

*Non-Resident Hunter Effort & Game Harvest Estimates  
for the 2008-2009 Mississippi Hunting Season*

Prepared for the

**DIVISION OF WILDLIFE  
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & PARKS  
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By

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## INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of the Mississippi non-resident hunter survey is to establish annual statewide and district estimates of hunter effort and harvest for each game species. These estimates provide trend data which allows Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (MDWFP) Wildlife Division staff to monitor changes in harvest and effort through time. The secondary purpose is to measure non-resident hunters' participation patterns, attitudes towards hunting and wildlife, and opinions towards agency programs and wildlife management tools. When interpreting this data, it is important to consider current wildlife management programs, habitat changes and availability, land use practices, species abundance, and the social and economic climate of the state.

Since 1994, a self-administered mail survey has been used to obtain total harvest, average daily kill, average seasonal harvest, and total man-days hunted for each game species by non-residents. The estimates obtained for each of these categories are precise because of the large sample size used, however, because mail surveys contain sampling, response, and nonresponse biases the accuracy of the estimates are always of concern to researchers (Filion 1980). Nevertheless, similar methodologies used to conduct the mail survey over time help to hold constant these biases and the estimates derived from the survey should provide adequate estimates for monitoring trends in hunter harvest and effort.

The primary objective of the mail survey for the 2008-09 hunting season was to obtain a reliable set of statewide non-resident effort and harvest estimates for each game species in Mississippi. The secondary objective was to provide district estimates. The third objective was to obtain demographic information from non-respondents. No effort was made to interpret the data presented here. The purpose of this publication is to compile existing information for future reference and to help guide future management decisions.

## METHODS

The sampling frame for the survey consisted of holders of any non-resident hunting license (Types 140, 141, 133, 134, and 144) purchased during the 2008-2009 license year. A random sample of 2,000 license holders was selected to participate in this study from the 37,143 non-resident licenses processed from July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009.

The survey process followed the Total Design Method (TDM) prescribed by Dillman (1978). This methodology pays particular attention to detail, persistence, and takes a personal approach to obtaining a response. This is accomplished, in part, by using personalized letters and envelopes processed with laser printers to simulate a first class mailing to differentiate it from “junk mail”. The TDM uses a series of four mail-outs to help increase response rate: 1) An introductory letter, questionnaire (APPENDIX A), and postage-paid business reply envelope (i.e., a complete packet) were sent; 2) Ten days after the second mailing a post card that was sent to all hunters in the survey. The purpose of the post card was to remind hunters about the survey and to thank those whom had already returned a completed questionnaire. A phone number was provided on the post card in case the recipient had not received or misplaced their questionnaire, so they could request another be sent; 3) Twenty-one days after the postcard mailing, a second complete packet was sent to all hunters who had not yet responded, and 4) Twenty-eight days after the second complete packet was sent, a third complete mailing was sent to all hunters who had not yet responded. Actual correspondence can be found in APPENDIX B. All surveys were numbered using a bar coding system printed on clear adhesive labels. When surveys were returned to Mississippi State University, the bar codes were scanned into a computer file and assigned with a “returned” status; this prevented respondents from receiving another mailing.

Data entry involved entering data from the surveys into the computer using a Microsoft Access data entry screen that had been previously developed. First, non-numeric responses in the survey were numerically coded for preparation for data entry. After all responses were converted into a numeric framework, responses from the surveys were data entered. The responses to the

last question of the survey, which was open-ended, were typed into an MS Access file so comments could be queried by agency staff.

Effort and harvest estimates and their standard errors for each species were calculated for total kill, average seasonal kill per hunter, proportion of licensed hunters, total licensed hunters, proportion of hunters who were successful, total man-days spent hunting, average days field per hunter, and the average daily kill. These estimates were calculated both on a statewide and district basis. Calculations were based on statistical programs originally developed by Steffen (1981) for mainframe computing, modified as necessary for desktop computing using SAS software.

