

Spring Gobbler Bag Limits in South Carolina

- The current statewide bag limit is 5 gobblers in South Carolina.
- Eleven (11) counties in the midlands and Pee Dee have a 2 bird limit.
- Only one other state (Alabama) has a 5 bird limit. Most states have a 2 bird limit.
- DNR Wildlife Section staff has long been concerned with the 5 bird limit.
- Reproduction in wild turkeys has **decreased** over time (see Figure 1).
- Average annual turkey harvest has **decreased** 25 percent since 2002 (see Figure 2).
- The number of turkey hunters has **increased** over time (see Figure 3).
- DNR staff recommended a 3 bird bag limit in May of 2008.
- A reduction in the bag limit should increase annual carryover of gobblers.
- A reduction in the bag limit should increase reproduction in turkeys.
- A reduction in the bag limit should more equitably distribute harvest opportunities among hunters.
- Only about 3 percent of hunters take more than 3 birds annually.
- However, this 3 percent of hunters takes about 25 percent of all birds annually with about 11 percent of the total harvest being made up of the fourth and fifth bird.
- Most hunters have noted the decline in turkeys in recent years.
- Indications are that most hunters question the appropriateness of the 5 bird limit and would support a reduction in the bag limit.

Figure 1. Summer wild turkey recruitment ratio in South Carolina 1982-2013. Note declining trend since 1988 and very poor recruitment 8 out of the last 11 years. Average recruitment prior to 1988 = 3.5. Average recruitment since 1988 = 2.0. This represents a 42 percent decrease.

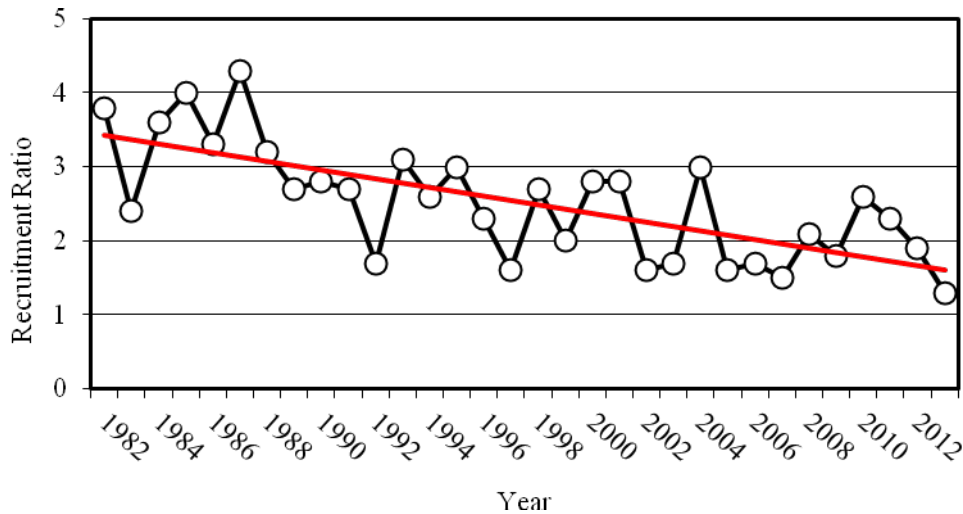


Figure 2. Spring wild turkey harvest in South Carolina 1982-2013. Note that harvest increased between 1982 and 2002 as a result of increasing turkey population following restoration efforts. However, average harvest since 2002 has declined 25 percent following multiple years of poor recruitment.

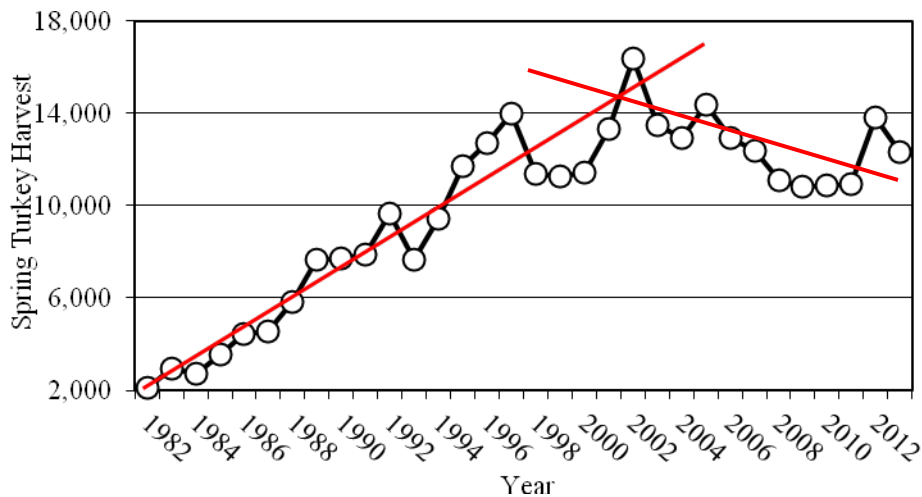


Figure 3. Number of turkey hunters in South Carolina 1982-2013. Note increasing trend throughout period. Average number of hunters over last 5 years is 30 percent greater than average of previous years.

