

2026 Spring Wild Turkey Harvest

Activity:

Delaware's 2026 spring turkey hunting season ran from April 11th to May 10th with a special two-day hunt for youth and non-ambulatory hunters on April 4th and 5th. Only bearded turkeys may be harvested. Private land hunters with proper licenses, hunter education and turkey education courses were allowed to hunt all 30 days of the season. Public land hunters were selected through a preseason lottery to hunt one of four weeklong season segments (A, B, C and D) during the same 30-day period. Sunday hunting for wild turkey is now permitted at the discretion of private landowners and wildlife areas. National Wildlife Refuges and Forest Lands do not allow Sunday hunting. The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) uses an online registration process like that for hunters registering White-tailed Deer in Delaware. Registering your harvest is done either online through the hunters Digital DNREC account, the Digital DNREC app or by calling 855-DEL-Hunt (1-855-335-4868).

Remarks:

At the end of the 2026 spring turkey hunting season, a total of 816 Wild Turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) were harvested in the State of Delaware, a 2% increase from the 2025 harvest (801 harvested in 2025; Figure 1) For the purpose of harvest reporting, Delaware is divided into four management regions, comprised of 18 Wildlife Management Zones (Figure 2). The Interior region (Zones 2, 4, 6 – 8 and 10) accounted for 41.2% (336) of the harvests, the Southern Region (Zones 11-17) for 36.7% (300) of harvests, Bayshore Region (Zones 3, 5 and 9) for 18.9% (154) of harvests and the Northern Region (Zones 1A and 1B) for 3.2% (26) of harvests. Reported harvest was greatest within wildlife management Zone 6, which accounted for 10.1% of harvests with 89 turkeys (Table 1).

Most birds were harvested on private lands; 638 (78.2%) for private and 178 (21.8%) for public. The top public land areas for harvest this spring were Redden State Forest (25 birds), Midlands Wildlife Area (18 birds) and Norman G. Wilder Wildlife Area (15 birds).

The two-day youth and non-ambulatory turkey hunt provided eligible hunters the opportunity to hunt before the regular season. That weekend, 68 birds (8.33% for the whole season) were harvested, 50 from Saturday, April 4th and 18 from Sunday, April 5th. By segment during the regular season, 45.59% (372) of total birds harvested were taken in segment A; 17.28% (141) in B; 13.36% (109) in C; and 15.44% (126) in D (Figure 3).

Harvest Trend:

Since turkey hunting in Delaware opened in 1991, we have seen the harvest numbers fluctuate from 93 in 1991 to 816 in 2026 (Figure 1). Though harvest numbers fluctuate in the short term, the trend shows there is a significant increase from when turkey hunting opened in Delaware. Population increase, hunter recruitment and growing public land opportunities through the lottery are a few factors that can explain these trends. The increase in harvest is most notably in adult bearded turkey more than in juvenile bearded turkeys. The Division of Fish and Wildlife uses these data and trends to evaluate future permit allocations, season dates and bag limits. Data collected from turkey permit survey cards also helps determine hunter effort and success, which can also be used to determine the number of turkey permits to be awarded at each area and segment. Summer productivity surveys are another way DNREC can determine population trends and recruitment, which will play a key role in any future changes to permit allocations, season dates and bag limits.

Prepared by:

Jenna Brown

Env. Specialist III – Turkey, Quail and Upland Game Biologist

DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife

Reviewed by:

