



# A Report on the Inaugural Season of Mandatory Wild Turkey Harvest Reporting in Mississippi

*Prepared for the  
Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks*

June 19, 2019

## **Executive Summary**

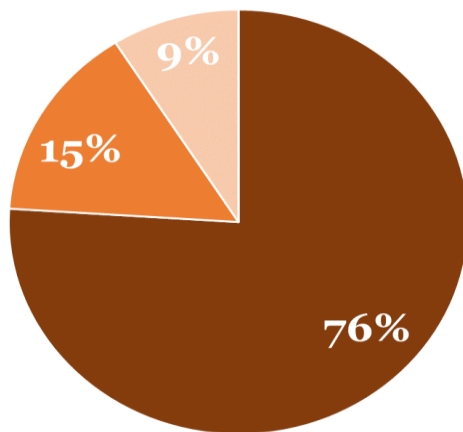
The 2019 spring turkey season marked a new beginning for wild turkey management in Mississippi. The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) instituted Game Check, a mandatory harvest reporting system designed to document gobbler harvests by all resident and nonresident turkey hunters. Hunters were required to report their harvests by 10 PM on the day which it occurred. Flexibility was a hallmark of Game Check; hunters were allowed to report harvests via a mobile phone application, website portal, or by calling a 1-800 hotline.

- ✦ Nearly 9,000 unique users reported almost 13,000 gobbler harvests.
- ✦ Most users chose to report via the mobile, smartphone app.
- ✦ Hunters reported harvests from 81 of Mississippi's 82 counties.
- ✦ Counties in north-central Mississippi had the highest density of gobbler harvests.
- ✦ 51% of the overall harvest occurred by the end of March.
- ✦ No major technical difficulties were reported by users.

### Individual Users and Harvest

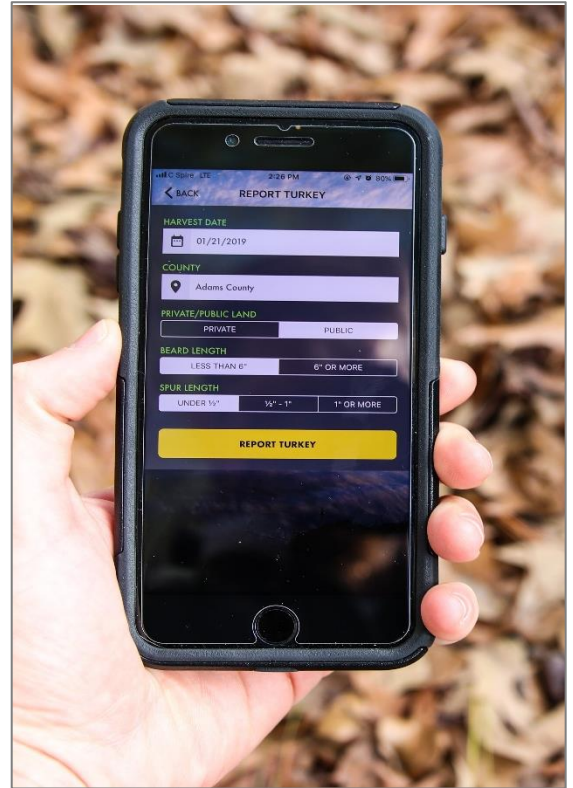
A total of 8,780 unique users reported 12,627 turkey harvests to Game Check during the 2019 spring turkey season. On average, hunters who reported were 39 years of age. Approximately 7% of reports were submitted on behalf of youth hunters under the age of 16. Nonresidents accounted for 9.5% of all reported turkey harvests.

The majority of reports were submitted via the mobile app (76%; Figures 1 and 2). Approximately 15% of reports were called in via the 1-800 hotline, whereas only 9% of reports were logged via the online website (Figure 2).



