

020018

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE LIBRARY
SK325.T8 W35 2001

- Wild turkey handbook / Minnesota D



3 0307 00062 0735

Wild Turkey Handbook



© Dominique Braud

SK
325
.T8
W35
2001

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Hunter Education Program

This document is made available electronically by the Minnesota Legislative Reference Library as part of an ongoing digital archiving project. <http://www.leg.state.mn.us/lrl/lrl.asp>

(Funding for document digitization was provided, in part, by a grant from the Minnesota Historical & Cultural Heritage Program.)

The Wild Turkey Handbook

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Hunter Education Program

Welcome

Welcome to the Advanced Hunter Education Program: Wild Turkey Clinic. This clinic is one of a series of hunter education programs offered by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Enforcement. We are pleased that you have a special interest in this session which covers a variety of topics such as methods of turkey management, hunting techniques, turkey calling, camouflage, hunting safety, and much more. By the time you have completed the clinic, we hope you will have developed a better understanding of the wild turkey and a true sense of appreciation for this magnificent bird.

There are several question periods included in the program, so please wait until the appropriate time to ask your questions. You'll find space to record notes from the clinic at the end of this handbook.

Information about the DNR Division of Enforcement's Hunter Education Programs

The Division of Enforcement has three hunter related education programs. For the beginner there is the Firearms Safety Program (FAS). The FAS program emphasizes the safe handling of firearms in the field and in the home. It is designed for the hunter and the non-hunter alike. It is required in Minnesota and other states for persons of certain age groups to purchase a hunting license. The program is open to those 11 years of age or older. As is the case with all of the division programs, it is instructed by highly trained volunteer instructors.

The division offers the Minnesota Bowhunter Education Program (MBEP) for all bowhunters 12 years of age and older.¹ It is designed for beginning to experienced bowhunters. The seminar is based on the International Bowhunter Education Program materials. The seminar is required to participate in selected bowhunts in Minnesota as well as to purchase bowhunting licenses in some states.



The Advanced Hunter Education Program (AHE) is offered by the Division of Enforcement. It is open to those 14 years of age and older.² It is designed for the outdoors person and hunter that have some firearms handling experience. The basic seminar is a six-session program that covers such topics as hunter behavior, laws and regulations, planning a hunt, survival, map and compass, small game, big game, waterfowl, and more. Participants that successfully complete this seminar, besides expanding their knowledge, receive a card which can be used when purchasing a hunting license in states which have a hunter education requirement.

The AHE certification can also be earned through a format of individual clinics. By completing this wild turkey clinic, you are a step closer to earning your AHE certifications. Part of the certification involves attending five approved single topic clinics, one of which must include a shooting activity. Also, a take home, open book examination must be completed. In addition to this clinic, you can choose from black bear, waterfowl, white-tailed deer, planning a hunt, survival in the outdoors, map and compass, firearms safety in the home, and more. There are no age restrictions for attending a clinic.

You can get information on other clinics and all of the DNR Safety Training Programs by calling toll free 1-800-366-8917. You can also find information at the DNR website at www.dnr.state.mn.us/enforcement/safety. Information about workshop opportunities for women offered through Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) is available at the toll-free number listed above.

If the reader finds errors, omissions, or has suggested changes to these materials, please contact our Camp Ripley office at 1-800-366-8917 or write: DNR Enforcement Division, Nelson Hall, attention Enforcement Education Program Coordinator, 15011 Hwy. 15, Little Falls, Mn. 56345-4173.

¹Persons 12 through 15 years of age must have an FAS card.

²Those 14 and 15 years old must have an FAS card.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
History of Wild Turkeys in Minnesota	2
Wild Turkey Biology, Characteristics, and Behaviors	3
Physical Characteristics	3
Wild Turkey Habits	4
Courtship and Mating	5
Nesting	5
Food and Cover	5
Range and Distribution	6
Turkey Management	7
Hunting Behavior	8
Turkey Hunting Behavior	15
Hunting Safety	16
Wild Turkey Hunting Safety	21
Turkey Hunting	24
Preparing for the Hunt	24
Equipment	24
Types of Turkey Calls	25
Calling Techniques	25
Scouting	26
Shooting	27
Preseason Shotgun Patterning	27
Hunting Regulations	27
Turn in Poachers (TIP)	28
Questions for the Conservation Officer	29
Spring Hunting	31
Fall Hunting	34
Bowhunting the Wild Turkey	36
Equipment	37
Blinds Versus Tree Stands	37
When to Draw	38
Decoy Tactics	38
Taking Aim	38
After the Hit	39
Turkeys and Trophies	40
Cleaning and Cooking	41
Maps for Use when Hunting Wild Turkeys	42
Using a Compass and a Map	43
Video: "Wild Turkey Hunting Success and Safety"	47
National Wild Turkey Federation	48
Gobbler Profile	49

RECEIVED

JAN 07 2002

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE LIBRARY
STATE OFFICE BUILDING

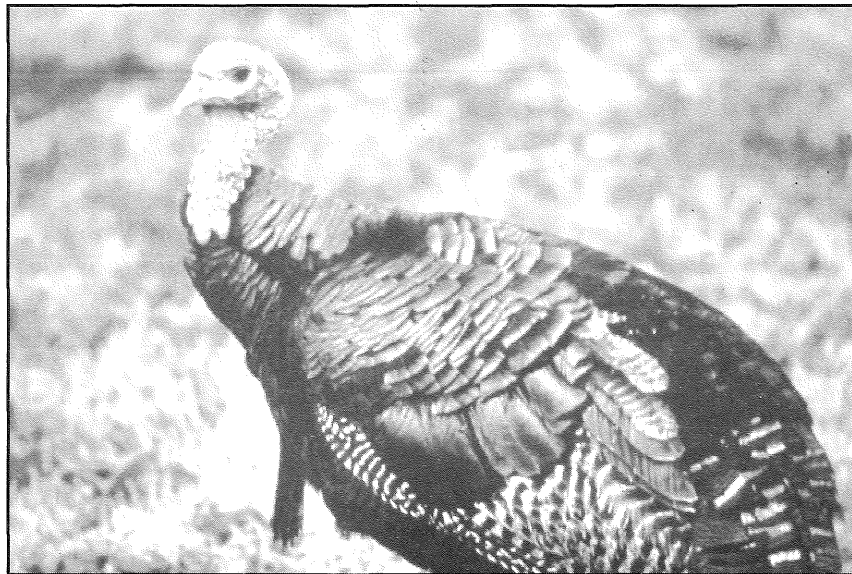
Introduction

The wild turkey's reputation among hunters is legendary. Wily, clever, smart, crafty, shrewd, and discerning are adjectives used to describe this largest of North American game birds. The hunter's challenge is embodied in an old Native American saying: "Any brave can kill a deer; it takes a chief to kill a turkey."

The turkey has the natural "equipment" to outmaneuver the vast majority of hunters. Respected turkey biologist, Wayne Bailey, claims the wild turkey's eyesight is 10 times better than humans and its keen sense of hearing is about eight times better. In addition, these birds have no sense of curiosity. Sudden movement or noise immediately sends them running (up to 30 MPH) or flying (up to 55 MPH in a glide) to parts unknown. Without question, hopeful turkey hunters have their work cut out for them.

Minnesota's wild turkeys are just as wary as their free-roaming ancestors that were trapped in other states and transplanted to Minnesota's southeast counties. They are likely to remain wild as long as there are annual hunting seasons. Although the objective of the turkey season is to provide recreation, hunting also serves to maintain the birds' wild nature.

This booklet presents the background and biology of Minnesota's wild turkeys, and provides information about hunting Minnesota's wild turkeys in a safe and responsible manner.



DNR staff photo

Wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) tom.

History of Wild Turkeys in Minnesota

When the Pilgrims chose the wild turkey to be the symbol of the Thanksgiving celebration, this largest of the North American game birds was very abundant. Over time, disappearing habitat and unregulated hunting decimated turkey populations nationwide. Not so today. Thanks to careful wildlife management, this much sought after game bird is a comeback success story.

Minnesota is on the northern fringe of the wild turkey range. But progressive wildlife management techniques and a mature oak-hickory forest have enabled the re-establishment and expansion of wild turkeys' populations into new areas.

The first attempts to re-establish wild turkey populations in Minnesota began in 1926 when 250 game birds were released in Winona and Houston counties, and, of all places, in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. These initial releases failed, as did later attempts involving several hundred more pen-raised birds.

From 1964 to 1968, the Minnesota Conservation Department, now the DNR, tried a different approach. A swap of ruffed grouse, bear, and walleye brought to Minnesota 39 turkeys trapped in Nebraska, Arkansas, and South Dakota. These wild turkey transplants were released in the Whitewater Wildlife Management Area. Between 1971 and 1973, an additional 30 wild-trapped birds from Missouri were transplanted to the Crooked Creek area of Houston County.

To date, the Minnesota turkey population has maintained itself despite predation, disease, and harsh winters. From the original transplants, the fall turkey population exceeded 40,000 by 1999. Wild turkeys now occupy about 44,000 square miles of territory, most of which is in the oak-hickory covered hills of southeastern Minnesota. With continued natural range expansion and further trapping and transplanting of wild Minnesota birds, all the turkey habitat in Minnesota should contain wild turkeys within the next few years.

Additional transplants will continue in other selected areas, since research has indicated that turkeys can survive outside the hardwood covered hills of southeastern Minnesota. The time may come when a stable turkey population exists throughout Minnesota's suitable turkey habitat, thus greatly extending turkey hunting zones.

- The presence of good turkey habitat and the absence of free-roaming or feral pen-raised turkeys are important considerations in selecting areas for transplants. Feral turkeys often come in contact with domestic birds around farmyards, contracting disease that may then be transmitted to wild turkey flocks. Release of game-farm or pen-raised turkeys is prohibited without a DNR permit.

Wild Turkey Biology, Characteristics, and Behaviors

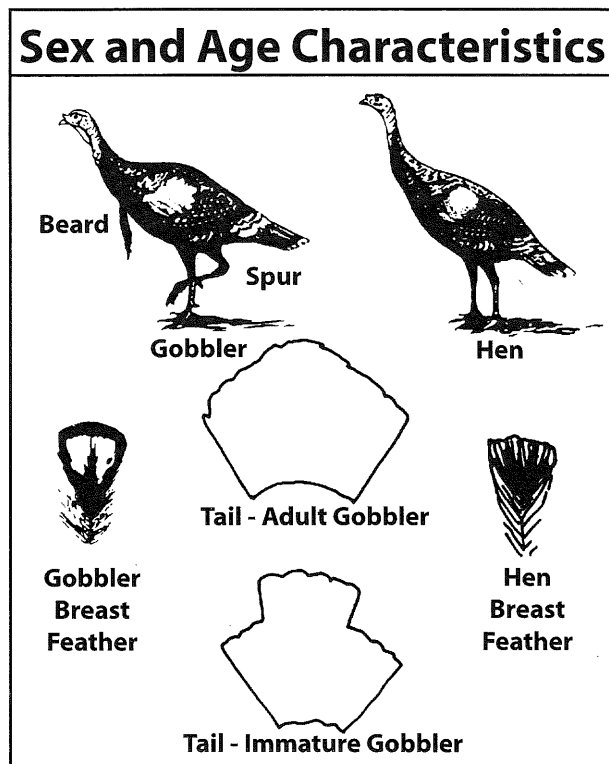
Minnesota hunters are fortunate that they have two opportunities a year to hunt turkeys. Spring and fall hunts present very different hunting conditions and are subject to different laws. The spring hunts require hunters to interact with the gobbling toms (only bearded turkeys are legal) by using calling techniques, camouflage, patience, and cunning. The fall hunt allows hunters to take either sex as well as the young of the year called poults. Because of these considerations and the totally different behavior of the turkey in the fall, hunters will need different skills and knowledge to be successful.

