

RESULTS OF WINTER 2017 WILD TURKEY PUBLIC INTERNET FLOCK SURVEY

For the ninth 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, 2017. During that time there were 998 flock reports, totaling 19,298 turkeys. In comparison, the winter 2016 flock survey recorded 2,118 flock reports, totaling 38,436 turkeys. Therefore, from the winter of 2016 to winter 2017 there was a decrease of 1,120 flock reports or 52.9%, and a decrease of 19,138 turkeys or 49.8%.

The primary reason for the decline in total flocks reports and total number of turkeys reported from winter 2016 to 2017 was the nature of winter 2017, which in much of the state was relatively easy in terms of little snowfall, minimal snow cover, and warm temperatures for much of the winter. There was considerable bare ground on south-facing slopes/edges most of the winter, and the abundant acorn crop was readily available. Flocks were not stressed to seek out and stay at backyard birdfeeders and farm sites.

Flock Reports and Turkey Numbers by WMU and Towns

Once again the WMU with the most flock reports was unit M in southeastern New Hampshire, with 369 reports and 7,214 turkeys (Table 1.). The three units from southeastern New Hampshire (J2, L, and M) reported a combined 581 flock reports, or 58.2% of the statewide total, and 11,771 turkeys, or 61.0% of the statewide total. The average number in a flock statewide was 19.34 per flock, and varied from 13.2 in J, and 13.8 in E, to a high of 24.1 in L, 22.3 in D, and 21.3 in K. During the previous winter of 2016, the statewide average was 18.15 turkeys per flock.

Table 2 records the towns from each county with the most flock reports from winter 2017. 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 is a lesser interest in reporting. Towns from Coos, Carroll and Grafton county region in northern New Hampshire show lower flock reports because there are fewer turkeys there and a significantly lower human population to report turkeys.

Table 3 records the towns from each county with the most turkeys in flocks. Because of the easy winter with little snow cover, turkeys did not congregate in very large flocks, and were more dispersed. The following demonstrates the lower numbers of turkeys in northern vs. southern New Hampshire. The counties of Coos / Carroll / Grafton recorded only three flocks of 50 turkeys and one of 80 whereas the southern half or so of the state recorded 28 flocks of 50 or more turkeys.

The following towns reported the highest number of turkey per flock. Central NH: 150 Hill, 100 Lyndeborough; Eastern NH: 90 Rochester, 79 Brentwood, 76 Londonderry, 75 Nottingham, 75 Franklin; and Northern NH: 80 Lancaster.

Table 4 records the total flock reports and total turkeys from the nine years of the Public Internet Winter Flock Survey (2009 through 2017). The numbers have been fairly similar over this span, except for the winter 2016, when a restrictive snow cover during the mid-winter prevented turkey movements. This recent winter of 2017 also had lower numbers of flock reports and total turkeys. This was due to one of the easiest winters, with fewer congregations at birdfeeders and farms. The 9-year average is 1,405 flock reports per winter, an average of 23,478 turkeys per winter and an average of 16.71 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 114 flocks (12.3%) in farmland, 279 flock reports (30.1%) in woodland and 534 flock reports (57.6%) in residential areas.

Winter Food Usage

Table 5 records the statewide food usage categories used by turkey flocks. As expected, by far the greatest percentage of use was 240 flock reports (64.69%) at backyard birdfeeders. Another 9.70% were fed corn/grain by people.

The next highest food use was 60 reports (16.17%) using acorns/beechnuts, and 16 reports (4.31%) using apples/crabapple. It was understandable that apple use was low since there was virtually no wild apple crop during 2016.

Farmland corn usage was 4.85% and was a combination of corn in manure, in ensilage, or in standing corn.

Avian Pox Information

The winter flock survey of 998 flock reports totaling 19,298 turkeys recorded only 4 sites from 4 towns with reports of turkeys with pox lesions in the head area. Two of the towns were in Hillsboro County and one each from Merrimack and Carroll Counties. The largest flock was of 52 turkeys in Nashua, and 3 of these turkeys were said to have the pox lesions.

During the previous winter survey (2016) there were only six sites in six towns with turkeys reported with pox lesions. After five years of monitoring the pox viruses in wild turkeys it appears that relatively few flocks exhibit clinical symptoms. Mosquitoes are a primary factor in spreading the virus. If spring and summer 2017 is rainy or wet, it will be interesting to see how many pox infected turkeys are observed in the 2017 Public Internet Summer Brood Survey, which begins June 1.