## **RESULTS**

A total of 2,000 questionnaires were mailed to nonresident hunters. There were a total of 1,010 useable questionnaires returned by hunters. Useable questionnaires included those who indicated they hunted at least one species one or more days during the 2008-09 season (n=979), and those who indicated they “DID NOT HUNT” on their returned survey (n=31). Since harvest estimates are extrapolated to all hunter license holders, those who indicated they did not hunt were included in the database as hunting zero days and harvesting zero animals for each species. Questionnaires were checked for the completeness of responses where it was found that seven individuals indicated their refusal to participate and two individuals were reported as being deceased. When non-deliverables (n=142) were excluded from consideration, an effective response rate of 54.4 % was obtained.

Statewide expansions were calculated based on the 37,143 non-resident hunting licenses sold and accounted for by June 30, 2009. There were 37,143 individuals licensed to hunt small game and 26,912 of these license holders also were eligible to pursue big game (deer and turkey) in Mississippi during the 2008-2009 hunting season.

The expanded statewide summaries of the non-resident total harvest, average daily kill, average seasonal harvest, percent of successful hunters, total man-days, average days hunted in

the season, total number of hunters, and percent of total licenses that hunted are provided in Table 1 for all game species included in the survey. Table 2 provides the expanded statewide estimates of total harvest and the variability of these (standard error and 95 percent confidence limits) for all game species surveyed.

Tables 3-8 summarize non-resident small game hunting on a statewide and district basis. Waterfowl hunting is summarized in Tables 9-13. Tables 14-17 summarize fox (red and gray), bobcat and coyote hunting. Statewide and district summaries of deer (buck and doe data from archery, primitive weapon, and gun seasons) and turkey hunting (spring and fall) are provided in Tables 18-26. Table 27 summarizes district and statewide estimates for feral hog. Tables 28-32 summarize non-resident demographic characteristics.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This compilation would not have been possible without the efforts and cooperation of many people. Many present and former MDWFP personnel from all divisions provided direct or indirect assistance. MDWFP personnel deserving special recognition are: Ben Sessums and the print shop crew for producing survey instruments, Curtis Thornhill and his staff for providing license information, and Randy Spencer & Dave Godwin for serving as liaisons between MDWFP and Mississippi State University.

Thanks also go to Ryan Smith, Charlie Shearer, and Candice Bogan of the Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory in the Forest & Wildlife Research Center at Mississippi State University for data processing and construction of data tables.

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Filion, F. L. 1980 Humans surveys in wildlife management. Pages 441-453 in Schemitz, editor. Wildlife Techniques Manual. 4th ed. Rev. The Wildl. Soc., Washington, D.C. 686 pp.

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TABLE 1. EXPANDED STATEWIDE COVERAGE OF THE 2008-09 MISSISSIPPI NONRESIDENT MAIL SURVEY OF GAME HARVEST BASED ON 37,143 SMALL GAME LICENSE HOLDERS AND 26,912 BIG GAME LICENSE HOLDERS.

