

NHFG: RESULTS OF WINTER 2016 WILD TURKEY PUBLIC INTERNET FLOCK SURVEY

For the eighth consecutive year, the Fish and Game Department conducted a wild turkey winter flock survey in which the public reported their flock sightings on-line. The reporting period was January 1 through March 30, 2016. During that time there were 2,118 flocks reported, totaling 38,436 turkeys. In comparison, the winter 2015 flock survey recorded 730 flock reports totaling 12,574 turkeys. Therefore, from the winter 2015 to winter 2016 there was an increase of 1,388 flock reports, or nearly tripled, and an increase of 25,862 turkeys, or approximately a three-fold increase in numbers. The following were two primary reasons for this significant increase:

1. Above average hatchling success and survival of young turkeys during the summer of 2015, due to semi-drought hatching weather during the spring of 2015.
2. The winter of 2016 was one of the easiest winters in recent decades, in terms of little snowfall, minimal snow cover, and warm temperatures.

Flock Reports and Turkey Numbers by WMU and Towns

The WMU with the most flock reports, as well as the most total turkeys was Unit M in southeastern New Hampshire with 460 reports and 8,214 turkeys (Table 1). The three (3) units from southeastern New Hampshire (J2, L, M) reported a combined 1,129 flock reports (53.3%) of the statewide total of 2,118 flock reports, and 20,723 (53.9%) of the statewide total of 38,436 turkeys. The average number in a flock statewide was 18.15 turkeys per flock. The average number per flock per unit varies from 11.81 turkeys in WMU E to 24.25 turkeys in WMU H1.

Table 2 records the towns from each county with the most flock reports from winter 2016. Counties from southeastern New Hampshire had the higher number of flock reports per town, as compared to western and northern New Hampshire. A primary reason is because of the much greater human population and roads in southeastern New Hampshire. The same flock is often reported by different people. One reason towns in the Cheshire and Sullivan county area of southwestern New Hampshire do not show many flock reports is because turkeys have been there the longest, and therefore there is a lesser interest in reporting. Towns from the Coos and Grafton county region in northern New Hampshire show lower flock reports because there are less turkeys there and a significantly lower human population to report turkeys.

Table 3 records the towns per county with the most turkeys in flocks. Because of the easy winter with little snow cover, turkeys did not congregate in large flocks and were more dispersed in small flocks. The largest flocks were in: Pelham (134), Peterborough (100), Londonderry (100), followed by Amherst (92), Stewartstown (75), Cornish (75), Hopkinton (72), Newmarket (72), Ossipee (72), Hill (70) and Kensington (70).

Table 4 records the total flock reports and total turkeys from the eight years of the public internet winter flock survey (2009 through 2016). The numbers have been fairly similar over this span, except for winter 2015, when a restrictive snow cover during the mid-winter prevented turkey movements, and making turkeys less visible to report. The winter of 2016 has had the most flock reports (2,118), with the most total turkeys (38,436). The 8-year average has been 1,456 flock reports throughout the state, and a total of 24,001 turkeys, with an average of 16.48 turkeys per flock.

General Habitat Use

Persons recorded three categories of land or type of habitat in which they observed a flock, and the breakdown was as follows: 347 flocks (17.73%) in farmland, 583 flock reports (29.7%) in woodland, and 1,027 flock reports (52.48%) in residential areas.

Winter Food Usage

Table 5 records the statewide food usage categories by turkey flocks. As expected, by far the greatest percentage of use was 530 flock reports (a total of 65.68%) at backyard feeders. The next highest food use was 133 reports (16.48%) using acorns/beechnuts, and 99 reports (12.27%) using apples/crabapples. The latter two food usages were expected because of a reasonably good acorn year and little snow cover, and there had been a “bumper” wild apple crop. The remaining 45 flock reports (5.57%) were using corn wastage at farmland. Another 493 flock reports indicated that food usage was unknown.

Avian Pox Information

There were only six sites from six towns with reports of turkeys with the pox lesions in the head area. Of the six sites, four were from southeastern New Hampshire, two from WMU L, and two from WMU M.

The pox incidence appears to be quite low since there were 2,118 flock reports, and only 6 flocks reported with pox symptoms. Three of the six flocks had only 1 or 2 turkeys with the pox, and three of the six flocks had 6 or 7 pox turkeys per flock.

Opinions Regarding Turkeys

The following rates respondent’s feelings about wild turkeys: 9 (0.50%) strongly dislike, 22 (1.22%) dislike, 147 (8.18%) neither like nor dislike, 502 (27.92%) like, and 1,118 (62.18%) strongly like turkeys.

