



SHOW-ME GOBBLER

A Tri-Annual Publication of the George C. Clark Missouri Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation

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'Show Me' Hunting Heritage: Youth Across Missouri Tag Birds

By David Gladkowski

Missouri's moniker, the "Show-Me State," is an apt nickname, as the state has so much to show off, especially its natural resources. NWTF youth turkey hunts across the state also showed us our hunting heritage is in good hands.

"Missouri is a national leader in recruiting and retaining hunters," said John Burk, NWTF district biologist for Missouri, Iowa and Illinois. "A lot of that has to do with reasonably priced licenses and a convenient regulatory process to legally participate. Missouri also has a strong outdoor tradition and many opportunities to offer its citizens."

The NWTF outreach presence in Missouri yielded great results this spring, with masses of youth in the woods and dozens of birds harvested. Here are some of the highlights:



The NEMO Hunt had a wonderful turnout this spring.

NEMO Hunt

The North Eastern Missouri Chapter held a massive youth turkey hunting event that saw 25 birds harvested, but the countless smiles and new experiences were the real metric volunteers measured.

"The whole reason for this event is to get kids out in the timber to go turkey hunting who otherwise would not have an opportunity to go," said Billy Yargus, renowned turkey caller and volunteer at the NEMO hunt. "We had so many great volunteers and sponsors that made it all possible."

The NEMO hunt is the brainchild of dedicated volunteer Ralph Bedenbender who coordinated with landowners and spent many hours setting up blinds and finding mentors to ensure the youth had access and all the tools needed for a successful hunt and a good time.

"We had a heck of a good turnout, it was a beautiful day, the kids did really good, and I don't know how you could ask for a better weekend," Bedenbender said. "We are in a good community where we get a lot of the farmers' support, and that means a lot. It's a lot of work, and it takes a lot of people."

Conservation agents and seasoned hunters guided the 110 youth through a turkey hunting



A lifetime of memories made this weekend at NEMO.

seminar prior to the hunt. They were able to learn the basics of wild turkey hunting, conservation and general advice.

The youth were also given turkey hunting gear and were able to win prizes, thanks to many generous companies and volunteers.

Sponsors of the NEMO hunt included WoodHaven Custom Calls, Apex Ammunition, OnX Hunt, DSD Decoys, Heimer Construction, Terstrip Tree Service, Pepsi, Fox Optic and many community members who donated their time and money for the greater good.

Missouri State Senator Cindy O' Laughlin also attended the event and provided lunch after the hunt.

Governors Youth Turkey Hunt

The Governor's Youth Turkey Hunt is a collaborative effort between Governor Mike Parson, the NWTF, the Conservation Federation of Missouri, the Missouri Department of Conservation and many other volunteers and landowners.

"This past youth turkey season marked the 13th year of the Governors Youth Turkey Hunt," said Burk. "This successful annual event helps introduce new people to the joys of spring turkey hunting while also serving as a testament from our government that they recognize the importance of natural resources and value what these resources mean to the folks they govern."

To be eligible for the hunt, youth must be ages 11 to 15 and be first-time hunters or have never been turkey hunting.

The lucky 14 youth selected first attended an orientation that included hunter safety, hunting regulations and a chance to practice shooting shotguns.

Later that evening, the youth hunters and their chaperones were invited to the Governor's mansion for a spread of delectable foods. After the meal, the hunters departed for their hunting destinations, consisting of several high-quality properties offered for the event for the entire youth season weekend by gracious landowners close to the capital.

Eight of the 14 youth hunters harvested birds.

The Clay Howlett Memorial Chapter

The Clay Howlett Memorial Chapter held their 2022 JAKES Event in late March. Nine first-time turkey hunters between the ages of nine and 15 participated in a turkey hunting workshop where they learned about turkey biology, hunting techniques and calling, turkey hunting regulations, hunting safety and shotgun patterning.

Youth who attended the workshop were selected to participate in a mentored turkey hunt on April 9-10 in Pulaski, Laclede and Camden Counties.

The hunters arrived early on opening morning and hunted with a conservation agent or an NWTF member who served as mentors.

Six of the nine youth harvested gobblers.

Continued on page 3.

From The President

By Dan Zerr

IT'S OK, THAT'S NORMAL

I received the letter on April 12, the day before we left on our annual pilgrimage to Kansas to kick-off the turkey season. It seems that my insurance agent needed to talk with me, so I should call and make an appointment. We did leave for Kansas the next day, hunted for a couple of days and got back on Saturday. The next day was Easter. The next day after that, the Missouri season started. On May 10th, I finally called and set up the appointment. The insurance agent didn't sound as if he was happy to hear from me, he told me "I sent you that letter a long time ago." My reply was, "Yeah I got that letter, but it was turkey season. His response was, "you don't understand, I need to talk with you." My answer to that was. "you don't understand, I put off an appointment to my cardiologist, because it was turkey season, and that was the fall season."

I began to sense that he was not fully comprehending the situation. Without trying to explain how things are, I left him with the comment that "it's Ok, that's normal". In trying to live life around those who haven't been blessed with the "obsession", or if you know enough to make allowances because you married poorly, "it's OK, that's normal" explains a lot of circumstances where "normal people" would consider you bait for the guys in the white jackets.

Subsisting on a large Columbian Roast Coffee and a glazed honey bun, gives you a caffeine/sugar hybrid buzz that is good until at least 10:00 am for a couple of weeks may be a dietician's nightmare, but "it's ok, that's normal". Staying in the woods until 1:00 pm, when the agreed upon departure was supposed to be 11:00 am, but, that gobble at 10:15 meant that the bird would be back in an hour, would seem to be stubborn and short-focused. But, it's ok, that's normal.

Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise, has been put to the test for a couple of weeks, but it's ok, that's normal. Wading a 12 inch deep stream with 10 inch boots doesn't give you a warm fuzzy feeling about being one with nature, but it's ok, that's normal.

We put ourselves through a lot in the pursuit of the wild turkey, sometimes nothing works. But it's ok, that's normal. When things do fall into place and we get lucky, there is nothing normal about that, and it is way more than ok. I hope everyone had a chance to participate, congratulations to those who scored. If you didn't, keep your chin up, appreciate what we had the opportunity to do. We will do it again next year.