Hunters must know how to tell the difference between males and females for the spring hunt. This information is also very useful for hunting turkey in the fall. The spring hunter will want to know the difference between the much sought after old gobbler and a young male bird, or jake. To the beginning hunter, the physical differences

between the sexes and the sign that they leave may not be very noticeable, but with newly acquired knowledge and a little experience, identification will become easier.

Physical characteristics

A large male, or tom, wild turkey can weigh more than 29 pounds, stand three feet tall, and have a five-foot wingspan. Wing primaries have distinct white bars with a light gray background. The tail feathers are almost black with rusty markings and buff-colored tips. The tom's head is bald and blue—except during courtship. Then the skin becomes engorged with blood and turns red about the neck and reddish blue in the cheeks and white on top of the head. The legs are pinkish. An adult hen's head is sparsely covered with short brown feathers and her wing primaries are usually barred and rounded.



Other Visual Characteristics		
Characteristics	Hens (females)	Gobblers (males)
Beards:	Occasionally (4%)	Regularly
Droppings:	Looped, spiral, bulbous	Longer, straight, knob-like, j-shaped
Breast feathers:	Buff-colored tips	Black tipped
Spurs:	None	Yes
Track size:	4½" spread or less	Often greater than 4½" spread
Gobble:	Never	Frequently, especially in spring
Head adornments:	None	Snood, caruncles
Head colors:	Gray to gray-blue	Bright turquoise blue to bright red to bright blue

Juvenile turkeys, both jakes and jennies, do not have pronounced barring on the tips (the last inch or two) of the outermost couple of primary wing feathers. Rather, they are almost totally dark brown and very pointed. If the feathers are barred and squared off, it is probably a tom that has worn the wing tips off by strutting. At the same time, many jakes also strut and may wear off the pointed dark points.

The turkey has a range of voices—the whistle of the young bird, the alarm “putt,” the soft “cluck” of the hen’s tree call, the hen’s “here I am” yelp, the “cackle” or fly down from the roost call of the hen, and the male’s gobble.

There are several aging characteristics to observe. Immature gobblers (jakes) usually have beards less than four inches long and spurs of less than one-half inch; their middle tail feathers are longer than the others; and they have sharp, pointed, primary wing feathers with indistinct, alternating light and dark bars. Mature gobblers may have a beard more than one foot long, spurs one-half to two inches long, and tail feathers all of the same length. Hens lack spurs, and only four percent of hens have small beards.

Hunters soon discover that turkeys possess excellent eyesight and hearing. Some biologists claim turkeys can see 10 times better than humans and hear eight times better. Turkeys do not have three-dimensional vision and to see accurately, they must move their heads back and forth. However, they can easily detect directions, distance, size, shape, brightness, color, and intensity.

Wild turkey habits

Extremely wary, wild turkeys stay in flocks where they have many eyes to spot danger.

Turkeys are powerful, adept flyers that can fly straight up if danger is approaching. Wild turkeys are not at all curious—any sudden movement or noise sends them running or flying. Pen-reared birds seldom exhibit these traits.

Wild turkeys are most active in the morning and roost in trees at sundown. As a general rule, adult gobblers flock by themselves, very rarely joining hens and poults.

When feeding, turkeys need to see well in all directions for security against predators. Woodland edges provide the most favored foraging areas. Turkeys tend to avoid areas of dense brush. A relatively open understory in mature oak-hickory woodlands allows turkeys to forage for nuts and berries more extensively and frequently.

Wild turkeys prefer to roost at night in mature, open-branched hardwoods near hillsides. South- and east-facing slopes are preferred by turkeys for early sunlight and for shelter from northwest winter winds.

During nesting and brood-rearing seasons, wild turkeys require water daily and are rarely far from a water source. During other seasons, turkeys receive necessary water from the foods they eat.



Roosting wild turkey.

DNR staff photo

Courtship and mating

Courtship and mating, the most dramatic aspects of turkey behavior, begin early in April and continue until late May.

When displaying, the tom's loose skin under the lower beak (called a dewlap) changes colors from red to blue and from purple to white. The snood, a cone-like projection located just above the beak, elongates and swells during the display. Toms engage in "necking" contests with other toms, twining their necks together in a show of strength. The winner becomes a flock's dominant male.

Males develop a "breast sponge" during the breeding season. This padding of tissue, filled with oil and fat, apparently sustains the male during breeding season when he loses interest in eating. The sponge also serves as a display device—a protruding chest to attract hens. Head back, chest feathers puffed out, tail spread fan-like, the tom paces back and forth, sometimes taking several quick steps toward the female with its wings dragging the ground. Hens may leave the tom soon after being bred.

Nesting

After a successful mating, the hen becomes secretive, slipping away to find a suitable nesting spot. Most hens engage in nesting by mid to late April. It is during this period, when the number of receptive hens decreases, that males become most susceptible to hunters imitating the call of a hen.

The nest is a slight depression scratched in the ground by the hen. It is usually located around the edges of old fields, berry thickets, along woodland roads, and occasionally in hay fields.

Clutches average 10–12 eggs, and egg laying is completed in about 14 days. Hens normally cover the eggs with leaves when they leave the nest to forage. During the first days of incubation, the hen may abandon the nest if disturbed, or threatened by predators.

After about 28 days of incubation, all fertile eggs in the clutch hatch within a 24-hour period. Shortly after hatching, the new poults are led by the hen into a nearby field to feed on insects, a protein-rich food source. For four weeks, the poults are brooded on the ground until their primary (flight) feathers have developed.

Food and cover

Turkeys need two kinds of seasonal habitat. The first is in spring, summer, and fall when old hay fields, pastures, and open woods are important forage areas for insects, berries, green leaves, and seeds. Woodland edges provide the best foraging areas, and turkeys tend to avoid areas of dense brush. A relatively open understory in mature oak-hickory woodlands allows turkeys to forage for mast (nuts and berries) more extensively and frequently.

Young turkeys are voracious feeders and need high-protein insects during the first couple months of life. Young birds usually gain 10 to 15 pounds



DNR staff photo

Wild turkey hen.

between June and December. By late fall, turkeys depend on acorns, grains, fruits, and berries. They flock together for safety.

The second seasonal habitat is in Minnesota's severe winter weather when turkeys require a reliable food supply and roosting cover. South and west facing slopes are important foraging and resting areas as increased snow melt exposes food for these ground-feeding birds. Acorns are the staple of their winter diet so habitat should include a variety of oaks large enough to produce acorns. Unfortunately, acorn crops in Minnesota are not dependable. Sometimes turkeys have to depend on other staples such as corn, grain, and alfalfa.

Range and distribution

A race of wild turkeys called Easterns range over an extensive area in Minnesota, generally requiring 200–300 acres of habitat. Refer to the two maps (Figures 1 and 2) to get a general idea of where the turkeys are in Minnesota and their general population. As trap and transplant efforts continue, only time and the birds themselves will tell just how far

north wild turkeys will be able to become established and survive.

There are six races of turkeys, four are found in the United States, and two are found mainly in Mexico. Eastern wild turkeys are located mainly in the hardwood and mixed conifer forests of the eastern United States and range from southern Canada to northern Florida. Florida turkeys are found in subtropical central and southern Florida. Rio Grande turkeys are found in the brush lands of southwestern Kansas, eastern New Mexico, south to Texas, and into Mexico. Merriam turkeys are located in the mid-altitudinal pine forests of the Rocky Mountains. The Gould's (Mexican) turkey is federally protected and is found in northwestern New Mexico and south to southern Mexico. The Ocellated turkey lives in lower Mexico and Guatemala. The Ocellated turkey is a separate species from those found in the U.S. The five species found mainly in the U.S. and northern Mexico are subspecies of each other and will readily interbreed wherever their ranges overlap.

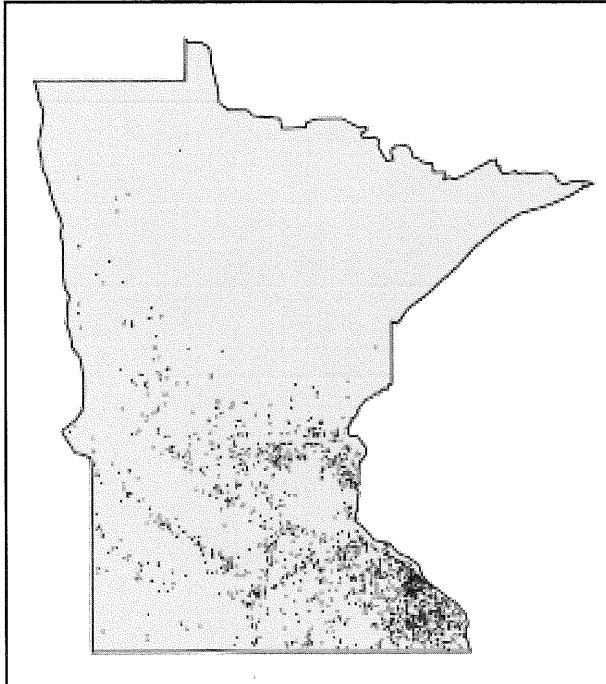


Figure 1. Locations of turkey sightings from a recent survey of antlerless-deer hunters in November and December.

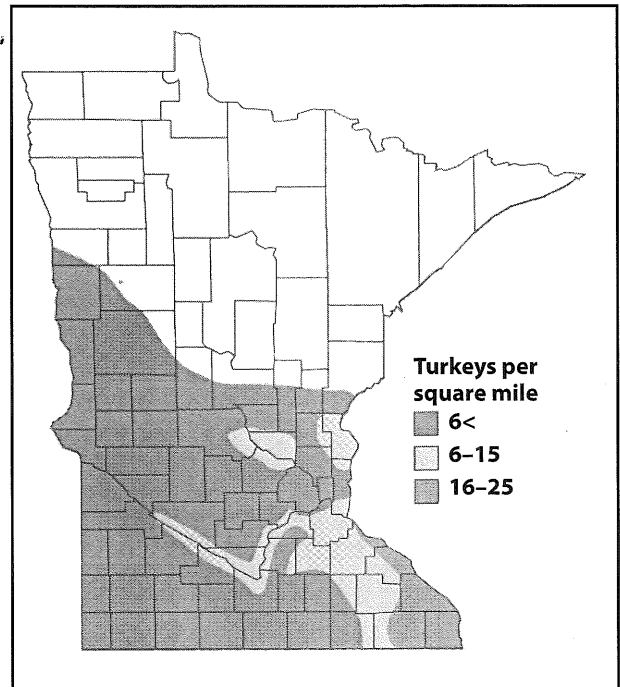


Figure 2. Wild turkey range.

Turkey Management

Turkeys are well adapted to southeastern Minnesota's mixture of farmland and hardwood forest. The primary habitat is the oak-hickory woodlands. Thus, an important consideration for any turkey management plan is proper management of the forest. Luckily, tree cover on steep slopes is important for erosion control as well as for turkeys. In addition, forest land has been purchased for use as state forests, wildlife management areas, and state parks. It is important to remember that big changes in land use will affect the wild turkey population.

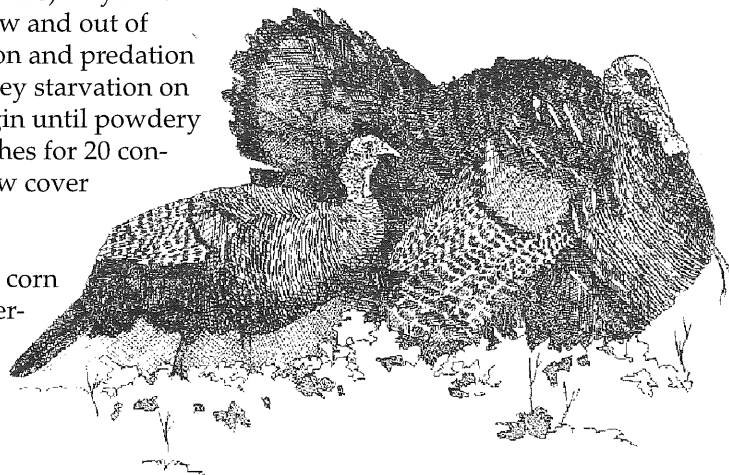
Through the Private Forest Management (PFM) program, the Department of Natural Resources can help private landowners take inventory of their property and develop a plan for multiple use management, including wildlife habitat, timber stand improvement, timber harvesting, and recreation. The PFM program provides technical advice and assistance in state and federal cost-share programs for landowner participants. This program is a benefit to both landowners as well as turkey hunters. For more information, contact your local DNR wildlife manager or district forester for help in preparing a private forest management plan.