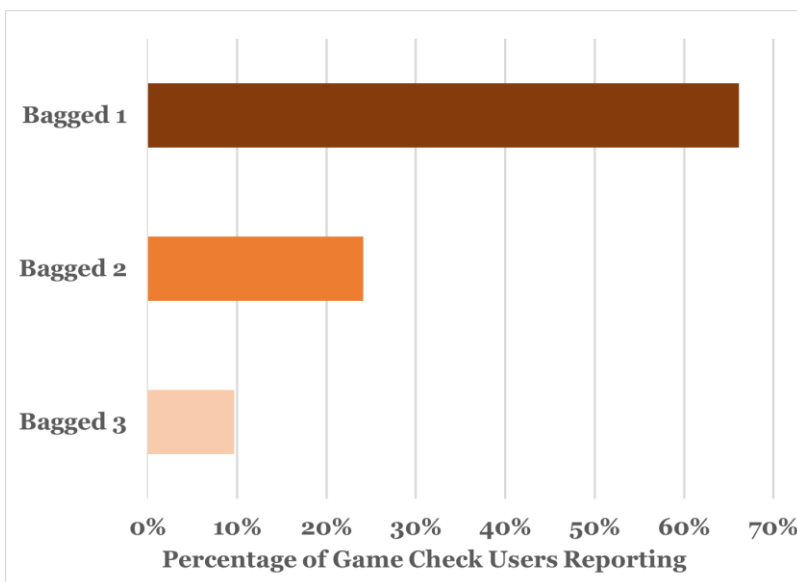
■ Smartphone App ■ Call Center ■ Website

**Figure 2.** Distribution frequency of reporting methods by Game Check users in Mississippi's 2019 spring turkey season.



**Figure 1.** The primary method used by Mississippi turkey hunters in Game Check's first year was the mobile app.

Most of the hunters who utilized the Game Check system only reported one bird. Approximately 9.7% of users attained Mississippi's seasonal bag limit of 3 gobblers (Figure 3).



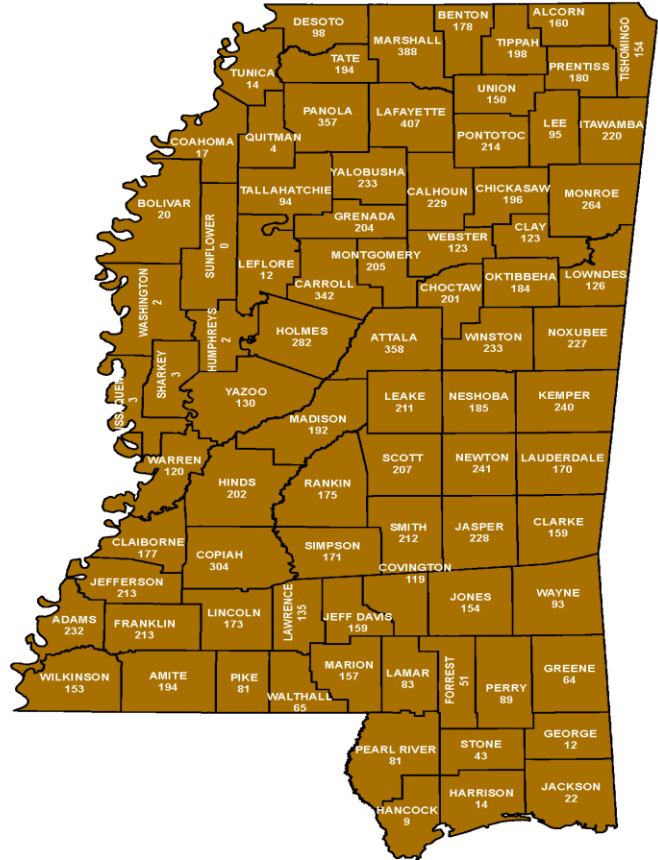
**Figure 3.** Breakdown of Game Check users (by percentage) who reported one, two, and three gobblers to the Game Check system in 2019.