Reinna Tyl, our wild turkey biologist with MDC announced that she will be leaving her post shortly to take a position with the Pennsylvania Game & Fish Department. We are sorry to see her leave, but wish her the best in her new job.

It's been a busy spring, thank you to all of the committees who did all of the hard work on putting on the banquets. Overall we have been very successful, and have helped NWTF carry on our mission. Also thanks to the rank and file members who have attended the banquets and supported us with your hard earned dollars. We could not do this without you.

As we get ready to celebrate 50 years of conservation, thanks to all of you for the time, talent and cash you have invested in the organization. Let's make the 50th a special time.

*Thanks For All You Do,
Dan Zerr/President
MO State Chapter NWTF*



Rebekah Yarick of Bates County, killed a 23 pound gobbler with 5 beards, 10 1/4 inch main beard, 34 15/16 inch total beard length, 1 inch spurs. Pictured with Steve Yarick and his bird.



SHOW-ME GOBBLER

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ARTICLE SUBMISSION NOTE:

Please feel free to submit future articles with photos to the contact information listed above. Submission requirements: Digital copy submitted in Microsoft Word. Digital photographs only. Please use at least 225 resolution (dpi), or medium to high settings from your phone. Photos submitted outside of these guidelines may not be suitable for printing. Please include photo captions and credits for each photo submitted. Thank you for your contributions and we look forward to your participation in the future.

“Show Me” Hunting Heritage: continued from page 1.

“The memory of the day I bagged my first turkey at eight years old is as fresh as if it happened yesterday, and that was 42 years ago,” said David Howlett, NWTF Missouri Board Member. “Being able to get these kids in the field and create those same feelings for them is more than a worthwhile endeavor. It warms the heart to see the excitement on those young faces, listening to their hunt stories, and knowing you have created a lifelong outdoorsperson and another voice for conservation.”

The Spring Hunter Apprentice School at Wappapello

The Spring Hunter Apprentice School is in its 12th year at Lake Wappapello.

“Every year, we have at least 6 core guys step up and want to guide,” said Rob Stover, NWTF Missouri JAKES coordinator. “We couldn’t do this hunt without them.”

The event works to recruit kids who have never hunted or turkey hunted before.

“This year we had nine kids hunting and nine parents tagging along,” said Stover. “We like the parents to go to share the experience with their kids.”

Prior to the hunt, on Friday night, a local Missouri Department of Conservation agent goes over hunting safety and regulations. Stover then does an activity for the kids called “What’s in My Vest,” which goes over the range of turkey gear and how to use it in the field.

The youths hunt both Saturday and Sunday, and after the hunt on Saturday, they participate in a just-for-fun calling contest.

Two kids harvested birds on Saturday and one on Sunday.

“When I see a young hunter come in grinning from ear to ear, it all comes back,” said Stover. “My hope is that these kids and parents keep getting out into the woods for the rest of their lives like I have been able to.”

Current River Callers Chapter

The Current River Callers in Winona supported the efforts of Greg Buckner, who runs a program centered around outdoor recreation called God’s Pro Staff.

Eight youth attended the hunt, and four harvested birds.

These events don’t include the countless NWTF members who mentored friends, families and neighbors. Across the country, the NWTF and its state and local chapters are working diligently, like those in Missouri, to create new hunters. While youth are an important part of the mission, the NWTF also hosts hunts specifically for veterans, women and for people from all walks of life.

Recruiting new hunters is one of the main components of the NWTF’s Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative, a 10-year goal to increase conserved or enhanced wildlife habitat acres, open access to more public hunting and improve hunting participation. All goals were surpassed in 2020, with two years of the initiative remaining. As the initiative finishes its final year, the NWTF, since 2012, has conserved or enhanced 4,444,680 acres, opened 678,686 acres to public hunting access and recruited 1,531,384 new hunters.

Learn how you can get involved with the mission by speaking with your RD.

Clay Howlett Memorial Chapter Hosts 5th Annual JAKES Event and Mentored Youth Turkey Hunt.

By Aaron Pondrom and Dave Howlett

The Clay Howlett Memorial Chapter held their 2022 Jakes Event on March 26. Nine first time turkey hunters between the ages of 9-15 participated in a turkey hunting workshop where they learned about turkey biology, turkey hunting techniques and calling, turkey hunting regulations, hunting safety, and shotgun patterning. Youth who attended the workshop were selected to participate in a mentored turkey hunt on April 9-10 at the farm of Art and Kathy Booth in Pulaski and Laclede Counties near Richland, and on the Ernie Calvert farm in Camden County near Camdenton.

The hunters arrived early on opening morning and were paired with a conservation agent or NWTF member who served as hunting guides. On the opening morning of youth season, Joshua Noriega of St. Robert knocked down his first long beard and so did Lucas Delapena of Fort Leonard Wood...as well as Hudson Landis of Osage Beach.

Special thanks are due to Art and Kathy Booth for their idea to sponsor the hunt by opening their property to the hunters and their hospitality for feeding and hosting everyone. The Booth’s have done a tremendous job of managing their habitat to produce excellent nesting habitat for turkeys. In addition, they invested significant time in pre-hunt planning and scouting to ensure that mentors and hunters would be able to maximize the effectiveness of their time afield.

Special thanks also go to Ernie Calvert Sr. and Ernie Calvert Jr. for hosting half the young hunters on their property in Camden County. They both assisted in scouting and blind placement, as well as moving mentors and hunters to various locations throughout the weekend to help increase success for the young hunters. The Calvert family is a strong supporter of youth

hunting and have personally organized and hosted youth deer hunts in previous years.

Sincere appreciation is due to MDC Conservation Agents Jared Milligan, Justin Emery, Payton Emery, Nathan Ingle, and Aaron Pondrom; State Board Member and Clay Howlett Memorial Chapter President Dave Howlett. NWTF members George Dalgetty and Jason Peace served as hunting guides. Hunters cannot be recruited and introduced to the sport without knowledgeable mentors willing to give of their time and talents. We appreciate their willingness to share their passion to ensure our hunting heritage.

Events like these are also how we ultimately achieve our Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. goals. Therefore, if you think your chapter might be interested in this worthwhile endeavor, start planning now. Even if you can’t put on an event that hosts multiple hunters, invite someone new to share a hunting experience with you in a one-on-one hunt and then let us know about it by contacting John Burk at 573-676-5994 or jburk@nwtf.net.



