

Delaware's 2019-20 Deer Harvest Sets Record High; Wild Turkey Harvest State's 4th Highest Total



White-tailed doe/US Fish and Wildlife Service photo

Harvests from two of Delaware's most popular hunting seasons – deer and wild turkey – reflect continued conservation management by the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control in making the state a successful destination for deer and turkey hunters. A record 16,969 deer harvested for the 2019/20 hunting season helps move management of the deer population to a level that provides quality hunting opportunities while also reducing deer conflicts with humans. The 643 wild turkeys harvested during the spring turkey season from April 11 to May 9 and during the April 4 youth/non-ambulatory disabled hunt produced the fourth-highest recorded harvest for the state.

“Deer and turkey hunting are among the most popular outdoor pursuits in our state, and Delaware hunters are benefiting from our management of these two prized game animals,” said DNREC Secretary Shawn Garvin. “The record deer harvest shows progress in managing Delaware's deer population by providing expanded and sustainable deer hunting opportunities toward lowering deer conflicts with farming and motorists.”

The 16,969 deer harvested during the 2019/20 season exceeded the previous record by 1,665 deer (10.9 percent) compared to 15,304 deer harvested during the 2017/18 hunting season, with this past season representing the seventh consecutive year

that more than 14,000 deer were harvested by hunters in Delaware. The 2019/20 deer harvest was highest in Sussex County with 8,996, followed by Kent County with 4,980 and New Castle County with 2,993.

Numerous other deer harvest records occurred during the 2019/20 hunting season, including:

- 9,423 does, representing 55.5 percent of the total harvest and exceeding the previous record of 8,328 from 2004/05, with harvesting more does than bucks necessary to properly manage the size and quality of the deer population
- 4,861 antlered adult bucks with antlers three inches or more in length, exceeding the previous record of 4,729 from 2016/17
- 2,495 deer harvested by crossbow, exceeding the previous record of 1,781 from 2017/18
- 11 of Delaware's 18 Wildlife Management Zones experienced record deer harvests, with zones 2, 4, 8, 13, 14 and 15 having substantial increases
- A record number of 2,221 deer were harvested on Sundays, representing 13.1 percent of the total statewide harvest.

The 2019/20 hunting season was the second consecutive year in which deer hunting occurred on all Sundays during the deer season on private lands and Division of Fish and Wildlife public wildlife areas, providing additional hunting opportunities and management of the deer population.



**Wild turkey
gobbler/National Wild
Turkey Federation photo**

The harvest of 643 wild turkeys for 2020 was 78 birds higher than last year's total. Only turkeys with beards – almost

always males – can be harvested in Delaware. Of significance for this year's wild turkey hunting season was DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife's successful implementation of turkey harvest self-check stations established throughout the state in lieu of the traditional in-person check stations due to COVID-19 precautions.

Wild turkeys were harvested from 17 of the state's 18 wildlife management zones, with 537 turkeys harvested on privately-owned lands and 106 harvested from 20 different public lands to match the previous record number of birds harvested from public lands in 2017. Weekly harvest totals were 270 birds the first week, 133 the second week, 94 the third week, and 116 the fourth week. This year's total harvest also included 30 birds harvested by youth/non-ambulatory disabled hunters during the special youth/non-ambulatory disabled turkey hunt on April 4, our highest special turkey hunt harvest to date.

Highlights of the 2020 turkey hunting season included the harvest of 16 "non-typical" turkeys, gobblers with more than one beard. Of these birds, 12 had two beards, three had three beards, and one had four beards.

For more information on hunting deer or turkey in Delaware, review Delaware's [Hunting and Trapping Guide](#) or call the DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife's Wildlife Section at 302-739-9912.

About DNREC

The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control protects and manages the state's natural resources, protects public health, provides outdoor recreational opportunities, and educates Delawareans about the environment. The Division of Fish and Wildlife conserves and manages Delaware's fish and wildlife and their habitats, and provides fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing and boating access on nearly 65,000 acres of public land. For more information, visit the [website](#) and connect with @DNREC on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

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