Minnesota's biggest challenge to wild turkey survival is severe winter weather. During late winter, mast (forest tree nuts or acorns) may become scarce or buried under snow and out of reach, resulting in starvation and predation of weakened turkeys. Turkey starvation on losses generally do not begin until powdery snow depths exceed 10 inches for 20 consecutive days or when snow cover forms a hard crust.

An acre or two of standing corn located near a turkey wintering area is an important

management tool to ensure winter survival. Also, mature spread on fields adjacent to good turkey woods provides an additional source of grain and can increase survival during difficult winters.

The DNR and the Minnesota Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation establish hundred of acres of corn food plots in the turkey range.



Hunting Behavior

"Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to affirm that hunting, fishing, and taking of game and fish are a valued part of our heritage that shall be forever preserved for the people and shall be managed by law and regulation for the public good?"

—Question on the Minnesota General Election Ballot, November 1998

On election day, November 1998, 1,567,844 Minnesotans, (77.2 percent of those who voted) said "yes," that hunting and fishing in Minnesota are important enough activities to protect them by including language in the Minnesota Constitution to do so. Hunters need not be concerned about their right to hunt, right? 461,179 people on the same day said "no." Even with protection from the amendment, hunters need to be aware that there are those who oppose the action of hunters and/or are against hunting. **Hunters need to know how to conduct themselves to continue to be accepted by the people of Minnesota.**

People are judged by their actions. How we behave and how we follow the rules affect other people. Rules are developed to be followed. As a hunter, you must be aware of how your personal behavior and activities, as well as the actions of your companions, will affect others.

When driving a car, we are expected to drive carefully, following the rules of the road. When we play any sport, we are expected to follow the rules of the game. Hunters, too, are expected to behave responsibly while hunting—to hunt according to the rules.

Many of our rules are in the form of game laws which are designed to fulfill one or more of four basic needs:

1. To protect people (hunters and non-hunters) and property.
2. To provide equal hunting opportunities for all hunters.
3. To protect game populations.
4. To ensure "fair chase" by not taking unfair advantage of game species.

Other rules are unwritten. They are referred to as ethics and can be defined as a standard of behavior or conduct that the individual believes to be morally correct.

Usually, if a large number of a population (group of hunters, for example) believes in the same ethic, then they have it made law by the governing body (the state legislature in the case of game laws). It is the lack of good ethics on the part of a few who call themselves hunters that creates the need for ethics becoming laws. As laws multiply, so do restrictions. Such restrictions can lead to excessive control that spoils hunting.

Because each game species has different, specific habitats, each species that a person hunts may require a special set of ethics. Therefore, each hunter must develop his or her own ethics for the type of game they are hunting.

Future opportunities to enjoy hunting in Minnesota will depend upon the hunter's public image. If hunters are viewed as "slobs" who shoot up the countryside, vandalize property, and disregard the rights of landowners and citizens, they will lose the privilege to hunt on private land and public land as well. However, if an increasing number of hunters follow the honorable traditions of their sport and practice a personal code of hunting ethics which meets public expectations, the future of hunting will be assured.

A real threat to hunting today is how it is being promoted and increasingly thought of as a competitive event. The escalating win-lose fever resulting from competition can only serve to discourage restraint and encourage risk taking. Until hunters make it very clear that hunting is not competitive, as are the shooting sports, there will continue to be accidents and unacceptable hunter behaviors.

To make hunting safe and place it in its proper perspective, hunting should most appropriately be thought of as a ritual, or rite. Webster's dictionary defines rite as "a ceremonial or formal solemn act, observance or procedure in accordance with prescribed rule or custom...." To suggest that hunting should be a solemn act demonstrates respect. "In accordance with prescribed rule," affirms the importance of learning and following the rules.

Through rules, hunters eliminate unnecessary risk. Risk taking need not, or should it ever be, a part of the hunting ritual.

Definition of ethics and laws

Ethics are standards of behavior or conduct which are considered to be morally right. Ethics begin with an individual's standard of behavior. Each individual must make a personal judgment about whether certain behavior is right or wrong. If we believe that a specific action is morally right, then it is ethical for us to act that way.

For example, if a hunter truly believes that it is right to shoot a duck with a shotgun while it is sitting on the water, then it is ethical for that particular hunter to do so. The hunter behavior is consistent with his or her personal code of ethics. If, however, a hunter believes it is wrong to shoot a sitting duck, then it would be wrong for that person to do so. Such action would not be ethical for that hunter.

Most hunters have a personal code of ethics which is very similar to the laws associated with hunting. Usually, hunters agree that the hunting laws are fair and just, and find these laws easy to obey.

Personal code of ethics

Personal ethics are "unwritten laws" which govern your behavior at all times-when you are with others, and when you are alone. They are our personal standard of conduct. Our personal code of ethics is based upon our respect for other people and their property, for all living things and their environment, and our own image of ourselves.

"The hunter ordinarily has no gallery to applaud or disapprove his conduct. Whatever his acts, they are dictated by his own conscience rather than by a mob of onlookers."

—Aldo Leopold

The basis of a personal code of ethics is a "sense of decency." You must ask yourself repeatedly, "What if someone else behaved the way I am—would I respect him or her?"

Many of us probably developed a personal code of ethics long before we became hunters. Because we want the respect of our parents and family, our

Positive Role Model

Hunting enthusiasts and "role models" are needed in Minnesota today. Positive role models will do more for hunting than laws and regulations. This may require hunters to refuse to go along with certain members of their party or even change hunting groups.

Are you a positive role model?

What more can a hunter do to promote and protect the tradition of hunting? **BE INFORMED.** Learn everything you can about the positive aspects of hunting. Use what you learn to promote hunting. **BE A TEACHER.** Take the responsibility for educating young people in the ways of the outdoors. Not just your own children but others as well. Volunteer to be an Advanced Hunter Education, Minnesota Bowhunter Education, or Firearms Safety Instructor. **BE AN EMISARY.** Do everything you can to spread the positive aspects of hunting. Non-hunters must hear the truth; otherwise they may believe the misconceptions and opinions generated by anti-hunting groups. Talk intelligently about hunting. **BE A JOINER.** Get into every organization that looks as if it might help the cause-whether it be a local sportsmen's club or a national conservation organization. **BE A DOER.** Serve on committees, help influence people, work. Don't expect others to do the job. Do it yourself. **BE POLITICALLY ACTIVE.** Anti-hunting groups are continually pushing some kind of negative legislation. Politicians need to hear of your support for positive legislation. Become involved in grass-roots efforts at your local level. Irresponsible hunter behavior will lead to legislation that will curtail hunting. **BE A GIVER.** The anti-hunting groups are well financed. The pro-hunting forces are always operating on tight budgets.

friends and neighbors, we develop a standard of acceptable behavior. Some of us went on hunting trips even before we were old enough to hunt and learned what was expected by the example of others.

However, in today's common, single-parent families, many beginning hunters do not have a role model to guide their development of hunting ethics. Also, because only about three percent of our population lives in a rural setting, many hunters do not have opportunities to begin hunting until they are in their late teens and early twenties. When they do, they may begin with others of their age and hunting experience. Without an experienced hunter to help shape their hunting ethics, they may not know what is best for them and hunting.

Hunters must be willing to reconsider their hunting ethics. This may require changes in attitude and behavior. Concerned, experienced hunters are needed to assist less experienced hunters in "doing what is right." Positive role models will ensure good hunting traditions for the future.

Stages of the hunter

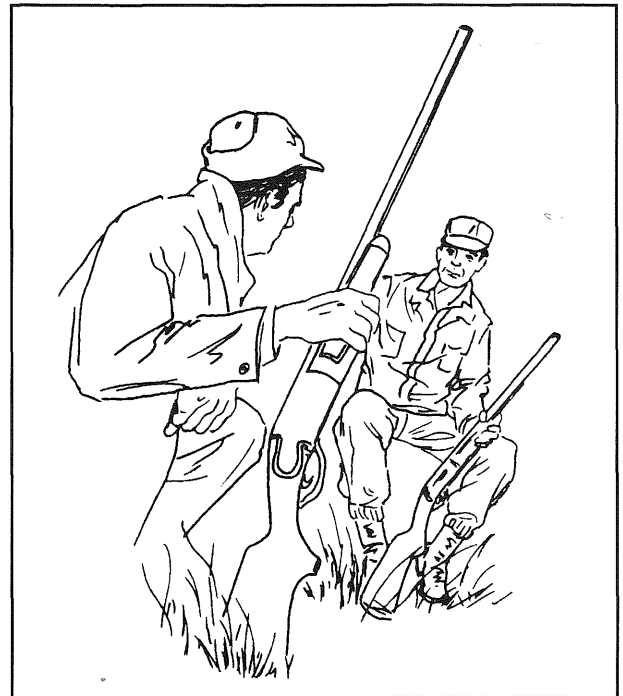
Your personal code of ethics and your hunting behavior may change through the years. Research conducted by Dr. Bob Jackson has found that it is usual for a hunter to go through five expectation stages.

1. First is the "shooter stage" – a time when shooting the firearm or bow is of primary interest.
2. Next is the "limiting-out stage" – when hunters want, above all, to bag the legal limit of game they are entitled to.
3. The third stage is the "trophy stage" – the hunter is selective—primarily seeking out trophy animals of a particular species.
4. The fourth stage is the "technique stage" – the emphasis is on "how" rather than "what" they hunt.
5. The last stage is called the "mellowing-out-stage" – this is a time of enjoyment derived from the total hunting experience—the hunt, the companionship of other hunters, and an appreciation of the outdoors. When hunters mellow out, bagging game will be more symbolic than essential for their satisfaction.

Hunters' personal code of ethics will change as they pass through each of these five stages—often becoming more strict and imposing more constraints on their own behavior and actions when hunting.

These self-imposed restrictions, however, will add to the enjoyment of the hunting experience.

Responsible hunters appreciate hunting more. Only they understand the new sense of freedom and independence that comes from hunting legally and responsibly.



Each hunting season, ethical hunters invite novice hunters to accompany them in the field. They take the time to share their hunting knowledge with their companions and introduce them to the enjoyment of hunting.

Ethics for consideration

Many people have proposed ethical standards which they feel should be adopted by all hunters. Some are presented for your consideration. Consider each ethic carefully. Decide whether it is right or wrong in your opinion. If it is right, incorporate it into your personal code of hunting ethics and practice it when afield. In the final analysis, your standards of conduct while hunting will be the true indicator of your personal code of ethics.

Hunter-landowner relations

Responsible hunters realize they are guests of the landowner while hunting on private land. They make sure they are welcome by asking for permission before they hunt. On the rare occasions when permission is denied, they accept the situation gracefully.

To avoid disturbing the landowner early in the morning, a responsible hunter obtains permission to hunt on private land ahead of time.

While hunting, the responsible hunter takes extra care to avoid disturbing livestock. If they are hunting with a dog, special precautions are taken to ensure it does not harass cattle, chickens, or other farm animals. They understand that disturbances can cause dairy cows to reduce their milk production, and poultry may crowd together in the chicken coop and suffocate. Beef cattle can suffer a weight loss costly to the rancher.