Prevent Invasive Plant Spread When Managing Your Habitat

By Will Reckemmer, NWTF Project Biologist

We hear a lot these days about invasive plants, but what are they, how are they spreading, and how can we prevent them? The answers to these questions vary by the species and region. In this article, I'm going to talk a little about herbaceous invasive plants that tend to cause issues when conducting forest management activities.

An invasive plant is a species that is not native to a particular region, spreads rapidly in natural communities, and is detrimental to the native plants and animals in those communities. Most invasive plants have a few things in common. They all tend to spread rapidly by producing large quantities of seeds annually, or by spreading clonally (by rhizomes underground). Many of these species also produce allelopathic chemicals that inhibit other plants from taking root nearby. Taken together, these factors allow them to outcompete native plants, take hold, and become monocultures. Why is this important for turkeys? It doesn't take much to realize that a diverse native grassland or woodland, is better turkey habitat than a monoculture such as a lawn or corn field. Diversity in vegetation is an extremely important factor in determining habitat quality. As plant diversity increases, so does insect diversity, seed diversity (i.e., food sources) and structural diversity (i.e., cover).

While conducting forest management activities, three species are at the top of the list for causing major issues. *Sericea Lespedeza*, Japanese Stilt grass, and *Perilla Mint* can all become increasingly common after conducting activities such as selective thinning, trail building, forest stand improvement, trail mowing and prescribed burning. These activities typically increase sunlight and can cause soil disturbance, creating ideal conditions for invasive plants. The above referenced activities are essential to creating excellent turkey habitat, but we must also be cognizant of introducing invasive plants, or all this hard work may be cancelled out.



In some instances, invasive plant seeds are already in the seed bank and by disturbing soil and adding sunlight they are released. However, one of the major ways that these species are being spread is by equipment! You can go out to just

about any logging road or trail that has been used for management and find evidence of this, invasive plants spreading off the trail. Oftentimes, equipment (i.e., ATVs, UTVs, Tractors, Skidders, etc.) is used on multiple properties and although your property is invasive free, if the equipment has been used in areas with invasive plants, the seeds (and even whole plants) can be caught up in wheel wells, drivetrains, and chassis. One way you can ensure that you are not creating a bigger problem while trying to create great habitat, is to ensure you thoroughly clean your equipment, or require your contractors to, prior to using it on your property.



If you do notice a population of invasive plants on your property, it is extremely important to begin managing it as soon as possible. The longer the population goes unchecked, the bigger it becomes, and the more seeds it adds to the seed bank. Recognizing the problem, and beginning to treat it promptly will ensure higher success of control in the long-term. Several methods are available for control of invasive plants. Mechanical control can be very successful with shallow rooted or annual species, such as *Perilla Mint* and Japanese Stilt grass when populations are small. Simply hand pull the plant when the soil is wet, place in a garbage bag and dispose of properly. Herbicide control is also very effective with small populations and can be used on all three species mentioned above. Whenever using herbicide, be sure to follow label instructions to verify proper use.

The key takeaway is that we all have a role to play in creating and maintaining quality wild turkey habitat. Invasive plants are a major threat to this quality habitat. We can all take a few simple steps to ensure we are not spreading invasive plants after working in an infested area; pressure wash and/or blow debris and dirt off of equipment, thoroughly clean boots of any debris, and regularly inspect our properties for new populations of invasive plants.

Advertising & Article Deadlines for the Show Me Gobbler Publication
Fall Deadline - November 30, 2022

The George C. Clark Missouri State Chapter Member Harvest Page

Share your outdoor experiences with your NWTf peers, PLEASE submit them to John Burk at jb Burk@nwtf.net with a brief photo description and they will be considered for the harvest page section of your Show Me Gobbler newsletter.



Bryker Hensley's 1st turkey and he was guided by his big brother, Bryce Hensley. 12" beard & spurs just over an 1" in Vernon County, Missouri.



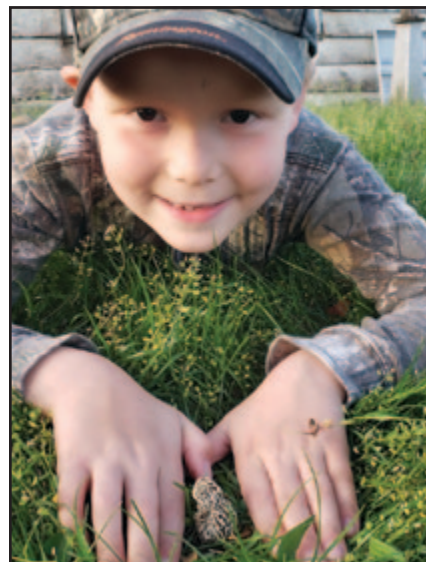
Henry, son of Eric Collop, President Parkville Gobblers Chapter, shot this 23 pound gobbler opening morning of youth season.



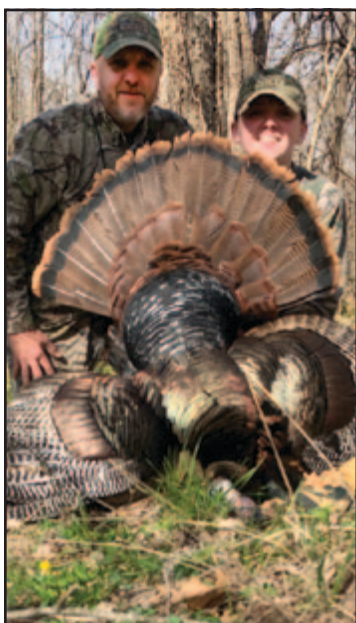
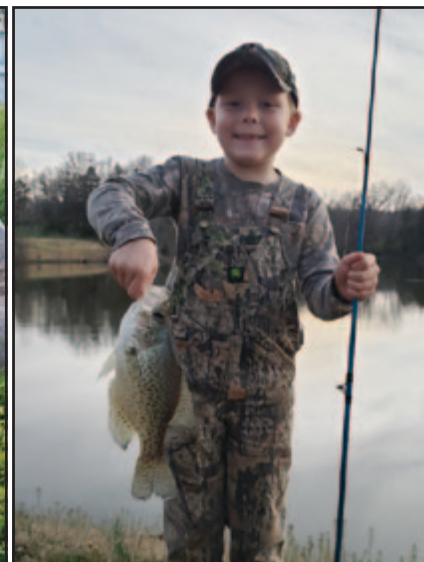
10 year old Stratton Mansfield from Nevada killed a 25 lb gobbler this spring. Parents Cameron and Lakyn Cartwright, Nevada, MO, and Henry and Kelley Wendleton, Butler, MO.



