M. Only 2 reports were from northern NH and 3 from western NH.

It was interesting to note that usually only 1 or 2 pox turkeys were observed in most flocks. The exceptions were 6 of 12 turkeys at a Deerfield site, 19 of 30 turkeys at a Kingston site, and another 7 of 15 turkeys at the same Kingston site.

The 25 pox reports from 1,520 flock reports (1.64%) would indicate that the pox virus was not very prevalent in the statewide turkey population, at least during the winter months of year 2014.

Table 1. Numbers of flocks reported and numbers of turkeys by WMUs – Winter 2014

WMU	# of flocks Reported	Total turkeys	Max. # in a flock	Avg. # turkeys Per flock
A	8	123	35	15.38
B	4	39	18	9.75
C1	12	183	25	15.25
C2	9	98	25	10.89
D1	18	253	30	14.06
D2	34	433	30	12.74
E	23	159	25	6.91
F	28	267	32	9.54
G	70	1,010	42	14.43
H1	36	672	50	18.67
H2	72	970	40	13.47
I1	83	1,170	50	14.10
I2	57	640	50	11.23
J1	61	987	83	16.18
J2	264	3,671	57	13.91
K	151	2,098	44	13.89
L	218	3,101	75	14.22
M	371	5,460	75	14.72
TOTAL	1,520	21,352	83 max.	14.05 = avg.

Table 2. Towns per county with most flock reports – Winter 2014

Belknap	Carroll	Cheshire	Coos	Grafton
Alton 20	Conway 11	Jaffrey 13	Whitefield 7	Hanover 13
Gilford 24	Wolfeboro 16	Marlboro 7	Lancaster 6	Enfield 11
Laconia 20	Bartlett 7	Rindge 7		Lebanon 9
Gilmanton 17	Tuftonboro 9	Swansey 8		Lisbon 6
	Wakefield 8			Plymouth 5
	Effingham 11			
Hillsboro	Merrimack	Rockingham	Strafford	Sullivan
Amherst 20	Concord 28	Auburn 22	Dover 20	Cornish 12
Hudson 22	Epsom 16	Deerfield 21	Strafford 20	Washington 6
Merrimack 28	Franklin 14	Greenland 39	Barrington 15	Charlestown 5
Weare 20	Hooksett 12	Londonderry 34	Durham 17	Sunapee 5
Hollis 17	Loudon 12	Northwood 21	Farmington 15	
	Newbury 11	Portsmouth 19	Lee 17	
	Hill 12	Stratham 18	Rochester 16	
	Hopkinton 12	Nottingham 14	Barrington 15	
			Somersworth 15	

Table 3. Flocks with the most turkeys reported by town and county – Winter 2014

Belknap	Carroll	Cheshire	Coos	Grafton
Alton 53	Conway 50	Rindge 40	Jefferson 25	Enfield 40
Gilmanton 50	Wakefield 83	Westmoreland 37	Lancaster 26	Hanover 42
			Whitefield 30	Wentworth 40
Hillsboro	Merrimack	Rockingham	Strafford	Sullivan
Hudson 40	Bradford 50	Candia 50	Durham 43	Cornish 50
New Ipswich 44	Chichester 57	Hampton Falls 50	Middleton 50	Unity 31
Peterboro 40	Concord 40	Kensington 75	Strafford 54	
	Dunbarton 40	N. Hampton 40		
	Epsom 75	Nottingham 45		
	Franklin 50	Plaistow 40		
	Hill 40	Rye 50		
	Hopkinton 40	S. Hampton 41		
	Northfield 40	Stratham 46		
	Pittsfield 48			

Table 4. Number of winter flock reports and number of turkeys for 6 years.