**Geographic Distribution of Harvest**

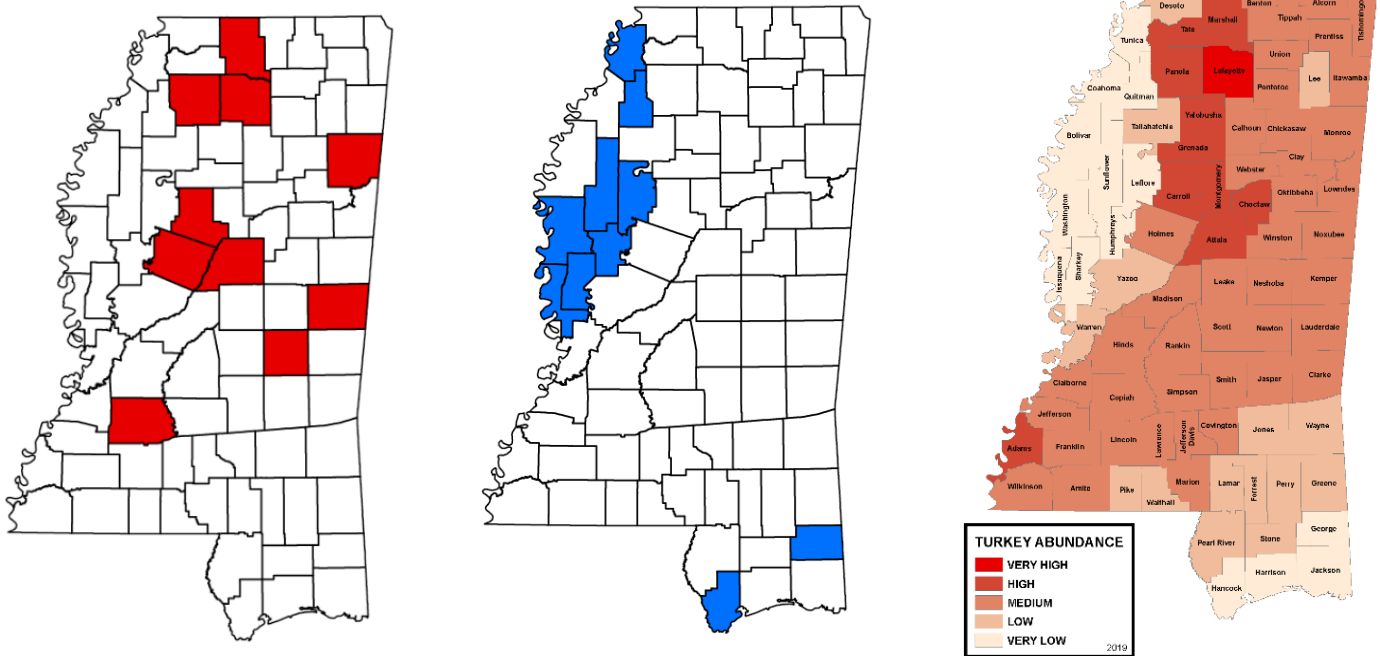
One of the most important functions of Game Check was to provide the MDWFP with county-level harvest numbers. Lafayette County was the top county for turkey harvests with a reported 407 gobblers taken. Attala, Carroll, Copiah, Marshall, and Panola counties all reported harvests in excess of 300 birds. Slightly over half of Mississippi counties reported more than 150 gobblers. Only Sunflower County failed to register any turkeys (Figure 4 and Appendix A).

The top and bottom 10 counties for reported harvest are shown in Figure 5. Harvest numbers were adjusted for land area within a county to obtain an assessment of relative turkey abundance across the state (Figure 5).

Approximately 12% of harvests came from public land.



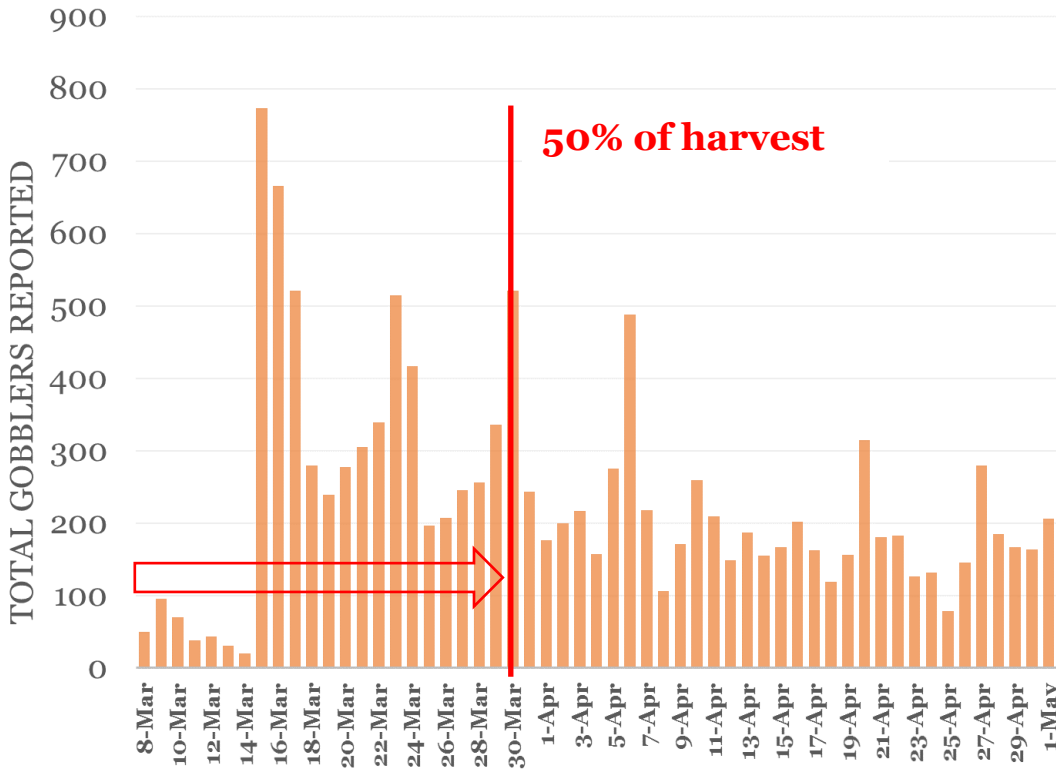
**Figure 4.** Total spring gobbler harvest numbers, by county, reported to the Game Check system in 2019.