Cole Erwin, successfully mentored by RD Mike Allen this spring.



Jace Van Leer of the 4 Rivers Chapter accomplished the Missouri trifecta. Finding morels, catching a crappie, and shooting a turkey all in the same day! WAY TO GO JACE!



Left: 15 year old Avery Dean, son of Missouri State Chapter Board member, Adam Dean. Vernon County, Missouri. Right: Avery picks up a second bird, this time in Rulo, Nebraska. Congrats Avery!



Brant, son of Don Masek of the Kingdom of Callaway Limbhangers with their MO 2022 double.



Danita Rechkemmer with her first turkey, mentored by husband and Project Forester, Will Rechkemmer.



Lincoln Hills Committee member, Logan Shaw, with his Kansas bird.



Four Rivers Chapter member, Eldo Meyer, with his Missouri and Nebraska birds.



Liam Rasmussen, Grandson of Four Rivers Chapter leader Eldo Meyer, with one of his Missouri birds.



Lisa Beumer, of the Walt Beumer Memorial Chapter with her first double, AND... she completed her Grand Slam on opening day south zone Immokalee, Florida AND... as a bonus caught some beautiful Peacock Bass!



— NWTF SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS —



Carter Vandeloecht of the Chariton County Full Strutters.



Mo State Scholarship winner, Owen Fraser, with the Kirksville Ridge Runners.

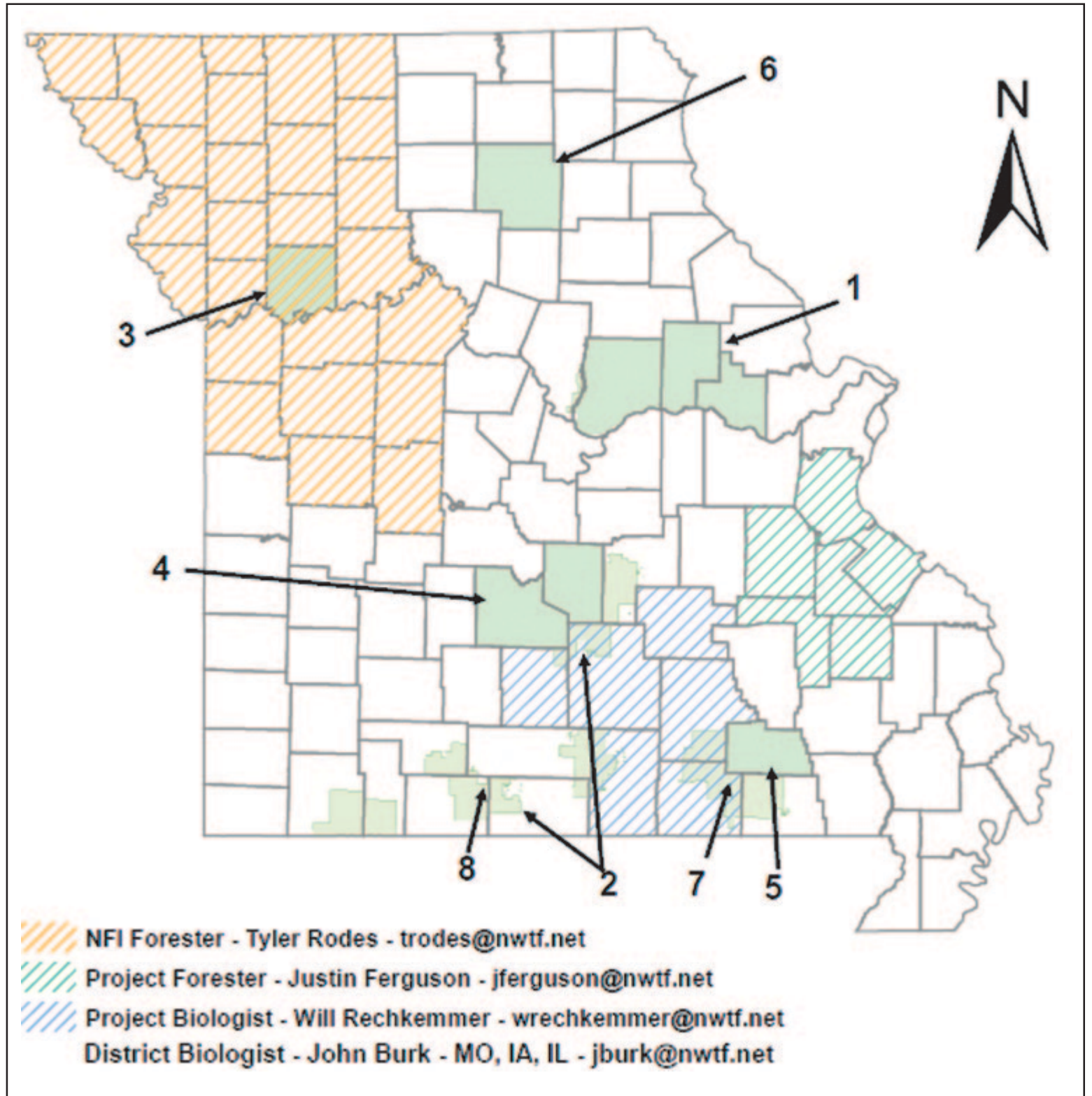


Chance Corbett of the Grand River Gobblers.

2021-22 NWTF Missouri Wild Turkey Habitat Projects

Will Rechkemmer,
NWTF Project Biologist

The projects listed below in the table and on the map are wild turkey habitat and hunting heritage projects to be conducted by partners with funding made available through the George Clark Missouri State Chapter of the NWTF. Funding for these projects is provided through the NWTF Super Fund from revenue generated by NWTF members and guests at Hunting Heritage events throughout the state. Funding for these projects totaled \$71,047.55 for the 2021-22 project period and included 8 different projects in 6 different areas. With partner contributions of \$401,508.68 the total project value for the 2021-22 project period is \$472,556.23. Project numbers on the map correspond to the projects in the table. NWTF Forester and Biologist territories are also highlighted on the map where Foresters and Biologists are providing technical assistance to private landowners to create and improve wild turkey habitat.