Table 1. Numbers of Flocks Reported and Numbers of Turkeys by WMU – Winter 2016

WMU	# of flocks Reported	Total turkeys	Max. # in a flock	Avg. # turkeys Per flock
A	14	222	75	15.86
B	9	138	20	15.33
C1	9	116	30	12.89
C2	4	65	37	16.25
D1	24	498	50	20.75
D2	29	496	68	17.10
E	32	378	31	11.81
F	23	278	23	12.09
G	75	1,271	50	16.95
H1	59	1,431	75	24.25
H2	93	1,935	100	20.81
I1	140	2,567	72	18.34
I2	54	974	62	18.04
J1	90	1,655	72	18.39
J2	357	6,580	68	18.43
K	334	5,689	92	17.03
L	312	5,929	71	19.00
M	460	8,214	134	17.86
TOTALS	2,118	38,436		18.15

Table 2. Towns per county with most flock reports – Winter 2016

Belknap	Carroll	Cheshire	Coos	Grafton
Alton 35	Wolfeboro 21	Keene 10	Whitefield 10	Lebanon 14
Gilford 31	Tuftonboro 17	Westmoreland 8	Pittsburg 7	Canaan 13
Belmont 18	Conway 14	Chesterfield 7	Jefferson 5	Enfield 9
New Hampton 12	Ossipee 14	Gilsum 6	Milan 5	Campton 8
Tilton 11	Freedom 13	Harrisville 6	Berlin 4	Littleton 7
Laconia 10	Effingham 10	Jaffrey 6	Lancaster 4	Plymouth 7
	Madison 10	Rindge 6	Stewartstown 4	Ashland 5
	Bartlett 7	Swanzy 6	Colebrook 3	Orford 5
	Wakefield 7	Dublin 4	Columbia 3	
		Fitzwilliam 4	Shelburne 3	
		Stoddard 4	Carroll 2	
		Alstead 3	Dummer 2	
		Hinsdale 3	Stratford 2	
		Richmond 3		
		Walpole 3		

Hillsboro	Merrimack	Rockingham	Strafford	Sullivan
Bedford 53	Loudon 50	Deerfield 39	Durham 27	Cornish 19
Manchester 35	Concord 46	Auburn 38	Rochester 26	Plainfield 12
Amherst 30	Hooksett 33	Londonderry 36	Barrington 19	Newport 8
Goffstown 30	Chichester 22	Nottingham 31	Farmington 16	Claremont 7
Merrimack 23	Hill 22	Salem 25	Dover 15	Sunapee 6
Milford 21	Pembroke 22	Derry 22	Strafford 13	Unity 5
Pelham 21	Epsom 21	Raymond 22		
Weare 20	Hopkinton 20			

Table 3. Largest Number of Turkeys per Flock Reported By Town and County – Winter 2016

Belknap	Carroll	Cheshire	Coos	Grafton
Tilton 48	Ossipee 72	Alstead 60	Stewartstown 75	Piermont 68
Alton 42	Tuftonboro 51	Hinsdale 60	Lancaster 50	Ashland 50
Sanbornton 42	Madison 45	Marlborough 53	Shelburne 37	Orford 50
Belmont 40	Freedom 43	Keene 50	Jefferson 33	Littleton 38
Gilford 40	Wolfeboro 40	Westmoreland 50	Randolph 31	Canaan 35
Barnstead 35	Eaton 38	Harrisville 43	Berlin 30	Lebanon 35
New Hampton 32		Walpole 40	Carroll 30	Alexandria 34
Gilmanton 31		Swanzy 38	Whitefield 30	Groton 34
				Enfield 30
				Lyme 30

Hillsboro	Merrimack	Rockingham	Strafford	Sullivan
Pelham 134	Hopkinton 72	Londonderry 100	Stafford 60	Cornish 75
Peterborough 100	Hill 70	Newmarket 71	New Durham 52	Charlestown 60
Amherst 92	Pittsfield 68	Kensington 70	Durham 50	Plainfield 45
Litchfield 68	Franklin 55	Northwood 62	Farmington 50	Claremont 40
Mont Vernon 60	Concord 52	Epping 58	Somersworth 36	Croydon 40
Goffstown 51	Epsom 52	Deerfield 50	Rochester 34	Goshen 35
New Boston 51	Loudon 50	Exeter 50	Dover 30	Langdon 35
		Newton 50	Lee 30	Newport 30
			Madbury 30	

Table 4. Number of Winter Flock Reports and Number of Turkeys For 8 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
2015	730	12,574	100	17.22
2016	2,118	38,436	134	18.15
AVERAGE	1,456	24,001		16.48

Table 5. Food Usage Categories by Turkey Flocks, Statewide – Winter 2016

Food Category	Number of Observations	Percentage of Total Observations	Notes
Acorns/beechnuts	133	16.48%	
Apples/crabapples	99	12.27%	
Birdfeeder	426	52.79%	65.68% feeders
Corn/grain fed	104	12.89%	
Corn in manure	24	2.97%	5.57% farm grain
Corn in ensilage	21	2.60%	
Standing corn	0	0.00%	
Dried berries/ Fruits on shrubs	0	0.00%	
TOTAL	807	100.0%	
(Unknown foods)	(493)		

Table 6. Avian Pox Virus Reports in Flocks – Winter 2016

WMU	Town	# of Turkeys in Flock	# in Flock With Pox
D1	Dalton	24	6
L	Newmarket	62	6
L	Nottingham	19	2
J2	Rochester	6	1
M	Seabrook	24	1
M	Windham	15	7