Responsible hunters leave all gates as they find them—and if closed, they ensure they are securely latched. They cross all fences by going underneath to avoid loosening the wires and posts. They only enter on the portions of private land where the owner has granted permission to hunt. They never assume they are welcome on private property simply because other hunters have gotten permission to hunt there.

Responsible hunters avoid littering the land with sandwich wrappings, pop cans, cigarette packages, or other garbage, including empty casings, empty shell boxes, and shells.

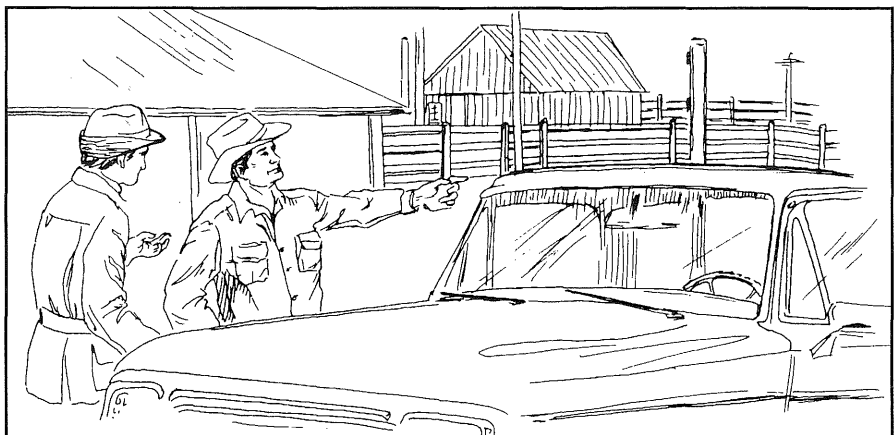
They never drive or walk through standing crops, nor do they send their dogs through them. When driving across pastures or plowed fields, they keep their vehicles on the trail or road at all times. They understand that the ruts left by vehicles on hill-sides can cause serious soil erosion. They hunt as much private property on foot as possible. When parking their vehicles, they are careful not to block the landowner's access to buildings, equipment, and roadways.

If they see anything wrong on the property such as open gates, broken fences, or injured livestock, they report it to the landowner as soon as possible.

Responsible hunters limit the amount of game they and their friends take on a landowner's property. They realize the landowner may consider several bag limits as a sign of greed.

Unless they are close personal friends of the landowner, responsible hunters do not hunt on a specific farm or ranch more than two or three times each season. They do not want to wear out their welcome.

Before leaving, they thank the landowner or a member of their family for the privilege of hunting the property and they offer a share of their bag if



Responsible hunters respect the rights of landowners and get permission to hunt on private land. These hunters ask and find out what they can and cannot do while hunting as a guest of the landowner.

they have been successful. In appreciation for their hospitality, a thoughtful hunter offers to help with chores. If the offer is accepted, they cheerfully pitch bales, mend fences, fork manure, etc. They may even use their special skills such as plumbing, mechanical abilities, painting, or carpentry.

If they own property elsewhere such as a farm, ranch, or lake cottage, responsible hunters will invite their host to use them. They note their host's name and address and send a thank you card in appreciation for the landowner's hospitality.

Remember, a landowner has no respect for trespassers. It only takes a moment to request permission and you may be allowed to come back again.

Regard for other people's feelings

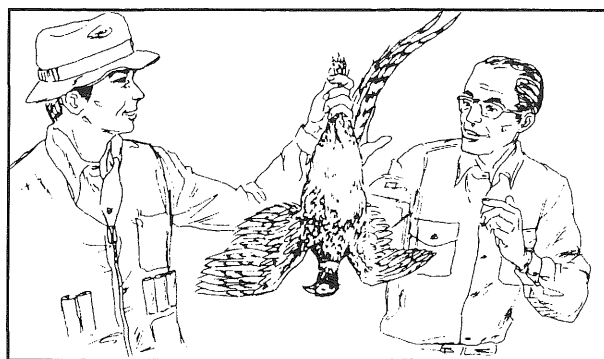
When hunting on public lands, responsible hunters show the same respect for other users of the land as they show for landowners on private land.

They hunt in areas where their activities will not conflict with other's enjoyment of the outdoors. They treat the land with respect, being careful not to litter or damage vegetation. They limit their use of vehicles to travel to and from their hunting area, always remaining on trails or developed roadways.

They know that alcoholic beverages can seriously impair their judgment while hunting. They restrict their drinking to the evening hours after the firearms have been put away. Even then, they drink in moderation to be sure that their actions do not offend others.

Responsible hunters recognize that many people are offended by the sight of a bloody carcass tied to a vehicle or a gut pile in full view of the road. People may also be put off if hunters parade vehicles through a campground or streets of a community with a gun rack full of firearms. Having respect for the feelings and beliefs of others, responsible hunters make a special effort to avoid offending non-hunters. They are consistently aware that many of these people are their friends, neighbors, relatives, and even members of their immediate family.

They appreciate the fact that many people do not hunt and understand some people are opposed to hunting. They respect these people as human beings whose likes and dislikes differ from their



Responsible hunters stop and thank the landowner for the privilege of hunting on their land. If the hunter is successful he or she may offer to share the game or, by some other means, show their appreciation for the opportunity to hunt private land.

own. They accept the fact that hunters, non-hunters, and anti-hunters are equally sincere in their beliefs about hunting.

Relationship with other hunters

Responsible hunters show consideration for their companions. When leaving for a hunt, they are ready to go at the appointed time and they do not invite others to join the group unexpectedly.

In the field, their consideration extends to other hunters as well. They realize that hunting satisfaction does not depend on competing with others for game.

Responsible hunters avoid doing anything that will interfere with another's hunt or enjoyment of it. They do not shoot along fence lines adjacent to fields where others are hunting, nor do they try to intercept the game others have flushed. If disputes arise with other hunters, they try to work out a compromise—perhaps a cooperative hunt—which everyone can enjoy.

Responsible hunters do not hog shots—they do the opposite. They give friends a good shot whenever possible. They show special consideration for the inexperienced or hunters with disabilities by allowing them to hunt from the most advantageous position.

Each hunting season, responsible hunters invite novice hunters to accompany them in the field. They take the time to share their hunting knowl-

edge with their companions and introduce them to the enjoyment of hunting.

They do not shoot over their limit to fill the bag of others. This includes shooting a deer and having a young hunter tag it. They realize that young hunters want to harvest their own game. Responsible hunters do not take their limit unless they plan to use all they have taken.

They observe the rules of safe gun handling at all times and firmly insist that their companions do the same. They politely tell others when they think their behavior is out of line.

Self-respect

Responsible hunters realize it is their responsibility to know how to take care of themselves in the outdoors. They respect their limitations.

They never place their lives or the lives of others in jeopardy by failing to notify someone where they intend to hunt and how long they expect to be gone. If their plans change, they leave notes on their vehicles designating their destination, time of departure, and expected time of return.

They respect the limitations of their health and physical fitness. They consult with their doctors regularly to be sure they are capable of strenuous hunting activity. If unfit, they condition themselves before going hunting. They have their vision checked and, if necessary, wear glasses or contact lenses to correct any visual impairments.

To cope with unexpected outdoor emergencies, responsible hunters learn and practice first aid and survival skills. They know how to recognize and cope with hypothermia.

Respect for wildlife

Hunters are naturalists. Their interest in wildlife extends beyond game animals to all living things. They're thrilled by the sight of a bald eagle as well as a white-tailed deer. They know and study nature's ways, and realize that wildlife can be enjoyed year round—not just during the hunting season.

Fair chase hunters always give their quarry a "fair" chance to escape.

When hunting, their pursuit of game is always governed by the "fair chase" principle. Simply stated, this principle demands that hunters always give their quarry a "fair" chance to escape.

When hunting big game, responsible hunters will always attempt to get close enough to their quarry to ensure a quick, clean kill. They realize that in doing so, their quarry may notice them and escape, but they always give their quarry this sporting chance.

Responsible hunters never shoot indiscriminately at a flock of game birds or a herd of big game in the hope of hitting one. They will always attempt to kill their quarry quickly. Flock shooting any species causes much wounding. A good example is swatting ducks on the water. This bad behavior gives responsible hunters a bad name.

Through considerable practice before a hunt, they will learn the distance at which they can be most confident of killing game cleanly. They will ensure their rifle is accurately sighted in and determine the most effective shot size for their shotguns. The goal of practice, range estimation, sighting in, and proper shot selection is to reduce wounding loss.

Once afield, they will expend an extraordinary effort to retrieve all game—even if it means interrupting their hunting to help another hunter locate a wounded animal. When possible, they will use a trained hunting dog to retrieve ducks in a slough or upland game in heavy cover.

If it appears they have missed their shot, responsible hunters will always carefully inspect the spot where their quarry stood to ensure the animal was not hit.

Responsible hunters show as much respect for their game after it is taken, as before. They never allow the meat or other usable parts of the animal to be wasted. They field dress or clean their game within minutes of being taken so it doesn't develop that "wild" taste. The fur and feathers of many game birds and mammals can also be used to make flies for fishing or decorations for homes and offices.

Respect for the environment

Responsible hunters are caretakers of the environment. While hunting, they are aware of damage they may do to the plant life and to the soil; they try to minimize their impact. They avoid needless destruction of vegetation. They down living trees or trim branches only when it is legal to do so or with permission. They avoid actions that may cause erosion. They use only what is necessary, remove their garbage, and minimize any evidence of their presence.

Respect for laws and enforcement officers

Responsible hunters obey all laws which govern their hunting activities, even those with which they disagree. Instead of ignoring a law, they work through their elected representatives to change laws which they feel are unjust.

Responsible hunters will not ignore illegal acts of others. They insist that all members of their hunting party obey the law and they report law viola-

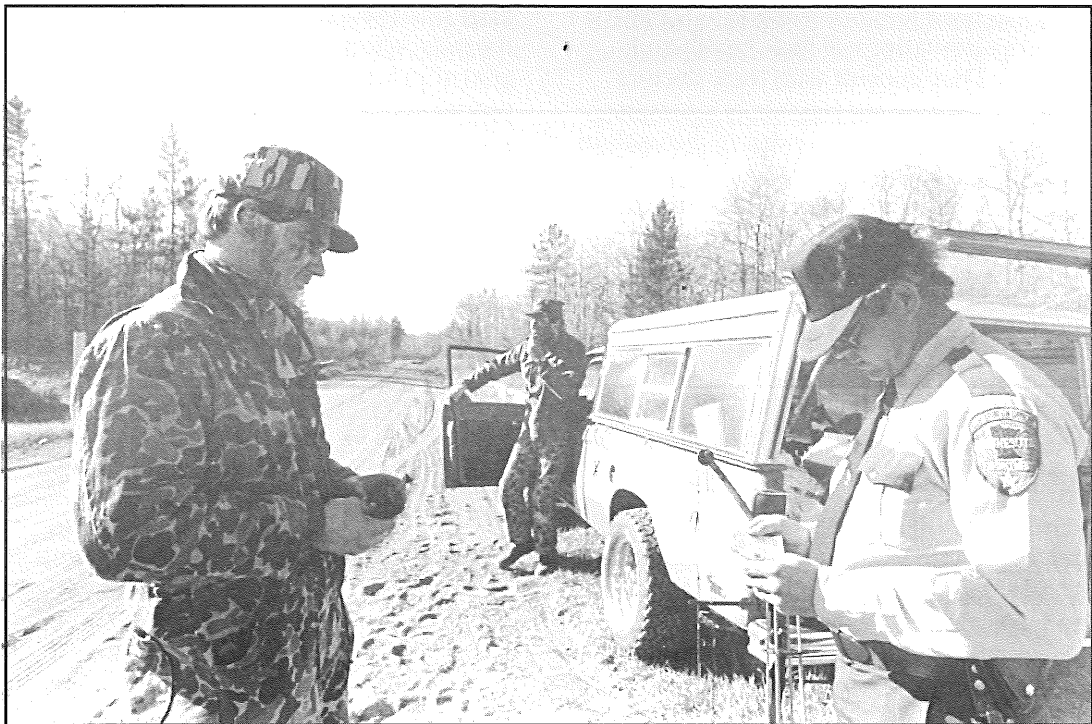
tions to the appropriate law enforcement agencies. If asked to serve as witnesses, they accept this responsibility.