Year of survey	# of flock Reports	Total turkeys	Max. # in a flock	Avg. # turkeys Per flock
2009	1,528	23,922	100	15.66
2010	1,291	19,219	100	14.89
2011	1,497	27,521	150	18.38
2012	1,180	20,595	150	17.45
2013	1,787	28,389	150	15.89
2014	1,520	21,352	83	14.05
6 year avg. =	1,467	23,500		15.7

Table 5. General habitat use of turkey flocks by WMUs – Winter 2014

WMU	Farmland		Residential		Woodland	
	# of reports	% of total	# of reports	% of total	# of reports	% of total
A	1	14.9%	4	57.14%	2	28.57%
B	2	50.0%	1	25.00%	1	25.00%
C1	1	9.09%	5	45.45%	5	45.45%
C2	--	--	2	28357%	5	71.43%
D1	3	18.75%	9	56.25%	4	25.00%
D2	10	33.33%	10	33.33%	10	33.33%
E	--	--	11	50.00%	11	50.00%
F	7	26.92%	8	30.77%	11	42.31%
G	10	16.67%	26	43.33%	24	40.00%
H1	13	36.11%	10	27.78%	13	36.11%
H2	12	17.65%	29	42.65%	27	39.71%
I1	13	16.25%	32	40.00%	35	43.75%
I2	3	5.45%	25	45.45%	27	49.09%
J1	12	22.22%	22	40.74%	20	37.04%
J2	58	24.17%	90	37.50%	92	38.33%
K	16	11.43%	65	46.43%	59	42.14%
L	29	14.50%	94	47.00%	77	38.50%
M	31	8.88%	262	75.07%	56	16.05%
Statewide	221	(15.72%)	705	(50.14%)	480	(34.14%)

Table 6. Food usage categories by turkey flocks statewide – Winter 2014

Food category	Number of Observations	Percentage of Total observations	
Acorns/beechnuts	41	5.6%	
Apples/crabapples	77	10.6%	
Birdfeeder	432	59.4%	78.0% fed by people
Corn/grain	135	18.6%	
Corn in manure	11	1.5%	3.5% corn from agriculture
Corn in ensilage	10	1.4%	
Standing corn	5	0.6%	
Dried berries/ Fruits on shrubs	2	0.2%	
TOTAL	727	100.0%	
(unknown foods)	(181)		

Table 7. Numbers and percentages of winter flocks using birdfeeders by WMUs
(2013 vs 2014)

WMU	Number of flocks		Percentage of flocks	
	Winter 2013	Winter 2014	Winter 2013	Winter 2014
A	2	0	14.3%	0.0%
B	2	1	33.3%	33.3%
C1	5	3	50.0%	50.0%
C2	1	1	9.1%	25.0%
D1	5	7	20.8%	58.3%
D2	10	4	19.6%	25.0%
E	6	2	28.6%	16.7%
F	6	9	13.3%	50.0%
G	31	18	26.1%	38.3%
H1	14	6	24.6%	27.3%
H2	22	20	24.2%	41.7%
I1	17	22	21.0%	47.8%
I2	16	18	30.2%	48.7%
J1	12	19	20.7%	54.3%
J2	61	62	21.3%	39.5%
K	55	48	26.4%	55.8%
L	47	69	23.9%	51.5%
M	88	123	20.6%	55.7%
Statewide	400	432	22.7% avg.	47.6% avg.

Table 8. Avian pox virus reports in flocks by WMUs – Winter 2014

WMU	Town	Location	# of turkeys in flock	# in flock with pox
C1	Gorham	Mechanic St.	21	1
G	Enfield	Crystal Lake Rd.	22	1
F	Campton	Beech Hill	6	1
H2	Harrisville	Prospect St.	8	1
I2	Sutton	Corporation Hill Rd.	6	3
I2	Springfield	Hogg Hill Rd.	27	2
J2	Chichester	Hilliard Rd.	8	1
J2	Farmington	United States	14	2
J2	Farmington	Poor Farm Rd.	25	1
J2	Strafford	Evan's Mt. Rd.	27	1
L	Deerfield	Birch Rd.	12	6
L	Dover	Piscataqua & Rabbit Rds.	4	1
L	Dover	" " "	25	1
L	Dover	Bay View Rd.	3	1
L	Epping	Shepherd Lane	36	1
L	Epping	" "	16	1
M	Greenland	Caswell Rd.	18	4
M	Greenland	" "	8	1
M	Kingston	Mill Rd.	30	19
M	Kingston	" "	15	7
M	Merrimack	Nathan Hale Ln.	4	1
M	Merrimack	Jade Rd.	64	2
M	Pelham	Clydesdale Ave.	2	1
M	Plaistow	Kingston Rd.	40	1
M	Portsmouth	Islington St.	18	1