MO-NWTF 2021-2022 Habitat Projects.

Project #	Location	Project Description	Acres	Dollars Allocated	In-Kind Match
1	Callaway, Warren, Montgomery Counties	River Hills Private Land Cost-share	760	\$7,100.00	\$71,000.00
2	Mark Twain National Forest (MTNF)	Assist MTNF Aerial Ignition Prescribed Burning	50,000	\$29,500.00	\$190,580.00
3	Ray County	Seed Drill	N/A	\$5,000.00	\$30,725.00
4	Laclede/Pulaski Counties	Mentored Turkey Hunt	N/A	\$1,100.00	\$6,300.00
5	Carter County	Mentored Turkey Hunt	N/A	\$750.00	N/A
6	Macon County	Seed Drill	N/A	\$3,000.00	\$36,100.00
7	Handy Stewardship Project – MTNF	Open Land and Woodland Restoration	1,073	\$11,479.00*	\$35,394.82*
8	Arkansas View Stewardship Project – MTNF	Glade Restoration	96	\$13,118.55*	\$31,408.86*
Total:				\$71,047.55	\$401,508.68
Grand Total:				\$472,556.23	

*These values are total project values over the course of 2018-Present

New Project: Wild Turkey Banding and Harvest Rate Estimation

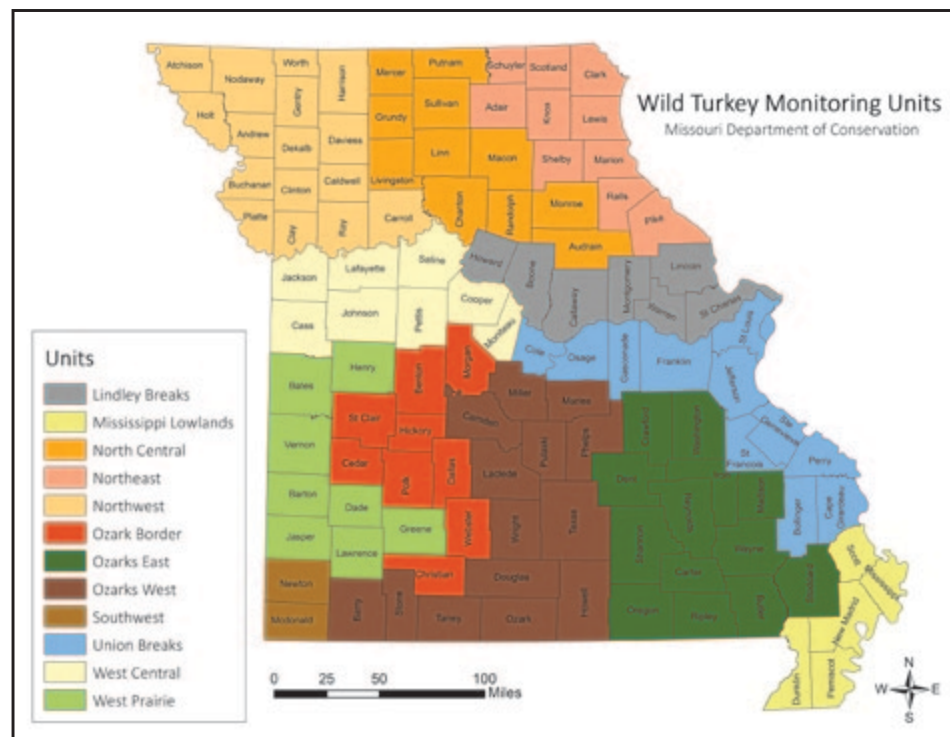
By Reina M. Tyl
Wild Turkey and Ruffed Grouse Biologist
Missouri Department of Conservation

This winter, we embarked on a new research project aimed at estimating male turkey harvest rates—or the proportion of males harvested—during the spring and fall hunting seasons. We are currently in the process of developing new population models for each Wild Turkey Monitoring Unit (TMU) that will allow us to estimate turkey abundance, harvest rates, and other population dynamics across the state. The models are being developed using available data from wild turkey field studies conducted in the Ozarks East, Northeast and North Central TMUs. During the development of these models, it became apparent that the existing data was not a good fit for some of the transitional areas between the Ozarks and the more open areas of north and west Missouri. We determined that updated harvest rate information for male turkeys in two TMUs—Ozark Border and Union Breaks—was needed to improve model performance.

The Ozark Border and Union Breaks TMUs are very linear and cover a broad geographic area. Ultimately, we decided to concentrate our efforts in Cedar, Polk, and St. Clair counties in the Ozark Border TMU and Ste. Genevieve, Perry, and Bollinger counties in the Union Breaks TMU. Ultimately, we were looking to band turkeys by capturing them with rocket nets, but the first

step involved finding flocks of turkeys and baiting them into suitable capture sites. We employed a mix of scouting for turkey flocks from public roadways, reaching out to local MDC staff to see where they normally see flocks of turkeys, and contacting landowner cooperatives and local NWTf Chapters to see if their members were willing to let us trap turkeys on their properties. We also scouted for flocks of turkeys on public lands within the study areas.

From January through March, we captured and banded a total of 86 turkeys during 21 capture events at 17 sites across 7 counties. While we were targeting males, we ended up capturing and banding 10 hens during this effort as well. A summary of our capture and banding results are as follows:



Improved turkey population models are under development for each of the 12 Wild Turkey Monitoring Units (TMUs). This harvest rate estimation project is occurring within the Ozark Border (red) and Union Breaks (blue) TMUs.



Several multiple-bearded males were banded this past winter, including a jake with 4 beards (left) and a gobbler with 2 beards (right).



Boom! A trail camera used to monitor activity at a bait site was perfectly timed to snap this photo of the moment the rocket net was deployed to capture 5 gobblers.