When they meet a state or federal wildlife officer, wildlife biologist or technician checking hunters, they are cooperative and provide the information requested. If they do not understand the need for certain information, they ask for an explanation.

Hunters realize the officer's responsibility is to protect wildlife and their hunting rights.

In summary, ethical hunters should have **respect for** and are **responsible to**:

1. Landowners
2. Non-hunters
3. Other hunters
4. Themselves
5. Wildlife
6. The environment
7. The laws and the officers whose duty it is to enforce them



DNR staff photo

Responsible hunters fully cooperate with conservation officers and wildlife officials, knowing that they protect and enhance their hunting opportunities.

Turkey Hunting Behavior

Hunting wild turkeys, although still relatively new in Minnesota, has developed into an excellent tradition. The reason for this is that the wild turkey is a supreme trophy for Minnesota hunters, a bird canny and elusive enough to challenge the best efforts of any hunter.

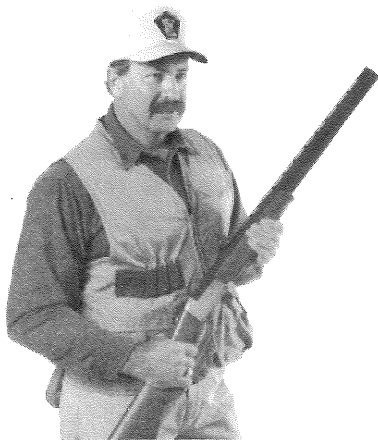
- The turkey should only be hunted by those ready to practice the highest standards of hunting skills and the strictest standards of sportsmanship and ethics.
- Although it is legal to shoot a wild turkey on the wing, the chances of getting a killing shot in the head area are very unlikely. This is an ethical decision on the part of the hunter. Most experienced and ethical hunters do not shoot wild turkeys on the wing.
- Turkey hunting is a one-on-one sport, so you should not call a bird if you know another hunter is near by.
- Two hunters calling one bird may at the same time can easily result in neither being successful. It is not ethical to shoot a bird "on the way in" in response to another hunter's calling.
- It is unwise and unsafe to approach a hunter who is calling a bird in.

Safe firearms carrying practices

There are several ways to carry a firearm safely and at the same time have it ready for a quick, safe shot in the field. Whichever carrying method you use, these basic rules apply:

1. Keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction away from yourself and others.
2. Keep the safety in the "on" position when carrying a firearm. Remember that the safety is a mechanical device and can fail.
3. Keep your finger outside the trigger guard until you have positively identified your target, determined that it is safe to shoot, raised your firearm to a shooting position, and determined that it is still safe to shoot.

Common Carrying Positions



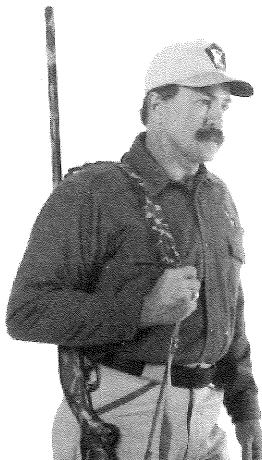
Double-hand Carry



Cradle Carry



Elbow



Sling Carry



Shoulder Carry



Trail Carry

DNR staff photo

Shivering is the first sign of hypothermia.

Cold weather a factor in hunting incidences

Cold weather is very much a factor in Minnesota's hunting incidences. If we look at the way we hunt, our attitudes toward the cold, and the effect the cold has on our ability to think and move, it's easy to see the connection.

Minnesotans learn to tolerate the cold. We shiver, stiffen up, and sometimes lose the sense of touch in our fingers and toes. When we hunt with firearms in Minnesota, we may tell ourselves that this is how we can expect to feel on opening day.

Cold causes us to use up energy—blood sugar—faster (hypoglycemia) and our body temperature drops (hypothermia). What many hunters fail to consider, however, is that as this begins to happen, we shiver, begin to lose our sense of balance, and start losing our ability to think clearly. The risk of dropping the firearm or falling increases. Our judgment begins to fail. We may even forget to keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.

The scary part is that we actually lose our ability to think and concentrate on what we're doing. Too long in the cold and a hunter can end up both clumsy and careless. Hypothermia is not limited to below freezing temperatures. Getting wet on a windy day in 50-degree weather can be as dangerous as freezing temperatures.

The ability to resist the cold can vary greatly among people in a group. A key symptom to watch for is severe shivering. If you or someone else starts to shiver, that's the signal to get warm and dry immediately. Severe shivering is the "final stage" in which a person still can think clearly enough to help themselves.

Lever action rifles are not for beginners!

Anyone using a lever action rifle with exposed hammer should know the ways the firearm can accidentally discharge because this style firearm is most frequently involved in accidents.

When chambering:

To chamber a round in a lever action, the lever is moved forward and then back. The movement of the lever also cocks the hammer. As the lever is moved, the trigger is fully exposed. If the trigger is hit as the lever is moved back, the firearm will fire!

When placing the hammer at half-cock:

A round has been chambered and the hammer is fully cocked. Unless the firearm is fired or unloaded immediately, the hammer should be placed in the half-cock or safe position. To do this, the hammer is held in place with the thumb, the trigger is pulled, and then the hammer is slowly lowered.

If the hammer should slip from the thumb as the trigger is pulled, the firearm will fire! The risk of an accidental discharge is greater with cold fingers, small hands, and bulky gloves.

If the hammer is hit or struck:

The hammer on a lever action rifle is designed so that it can be easily cocked. Because of this design, it is also easy to bump or hit the hammer.

Be aware that a sharp blow to the hammer of a lever action rifle can cause the firearm to fire, even when the hammer is in the half-cock or "safe position."

When unloading:

The first example explained how an accidental discharge can occur when chambering a round. The same thing can happen when unloading the firearm. That is because the tube magazine can be emptied only by chambering and ejecting each round.

Again, each time the lever is moved forward and brought back, the hammer is cocked and the trigger is exposed. If the trigger is hit by the thumb, for instance, the firearm may fire!

Note: Newer models of lever action rifles have a safety that can substantially reduce the risk of an accidental discharge. Remember, however, that a safety is a mechanical device which can fail.

Wild Turkey Hunting Safety

A turkey's keen eyesight necessitates the use of camouflage clothing. At the same time, use of camouflage makes hunters nearly invisible to other hunters. Moreover, turkey hunters may attract other hunters who mistake their calling for the real thing. These factors have resulted in serious and fatal incidents. Of all the hunting practices nationwide, turkey hunting has led to the most incidences proportionately.

Wild turkey incidences in Minnesota

Because of the high number of incidences, turkey hunting is gaining a reputation of being a dangerous sport throughout the United States. In Minnesota, however, there have been only six reported incidences since turkey hunting began in 1978. The low number of incidents here is due, in part, to the fact that it is still a relatively new type of hunt and also because of the availability of hunter education classes and wild turkey clinics in Minnesota. Educated hunters are better prepared to respect and follow the rules of gun handling and hunting safety.

The following paragraphs are actual police reports briefly describing what happened to cause the shooting of five turkey hunters in Minnesota. One of the six incidences lacked a narrative and is not reported here. Fortunately, in all the cases, these Minnesota turkey hunting incidences were not fatal. As you read through these real life occurrences, ask yourself, were these accidents? According to the dictionary, an accident is anything that

happens unexpectedly, without design, or by chance. You be the judge.

1. Fillmore County, April 22, 1991, at 7:35 a.m. The 19-year-old victim was carrying a turkey decoy between arm and body. The shooter with five years' hunting experience saw the head and body of the turkey decoy but failed to see the hunter. The pellets struck the victim in the head.
2. Winona County, May 17, 1992, at 9:15 a.m. The 45-year-old victim was walking on a deer trail towards partner's location. The shooter with 38 years' hunting experience saw color and movement and fired, striking the victim. The victim was struck with pellets on right side including head, neck, shoulder, and arm.
3. Fillmore County, April 20, 1992, at 9:00 a.m. The shooter with five years' hunting experience observed a turkey earlier in the day. The 26-year-old victim saw a turkey up near the shooter's location. The victim then began to stalk the turkey which was no longer in sight. The shooter thought the victim was the jake turkey seen earlier. The victim was wearing Reel Tree Camouflage.
4. Morrison County, April 22, 1998, at 7:15 a.m. The 41-year-old victim called in a turkey for the shooter. The shooter had 25 years of hunting experience. The victim was out of sight of the shooter when the turkey came between them. The victim was hit by several pellets.
5. Houston County, May 10, 1999, at 11:27 a.m. The 40-year-old victim was returning to camp carrying a dead turkey. The victim sat down to rest. A second hunter with 25 years' hunting experience, seeing the turkey but failing to see the victim, shot the victim.

Safety must be given the utmost attention. "Hunter mistaken for game" accounts for almost all turkey hunting incidences. Although bright colors reduce success rates, some hunters now wear blaze orange camo clothing, place blaze orange bands on nearby trees, or set up blaze orange signs proclaiming "Camouflaged hunter nearby—be careful."

Some hunters place a square of hunter orange on the back of their camo jackets, as well as strips on the back of their elbows. This helps identify their movements to other hunters. This has little effect on hunting success, because it is all but impossible to take a safe and accurate shot at a turkey approaching from behind.

Hunters often "see" what their mind wants to see and not what is actually there. This phenomenon is known as premature closure, and involves color, sound, and motion. The movement of a hand, for example, may trigger a hunter to "see" the movement of a turkey, due to the strong desire to bag game. But hunters should remember that hunting is not competitive. Although harvesting game is a part of hunting, true ethical hunters realize that there is much more to hunting than the kill.

Incidences usually occur at the moment of greatest excitement. Hunters must restrain their impulse to shoot without looking or thinking. The basic rules to consider whenever hunting:

- never shoot at sound or movement
- never shoot at a patch of color
- positively identify the target as legal game
- always assume a sound or movement in the woods is from another hunter
- always positively identify any target before raising a gun or bow
- double check before shooting
- never shoot at flying or running turkeys, although legal, because they make poor targets and such shots usually result in wounded and lost birds

Remember this: Every time you pick up a firearm or bow, you pick up responsibility, so shoulder it well.

When hunting companions forget or ignore safety measures, let them know immediately. Reminding others about safety should be done in a positive and constructive manner.

Turkey habitat may include steep hillsides and uneven terrain which call for special safety precautions. When traversing this terrain and its obstacles, unload your gun chamber. Carry broadheads in a protected quiver. You will not get a shot at a turkey sneaking or wandering through the woods, anyway. Protect your firearm in the event of slips or falls, control the muzzle, and carefully check the muzzle each time it makes contact with the ground.

Help yourself and your hunting companions by following the rules of safe turkey hunting:

- Approach no closer than 100 yards to a gobbler, then call the bird to you. It could be a real gobbler or it could be another hunter.
- Select a calling site in front of a tree or rock that is wider than your shoulders. This will protect you from behind and should also conceal any slight movement you make while calling.
- Shoot only at a gobbler when it is in front of you; wait if you have to. A sudden swing to shoot behind you may find you facing the muzzle of another hunter.
- Select calling sites that allow visibility for 40 yards or more in all directions. You may be able to call an unskilled or careless hunter.
- Never stalk a gobbler. It may be coming from another hunter.
- Never attempt to call in a gobbler with a gobbler call while you are at a calling site. You may call in another hunter.
- You can never be totally invisible, even with total camouflage; turkeys and other hunters will see your movements. Remaining still will harvest more turkeys than the best camo. It is movement that causes turkeys to panic.
- Never wear any clothing or undergarments that have shades of red, blue, or white, since hunters might mistake these colors for a tom turkey's head.
- Never assume that what you hear, or what calls you hear, are from a turkey.