SPECIES	TOTAL HARVEST	AVERAGE DAILY KILL	AVERAGE SEASONAL HARVEST	PERCENT SUCCESSFUL HUNTERS	TOTAL MAN-DAYS	AVERAGE SEASONAL DAYS HUNTING	TOTAL HUNTERS	PERCENT OF TOTAL LICENCES (A)
DOVE	58,902	6.14	17.09	93.5	9,360	2.77	3,447	9.3
QUAIL	5,078	2.17	9.79	71.4	2,335	4.50	519	1.4
WOODCOCK	519	0.30	2.33	66.7	1,705	7.67	222	0.6
RABBIT	7,970	1.02	4.67	76.1	7,755	4.64	1,705	4.6
SQUIRREL	46,447	3.00	16.49	93.4	15,377	5.59	2,817	7.6
RACCOON	1,297	0.78	5.00	57.1	1,668	6.43	259	0.7
<b>TOTAL DUCK</b>	151,686	2.71	18.49	92.8	41,962	6.82	6,153	16.6
MALLARD	60,126	1.14	7.80	83.7				
WOOD DUCK	16,570	0.29	1.96	42.2				
OTHER DUCKS	74,990	1.28	8.73	77.7				
GEESE	5,968	0.38	3.00	93.1	8,378	7.79	1,075	2.9
RED FOX	0		0.00	0.0	0	0.00	0	0.0
GRAY FOX	0		0.00	0.0	0	0.00	0	0.0
BOBCAT	259	0.06	1.00	57.1	1,300	7.00	259	0.7
COYOTE	964	0.09	1.30	70.0	4,335	9.67	741	2.0
<b>TOTAL DEER</b>	29,898	0.07	1.43	67.3	361,098	18.00	20,903	77.7
BUCK	14,408	0.04	0.69	45.9				
DOE	15,490	0.04	0.74	46.1				
<b>ARCHERY DEER</b>	3,583	0.05	0.67	42.7	56,260	11.46	5,338	19.8
BUCK	1,082	0.02	0.20	16.8				
DOE	2,501	0.04	0.47	34.3				
<b>PRIMITIVE DEER</b>	4,740	0.06	0.68	51.9	57,580	9.24	6,980	25.9
BUCK	1,680	0.02	0.24	22.5				
DOE	3,061	0.04	0.44	35.3				
<b>GUN DEER</b>	21,574	0.08	1.17	65.9	236,734	13.56	18,402	68.4
BUCK	11,646	0.04	0.63	46.2				
DOE	9,929	0.04	0.54	38.5				
<b>TOTAL TURKEY</b>	2,613	0.08	0.61	41.2	29,550	7.21	4,255	15.8
SPRING 2008	2,575	0.08	0.62	41.1	20,799	7.10	4,181	15.5
FALL 2009	37	0.00	0.17	16.7	1,159	6.20	224	0.8
HOG	3,707	0.09	2.78	66.7	9,925	12.00	1,334	3.6

(A) DEER AND TURKEY PERCENTAGES BASED ON BIG GAME LICENSE HOLDERS; ALL OTHERS BASED ON SMALL GAME LICENSE HOLDERS.

TABLE 2. EXPANDED STATEWIDE ESTIMATES OF TOTAL HARVEST (AND VARIABILITY OF THE ESTIMATES) FOR NONRESIDENTS FOR ALL GAME SPECIES IN MISSISSIPPI DURING THE 2008-09 HUNTING SEASON.

SPECIES	TOTAL HARVEST	STANDARD ERROR		95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL	
		SE	AS % OF TOTAL (A)	LOWER LIMIT	UPPER LIMIT
DOVE	58,902	9,140	15.5	40,622	77,183
QUAIL	5,078	1,869	36.8	1,340	8,817
WOODCOCK	519	287	55.3	-55	1,093
RABBIT	7,970	1,763	22.1	4,443	11,497
SQUIRREL	46,447	8,642	18.6	29,162	63,732
RACCOON	1,297	743	57.3	-189	2,784
<b>TOTAL DUCKS</b>	151,686	16,208	10.7	119,269	184,102
MALLARD	60,126	6,682	11.1	46,761	73,490
WOOD DUCK	16,570	2,630	15.9	11,309	21,830
OTHER DUCKS	74,990	9,323	12.4	56,344	93,637
GEESE	5,968	1,374	23.0	3,219	8,717
RED FOX	0	0	0.0	0	0
GRAY FOX	0	0	0.0	0	0
BOBCAT	259	143	55.3	-27	546
COYOTE	964	290	30.1	383	1,545
<b>TOTAL DEER</b>	29,898	1,456	4.9	26,986	32,810
BUCK	14,408	851	5.9	12,705	16,110
DOE	15,490	974	6.3	13,542	17,438
<b>ARCHERY DEER</b>	3,583	500	14.0	2,583	4,583
BUCK	1,082	236	21.8	611	1,554
DOE	2,501	386	15.4	1,729	3,273
<b>PRIMITIVE DEER</b>	4,740	516	10.9	3,709	5,772
BUCK	1,680	259	15.4	1,161	2,198
DOE	3,061	407	13.3	2,247	3,875
<b>GUN DEER</b>	21,574	1,120	5.2	19,335	23,814
BUCK	11,646	725	6.2	10,195	13,096
DOE	9,929	720	7.3	8,488	11,369
<b>TOTAL TURKEY</b>	2,613	404	15.5	1,804	3,422
SPRING 2008	2,575	403	15.6	1,770	3,381
FALL 2009	37	37	100.0	-37	112
HOG	3,707	1,413	38.1	880	6,533

(A) %=100(SE/TOTAL HARVEST)



















































## Summary of Responses to Non-resident Demographic Questions for 2008-09

Table 28. Percent of respondents by how they rated hunting compared to their other outdoor recreation activities (such as fishing, camping, golfing, etc.) (Q2).