County	Hens Banded	Gobblers Banded	Jakes Banded	Total Banded
Benton	0	2	0	2
Bollinger	0	2	0	2
Cedar	5	5	7	17
Dallas	0	0	0	0
Perry	0	0	2	2
Polk	0	21	19	40
St. Clair	0	3	0	3
Ste. Genevieve	5	5	10	20
Total	10	38	38	86

A total of 12 banded male turkeys were reported harvested during the 2022 spring turkey season, two of which were harvested by youth hunters during the youth weekend. Perhaps the best part about calling these folks to thank them for reporting their harvest was having the opportunity to hear the stories of their hunt, and their surprise and delight upon realizing they took a banded turkey.

This winter's banding effort was the first of 3 winter trapping seasons. This project would not have been possible without generous cooperation from private landowners in these areas, and we would not be able to gather important information about our harvest rates without hunters calling in to report their harvest of these banded turkeys. We thank you for your important role in this effort.

Thirteenth Annual Governors Youth Turkey Hunt

By John Burk & Tyler Schwartz

The 2022 Governors Youth Turkey Hunt marks the 13th year of this very special event. The hunt serves as a recognition by our government, of the importance of natural resources and outdoor recreation to the Missouri citizenry. It is also a celebration of Missouri's leading role in recruiting, retaining, and reactivating hunters.

The youth started the weekend off on the day before the season opened by attending an informational session on turkeys and turkey calling. The youth learned the basics of calling, woods etiquette, and other things to be aware of when pursuing wild turkeys. They also had an opportunity to pattern their shotguns and learn about hunter safety. This very informative clinic was put on by the dedicated staff at the Missouri Department of Conservation.

The evening portion of Friday's festivities took place at the Governor's mansion where the youth and a guest were able to enjoy an elegant dinner. Representatives from the partnering agencies and organizations spoke briefly about the importance of the event as well as elevated the anticipation of what awaited the young hunters throughout the remainder of this special weekend. The speakers included Dan Zerr, the State

Chapter President from the National Wild Turkey Federation, Sara Parker Pauley from the Missouri Department of Conservation, Zach Morris, President of the Conservation Federation of Missouri, Tyler Schwartz, Executive Director of the Conservation Federation of Missouri, and Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe. The youth were then each given a custom call made by Jim Clark before taking their picture with Sara, the Lt. Governor and Jim Clark's great nephew, Lawrence Bowlin, who was in attendance on behalf of Jim. From there the youth departed across the state to meet up with their landowners and guides to try and notch their first turkey tag.

Turkey hunting is a pretty weather-dependent activity. To get the best opportunity to experience "the show" you pray for clear calm conditions at dawn. The youth were very lucky to have pretty good weather across the state to be able to have some great encounters with turkeys this year. Overall the results were good with 8 out of the 14 kids participating harvesting birds. Statewide, 2,881 birds were harvested over the past youth weekend, April 9 and 10. Top harvest counties were Miller with 87 birds harvested, Osage with 71, and Franklin with 71. Comparatively, young hunters checked 2,795 turkeys during the 2021 spring youth weekend.



Freshman representative and 13-year supporter of this event, Bruce Sassmann put a cherry on top again this year. Bruce is having plaques made for each of the kids that harvested turkeys with an official resolution capturing their special weekend.

The perennial success that this event has accomplished is largely a product of the overall quality of the experiences it has been able to provide the participants. All of these hunts throughout the 13 year history of this event have occurred on private land. We are therefore indebted to the generosity of the private landowners and guides that make it possible every year. The 2022 Guides and Landowners included: R.L. Bennett,

Justin Furgeson, Bill Haag, Bruce Sassmann, Steven Harrison, Don Masek, Brant Masek, Lucas Oil, Jim Cihy, Cole Cihy, Tyler Schwartz, Tim Taylor, Kevin Hess, Don Dettmann, and Jason Isabelle.

Thanks, once again, to everyone that made this year's hunt so special for Missouri's youth. Most of the landowners and guides are dedicated NWTF and/or CFM members and without them, this event would not be possible. We especially thank the landowners; the incredibly special gift that you willingly give year after year cannot be repaid. Please know that all involved are aware of this and that your efforts truly are making a difference in the cherished memories that you made possible.

Labor of Love

By Will Rechkemmer, NWTF Project Biologist

Habitat management is no easy task. You often hear the folks that have been at it awhile call it a "Labor of Love". Blood, sweat and tears is what it takes to create quality habitat, and it's a year 'round job. On top of all the other things we have going on in our lives, we still find time to get out and complete the daily, weekly, and monthly tasks that come with land management. There is plenty of labor involved, undoubtedly, but it is a love of wildlife and nature, that drives the hard work.

For the landowner just starting out, it can be a tough realization that restoration isn't a one and done. Oftentimes, it takes years to realize the goals we set out with. That being said, there are

plenty of small successes along the way that drive us to keep grinding away, like finding a large deer shed in an area you've been improving bedding cover, or flushing a turkey brood out of a recent pollinator planting. These small successes can become addicting and drive us to work harder.

For the weekend land manager (like most of us), it is important to set realistic goals. Start small, work on projects you can complete, and slowly work toward the end goal, that eating an elephant one bite at a time saying, comes to mind here. Your first step should be meeting with a professional forester or biologist, and developing a plan for your property. This plan will split your property into stands or units with priority levels, which make achieving your end goals simpler, one unit at a time.

With plan in hand begin by crossing off those high priority items first. Typically, these items are going to be things like removing invasive species, creating diversity in cover types on your farm, and installing firebreaks, trails, or roads that will make management easier. Forming a landowner co-op with like-minded neighbors, can also be beneficial to add capacity and share equipment costs, and can create landscape scale impacts. Over time, those small successes will add up and make all the effort worth it, such as having enough turkeys to hold a youth hunt on your property, or experiencing first hunts with your kids or grandkids. With the majority of Missouri being privately owned, if we want to push the needle of quality wildlife habitat upwards, we are the ones that have to move that needle. All it takes is a labor of love, and maybe some blood, sweat and tears.

Managing the Turkey Decline

By John Burk
District Biologist for MO, IA, and IL.