- Don't try to hide so well that you cannot see what is happening; you can't shoot a turkey you can't see anyway.

After harvesting a bird, take one more safety precaution: Carry your bird out of the woods in a large orange garbage bag or hunter orange wrap. If

you carry the turkey over your shoulder, there is a chance another hunter could mistake it for a live bird.

Remember this: No turkey is worth a human life, so be certain of your target before you fire.



DNR staff photo

Hunter safely carrying out bird in blaze orange bag.



DNR staff photo

Hunter improperly carrying out bird without using a blaze orange bag. This hunter could become the target.

Turkey Hunting

Since Minnesota's wild turkey program began, one of its goals has been to provide a sufficient number of birds for hunting. Because turkey populations have expanded tremendously since the original transplants in 1964, the Minnesota Legislature granted the DNR authority to establish the state's first spring turkey season in 1978.

Like pheasants, turkeys are polygamous—each breeding tom services a large number of hens. Because a turkey population consists of nearly an equal number of both sexes, toms are definitely in surplus and can provide considerable hunting opportunities. In fact, once a turkey population is established, both sexes can be harvested.

During the spring mating season, toms can be selectively hunted. Using calls that sound like a seductive hen, hunters are able to lure toms within range of a shotgun or bow and arrow.

In states with large turkey populations, hunting seasons are often held in the fall and spring. Fall hunts allow hunters to take birds of either sex and any age, similar to the ruffed grouse season. Minnesota, with an expanding turkey population, has conducted spring gobbler-only hunts in an effort to protect hens. These limits help to ensure a large breeding nucleus. In areas where Minnesota turkeys have saturated the available range, fall hunts began in October of 1990.

Preparing for the hunt

The name of the game in turkey hunting is preparation. Try to engage your turkey hunting friends in thorough discussions of the subject. Read articles and magazines. Obtain copies of the *Turkey Call*, a magazine produced by the National Turkey Federation, or select one of the many books written by turkey hunting experts. Learn to use the turkey call you choose, be it from an experienced caller or an instructional recording. Then practice, practice, practice perfecting your calling technique.

Equipment

- A shotgun that you have patterned
- Shot shells
- Maintained archery equipment
- Turkey calls that you know how to use
- Carrying or plastic bags to keep calls dry
- Topographical maps
- Aerial photographs
- Camouflage clothing (a hat, face mask or camo face paint, coat, pants, gloves, dark socks, tape or sock for your gun or bow)
- Wet weather clothing
- Cushion for sitting
- Camera
- Binoculars
- Knife

- Compass (learn how to use it)
- Mosquito lotion
- Pack sack
- Carrying strap and hunter orange cover for harvested bird
- Survival kit including two heavy duty garbage bags or a space blanket, waterproof matches, a candle, and a whistle.
- Cooler and ice or other arrangements to care for the harvested bird
- Camping equipment or lodging arrangements

Types of turkey calls

An important step in preparing for a turkey hunt is the development of your calling skills. The best call is the one with which a hunter is most proficient, but many types are useful. Turkey calls have been made out of every imaginable substance—including the wing bone of a turkey—and in a great variety of styles. Each style has its own advantages.

The hinged box call is generally considered the easiest to use. It is a good choice for most first-time hunters. The sound is produced by merely scraping the hinged lid across the edge of the box. The disadvantages are that it requires the use of both hands and does not work if it gets wet. Placing the box call in a loose plastic bag allows hunters to keep the call dry while operating it under wet conditions. There are many good models on the market. A new variety with a push dowel can be operated with one hand and also can be fastened to a gun.

The friction striker consists of a flat surface over which a striker is pushed or pulled. A flat surface of slate or aluminum is placed over a resonating chamber. Most strikers are wooden dowels with one slightly pointed end. Some newer models with plastic strikers work even when wet. This type of call also requires the use of both hands.

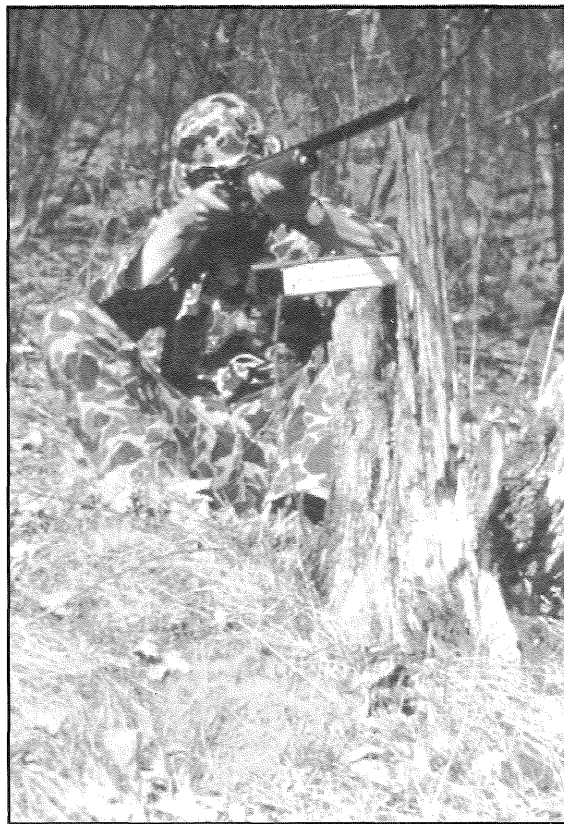
The diaphragm mouth calls are usually preferred by veteran hunters. They are the most versatile calls, but also the most difficult to master. They are unaffected by wet weather, allow the hunter to have both hands free to handle the gun, and can be used without making any discernible movement.

Calling techniques

There are several good ways to learn turkey calling, but reading about it is not one of them. Therefore, the following discussion will be only a short introduction to the art of turkey calling.

Beginners should keep several points in mind. Most experts believe it is better to call too softly than too loudly, to call too rarely than too frequently, and to perfect one or two calls rather than attempt some sound not yet mastered. Rhythm, or timing, can be more important than the actual quality of sound. Finally, remember that turkeys make a variety of sounds, many of which don't sound like anything you may have heard on an instructional recording. Absolute perfection of tone is less important than the skill of reading the gobbler's response and adjusting the calling technique accordingly.

Spring hunting has two calls of supreme importance. The "cluck" call is a contented turkey sound. The "yelp" is the primary call of the spring turkey hunter. It imitates the "come hither, I'm ready" call



Hunter with box call.

DNR staff photo

of the hen. It is a simple, high and low note slurred together, usually emitted in a series of three to five calls. These yelps can be muted or loud, slow and plaintive, or stridently insistent. This call has many variations, including that of young and mature hens.

"Kee-kee-run" is the predominant call used to hunt turkeys in the fall. However, when a flock has been broken up, hunters should imitate the sounds produced by lost turkeys. These sounds will include hens calling their young and the frequent sounds of the young poults. Additional fall calling techniques are found on page 34.

Inexperienced hunters may want to listen to instructional recordings to learn the basics of calling. Talking with experienced hunters, and reading articles and books about turkey hunting are also good sources of information. Note that using electronic devices such as recordings to actually call a turkey is illegal

Scouting

Successful turkey hunting begins with careful scouting. Plan on spending at least a day or two

scouting. Hunters going into turkey hunts "cold" put themselves at a great disadvantage.

While scouting, look for signs of turkey activity. Scratching, dusting spots, feathers, droppings, and tracks all indicate the presence of turkeys. In the spring, gobblers can be located by enticing them to answer a gobble produced by a call. Almost any noise may get them to sound off. This technique is most useful after the birds have roosted for the night. Remember to scout at times when other hunters are not out, so you don't interfere with their hunt and for safety reasons. Also remember not to disturb nesting hens in the spring.

The scouting trip is the best time to seek permission to hunt on private land. It is wise to review the Minnesota Trespass Law found in all the game synopses. Warm receptions from landowners are more likely to occur when requests come well in advance of the season. It is a waste of precious hunting time to try to seek a hunting spot once the season has started. Developing a good relationship with landowners is one of the best methods for finding birds. Many landowners will point out where they have seen birds most often.



DNR staff photo

Scouting for turkey sign.

Shooting

Be absolutely sure your target is a turkey. In the spring, be absolutely sure your target is a bearded bird. Sometimes hens have beards, and even though they are often passed up by hunters, it is still legal to shoot them.

Shooting a bird on the ground with a shotgun should not be very tricky, yet this climactic point in the hunt should not be taken for granted.

The only proper place to aim a shotgun, on a relatively stationary bird on the ground, is the head and neck area. A body shot might allow it to run or fly off to die where it can't be found. It is difficult to overstate how tough turkeys are.

The best shooting range is 20 to 40 yards. A 12-gauge should never be fired at a turkey that is more than 40 yards away. The chances of a lost, wounded bird are too great.

Check what is behind your target. Is it safe to shoot? Is there a second turkey back there? (You are allowed only one turkey with your license.) Shoot so that you harvest only the bird you are aiming at.

Experienced hunters know that strutting turkeys are hard to kill. Wait to shoot until the gobbler is no longer strutting. Shots at strutting gobblers too often lead to crippled birds because the head and neck are not extended.

Experienced hunters also recommend getting to the bird immediately after the shot. It may be necessary to stand on a wing in order to anchor the bird, or even to shoot it again.

The shot is usually taken by easing the gun into position as the turkey approaches behind a screen of trees and brush. Otherwise, the hunter may be forced to quickly mount the gun and shoot before the bird flies or runs away.

Pre-season shotgun patterning

Nothing is more frustrating than spending time and money preparing for the hunt and then missing the opportunity to kill a turkey because you failed to pattern your shotgun. Not knowing where your shotgun is hitting and whether your pattern is effective at optimum shooting distances is not only a waste, it is unethical.

When so much depends upon one shot, the beginning turkey hunter is advised to try a few practice shots. Mounting a shotgun and aiming it like a rifle rather than wing shooting may lead to some surprising misses.

Turkey hunters may photocopy the "Gobbler Profile" located on the inside back cover of this booklet to use for patterning their firearms. Hunters may want to purchase a few shells of each legal shot size and shoot at the turkey profile from 25, 30, 35, and 40 yards. Firearms with changeable or variable chokes should be tried with different combinations to find the best pattern so that shot will strike the skull or vertebrae for a quick and sure kill. Hunters might need to restrict shots to closer than 40 yards to assure a kill.

Practice aiming your shotgun like you would a rifle. Some firearms don't have rear sights; you may have to adjust your shot so the pattern's center strikes where you aim. Shotgunners are often surprised that their gun does not center the pattern where they aim.

Hunting regulations

The spring turkey hunting season is set for the period when toms are gobbling. Gobbling normally begins several weeks prior to the first day of hunting and continues through the spring. Toms have been successfully called in as late as June. Gobbling activity is greatly affected by weather conditions, with the heaviest activity occurring on clear, calm mornings. Rain and strong winds reduce or eliminate most gobbling activity.

In the spring, hunting is allowed only from one-half hour before sunrise until noon.

The fall season allows hunting from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

Turkeys are difficult to harvest—dense layers of feathers and muscles protect the vital body organs. Consequently, it is important to select equipment which meets the legal requirements for the time and place in which you will be hunting and is substantial enough for the task. Shotguns must be 20-, 16-, 12-, or 10-gauge, except for muzzle-loading shotguns, which must be 12-gauge or 10-gauge. Bows must be 40-pound pull or greater, using arrows with legal broadheads.

Shot size is restricted to number four or smaller diameter for safety reasons. Most duplex loads are illegal since they contain some shot sizes larger than four.

Important! Hunters age 18 or older must possess a Wild Turkey Stamp to hunt wild turkeys in Minnesota. Created by the Minnesota State Legislature in 1997 at the request of turkey hunters, the stamp proceeds are dedicated to wild turkey management and research.

