

## **2012 Missouri Wild Turkey Brood Survey Results**

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Each year, citizen volunteers and Missouri Department of Conservation staff record the number of hens and poults that they observe during June, July, and August. These observations are used to determine the success of the hatch, which is the driving force in determining wild turkey abundance. Based on the total number of hens and poults observed, a poult-to-hen ratio is calculated, which is simply the average number of poults observed per hen. This information serves as an index to wild turkey production at both the statewide and regional scales.

Research has shown that good wild turkey production tends to result from dry weather during nesting and brood-rearing, and conditions this year could certainly be described as such. With Missouri in the grips of an extreme drought, the state's turkey population experienced yet another good hatch this summer. The 2012 statewide poult-to-hen ratio of 1.7 is identical to last year's ratio, and is 42% and 21% higher than the previous 5 and 10-year averages, respectively. The 2012 ratio exceeded the previous 5-year average in all turkey productivity regions (see figure below), with most regions experiencing poult-to-hen ratios ranging from 1.5-1.7.

The highest production this year was observed in portions of Southeast Missouri, where the ratio exceeded two poults per hen. Especially notable improvements in 2012 occurred in the Northwest, Ozark Border, and West Prairie regions, where poult-to-hen ratios were at least 50% higher than the previous 5-year average. With the hatches of 2007-2010 failing to exceed 1.2, the hatches of 2011 and 2012 represent a considerable improvement in production, and should serve to bolster turkey numbers throughout much of the state.

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