Response	Frequency	Percent
Most important outdoor activity	590	66.7
Second most important outdoor activity	208	23.5
Third most important outdoor activity	59	6.7
None of the above	27	3.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>884</b>	<b>100.00</b>

n missing = 95

Table 29. Percent of respondents by their age category (Q3)

Age Category	Frequency	Percent
18-20	13	1.4
21-25	38	4.1
26-30	64	6.9
31-35	77	8.3
36-40	87	9.4
41-45	103	11.1
46-50	130	14.0
51-55	114	12.3
56-60	102	11.0
61-65	106	11.4
>65	94	10.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>928</b>	<b>100.0</b>

n missing = 51

Mean age of hunter = 45.8

Table 30. Percent of respondents by their gender category (Q4)

Gender Category	Frequency	Percent
MALE	903	97.2
FEMALE	26	2.8
TOTAL	929	100.0

n missing = 50

Table 31. Percent of respondents by their approximate annual household income category before taxes (Q7)

Income Category	Frequency	Percent
Under 10,000	16	1.9
10,000-19,000	16	1.9
20,000-29,000	31	3.6
30,000-39,000	40	4.7
40,000-49,000	62	7.2
50,000-59,000	87	10.1
60,000-69,000	74	8.6
70,000-79,000	74	8.6
80,000-89,000	59	6.9
90,000-99,000	56	6.5
100,000 and above	346	40.2
TOTAL	1662	100.0

n missing = 118

Table 32. Percent of respondents by their highest completed level of education (Q8)

Education Category	Frequency	Percent
Elementary	11	1.2
High School	303	32.6
College	466	50.2
Graduate School	148	16.0
TOTAL	928	100.0

n missing = 51

Table 33. Percent of respondents by their race (Q9)

Race Category	Frequency	Percent
WHITE OR ANGLO	891	96.2
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	22	2.4
LATINO OR HISPANIC	1	0.1
NATIVE AMERICAN OR ALASKAN NATIVE	5	0.5
ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	1	0.1
OTHER	6	0.7
TOTAL	926	100.0

n missing = 53

## Appendix A

Questionnaire: 2008-09 Survey of Mississippi Non-Resident Hunters









## Appendix B

Survey correspondence with hunters for the 2008-09 Survey of Mississippi Non-Resident Hunters

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Mississippi State  
UNIVERSITY

Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory  
Forest & Wildlife Research Center  
Box 9690  
Mississippi State, MS 39762-9690

July 1, 2009

John Doe  
123 Buck Drive  
Fawn, MS 30759

Dear John:

I am writing to ask for your help in a study of Mississippi hunters. Each year I conduct the enclosed annual hunter harvest and attitude survey for the Wildlife Bureau of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (MDWFP). We conduct this study to determine the characteristics of hunters, the amount of game harvested in Mississippi during the previous hunting season, and hunters attitudes toward important wildlife issues.

The enclosed survey is designed to tell us about your game harvest in the 2008-2009 (September 1, 2008 – May 3, 2009) Mississippi hunting season, your opinions on wildlife management in Mississippi, and your willingness-to-pay for hunting licenses. To give you an idea of how your information will be used, on the back of this letter we have provided results on hunter effort and harvest in Mississippi from the information licensed hunters provided in last year's survey.

You are one of a small number of license holders from the 2008-09 hunting season selected to participate in this study. It is important that you and no one else complete the questionnaire. Your response is vital to insuring the information we collect is representative of all Mississippi hunters, and we want to hear from you whether you hunt often or just occasionally. All responses will be strictly confidential, and you will not be identified with your answers. Your answers will be grouped with other respondents in a non-identifiable manner. The survey has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so we can remove your name from the mailing list once we receive it.