A successful turkey hunter must attach the license tag to the turkey's leg immediately after it is killed. The bird must be taken to a check station and registered. The attendant records the bird's weight and age, the location of the kill, and other information important to wild turkey management in Minnesota.

A person may not assist another turkey hunter in any way, including calling, unless the person has a license for the same season and zone. Party hunting is not allowed for wild turkeys; each hunter must harvest his or her own bird.

During the fall hunt, males, females, and poults may be harvested where there is an open season. Fall hunts are only held in areas where the turkey population is sufficient to allow the taking of either sex.

Hunting regulations may vary from year to year. Hunters should review the current year's *Hunting and Trapping Regulations* or rules.

Turn in Poachers (TIP)

In many states, the illegal killing of fish and wildlife—poaching—has become a serious problem. Minnesota's economic loss to poaching for just deer alone is over \$25 million. The poaching of wildlife, like the wild turkey, is a loss to all Minnesotans.

These monetary values were placed on wildlife by the Legislature as a deterrent to wildlife poachers.

TIP is a non-profit grassroots movement formed by a group of concerned conservationists who are dedicated to preserving our vast treasury of fish and wildlife.

How the program works

Basically, TIP encourages Minnesotans to make anonymous reports of fish and wildlife violations for a cash reward. Anyone wishing to report a game and fish law violation may call the statewide, 24-hour toll-free number 1-800-652-9093. To protect the person's anonymity, the caller is assigned a code number to use when communicating with the DNR's Division of Enforcement.

Information provided by the caller is recorded on a numbered form which is sent to the conservation officer assigned to the area nearest the violation. If the tip leads to an arrest, the investigating officer returns the form to TIP via the Division of Enforcement headquarters in St. Paul.

Each tipster is told to watch local newspapers for an announcement of an arrest. Once they read of the arrest, they can call the same toll-free phone number, identify themselves by the code number, and make arrangements for the reward to be paid.

TIP rewards

Rewards paid to tipsters fall into three categories: \$100 minimum for small game, fish, and non-game species violations; \$250 minimum for big game and endangered species; and up to \$1,000 maximum for violations such as large numbers of animals taken illegally or a commercial poaching venture. TIP is aimed at controlling the persistent violator

and poaching rings that exist in Minnesota. However, no leads are turned down. If a call is received about a hunter shooting too many ducks, the report will probably be pursued—a violation is a violation.

Sometimes poachers use heinous methods to kill wildlife, from leg snares to wire nooses that can slowly strangle a luckless deer. After all, poachers are mostly concerned about how they can avoid getting caught. If they cripple a deer while spotlighting at night, they will simply leave it to find another animal that they can kill quickly.

You can help

TIP works only if the public supports the program. Citizens must be willing to make anonymous tips to stop game and fish lawbreakers. Financial support is also important. TIP is not an enforcement arm of government. It is a private, non-profit foundation whose board of directors is composed of citizens throughout Minnesota. Like any foundation, it survives primarily on donations.

For more information on TIP, call 651/406-9111.

Questions for the conservation officer

“Plan your hunt and hunt your plan.” This advice is a “must” for hunters that want a safe and successful hunt. Part of the plan includes knowing and following the turkey hunting regulations. Often hunters accept what they think they have heard to be the correct regulation. Hunters must study and learn the regulations each season as regulations are updated yearly. Also, hunters must know the regulations for the area of the country or part of the state they will be hunting; regulations vary for different parts of the country.

Conservation officers are often asked questions related to hunting regulations. The questions and answers that follow are some that conservation officers are frequently asked. Use them to help you understand and follow the regulations they address.

The regulations that are addressed in the following paragraphs were correct at the time of publication. It is the hunter’s responsibility to determine the current regulations.



DNR staff photo

When you're not sure about a regulation or law, consult with your local conservation officer.

Can I accompany my juvenile son or daughter on their turkey hunt, and call birds for them?

Your question is a two-part question. Yes, you not only may accompany them, but in cases where the youth is under the age of 14, state law requires that the youth must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. This requirement is for safety and supervision purposes and does not entitle you to assist in actually taking the bird.

The second part of the question depends on your license status. If your own license is valid during the same season (both permit area and time frame), you may call for and otherwise assist another licensed hunter.

The simplest remedy to this problem begins with proper planning prior to making an application for a turkey license. The lottery system allows for up to four people to apply as a group, ensuring that if one is drawn, all are drawn and all will be licensed for the same permit area and time frame. Family and friends planning future turkey hunts are encouraged to make use of this group or party application.

Two limiting factors concerning turkey hunting in Minnesota are hunter interference and disturbance to the birds. The simple fact is, the more people that are in the field pursuing turkeys, the greater the chances are for interference and disturbance. If each licensed hunter should choose to be accompanied by another person, it would double the number of people afield and have a negative effect on the quality of the hunt for other hunters.

Can I party hunt for turkeys?

No. Although you may assist another similarly licensed party member (by calling for example), you may not actually shoot the bird for another, nor may you use your tag on a bird taken by another person.

What do I do if I shoot at one turkey and accidentally kill two or more?

We realize that on rare occasions an unseen bird or a "flyer" BB might result in more than one turkey being killed by a single shot. However, all hunters should know that their target and backdrop are clear for the shot, and hunters should be patient enough to wait for a clear shot at a single bird.

Please do not seek out the tag of another to "cover" the extra bird. This would constitute illegal party hunting and only compound the problem. Besides, you would only be denying that person of the thrill of taking his or her own bird. Instead, we ask that you leave the birds in the field and contact the local conservation officer.

Currently, the spring turkey season closes at 12:00 p.m. If I should wound a turkey during legal hours, can I continue to look for it past legal hours? Also, can I use a dog to assist me in locating the turkey?

While we appreciate every effort to retrieve a downed bird, the answer to both parts of your question is no. The regulations determining hunting hours do not contain an exception for retrieving lost birds, and the use of dogs would add considerably to other hunter interference and disturbance of both turkeys and other wildlife species attempting to rear young during the spring seasons.

While on my hunting trip, I realize that I have lost or misplaced my turkey license or tag. What should I do?

Contact the nearest Minnesota DNR Electronic Licensing Agent as soon as possible and explain your dilemma. They will have a record of your license purchase and the ability to issue a duplicate license. There is a nominal fee for this service.

I received the list of landowners who, as successful in the landowner's preference drawing, must allow turkey hunting on their property. Upon contacting them, some of these people denied me permission to hunt, citing that they already had turkey hunters planning to hunt during my season. What can I do about it?

Not much. The law allowing for the preference drawing states that successful landowner applicants must allow turkey hunting on their land. It does not say that they must allow unlimited turkey hunting on their land. A reasonable interpretation would be that the landowner allow one turkey hunter or turkey hunting party, depending on the size of the property, during each of the five-day seasons. It might also be unreasonable to expect the landowner to allow other hunters to use his or her property, again depending on the size of the parcel, during the specific season that they and other members of their hunting party are drawn for. This listing does not offer an exception from the trespassing regulations, and in no way authorizes turkey hunters to make other uses of the property such as camping, morel mushroom hunting, fishing, or driving on the property. As with all outdoor activities, hunters are advised to "ask first" and abide by the landowners wishes.

I've seen advertisements for "duplex" turkey load shot shells. Are these types of shells legal in Minnesota? Can I use steel shot?

Yes, "duplex" loads are legal, provided that none of the shot contained in the load are larger than the #4 fine shot, the maximum shot size required by the regulations. A load consisting of a mix of #4s and #6s, for example, would be legal, while a load mixing #4s and #2s would be prohibited.

The use of steel or other non-toxic material shot is not prohibited, but there is no allowance for people using these shells to use shot sizes greater than the #4 maximum size.

Spring hunting

A spring turkey hunter is rewarded by the annual renewal of outdoor life. After a winter of cold and confinement to indoor activities, the hunter can once again experience the great outdoors. Mother nature is renewing her world, from budding trees and blooming flowers to the breeding plumage of birds and the sounds of their mating calls. It's a time when one feels "it's great to be alive." Along with these pleasures, the spring turkey hunter who outwits a wily tom has much to be joyous about.

"Putting a gobbler to bed" is a technique that can greatly increase a hunter's chance of success. On nice days during mating season, it doesn't take much to make a gobbler sound off. Barking dogs, hooting owls, slamming car doors, and other sounds may trigger gobbling activity. During the late afternoon or early evening the day before hunting, position yourself on a prominent ridge or in the middle of a valley. Use a locator call such as an owl or crow call. If no gobblers sound off on their own, a light yelp might get them going. If a gobbler answers, try to pinpoint its location. Note prominent features around the location of the answering gobbler. Before first light the next morning, sit down no closer than 100 yards from the gobbler's roost and wait for the legal shooting time. Then, call softly like a lovesick hen and get ready for action. "Putting the gobbler to bed" should be repeated each evening during a hunt. The technique doesn't always work, but is well worth the effort.

Next comes the critical step. The hunter needs to listen to a couple of calls in order to locate a bird, then move as quickly and quietly as possible to a place where the bird can be called. The selection of this site can make or break the hunt.

How close can a hunter get? Probably no closer than 100 yards—and 200 yards would be safer. (It is possible to approach closer in hilly terrain than in flatter areas.) If the bird sees or hears the hunter's approach, it will slip away unseen. Remember, the wild turkey is not inquisitive.



DNR staff photo

Camouflage yourself entirely and sit in front of a large object.

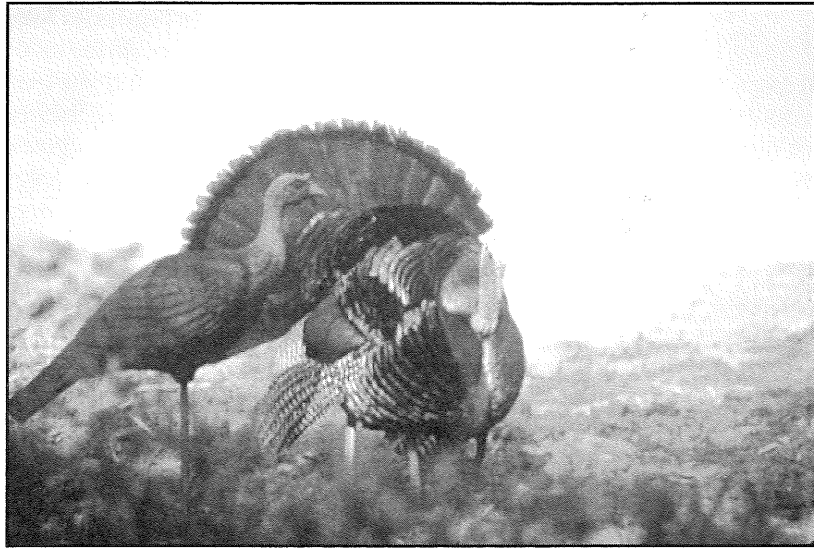
It is best to call a gobbler from your elevation or higher. Wild turkeys are more apt to come up hill to a call than down, and may not cross natural obstructions like streams or ravines. A gobbler might go to great lengths to reach a hen, but good hunters make it as easy as possible for the gobbler to reach them.

Turkeys can be hard to call across extremely open country, but very heavy cover makes for difficult shooting. Moderately thick cover with little understory is best.

Hunters attempting to call in a tom should place themselves in front of a large tree or rock to break up their outline and prevent being shot from behind. Camouflaged or at least dark, dull, forest-colored clothing is essential. Don't forget to cover the hands, face, and neck area. Also, since you are likely to be sitting on the ground, dark-soled boots are necessary. A ground pad or cushion extends the

time a hunter can sit still. (It also helps keep you warmer and dryer.) Shiny gun barrels and other equipment may spook a bird. Special cloth socks and camouflage tapes are available for covering guns or bows. Be sure to have a clear area to aim and swing guns or bows.