It has been a weird spring and, although the 2022 harvest was higher than 2021 it was still not what most Missourians expect when they hit the spring turkey woods. I have been turkey hunting since the mid80's and this season was my first "skunking" ever and 5 of my 10 trips resulted in no birds even heard. Missouri residents, for decades, have enjoyed some of the best deer and turkey hunting to be found anywhere on earth. This is especially true if you hunt north of the river where our rich soils are blanketed by a mosaic of oak/hickory upland forests, legume over-seeded pastures, row crop, CRP ground in native warm season grasses, and capillaried by riparian habitats all combining to enable some of the highest carrying capacities you'll find anywhere. Talk to anyone that hunted turkeys in north Missouri in the late 1990's and early 2000's and they will tell you stories of April spring woods where the gobbling gobblers were too numerous to even count and winter flocks numbered in the hundreds. Talk to anyone that has hunted turkeys in the last 5 years and you'll hear mostly complaining that the gobbling gobblers are definitely countable and in some cases that count is zero. The turkey decline is real, significant, not unique to Missouri, and everyone would like to hear the spring woods filled with gobbling again. The reason for the decline is that our poults are not surviving at the same rate they were during those hay days in the early 2000's. Adult mortality has not changed, nesting and even hatching rates are also within the range of what has historically been considered normal. However, once hatched, the number of poults that we add to the fall population is significantly lower than what has been previously measured. The recently concluded 5 year study in northeast Missouri documented some of the lowest poult survival rates ever recorded in the Midwest and there is not a single harvest regulation that can be manipulated that will improve this. Although there are multiple reasons for this change, it is hard to ignore the fact that at the same time our turkey numbers have declined, populations of animals that eat eggs and poults have increased significantly. Although this relationship between higher populations of predators and lower populations of prey between now and the early 2000's seems pretty linear this is not a problem that is as easily solved as many want to believe.

Many have been asking the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) to extend the trapping season and many others think a bounty would be the right way to go. While many do not value furbearers and consider them a nuisance to be rid of, they are native species that belong on our landscape as much as the turkeys do so using an enormous chunk of the states budget to fund an eradication program would not be realistic or responsible. However, MDC did recently approve of dramatic expansions to the trapping season. Prior to these

recently approved changes, the Missouri trapping season started on 15 November and ended at the end of January. From this point forward, folks that want to remove predators from their properties will be able to legally do so using cage traps and dog proof traps for raccoon and opossums from 1 August until 15 October. The regular fur season will then resume on 15 November. For fox and badgers the season will end as it had at the end of January but the season for everything else will remain open until the end of February and for coyote, raccoons, skunks, and opossums you'll be able to continue legally trapping until 14 April. These changes will remove the argument that predator numbers are a problem that MDC is refusing to address because the fur season will be expanded from 2.5 months to 7.5 months. It is worthy to note that 2.5 months had previously always been plenty of time to balance these populations through legal and responsible harvest. This being said, these changes will not accomplish the balance that those that lobbied for them are seeking because the issue of high predator populations is not lack of time to trap it's lack of incentive to trap. The folks that weren't trapping when the season was 2.5 month long, will be the same folks that aren't going to trap with a 7.5 month long season. Predator control, to be effective, has to occur at the landscape scale. These changes might be beneficial to those landowners with large properties that have also been doing the important work of intensive and effective habitat management and have the time and resources needed to effectively remove enough predators to make a difference.

I love the unique challenge that the sport of fur trapping and predator hunting offers me and I still participate in both selling finished hides and other products in niche markets. However, this is a lot of extra work and most need the economic incentive that comes with a strong raw fur market because trapping and fur hunting is a lot of work and requires expensive specialized equipment and knowledge to be successful. As stated above, bounties would also not work. A bounty system would have to essentially replace the fur market as the incentive. Some folks think that offering \$2/tail would be all that was needed. However, a quick glance at the historical fur harvest records indicate that the bounty would have to be more like \$15-\$20/tail to create enough of an incentive to get folks back trapping and this would total in the millions and be nearly impossible to control the fraud that would likely occur.

Trapping will certainly hone your skills as a woodsman because being successful at it requires a more detailed understanding of animal behavior and it could even be considered a form of redneck brain exercise. If you put out several dozen sets, remembering how many you set, where they all are, and finding them in the dark of the predawn morning hours can be challenging. Trapping also gives me a different perspective and appreciation for the same piece of ground than when I look at it

through my turkey or deer hunter eyes. Analyzing the landscape, assessing topographical features, reading tracks and sign in an effort to select a particular trap site and then properly setting and bedding the trap is something I have always enjoyed. The work is a little physical and once the finishing touches have been put on the last trap on the line the anticipation of what that line will produce the next morning has always been a bit like a kid awaiting Christmas morning to dawn so they can find out what is under the tree to me. November through the end of January has always been a pretty special time for me and there is not much else going on outdoors-wise during the last month of the season so trapping is a great way to spend time outdoors at that time of year. Although I love to trap, and am pretty good at it, I do it because I enjoy the sport and not to "do my part" to help out the turkeys, rabbits, and quail. Predator control can only be achieved at the landscape level and that can only effectively and affordably be accomplished when everyone is out there applying harvest pressure across the board.

If you want to do something that WILL make a difference for the turkeys, another physical outdoor activity that is best done at the same time of year is active forest management. Most of our forested land in Missouri is overstocked and closed canopied. There are roughly twice as many trees in our average Missouri woods than there should be to maximize the health and growth rate of each tree. By felling or girdling excess trees, the ones that remain will grow larger crowns that produce more acorns as well as put on height and diameter much faster than when it is competing with other trees for water and soil nutrients. For detailed information on how to effectively implement active forest management on your property it is best to contact a resource professional. The NWTf has 3 Project Foresters servicing different areas of the state that provide technical assistance to private landowners. Tyler Rodes services most of northwest Missouri (trodes@nwtf.net), Justin Ferguson services St. François and surrounding counties (jferguson@nwtf.net), and Will Rechkemmer services Texas and surrounding counties (wrechkemmer@nwtf.net). If you are interested in receiving technical assistance in an area they do not cover you can also go to <https://mdc.mo.gov/contact-engage> for contact information on your MDC resource professional that serves your county. Although I recommend seeking professional advise directly from a resource professional I will offer the following general guidelines. Selecting which trees you should remove is usually determined by species, size, and shape. You want to get rid of trees that don't have much economic or wildlife value (maples, elms, ironwood, some hickories). Another determination would be to keep a diversity of species that are valuable. With oaks, having a mix of white oak and red oak species is better than favoring all whites or all reds. White oak acorns take one year to develop and red oaks take two. White oaks flower 2 weeks ahead of reds and drop their