**Figure 5.** Top 10 (red, left) and bottom 10 (blue, center) counties for reported gobbler harvest via Game Check in 2019. The map at the far right illustrates relative turkey abundance based on Game Check’s reported county harvest per square mile.

## Timing of Gobbler Harvest

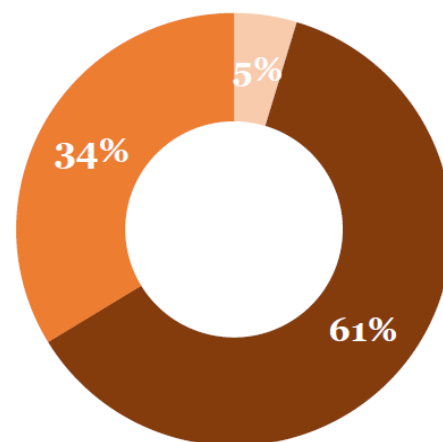
In addition to geographic distribution of harvests, Game Check data is also useful for evaluating the timing of harvest throughout Mississippi's spring season. The opening day of the regular season (March 15<sup>th</sup>) received more reported harvest than any other day (773 birds). Approximately 50% of the total harvest occurred by March 30<sup>th</sup> (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** Number of gobbler harvests reported, by date, throughout Mississippi's 2019 spring season.

## Gobbler Characteristics

The vast majority of gobblers reported to Game Check in 2019 were adult birds. Only 3% of all reported gobblers had less than a 6-inch beard. Similarly, only 5% of gobblers had less than one-half inch spurs. Most gobblers had between one-half to one-inch spurs. Slightly more than one-third of those reported had greater than one-inch spurs (Figure 7).



■ Less than one-half inch ■ One-half to one inch ■ Over one inch

**Figure 7.** Distribution of spur lengths for gobblers reported to Game Check in Mississippi during the 2019 spring season.

**APPENDIX A.** *Gobbler harvest totals reported by county to Game Check in Mississippi during the 2019 spring season.*

<b>County</b>	<b>Reported Harvest</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Reported Harvest</b>
Adams	232	Leflore	12
Alcorn	160	Lincoln	173
Amite	194	Lowndes	126
Attala	358	Madison	192
Benton	178	Marion	157
Bolivar	20	Marshall	388
Calhoun	229	Monroe	264
Carroll	342	Montgomery	205
Chickasaw	196	Neshoba	185
Choctaw	201	Newton	241
Claiborne	177	Noxubee	227
Clarke	159	Oktibbeha	184
Clay	123	Panola	357
Coahoma	17	Pearl River	81
Copiah	304	Perry	89
Covington	119	Pike	81
DeSoto	98	Pontotoc	214
Forrest	51	Prentiss	180
Franklin	213	Quitman	4
George	12	Rankin	175
Greene	64	Scott	207
Grenada	204	Sharkey	3
Hancock	9	Simpson	171
Harrison	14	Smith	212
Hinds	202	Stone	43
Holmes	282	Sunflower	0
Humphreys	2	Tallahatchie	94
Issaquena	3	Tate	194
Itawamba	220	Tippah	198
Jackson	22	Tishomingo	154
Jasper	228	Tunica	14
Jefferson	213	Union	150
Jeff Davis	159	Walthall	65
Jones	154	Warren	120
Kemper	240	Washington	2
Lafayette	407	Wayne	93
Lamar	83	Webster	123
Lauderdale	170	Wilkinson	153
Lawrence	135	Winston	233
Leake	211	Yalobusha	233
Lee	95	Yazoo	130