Table 1. Numbers of flocks reported and numbers of turkeys by WMU – Winter 2017

WMU	# of flocks Reported	Total turkeys	Max. # in a flock	Avg. # turkeys Per flock
A	5	64	29	12.80
B	2	45	30	22.50
C1	2	30	20	15.00
C2	1	30	30	30.00
D1	6	134	80	22.33
D2	29	556	60	19.17
E	15	207	31	13.80
F	30	486	31	16.20
G	50	823	50	16.46
H1	20	439	78	21.95
H2	40	725	60	18.13
I1	52	885	150	17.02
I2	23	348	50	15.13
J1	33	436	44	13.21
J2	111	2,127	67	19.16
K	109	2,319	100	21.28
L	101	2,430	90	24.06
M	369	7,214	79	19.55
TOTALS	998	19,298		19.34

Table 2. Towns per county with most flock reports – Winter 2017

Belknap	Carroll	Cheshire	Coos	Grafton
Alton 12	Wolfeboro 11	Jaffrey 6	Carroll 2	Lebanon 11
Belmont 8	Conway 8	Walpole 5	Jefferson 2	Bath 10
Barnstead 7	Bartlett 5	Westmoreland 4	Pittsburg 2	Campton 10
Gilford 6	Effingham 5	Alstead 2	Stewartstown 2	Hanover 8
Sanbornton 6	Brookfield 4	Dublin 2	Clarksville 1	Littleton 8
Laconia 4	Madison 4	Fitzwilliam 2	Dummer 1	Lyme 8
Center Harbor 3	Tamworth 4	Harrisville 2	Errol 1	Thornton 8
Gilmanton 3	Moultonboro 3	Keene 2	Lancaster 1	Alexandria 6
Tilton 3	Tuftonboro 3	Surry 2	Stark 1	Canaan 5
	Wakefield 3	Chesterfield 1		Enfield 4
	Jackson 2	Gilsum 1		Monroe 4
		Rindge 1		
		Stoddard 1		
		Sullivan 1		
		Swanzy 1		
		Winchester 1		

Hillsboro	Merrimack	Rockingham	Strafford	Sullivan
Merrimack 35	Concord 15	Londonderry 54	Farmington 16	Sunapee 5
Hollis 22	Bow 11	Derry 32	Barrington 13	Charlestown 4
Hudson 13	Epsom 8	Windham 32	Durham 11	Cornish 4
Amherst 11	Hooksett 8	Salem 22	Rochester 11	Claremont 3
New Boston 10	Hill 7	Deerfield 11	Dover 9	Grantham 3
Litchfield 9	Pittsfield 7	Hampstead 11	Lee 9	Washington 3
Nashua 9	Pembroke 6	Plaistow 10	Milton 4	Lempster 2
	Warner 6	Nottingham 9	Somersworth 4	Newport 2
	Franklin 5		Strafford 4	Springfield 1
	New London 5		Middleton 2	Unity 1
	Sutton 5		Rollinsford 2	

Table 3. Largest number of turkeys per flock reported by town and county– Winter 2017

Belknap	Carroll	Cheshire	Coos	Grafton
Gilford 50	Effingham 44	Walpole 78	Lancaster 80	Bath 60
Gilmanton 42	Brookfield 36	Jaffrey 50	Dummer 30	Canaan 50
Barnstead 40	Moultonboro 34	Sullivan 40	Stark 30	Landaff 50
Sanbornton 36	Bartlett 31	Westmoreland 40	Stewartstown 29	Piermont 50
Alton 35	Conway 30	Gilsum 30	Carroll 24	Alexandria 46
Belmont 35	Madison 30	Winchester 30	Jefferson 20	Hebron 42
Center Harbor 27	Wolfeboro 26	Keene 28	Errol 15	Hanover 41
Laconia 27		Chesterfield 25		Lisbon 32
		Fitzwilliam 25		

Hillsboro	Merrimack	Rockingham	Strafford	Sullivan
Lyndeborough 100	Hill 150	Brentwood 79	Rochester 90	Cornish 39
Hudson 66	Franklin 75	Londonderry 76	Durham 57	Charlestown 35
Goffstown 59	Hooksett 70	Nottingham 75	Dover 53	Grantham 30
New Boston 57	Pembroke 65	Deerfield 73	Barrington 52	Claremont 28
Bedford 54	New London 50	East Kingston 70	New Durham 47	Newport 25
Hollis 52	Epsom 49	Salem 70	Farmington 46	Sunapee 20
Nashua 52		Derry 64		
Weare 52				

Table 4. Number of winter flock reports and number of turkeys for 9 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
2017	998	19,298	150	19.34
AVERAGE	1,405	23,478		16.71

Table 5. Food usage categories by turkey flocks statewide – Winter 2017

Food Category	Number of Observations	Percentage of Total Observations	Notes
Acorns/beechnuts	60	16.17%	
Apples/crabapples	16	4.31%	
Birdfeeder	240	64.69%	74.39% feeders
Corn/grain fed	36	9.70%	
Corn in manure	7	1.89%	4.85% farm grain
Corn in ensilage	11	2.96%	
Grasses	1	0.27%	
Standing corn	0	0.00%	

Dried berries/ Fruits on shrubs	0	0.00%	
TOTAL	371	100.0%	
(Unknown foods)	(224)		

Table 6. Avian pox virus reports in flocks– Winter 2017

WMU	Town	# of Turkeys in Flock	# in Flock With Pox
M	Litchfield	2	1
M	Nashua	52	3
I1	Sutton	1	1
J1	Wolfeboro	7	?