After you complete the questionnaire, please return it to Mississippi State University in the postage-paid, business reply envelope as soon as possible. For additional information regarding human participation in research, please feel free to contact the MSU Regulatory Compliance Office at (662) 325-3994. If you should have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me at Mississippi State University at (662) 325-4153.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. We hope you are enjoying your summer thus far and that your 2009-10 hunting season will be a safe and successful one.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin M. Hunt".

Dr. Kevin M. Hunt  
Associate Professor & Director  
Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory

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Mississippi State  
UNIVERSITY

Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory  
Forest & Wildlife Research Center  
Box 9690  
Mississippi State, MS 39762-9690

July 22, 2009

John Doe  
123 Buck Drive  
Fawn, MS 30759

Dear John:

About three weeks ago, we sent you a survey of Mississippi hunters. As of today, we have not yet received your completed questionnaire. If you have recently returned your survey, please accept our thanks. The comments of people who have already returned their questionnaires included a wide variety of answers. However, the success and accuracy of our study depends on you and the others who have not yet responded. We ask for your help in making sure our results are representative of all hunters in Mississippi.

In case you misplaced your survey, we've enclosed another. The survey is designed to tell us about your general hunting activity and game harvest during the 2008-2009 hunting season, and your opinions on various wildlife management issues currently being considered by MDWFP. Study results will help MDWFP in wildlife management plans. Although the survey is completely voluntary, we hope that you will take the 15-30 minutes necessary to provide your input and be a part of the wildlife management process. If you did not hunt in the 2008-2009 hunting season, please write **DID NOT HUNT** on the front of the questionnaire and mail it back to us so we can take your name off the mailing list. If you hunted in 2008-09, please complete the harvest questions. To give you an idea of how your harvest information will be used, we have included on the back side of this letter the results on hunter harvest in Mississippi from the information licensed hunters provided in last year's survey.

All responses will be strictly confidential, and you will not be identified with your answers. Your answers will be grouped with other respondents in a non-identifiable manner. The survey has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so we can remove your name from the mailing list once it is received. After you complete the questionnaire, please return it to Mississippi State University in the postage-paid, business reply envelope as soon as possible. If you should have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me at Mississippi State University at (662) 325-4153. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and good luck during the upcoming hunting season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin M. Hunt".

Dr. Kevin M. Hunt  
Associate Professor & Director  
Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory

10000



Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory  
Forest & Wildlife Research Center  
Box 9690  
Mississippi State, MS 39762-9690

August 12, 2009

John Doe  
123 Buck Drive  
Fawn, MS 30759

Dear John:

During the last two months, I have sent you several mailings involving a survey on Mississippi hunters. As of today, I have not yet received your completed questionnaire. If you have recently returned your survey, please accept my thanks.

The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks value your perspective of wildlife management and have funded this study to get your opinion on wildlife management issues currently facing the agency. The success and accuracy of our study depends on you and the others who have not yet responded. If for some reason you prefer not to respond, please let me know by returning the blank questionnaire in the enclosed business reply envelope. Or, if you did not hunt in the 2008-2009 hunting season, please write **DID NOT HUNT** on the front of the questionnaire and mail it back to us so we can take your name off the mailing list. To give you an idea of how your harvest information will be used, we have included on the back side of this letter the results on hunter harvest in Mississippi from the information licensed hunters provided in last year's survey.

If you choose to respond, the survey should take you no longer than 15-30 minutes to complete. Your responses will be strictly confidential, and you will not be identified with your answers. The survey has an identification number for mailing purposes only. Your answers will be grouped with other respondents in a non-identifiable manner, and there is no way for anyone outside of my laboratory to determine your identity. I will destroy the name and address list at the end of the study.

After you complete the questionnaire, please return it to Mississippi State University in the postage-paid, business reply envelope as soon as possible. If you did not hunt, please write that on the front cover and send it back to me so I can take your name off of the list. If you should have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me at Mississippi State University at (662) 325-4153. For additional information regarding human participation in research, please feel free to contact the MSU Regulatory Compliance Office at (662) 325-3994. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and good luck during the upcoming hunting season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin M. Hunt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "K".

Dr. Kevin M. Hunt  
Associate Professor & Director  
Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory