

# Maine Spring Wild Turkey Hunter's Guide



The Maine Spring Wild Turkey Hunter's Guide was developed by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife in cooperation with the Maine Chapters of the National Wild Turkey Federation. Its goal is to:

- Increase your awareness of safe, ethical, and responsible behavior necessary when turkey hunting.
- Expand your knowledge of the Wild Turkey.
- Improve your hunting skills.
- Answer any questions you might have.

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## Wild Turkey Management Goals and Objectives

Since 1968, the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has used strategic planning to establish population objectives for many of the species it manages, including Wild Turkey. The Department has refined and expanded the process over the years, and public involvement is an integral component.

In 1999, the Department convened a public working group to develop goals and objectives that would guide Wild Turkey management for the period 2000-2015. Members of the working group came from many geographic areas of the state and represented diverse groups and interests, such as sportsmen, landowners, environmentalists, etc. They developed the following goal and 5 objectives for Wild Turkeys in Maine. The goal and objectives have been endorsed by the Department and its Fish and Wildlife Advisory Council and are the Department's "marching orders" through 2015.

**Goal:** Increase the size and distribution of the Wild Turkey population within all suitable habitats in Maine.

**Objective 1:** By 2010, increase the size and distribution of the Wild Turkey population within all suitable habitats in Maine via trap and transfer activities and habitat improvements.

**Objective 2:** By 2010, provide unlimited spring hunting opportunity (everyone who applies for a permit receives a permit) as long as the Wild Turkey population can support it, and 2001 hunt quality is maintained. (The working group defined quality hunting as hearing, seeing, working, and hopefully harvesting a turkey without interference from others.)

**Objective 3:** By 2002, develop a component to the Department's Nuisance Wildlife Policy that addresses Wild Turkeys.

**Objective 4:** By 2003, implement a limited fall hunting season in areas where the Wild Turkey population can support it, and without adversely affecting Objective 2.

**Objective 5:** Develop a cooperative habitat improvement program between landowners, the Maine Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Department.

### **Catch Gobbler' Fever**

**Nothing beats the thrill of spring turkey hunting with family and friends.**

**Remember to respect the rights of others, identify your target, and insist on a clean shot.**

**To learn more, attend a Wild Turkey hunting seminar sponsored by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and The Maine Chapters of the National Wild Turkey Federation.**

### **Important!**

**Possessing, raising, or releasing Wild Turkeys or wild hybrids will negatively impact the future success of this program, and is prohibited by law. Birds from these strains do not survive or reproduce well in the wild, and they introduce inferior breeding stock, and potentially disease, into natural populations. Illegal releases of pen-raised turkeys into the wild will jeopardize the years of hard work and money invested by the sportsmen and women of Maine, the National Wild Turkey Federation, and MDIFW to make Wild Turkey restoration in Maine a reality.**

### **Turkey Hunting Survey**

Information provided by hunters is an important part of the Department's turkey management program. A sample of turkey permit holders, including those who did not hunt or were unsuccessful, will be asked to complete a survey provided by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife online or by mail. **Those who submit the survey online will be automatically entered in a drawing for a National Wild Turkey Federation membership and a framed wildlife print.**

### **Landowner Permission**

The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife strongly recommends that hunters ask permission of the landowner before going onto land to hunt or scout. Since the hunt will be conducted during the spring (a non-traditional hunting period) and in the most densely populated counties of Maine, it is very important to seek consent from the landowner. The hunter who does this will find that landowners who posted their property during the fall are often willing to allow spring turkey hunting. Usually, the landowner only wants to know who you are and when you are going to be on his/her land. If you fail to gain permission on a

parcel, respect the landowner's rights and seek hunting privileges elsewhere. The success of this and future hunts depends on you.

## Turkey Hunting Safety

Spring Wild Turkey hunting is a specialized sport requiring skill and plenty of patience. The Wild Turkey's keen eyesight, sharp hearing, and extreme wariness make it one of the most elusive of all game species.

**Wild Turkey hunting is potentially dangerous given its secretive, camouflaged nature and the inexperience of newcomers to the sport.** Learning about the behavior of this bird is equally as important as learning the basic techniques to safely hunt it.

To prepare for turkey hunting, these important safety rules should be observed:

1. **Never wear the colors red, white, or blue.** These are gobbler head colors and are used by hunters to differentiate between a gobbler and a hen. Avoid any article of clothing with these colors whether it be a pair of socks or a handkerchief. Failure to follow this rule has resulted in hunting accidents in other jurisdictions.
2. **Always select a calling position that provides a background at least as wide as your shoulders.** Shielding your back, from your head to your waist, will help prevent accidents and will decrease the chances of a Wild Turkey detecting any hunter movement.
3. **Always select a calling position that provides at least 36 meters (40 yards) of vision in a 180 degree field of view.** Turkeys and other hunters should be visible from a distance. Do not use brush or conceal yourself. Do not limit your vision.
4. **Never make sudden movements when calling** even when wearing camouflage. This alerts a Wild Turkey to your presence, and another hunter may mistake you for a moving bird.
5. **Always consider that another hunter may make sounds you hear.** Be one hundred percent sure of the identity of your target before you even point your gun at it!
6. **Hunt defensively.** Be alert for other hunters. If you see another hunter, make your presence known by yelling in a loud voice.
7. **Be absolutely sure you have a safe backstop before you pull the trigger.** Be certain your target is a bearded bird. The importance of safety cannot be overstated. There isn't a Wild Turkey in North America worth an accidental injury to another person.
8. **Never try to stalk a wild turkey.** It is not only very difficult to stalk one of these wary birds, but it is also extremely dangerous. Stalking a calling turkey is a major cause of accidents, as it may lead you to another hunter. Calling the bird to your position is the safest and most effective way to bag a gobbler.
9. **Never use a gobble (male call) to call in birds.** You run a high risk of attracting another hunter. Hen calls are safer and more effective.
10. **If you are successful in bagging a wild turkey, special care should be taken while carrying it out of the woods.** The safest method is to totally encase the bird in a long, zippered carry-bag (not red, white, or blue) or hunter orange vest for transport to eliminate the possibility of drawing fire from an indiscriminate hunter.

## Turkey Hunting Tips

- Scouting is the single most important part of turkey hunting. Scout several different areas to lessen your chances of conflict with other hunters.
- Practice your turkey calling diligently.
- Practice shooting your bow and know your effective killing range.
- Plan on hunting weekdays if possible, rather than Saturdays. Hunting pressure is lighter during the week, reducing the potential for inadvertent conflicts with other hunters.

- Be patient, there is plenty of time. Birds are active throughout the month of May.
- If bowhunting, use a string tracker to aid in retrieving wounded birds.
- Be patient when calling, as birds sometimes come in silently. This is especially true in areas that experience heavy hunting pressure.
- Do not walk in on another hunter who is "working" a bird. Repeated gobbling is often a sign of a hunter working a bird. Attempting to stalk the "gobbler" is not only dangerous, but it is also interfering with the caller, possibly spoiling his/her chance of success.
- Don't wear any clothing (including undergarments) containing the colors red, white, or blue. These are the same colors as a gobbler's head and may draw fire from a careless hunter. Many turkey hunting accidents involve "mistaken for game" violations.

### **Someone's Stealing Maine's Wildlife**

**The illegal killing of a Wild Turkey is a Class E crime with a fine of not less than \$1,000 per bird!**

**WE PAY CASH**



**For information on poachers and private property abuse.**

**To report a violation call  
1-800-ALERT US  
1-800-253-7887**

**US Cellular and Maine  
Wireless dial #GW  
Unicel dial \*GW**

### **Hunter Ethics**

Ethics are standards of behavior that are considered to be morally right, even without the benefit of legal sanction.

Ethical behavior varies somewhat from place to place, depending on local traditions and practices. However, an overall standard of conduct must be established and observed by the hunting fraternity. While hunting is considered a respectable activity in Maine, it is frowned upon in many areas by an increasing number of people. The primary reason for this disapproval is the manner in which some irresponsible hunters conduct themselves in the field.

Instead of formulating a specific list of unacceptable behavior for the hunter, it may be of more value to discuss some desirable attitudes and criteria, which should be used by the ethical sportsman in determining behavior.

A hunter's conduct is determined by his or her:

- Philosophy on harvesting game. When you go hunting, what is your objective? Is it to get your limit as fast as possible? The ethical sportsman will look at hunting as an overall outdoor experience. There is pleasure to be gained without even firing a shot!
- Preparation. The ethical hunter is always prepared before venturing afield. From selecting the right firearm and knowing how to use it, to being ready for an emergency situation, the sportsman is ready for the expected...and the unexpected.
- Commitment to the sport of hunting above any personal accomplishments. The ethical hunter always puts the survival of the sport first. Whatever is best for the image of the sport must take priority, even if it means passing up a trophy shot or not taking the limit when you know the population is down. Remember, your son or daughter, hunting companions, landowners and even strangers, is always watching you. Your behavior will reflect back on you...and on your sport.
- Use of traditional skills and methods of fair chase. The sportsman will want to match wits with the game hunted. Challenge yourself. Selfish and unethical actions degrade the hunter and the sport.
- Regard for the feelings of others. Always consider other people, especially landowners and non-hunters. Hunt safely. Ensure that your conduct is not offensive. Be prepared to justify your actions. Many people don't appreciate a sign blown full of holes, a messy campsite, or a dead animal on display on your vehicle or at your home or camp.
- Willingness to obey the unwritten laws. There are a lot of situations in hunting that are technically legal, but shouldn't be done anyway, for both ethical and safety reasons. It's not illegal to stalk a calling turkey, or to shoot a turkey that has responded to another hunter's calling. It's not illegal, but it's not right, and it can be dangerous.
- Attitude toward wildlife. The ethical hunter must respect the game being hunted, as well as other wildlife. Part of this respect includes not harvesting more than the limit, not harvesting animals not wanted for a specific purpose, and having the proper size firearm and skill to ensure a clean, one shot kill.
- Respect for the law. The laws are there to protect people and to protect wildlife. Even if you don't agree with all of them, the ethical hunter obeys all the laws all the time, and he/she reports those who don't. Remember, it's your resource.

### **National Wild Turkey Federation**

#### **A Turkey Hunter's Code of Conduct as a Responsible Turkey Hunter; I will**

- 1. Not let peer pressure or the excitement of the hunt cloud my judgment;**
- 2. Learn and practice safe hunting techniques;**
- 3. Hunt the wild turkey fairly;**
- 4. Know the capabilities and limitations of my gun or bow and use it safely;**
- 5. Obey and support all wildlife laws and report all violations;**
- 6. Respect the land and the landowner and always obtain permission before hunting;**
- 7. Avoid knowingly interfering with another hunter and respect the right of others to lawfully share the out-of-doors;**
- 8. Value the hunting experience and appreciate the beauty of the wild turkey;**
- 9. Positively identify my target as a legal bird and insist on a good shot;**
- 10. Share responsible turkey hunting with others and work for wild turkey conservation.**

## **A Brief History of Maine's Wild Turkey Restoration**

Historically in Maine, Wild Turkeys appeared in significant numbers in York, Cumberland, and Oxford Counties, and perhaps in reduced numbers eastward to Hancock County. Reductions in the amount of forest land due to intensive land clearing for farming and unrestricted shooting were probably the two most important factors leading to the extirpation of native Wild Turkeys in Maine in the early 1800's. The reversion of thousands of acres of farmland back to wooded habitat, and present day agricultural practices, have enhanced prospects for reestablishing Wild Turkeys into, and perhaps beyond, their former range. Attempts to reintroduce turkeys to Maine began in 1942 when the Department of Inland Fisheries and Game released 24 captive-reared birds on Swan Island in Sagadahoc County. These birds were supplementally fed in the winter, and the last bird was reported seen in 1946. In the 1960's, fish and game clubs in Bangor and Windham made similar attempts to reestablish turkeys into their areas using imported birds raised from part wild and part game-farm stocks. Neither of these attempts resulted in a good population of wild birds. In Maine, we have had the benefit of work done by biologists in other states to reestablish Wild Turkeys into former and new ranges of suitable habitat. Researchers in these states discovered the key to each success was to remove a small number of wild birds from one site and release them, as soon as possible, into suitable, unoccupied habitat.

Responding to requests from fish and game clubs and individual Maine sportsmen, and encouraged by successful reintroduction programs in Vermont and New Hampshire, MDIFW began planning its own turkey program in the mid-1970s. The goals of this program were twofold: to establish turkeys in the coastal part of the state where they historically occurred, and to establish a big game species for hunters in Maine. The first step was to locate a source of birds. Vermont biologists, who had great success with their turkey program, were willing to supply Maine with birds from their wild flocks. The next step was to select a release site. York County was chosen as the initial release site because of its large acreage's of wooded habitat, a good supply of mast-producing trees (beech and oak), and its mild winters with <60 inches of annual snowfall.

In 1977 and 1978, Vermont Fish and Game biologists trapped 41 turkeys, which MDIFW biologists released in the towns of York and Elliot. By the early 1980s, the York County population had become large enough to serve as a source of birds for new release sites in Maine. In the spring of 1982, 33 birds were captured in York County and released in Waldo County in an attempt to establish a turkey population in the mid-coast region. In the winter of 1984, 19 additional birds were captured in York County and released in Hancock County, but poaching was believed to be the demise of these birds. During the winters of 1987 and 1988, MDIFW biologists, with the help of individuals from the Maine Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) and Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, trapped 70 Wild Turkeys in Connecticut and released them in Maine to augment Maine's turkey population.

Since 1990, instate trapping and transfer by regional biologists occur each year and has expanded the range of the Wild Turkey in Maine to the east and north. Today, reports of Wild Turkeys well inland of the coast and eastward throughout Hancock County are common.

Wild Turkeys are ground feeders and eat a wide variety of grasses, seeds, fruits, and insects. In the northeast, turkeys reach their highest densities in areas with agricultural activities, particularly dairy farms. These sites enable the birds to get through the tough winter months. Here farms provide abundant food in the form of silage corn and undigested grains in manure, which is either spread on fields or stored where the birds can get to it. Further, hay fields associated with farms also provide hood habitat for young turkeys. MDIFW biologists believe that snow depths may be a limiting factor for turkeys in Maine. For this reason, future turkey releases will be in areas with dairy farms and a large amount of land in hardwoods, particularly mast-producing trees. Ultimately, the department's goal is to have a viable Wild Turkey population wherever suitable Wild Turkey habitat exists.

## **Reasons for a Spring Turkey Hunt**

Wild Turkeys, like white-tailed deer, are polygamous, meaning generally that only the dominant males in the population mate with most of the females. The remaining males can be considered surplus.

The sexes are easily distinguished in Wild Turkeys, as only the males gobble and have spurs. All males have beards of varying lengths, and about one in 25 hens also has a beard. The gobblers have a blacker plumage than the gray or buff-colored hens. As with the males of many bird species, the gobblers have the brighter coloration, and this is readily apparent on the head and neck. During courtship, males display vivid red, white and blue head coloration.

Courtship activities take place in the early morning hours during late April and early May. The spring hunting season dates are chosen to allow most breeding to take place and hens to begin incubation prior to the start of the hunting season. Hens are less vulnerable to shooting after they begin incubating. Further, hens often leave the nest during afternoon hours, hence the noon daily closure in hunting activity. The hunt is limited to bearded turkeys only. After mating, the gobbler's participation is over. The hens are responsible for incubating and rearing the young. In 49 states where spring turkey hunting is allowed, the sport is in no way detrimental to the population growth or range expansion of Wild Turkey flocks. Spring turkey hunting provides a quality big game hunting opportunity, even in states with an ongoing restoration program.

## **Know Hens From Gobblers**

Do not encourage family members or friends to go turkey hunting unless they have observed Wild Turkeys so they can readily distinguish between females (hens) and males (toms, gobblers, or jakes). Remember, older adult hens can develop beards too. It is highly advisable to attend a turkey hunting seminar and watch films or videos about turkeys. Every hen killed during May potentially represents 12 young that won't hatch.

**If a person doesn't know a hen from a gobbler, he/she should not be turkey hunting.**

There is little excuse for shooting a hen as the hunter is playing the part of the hen and making calls to get some toms to come to him/her. In the process of calling and waiting for the tom to come to his/her concealed position, the hunter will most likely hear the males gobble a number of times. Further, there is a high probability of seeing the toms displaying and fanning their tails. Even so, it is not unusual for a hen to be seen feeding alone or accompanied by one or more toms.

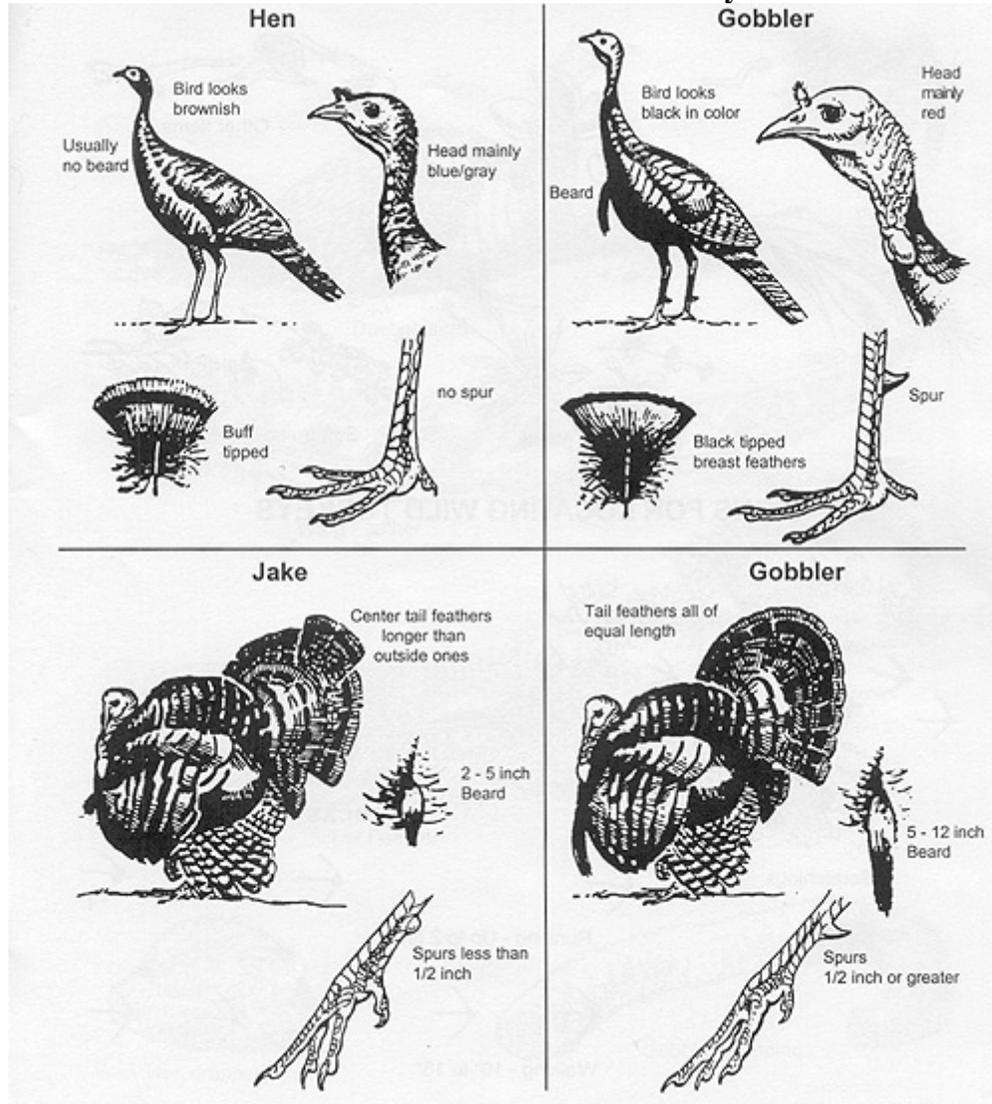
The regulations read "one bearded turkey" is legal game. The beard is often small and hard to see on young males (jakes). Sometimes it is broken off. Other times, trees or brush obscure the view of the beard. The majority of males in the population do not have long beards (5 to 12 inches), but rather are "jakes" or one-year-old males (2 to 4 inch beards). In this case, the beard is not easy to see and may protrude only an inch from the breast feathers. Approximately 4% of adult hens will have thin beards that can be 6 to 8 inches long. These hens are valuable because they are generally experienced breeders and nesters, and hunters are encouraged not to shoot these bearded hens.

A major characteristic of males is the very pronounced red, white, and blue head coloration of the displaying tom. The white skull cap on the tom is very obvious and the wattles (reddish skin area) on the male's neck are more pronounced than on the hen. The hen has a smaller, bluish-gray head with more small feathers covering it. Males are much larger, darker colored and have spurs on their legs.

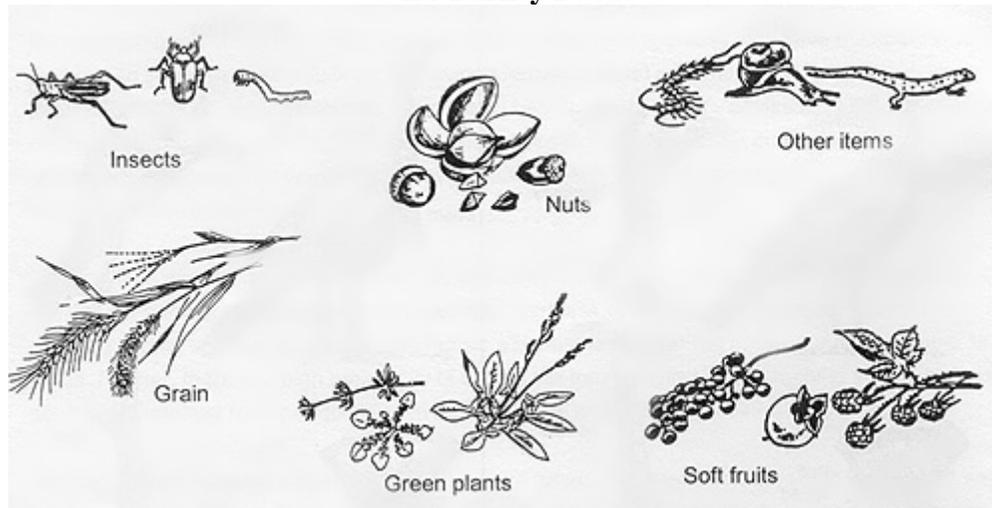
The sex of a turkey "in-hand" is readily apparent. Look at a small feather from the chest or upper back. All males have a black band at the tip of the feather. Hens have a black band toward the end of the feather, but also have a narrow 1/8" to 1/4" band of buffy-brown beyond the black band.

**Know how to identify a hen from a tom. Pre-season scouting and observing several birds will help.**

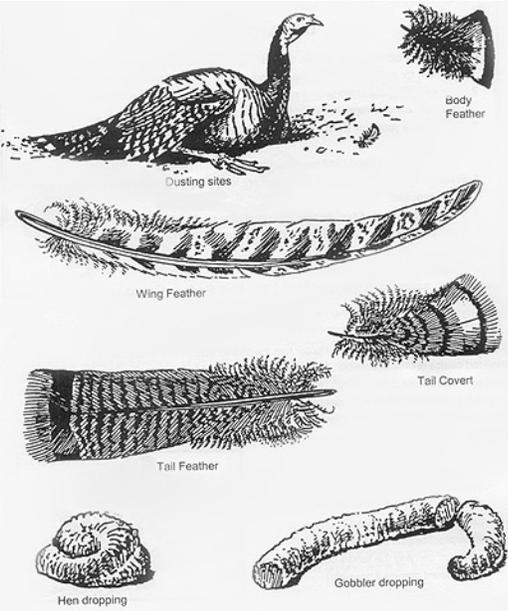
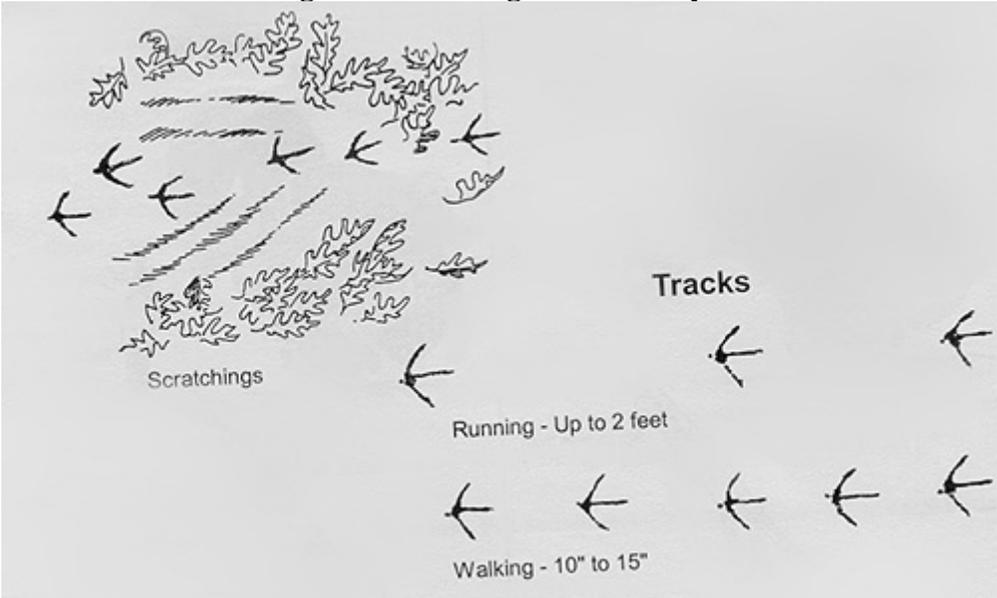
## Characteristics of the Wild Turkey



## Wild Turkey Foods



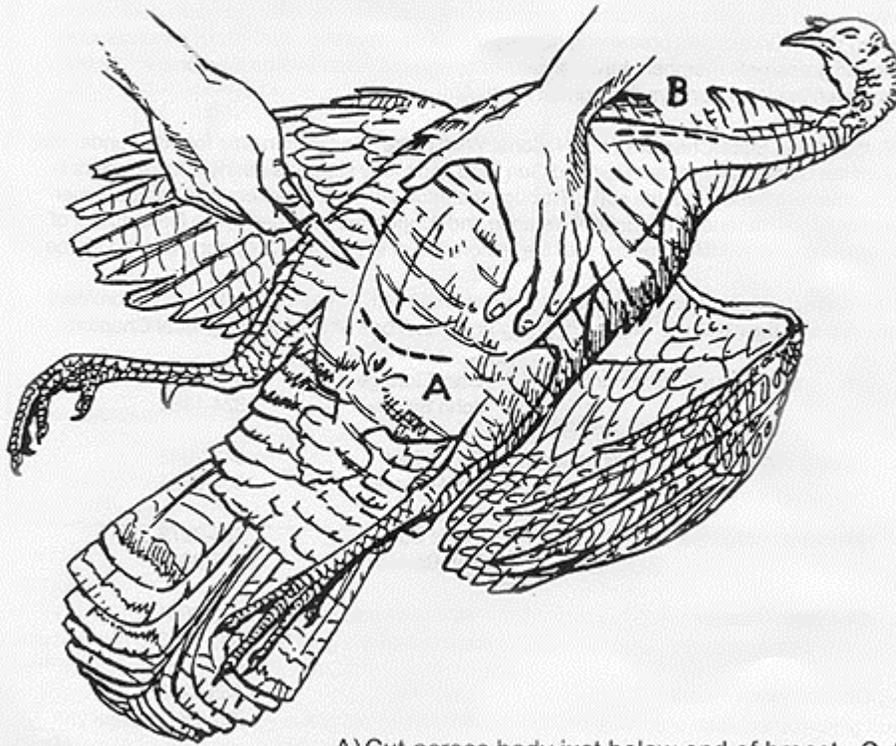
# Signs for Locating Wild Turkeys



## Field Dressing

### FIELD DRESSING A WILD TURKEY

Note: If you believe that you have a trophy bird that may weigh in excess of 20 lbs., do not field dress the turkey. You will want to weigh the bird whole on certified scales.



A) Cut across body just below end of breast. Cut around vent and pull out contents of body cavity.

B) Cut along base of neck and pull out crop.

## Camouflage

### Dress for Success

Never wear clothing that contain the colors of red, white, or blue because they can be mistaken for colors found on Wild Turkeys.

Be sure that accessories you carry that are red, white, or blue (e.g. diaphragm calls, box call chalk, candy wrappers, apples, cigarette packs, etc.) are not visible to other hunters.

Camouflage your gun. If not, at least cover up white diamonds or other red or white markings.

Always keep your hands and head camouflaged when calling.

Wear dark-colored socks and pants that are long enough to keep your bare skin from being exposed.

Do not "over-camouflage" by sitting in vegetation so thick that it obscures your vision.

If you use a blind of camouflage netting, maintain a clear field of view.



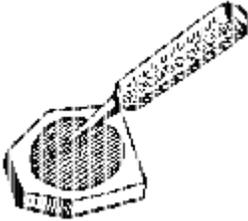
## National Wild Turkey Federation

### Equipment

It is important that the Wild Turkey hunter has the proper equipment. A checklist of the recommended basics is provided below. Other gear can be added as hunting situations require it. Make sure your equipment is not colored red, white, or blue.

- full choke shotgun or approved archery equipment
- camouflage pants, jacket, gloves, socks, hat, face paint, or head net
- turkey calls
- topographical maps
- compass
- binoculars
- knife
- pack for carrying equipment
- waterproof matches
- waterproof bag (to store calls in)
- a bag for carrying the turkey out of the woods (fluorescent orange if possible)

## Turkey Calling

Types of Turkey Calls			
Air-operated Calls		Locator Calls	
 Diaphragm Call	 Wing bone Call	 Crow Call	 Owl Hooter
Friction Calls			
 Slate Call		 Box Call	

### *Calling*

Proper calling techniques are crucial to success. An understanding of the use and meaning of hen calls is important because calling the gobbler to the hunter is a reversal of the natural process of the hen moving toward the gobbling male for breeding.

The best way to learn how to imitate the calls of the Wild Turkey is to listen to instructional cassette tapes. The advice of an experienced caller is also valuable.

Variation in the calls of Wild Turkeys is evident, and they are able to produce high notes as well as low notes. Common hen calls include the yelp, the cluck, the purr, the putt, and the cackle.

### *Calling Tips*

- A skillful Wild Turkey caller must be patient and practice calling frequently before hunting.
- It is important to know a type of call well, and how to use it.
- The timing of the call, or rhythm, is thought to be as crucial as the quality of the sound.
- Calling too frequently may stop the approach of a turkey and thus reduce chances of bagging a bird.
- Calling more softly is recommended as a turkey approaches the hunter.
- Some expert Wild Turkey hunters believe that gobblers do not like to be called downhill and therefore suggest calling from higher ground, such as a ridge.

## *Turkey Calls*

- **Yelp** - The most common and basic turkey call is a "yelp." Yelps consist of a series of two-note "kee-yuk" calls that hens emit in a rhythmic fashion, typically repeated five to seven times, but often much more. The three most common types of yelps are: the **tree yelp**, the **plain yelp**, and the **lost call**, or assembly call of a lost hen.
- **Tree Yelp** - Early in the morning, while still on the roost, Wild Turkeys sometimes emit a soft three to four note yelp. This call functions as a form of communication between birds while on the roost. Hunters might use this call as a signal to turkeys that there are other birds roosted nearby.
- **Plain Yelp** - This is emitted by turkeys while in the trees or on the ground. It is longer (sometimes more than 10 syllables or notes) and much louder (heard more than 200 meters or 660 feet away) than the tree yelp. It is believed that birds use this call later in the day in order to keep the flock together. When effectively imitated by hunters in the spring, the plain yelp can attract gobblers.
- **Lost Call** - The lost call or yelp is a long call having as many as 30 notes or syllables. Louder and lower in pitch than the plain yelp, it is characterized by urgent tonal inflections. This call is used mostly in the fall to re-group a scattered flock.
- **Cluck** - The cluck is a single-note call, which is more abrupt and less musical than a yelp. Similar in function to the yelp, the cluck attracts the attention of turkeys at a distance and helps keep the flock together.
- **Purr** - The purr is usually described as a one-second-long, soft, medium-pitched sound. Members of a contented, undisturbed flock often emit this low level purring, particularly when they are feeding.
- **Cackle** - The cackle is a rapid succession of loud, high-pitched staccato sounds that may vary in tone and rhythm. Hens often emit this call when they are flying into or out of the roost.
- **Putt** - If the flock is disturbed, the cluck may change to a louder putt call or to a very loud putting, which expresses aggression or fear. Using this call will usually alarm turkeys rather than attract them.
- **Cutt** - When a turkey repeats a series of excited clucks it is referred to as "cutting." This call is most often used in the spring.
- **Kee-Kee** - This consists of a series of very high-pitched, whistle-like notes that turkeys emit in a rhythmic fashion; the number of notes or syllables ranging from a few to over 10. It is an assembly call, emitted by a young turkey when it has become lost or separated from a flock or family group.
- **Kee-Kee-Run** - This consists of a series of kee-kee calls followed immediately by several yelps, and simulates a young turkey that is learning how to yelp.

## **Scouting, Locating, and Positioning**

Pre-season scouting may indicate good areas to hunt during the season. Study the topography of the land to locate as many calling sites as possible. Signs such as tracks, scratchings, and droppings are all good indicators of turkey activity. Scout more than one area so that you will have alternate sites. Look for safety features at each site in order to prevent future accidents.

Because gobblers are in an extremely excited state during the breeding season, loud noises and certain animal calls can stimulate a gobbling response. A turkey hunter can take advantage of this by imitating owl hoots or crow calls and then waiting for a response. This technique can be used to roost or locate a gobbler the night before the hunt or the morning of the hunt.

Determining the exact location of the bird is critical and will help the turkey hunter choose the best possible calling position. The hunter should locate a calling position in open woods, selecting a spot where his/her back is protected. An appropriate calling position would be against a large tree or rock where the outline of the body is concealed.

## **Safe Turkey Hunting Techniques**

Use these techniques when hunting to increase your safety:

- Call in open terrain
- Call from a position where you are protected from the back
- Shout "STOP" to alert approaching hunters of your position
- Never sneak in on a turkey or use a gobbler call near other hunters
- Never shoot at sound or movement
- Use a flashlight when walking in the dark
- Be careful of your long-range background
- Never crowd another hunter working a bird
- Be certain of companion's location
- Avoid high hunting pressure areas
- Discuss safety techniques with companions
- Never assume that other hunters are responsible
- Exercise extreme caution when using decoys

### **Proper Use of Decoys**

A decoy should never be visible while being transported. Never carry an uncovered (identifiable) decoy any distance.

Whenever possible, set-up by a "stand" tree that is greater in diameter than the width of your shoulders. From your seated position, identify the clearest line of vision to your front. Establish a "sight line" that allows you 100 yards visibility. Then set your decoy(s) approximately 20 yards from your position on the line.

Should you see another hunter (especially if he/she is close to your "line of sight") call out to them in a loud, clear voice. Their presence has already compromised your location and a "soft" call may only confuse them, rather than alert them to your presence.

If you are calling over decoys and then elect to move to a new location, check carefully to ensure that no one is stalking your decoy(s). Check before leaving.

### **Bowhunting Tips**

#### ***Set-up***

Due to the wariness of the Wild Turkey, bow hunters sometimes use decoys and a blind. Decoy(s) divert the tom's attention from the caller, while the blind allows the hunter to draw the bow unseen. It is wise to place the decoy(s) to the side of the blind, well within range of the bird's anticipated approach.

#### ***Special equipment***

A quiet bow set at a comfortable poundage is essential to your success. Compound bows are preferable because the let-off allows you to hold the bow at full-draw for an extended period. Heavier draw weights often associated with hunting large game are not necessary for turkey hunting and are easier to draw and hold. While you can use the same broad heads as you use for deer hunting, they should be fitted with an arrow stopper to prevent complete pass-thru. String tracks are also very helpful in retrieving a turkey after the shot. Be sure to practice with this set-up as these modifications will affect arrow flight. A stool or seat makes the wait much easier, and it is important to camouflage everything as the turkey is often in your presence for quite some time prior to the shot.

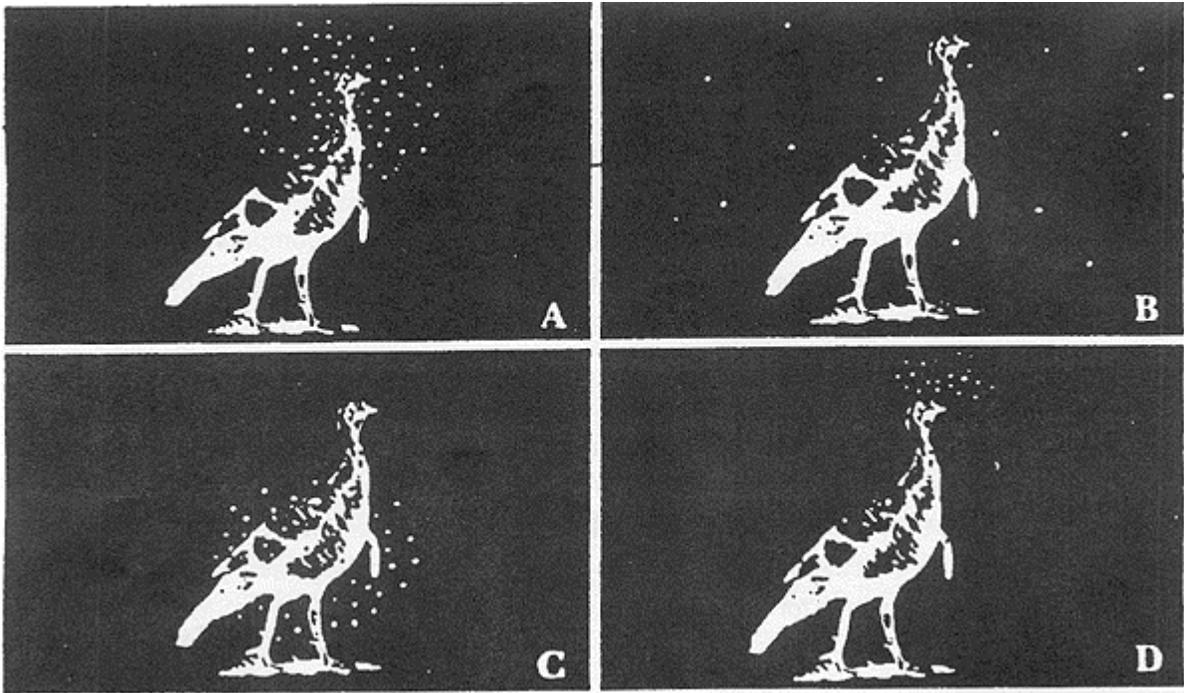
#### ***Calling***

If you are hunting alone, it is best to use a mouth call, as it will allow you use of both hands. If you are hunting with a partner, position the caller 10-20 yards behind the shooter.

### ***Shot placement***

The hunter should draw only when a tree blocks the turkey's vision or when the bird faces away from you. With a broadside shot your point of aim is the wing butt, where it attaches to the bird. When taking a shot head-on (bird facing you), aim for the center of the chest, where the beard comes out on a gobbler. If the bird is facing away from you, aim for the base of the tail. Remember, a turkey's vital organs are about the size of a softball.

### **Patterning your shotgun on a life-size target**



A - The desired pattern, good shot placement (point of aim is base of turkey's neck).

B - This pattern shows that the bird is out of range at this distance.

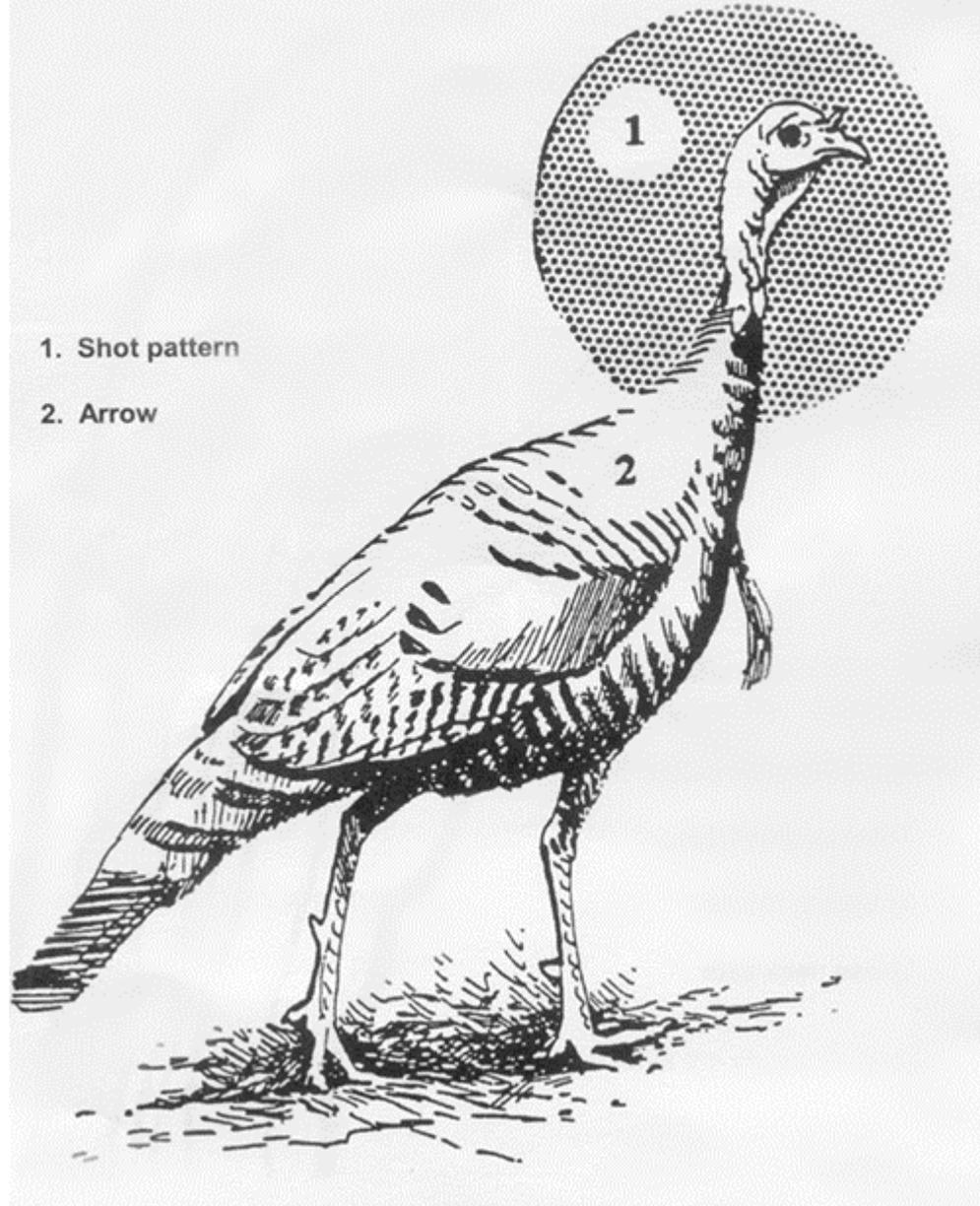
\*C - Poor shot placement, good pattern.

\*D - Poor shot placement, good pattern.

\*Poor shot placement is a result of poor aiming by shooter or the shotgun's tendency to shoot high or low; left or right.

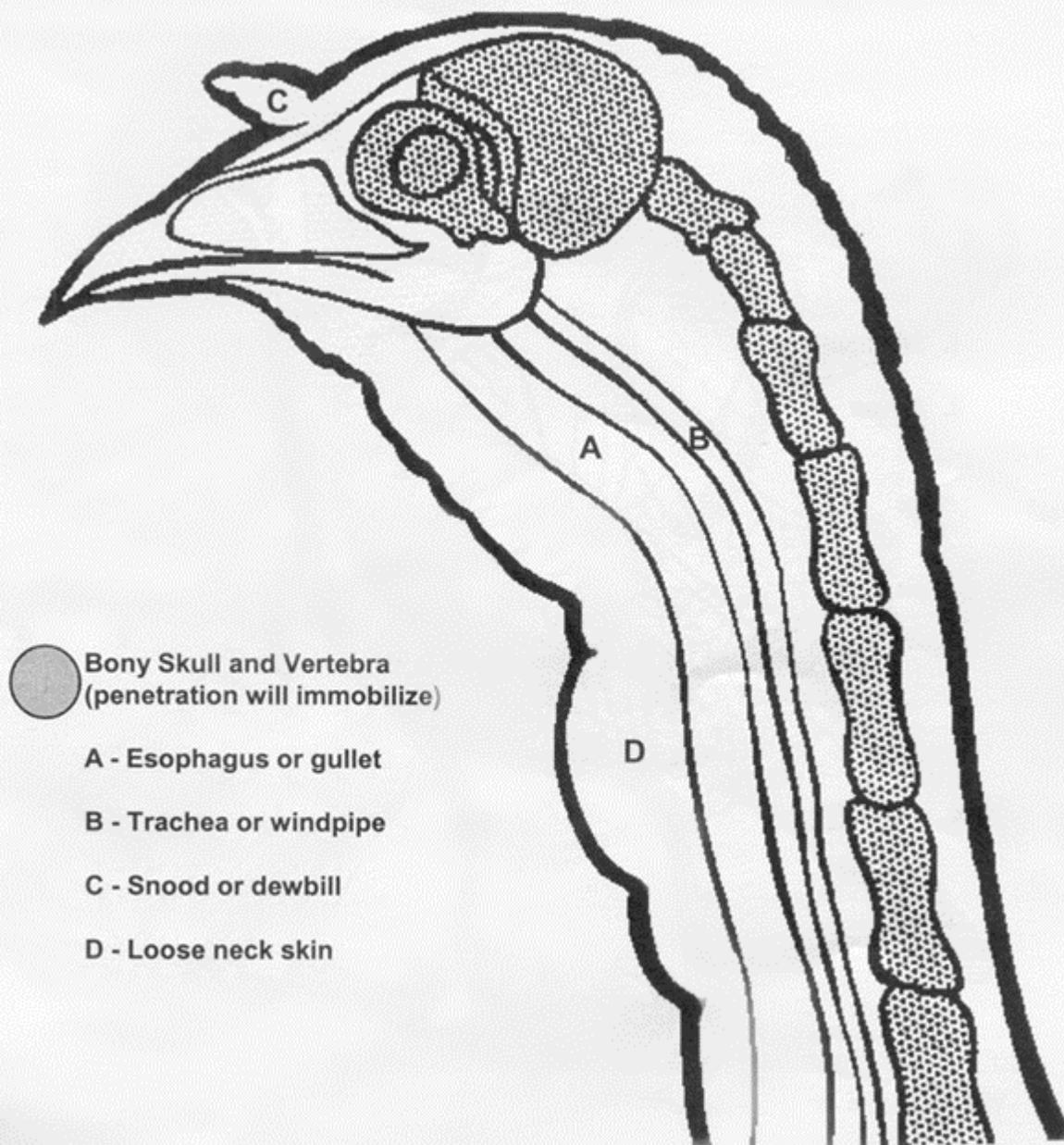
### **Shot Pattern or Arrow Placement for a Quick Kill**

## SHOT PATTERN OR ARROW PLACEMENT FOR A QUICK KILL



## Vital Areas in the Head of a Wild Turkey

### VITAL AREAS IN THE HEAD OF A WILD TURKEY



**Make photocopies for patterning your gun.**

## **Wild Turkey Records**

The National Wild Turkey Federation's (NWTF) Wild Turkey Records serves as a permanent international archive for preserving standardized information on legally harvested Wild Turkeys at the Federation's Edgefield, South Carolina headquarters.

Any legally taken turkey is eligible for inclusion in this program, and each participating hunter receives a lapel pin and a certificate suitable for framing. All applicants must be current members of the NWTF. The Federation updates these computerized records at least quarterly, and publishes the top entries annually in its Turkey Call magazine.

For more information on this program, contact:

National Wild Turkey Federation

PO Box 530

Edgefield, SC 29824

Phone: (803) 637-3106 [www.nwtf.com](http://www.nwtf.com)

## **National Wild Turkey Federation**

When the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) was founded in 1973, there were an estimated 1.3 million turkeys and 1.5 million turkey hunters. Thanks to the efforts of the NWTF, its members, partners, and state, federal, and provincial wildlife agencies, there are now an estimated 5.6 million Wild Turkeys and approximately 2.6 million turkey hunters. Turkey hunting has become the second highest participated type of hunting and is the fastest growing form of hunting.

The National Wild Turkey Federation, headquartered in Edgefield, SC, is a national nonprofit conservation and education organization comprised of more than 450,000 members dedicated to conserving Wild Turkeys and preserving hunting traditions. Together, the NWTF's conservation partners and grassroots members have raised and spent more than \$168 million on over 22,000 projects benefiting Wild Turkeys throughout North America.

In 1997, the Maine State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation was founded under the tutelage of the Gorham/Windham Rod and Gun Club and today supports nearly 500 members in nine local chapters throughout the state. Through the efforts of local Chapters and annual Super Fund Membership Banquets, financial assistance and support are provided to the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to assist with the restoration of the Wild Turkey population in Maine.

If you are interested in learning more about the National Wild Turkey Federation or becoming a member, logon to their web site at [www.nwtf.org](http://www.nwtf.org). If you wish, you may join by calling the NWTF at National Wild Turkey Federation, PO Box 530, Edgefield, SC 29824 or call (803) 637-3106.

The Maine State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) has established the Longbeard Society, which operates much like Maine's Biggest Bucks Club, to recognize hunters who have taken trophy wild turkeys. To qualify, a turkey must have been legally taken in Maine and have a minimum beard length of 7 inches.

Beard and spur length measurements must be made with a device that is accurate to 1/16 inch. In order to standardize measurements, all length measurements must be recorded in eighths. Each beard must be measured from the center point of the protrusion from the skin to the opposite end of its longest bristle. Each spur must be measured along the centerline of its longest dimension, from the point at which the spur protrudes from the scaled leg skin to its tip.

If you are interested in knowing how your turkey scores under the NWTF scoring system, you can calculate it by this formula: Weight (in pounds) plus ten times the length of each spur plus two times the beard length. For example, a 19-pound gobbler with both spurs one inch long and a 9-inch beard would be scored as follows:

19 pounds + 10 x both 1" spurs + 2 x 9-inch beard

19 + 10 + 10 + 18 = Score of 57

Turkeys weighing 22 pounds or more, or having beards of 10 inches or longer, or having spurs of 1-1/4 inch or longer must be measured by an official Maine State Chapter scorer listed on registration form [PDF](#). In order to register your trophy and join the Longbeard Society, you must be a current member of the National Wild Turkey Federation. The Maine State Chapter will issue a Longbeard Society patch to each member who registers a qualifying turkey and pays a \$5.00 registration fee to help cover the program's expenses. The Society's top entries are listed annually in the Maine Gobbler Grapevine newsletter, which is sent to all NWTF members in Maine.

### **Maine State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation Longbeard Society Registration**

If you are interested in learning more about the National Wild Turkey Federation or becoming a member, log on to their web site at [www.nwtf.org](http://www.nwtf.org).