Sam Robinson

Environmental Program Manager

DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife



DNREC DIVISION OF
FISH AND WILDLIFE

89 Kings Highway
Dover, DE 19901
302-739-9910
dnrec.delaware.gov/fish-wildlife/

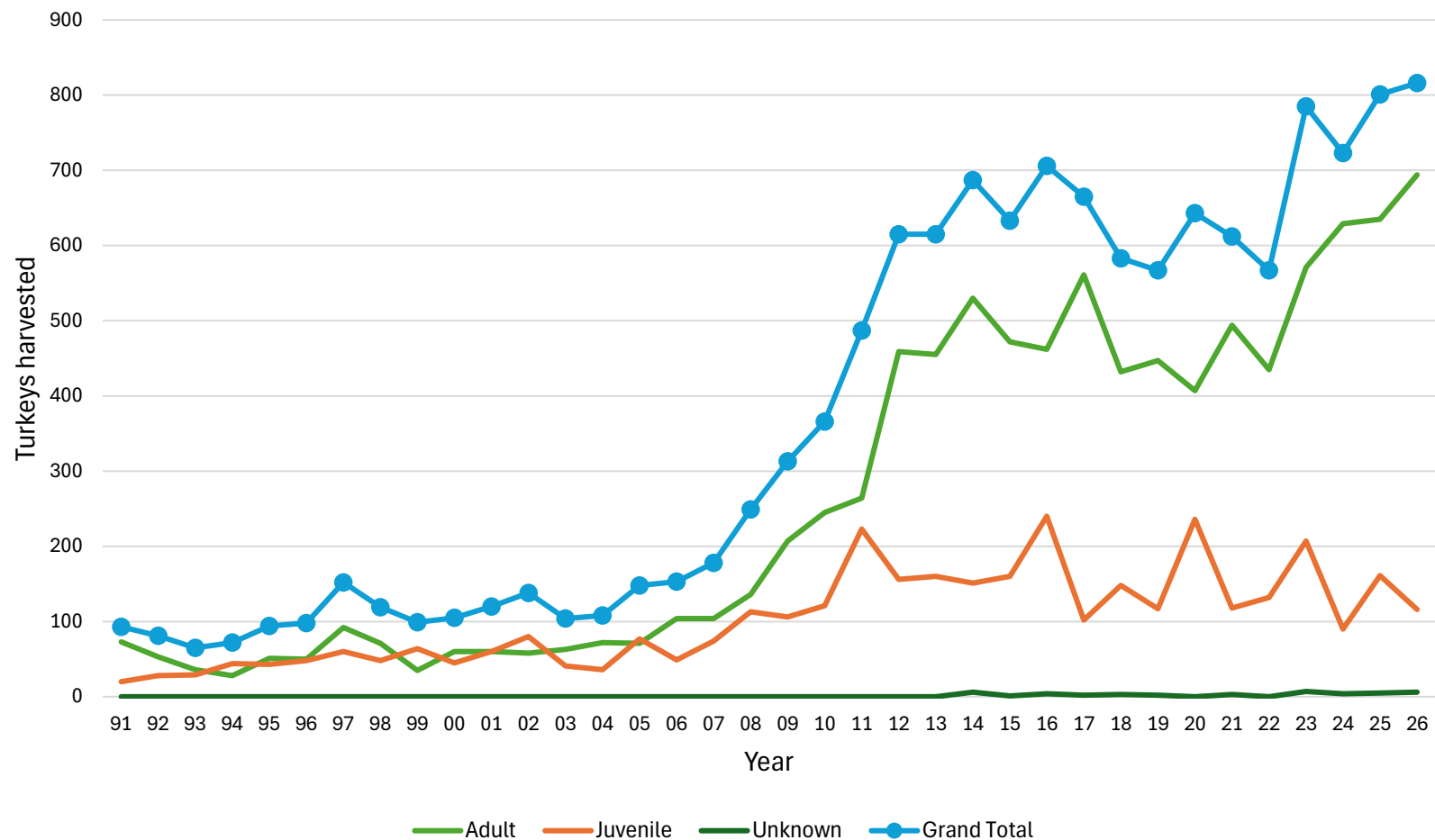


Figure 1. Annual harvest of Eastern Wild Turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) in Delaware from 1991 – 2026 classified by age groups.



Zone	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
1A	0	0	0	0	0
1B	7	11	12	20	26
2	29	43	44	39	41
3	25	38	40	53	44
4	60	87	75	61	76
5	21	35	36	44	47
6	84	112	96	105	89
7	46	63	59	53	55
8	47	49	39	64	48
9	30	47	44	58	63
10	7	17	21	20	27
11	50	62	52	73	73
12	41	57	41	38	37
13	17	18	22	34	33
14	24	30	37	26	35
15	23	23	34	38	34
16	34	42	43	48	58
17	19	35	28	27	30
Unknown	3	16	0	0	0
Total	567	785	723	801	816

Table 1. Five-year (2022–2026) spring Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) harvest by hunting zone in Delaware..