The "one two" punch of TSI and prescribed burning required to restore and maintain open woodlands which are superior brood rearing habitat for turkeys.

bounty pretty much all at once early in the fall while reds sprinkle throughout the fall and winter. From a wildlife perspective, the benefit to managing for this diversity is somewhat of an insurance policy against a total mast failure. Both deer and turkey rely heavily upon acorns during the fall and winter so wherever there are acorns that is where the deer and turkey will be. Great mast crops are also linked to deer and turkey productivity the following spring. The next determination would be removing trees that are ill formed or suppressed. Another simple rule of thumb that can help you gauge how much to cut is to take the diameter at breast height (DBH) measurement of the tree you are keeping, multiply that by two, convert that to feet, and remove everything else in that circle. In other words, if you have a 15 inch tree, remove everything within 30 feet of that tree. The next determination would be how to manage the volume of trees to be removed. In many cases, the recommended thinning rate would be half the trees in your woods. Therefore, if you dropped them all you would have a treatment area that would look like tornado damage and, from a turkey management perspective, it would be too thick. I usually recommend dropping everything 8 inches or less and ringing everything bigger. Ringing is essentially, cutting completely through the cambium or bark of the tree all the way around it in two places about 3 or 4 inches apart. When the cambium is completely breached the flow of water and nutrients to the tree is cut off and the tree dies. The desired canopy gap still exists without creating the jumbled mess on the forest floor and the standing dead tree will provide foraging sites and probably also future denning sites as it decays over time. The canopy gaps created by these thinnings allow sunlight to reach the forest floor. The grasses and broadleaf plants that respond to this daylighting create excellent nesting and brood rearing habitat for turkeys and numerous other species that prefer this kind of vegetative structure.

To maintain this structure you will eventually have to also incorporate the use of prescribed fire or the grass and broadleaf plants will be replaced by tree seedlings and saplings. A portion of this type of vegetative structure can also be beneficial but when the entire stand is allowed to turn into a hardwood thicket it is no longer usable space for wild turkeys.

Trapping and predator hunting is a challenging and rewarding pastime that I encourage everyone to try but it does not move the needle much at the scale it is currently being done when it comes to increasing turkey populations. If you want more turkeys on your place you get a lot more bang for your buck by focusing on providing high quality nesting and brood rearing habitat. Predator control is probably the most expensive thing that you can effectively do and even then, it rarely mitigates for marginal habitat quality. It doesn't take many predators to impact turkey populations when nesting and brood rearing habitat is low quality or sparse. However, when your nesting and brood rearing cover is of high quality and abundant, more of your poults will survive and your population will increase. If you think about it, it makes sense. When you have great nesting and brood rearing habitat you also actually have higher predator densities because good habitat is good for everything and prey populations determine predator populations, not the other way around.

November through April is a great time to be an outdoors person. Deer seasons are in full swing on the front end and from mid-November until the end of February you can learn a new skill that I have found adds significantly to the quality of my outdoor year. Perfecting your "honey hole" can be accomplished from January through mid-April and the end of that window will provide you with the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of your labor.



The author after a successful "first stand" predator calling.



The author after a successful run of his trapline.



Example of a restored open woodland that is pivotal to supporting a healthy turkey population regardless of predator densities.



Do you plan to hunt turkeys this fall?

By Reina M. Tyl
Wild Turkey and Ruffed Grouse Biologist
Missouri Department of Conservation

Whether hunting by firearm or bow, the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is asking hunters to submit feathers from turkeys they harvest this fall. The information gathered from these feathers will improve models used to monitor turkey population trends and estimate turkey abundance across the state.

If you are interested in participating, please register at mdc.mo.gov/turkeyfeathers. After you Telecheck your turkey, please retain a wing and 3-5 feathers from the breast. You will be mailed a feather submission packet, including a postage-paid return envelope to submit the feathers at no cost to you.

The success of this effort is dependent on voluntary participation from turkey hunters like yourself. Thank you in advance for playing your part to help conserve Missouri's wild turkey resource.



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Next Deadline = November 30, 2022

Report Observations of Turkeys during June, July, and August

By Reina M. Tyl
Wild Turkey and Ruffed Grouse Biologist
Missouri Department of Conservation

Help the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) assess the quality of the hatch and gauge turkey abundance around the state by participating in the annual wild turkey brood survey. Previously administered using postcards, a new electronic version of the survey makes the survey accessible to more people and streamlines summarization of the results.

Register to become a brood survey cooperator by clicking the link below or scanning the QR code from a mobile device. As a cooperator, you will receive a reminders about the survey and a summary report at the end of each survey. You can also receive a copy of your submitted observations upon request. For additional information about the brood survey, including a printable worksheet to keep track of

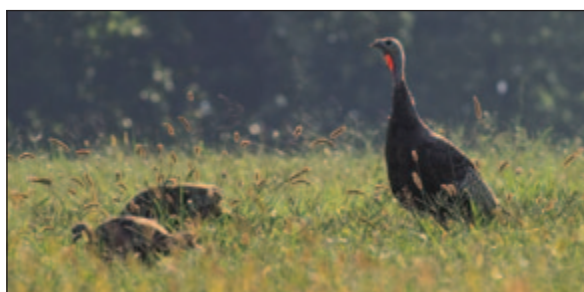


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your observations if you are frequently without internet access, visit: <https://mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/species/turkey/wild-turkey-brood-survey>



Show Me Gobbler Publication Status

As a Missouri member of the NWTF, you have been accustomed to receiving a printed version of the Show Me Gobbler. During the COVID 19 pandemic, it was decided by the State Board of Directors to move to a digital version available on our State Website www.monwtf.org. This was done for economic reasons and greatly helped us during these past two years.

The State Board of Directors voted to bring back one printed issue a year, in December, which will allow us to include a paper ballot for State Board of Directors voting purposes. It was also decided to print this current issue to provide our membership with an update as to the status of the Show Me Gobbler and what the frequency will be for the immediate future.

For the balance of 2022, we will issue a summer issue, digitally and available on our website, as well as a printed issue in December. For 2023, both Spring/Summer and Summer/Fall issues will be digital and the December Winter issue will be printed.

We appreciate your continued support of the NWTF and hope you enjoy staying connected with the Show Me Gobbler

John Shene
Volunteer- Missouri State Board of Directors