Public Land Area	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
<i>Assawoman Wildlife Area</i>	2	6	4	4	9
<i>Augustine Wildlife Area</i>	1	5	4	4	3
<i>Blackiston Wildlife Area</i>	7	8	11	6	6
<i>Blackbird State Forest</i>	5	9	12	8	12
<i>Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge</i>	0	0	0	9	7
<i>C&D Canal Conservation Area</i>	5	8	10	8	11
<i>Cedar Swamp Wildlife Area</i>	6	5	4	10	7
<i>Eagles Nest Wildlife Area</i>	2	5	8	9	7
<i>Industrial Forest Lands - Barr Complex</i>	2	1	0	2	2
<i>Industrial Forest Lands - Laurel Complex</i>	2	0	1	2	2
<i>Little Creek Wildlife Area</i>	4	1	4	8	4
<i>Marshy Hope Wildlife Area</i>	0	0	2	1	3
<i>Midlands Wildlife Area</i>	8	11	6	9	18
<i>Milford Neck Wildlife Area</i>	4	11	10	13	9
<i>Nanticoke Wildlife Area</i>	4	6	6	6	10
<i>Norman G. Wilder Wildlife Area</i>	12	13	9	22	15
<i>Old Furnace Wildlife Area</i>	3	2	4	2	7
<i>Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge</i>	0	0	0	5	3
<i>Prime Hook Wildlife Area</i>	0	0	1	2	2
<i>Redden State Forest</i>	18	26	17	26	25
<i>Taber State Forest</i>	5	2	3	3	1
<i>Tappahanna Wildlife Area</i>	4	4	8	4	3
<i>Ted Harvey Conservation Area</i>	1	5	3	5	7
<i>Woodland Beach Wildlife Area</i>	3	3	4	3	5
Total	98	131	131	171	178

Table 2. Five-year (2022–2026) Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) harvest distribution among DNREC – Division of Fish and Wildlife and Delaware Department of Agriculture – Forest Service owned public lands.

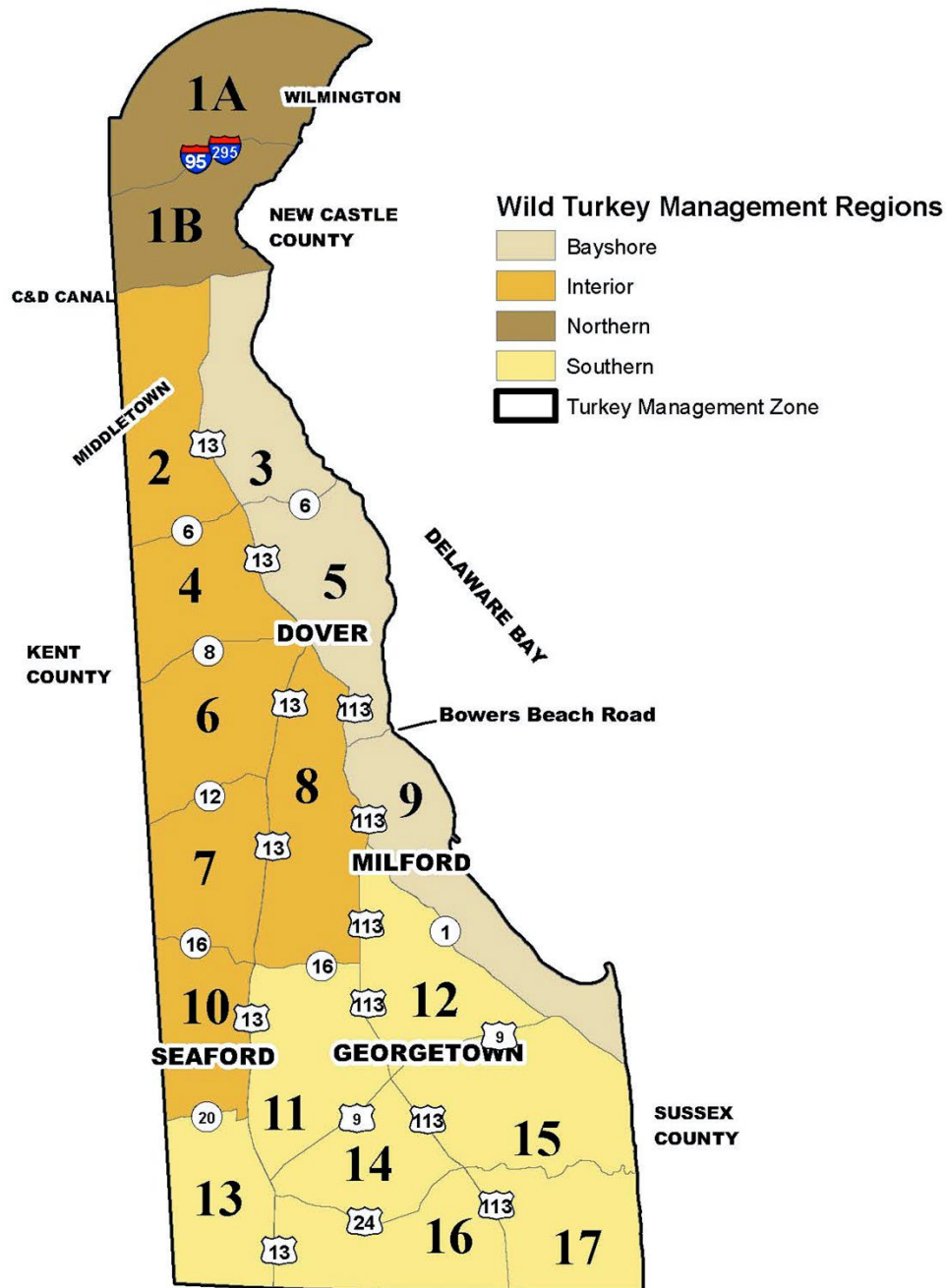


Figure 2. Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) management regions and associated Wildlife Management Zones in Delaware.

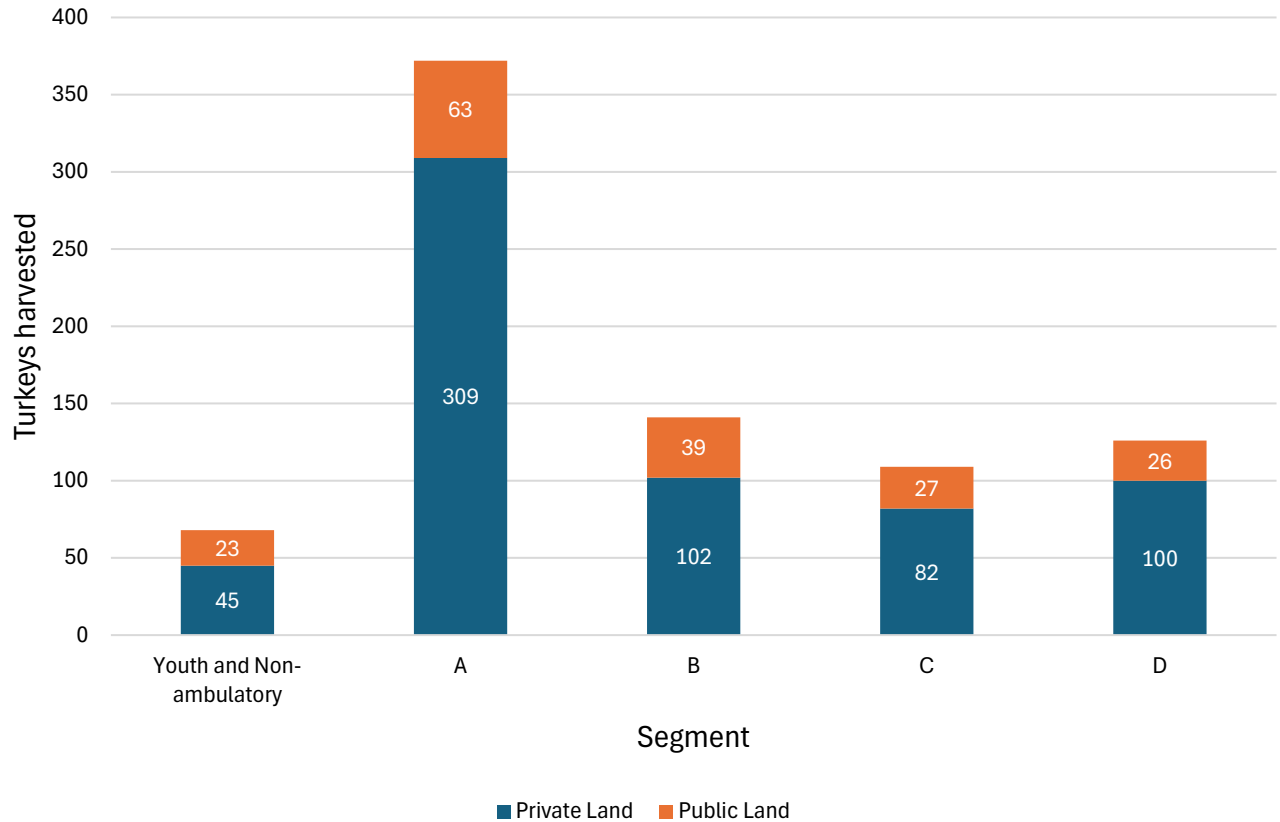


Figure 3. Spring 2026 Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) harvest by segment (regular season April 11th through May 10th, 2026) on public and private lands, including the youth and non-ambulatory hunt weekend (April 4th and 5th 2026).