Artificial turkey decoys are used successfully by some hunters. Silhouette decoys are safer than full-bodied decoys since other hunters should more easily be able to distinguish the silhouette from a real turkey. Place the silhouette slightly to one side, with the decoy facing away from you. In this position, another hunter shooting at a silhouette or side would likely be shooting parallel to your position. If you hear other hunters approaching, use very human sounds to alert them to your presence; do not use a turkey sound. If they are close enough to be heard, they probably have already disrupted any turkeys in the area. Besides, being safe is more important than getting a shot at a bird.



© Dean Peterson

Some turkey hunters use decoys successfully. Silhouette decoys are the safest.

Decoys look like turkeys. In order to avoid danger while carrying one, enclose it in a wrap, either hunter orange or a complete cover of camouflage. They can also attract more than that love sick tom. In addition to other hunters, decoys may attract natural turkey predators like hawks and owls, which can also spook a turkey. However, if used properly, decoys can enhance the chances of bagging a tom. More information about the use of decoys can be found on page 38.

For spring gobbler hunting, the preceding techniques are among those that have typically been most effective, however, the variations are too numerous to write about here. If turkeys were predictable, hunting them would be less challenging.

Late season gobblers

Anyone who has hunted turkeys knows that anytime you can draw a permit is a good time to hunt turkeys. We speak a lot about hunting turkeys early in the season, but we don't speak a lot about late season birds. Here are some things to know:

1. Green up

By the time the last couple of seasons come along, you'll notice that the fields and woods have turned green, making the distances you

can hear and see in the woods a lot more difficult because of the new vegetation. The same is true for the turkey.

2. The toms

By this time in the season, these birds may have been hunted hard by any number of hunters and they have heard probably every call that was made. They will still gobble, but might not come in at all, or if they do come in, they might come in silent. This is a time when less calling is better. Also, at this time of year a lot of toms have lost their desire to breed or the hens are all on nests. Now is when these birds will feed heavily. You'll also notice, they will gather in bachelor groups and will tolerate each other.

3. Knowing the woods

Now is the time all your scouting will come into play. You know which fields the turkeys like and what ridges they will frequent in the woods. Sometimes the toms will be feeding in groups of two to 12 birds. You can pattern them like deer by hunting the trails they use—deer trails and logging roads—they still like to travel through areas of least resistance.

Late season is still a great time to hunt gobblers.

Fall hunting

Even though you will employ many of the same skills and safety considerations used in the spring, fall turkey hunting is a unique experience for a variety of reasons. One thing you'll want to learn more about is how the change in seasons creates a change in turkey habits and habitats.

Fall hunting can be a "feast or famine" endeavor. The presence of young birds and the tendency for a brood to remain close in the fall means that there are more birds per square mile than in the spring.



Still, birds may be harder to locate in the fall. One reason the birds are harder to locate is that you won't hear the loud and somewhat frequent gobble of the adult male looking for hens as you do in the spring. On the other hand, you might end up walking all day without any sign of a turkey, and then, suddenly, you'll be among three or four brood hens and their poults.

Food is more plentiful and often in concentrated spots in the fall. A grapevine may provide nourishment for a brood for a number of days, and a few trees with abundant supplies of acorns can hold several broods in one location for awhile. In the spring, food is not as plentiful and the birds have to move about in order to find it.

Throughout the summer, a hen and her poults remain together searching out a diet mainly of insects. As summer changes to fall and then to winter, the birds will have gradually switched from a diet of insects to vegetation such as the grapes and acorns. Preseason scouting before your fall hunt will help you locate these broods. It is especially beneficial to do scouting a day or two ahead of your hunt.

Wild turkeys are naturally gregarious and will make every attempt to rejoin their flock should they become lost or separated. A technique used traditionally by fall turkey hunters takes advantage of this bird's gregarious nature by attempting to scatter a flock rather than have it run or fly off as a group. The best time to try the scatter method is when you are within 50–60 yards of a flock, after the birds have indicated they know you are there, usually by producing a loud, sharp "putt." The goal is to try to scatter the flock so that the birds spread out in many directions.

There are a number of ways to do this. One way is to put your firearm down and run at the group as fast as you safely can while screaming and yelling. Sometimes a good scatter can occur by chance if you happen to "stumble upon" a flock.

Once you've located a flock, you can select a safe spot at or near the point of scatter to

Fall brood.

DNR staff photo

set up and begin calling. Sit quietly. After a period of time, the hen will begin to call. It may be 20 minutes or even up to an hour before it starts calling and may continue for up to two hours. Once the hen starts calling, you should begin calling also.

Hunters should try to mimic the calls they hear. Most frequently you will hear “kee-kee” or “kee-kee-run.” The “kee-kee” is a series of three or more very high pitched notes that roughly sound like “kee.” The “kee-kee-run” is just adding one or more yelps before or after the series of “kee- kees,” and running them all together.

You may also pick up another call referred to as the “lost yelps.” This call is a series of seven to 10 yelping sounds that start low and soft, with the middle notes louder, and then end low and soft. Always try to imitate what you hear the wild birds doing.

On occasion, you might be walking in the woods and hear a hen calling her flushed brood back together. This indicates that something spooked them earlier. Be ready to position yourself and begin calling immediately. A hen will also call her brood at “fly down,” that is, in the morning, and prior to “flying up” in the evening.

In addition to being an effective technique, the scatter-flush method provides better control of the situation. A hunter has time to pick a safe calling and shooting location as well as a chance to observe the returning birds.

Experienced turkey hunters use the scatter-flush method because it allows them to better identify and select their target. For example, adult brood hens have larger heads compared to the young of the year. Even though it is legal to take an adult brood hen, many hunters willingly pass up the shot because they know the hen guides its brood through the winter.

Hunters can concentrate on taking a young jenny or jake—birds that have not yet demonstrated their ability to reproduce and which experience a high mortality rate during their first year. A young jake tends to be darker, and may be larger, than a young jenny. Young jakes may also stay near the outer edges of the flock and make small gobbling sounds

mixed with yelps and high pitched “kee-kees” as they try to get back to the flock.

As fall progresses, young jakes spend more time on the edge of the flock and by late November or early December begin to join up with adult males or start their own flock, often of sibling jakes.

Bagging an adult gobbler in the fall can be more difficult than during the spring since gobblers seldom call or respond to calls at this time of year. Also, the gobbler’s head and neck adornments, so prevalent in the spring, are faded in the fall, making it difficult to identify.

The scatter-flush method also provides an opportunity for a hunter to experience the thrill of having several birds coming to your calls from several directions at the same time. You may find this to be a good time to hunt with a partner since a brood will usually regroup in the same location even after a kill. This might be a good opportunity for you to consider passing on your hunting tradition and skills by introducing a youth to this sport, especially one that has never hunted before.

There is high demand to use the turkey woods in the fall. There are a number of other species that hunters will be pursuing, and many non-hunters want to use the same woods to enjoy other activities as well. All users, especially turkey hunters, should avoid interfering with each others’ enjoyment of the outdoors. The turkey hunter must be especially conscious of the presence of other people and keep hunting safety in mind at all times.

More information on how to employ fall turkey hunting methods can be found through books, videos, and audio cassettes available commercially, and by attending a DNR Advanced Hunter Education Seminar or Minnesota Bowhunter Education Seminar.

Bowhunting the wild turkey

Bowhunting can be one of the most difficult, yet rewarding of all outdoor activities—and seasoned hunters will readily admit that the wild turkey is one of the smartest animals in the woods. Many consider taking this elusive bird the ultimate challenge—even for the experienced archer.

Whether using the compound, recurve, or long bow, hunters should remember that turkeys have keen eyesight and can detect even the slightest movement. It's also important to note that the vital

area of a turkey is very small, so shot placement is especially critical.

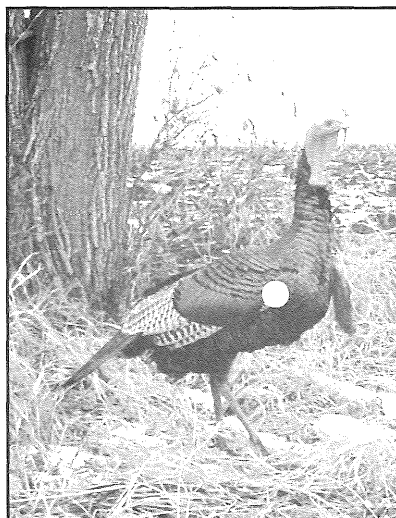
For bowhunters familiar with other game species such as white-tailed deer, using a bow to take wild turkey presents similar challenges. For instance, you should be well camouflaged, keeping your skin covered at all times including your hands, wrists, face, and neck areas. Your equipment should also be covered and silenced with appropriate material.

Proper Aiming Points for Bow and Arrow

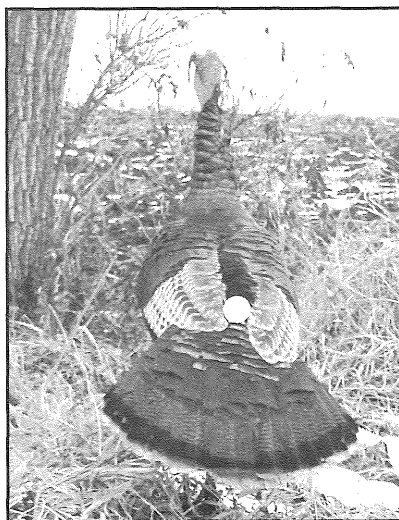
Photos this page by Lawrence Duke



To cause damage to vital organs, break a wing or leg and back bone. Place the arrow four inches below base of neck or about 1" below where the beard is attached.



An arrow placed at a point where the wing attaches, will hit the vitals and break a wing or spine. A spine shot is best because it immobilizes the turkey.



This shot will give the bowhunter the best chance to hit the spine, immediately immobilizing the turkey.



An arrow aimed at the base of the tail (vent) should hit the vital organs and may break a leg or wing.

Besides having excellent vision, turkeys can also see bright colors and distinguish variations in color. Nevertheless, archers are encouraged to use bright fletching on their arrows. The bright fletching helps in determining which part of the bird has been hit and also in locating the arrow after the shot.

Equipment

Choosing the right bow and broadhead is a very personal decision—there are numerous styles, manufacturers, and price ranges available. The equipment you may already be using for hunting deer will generally work well for taking turkeys. Once you purchase your equipment, it's important to take the time to become familiar with it. Practice shooting in a variety of simulated hunting situations prior to the season opener is critical for your safety and your success.

The draw weights for bows should be legal and adequate. Broadheads must be sharp. A pass-through with an arrow is not desirable. If you have a compound bow which allows you to adjust the pull weight, you may want to consider reducing the pull to a lower weight than you use for other game. Be sure the pull weight is at least the minimum poundage required for a legal bow.

There are several devices on the market that can be used to prevent an arrow pass-through. Some of these devices fit behind the broadhead and are specifically designed to keep an arrow in the turkey. Another device that has merit is the retractable blade broadhead. Whichever type you choose, make sure it meets the legal requirements for broadheads in Minnesota.

String trackers can be used to recover a turkey after it has been shot with an arrow. Needless to say, good arrow placement is more important than the type of equipment or accessory you decide to use. You need to know the anatomy of the wild turkey and practice for the killing shot. (More information on the use of string trackers can be found on page 39 of this handbook.)

Blinds versus tree stands

Tree stands are great for some forms of hunting, but they place the wild turkey hunter at a distinct disadvantage. First, wild turkeys constantly look up, scanning the sky for predators such as hawks and owls, and secondly, setting up portable stands tends to create noise and commotion that can spook a turkey.

The use of ground blinds is by far the most popular method for bowhunting wild turkey. Ground blinds can be made of surrounding natural materials or manufactured out of netting and other camouflage materials. One advantage of using a good ground blind is that a bowhunter can come to full draw and still remain hidden. The blind material also helps to cover up any small sounds the hunter may make.

Blind placement is crucial. You should place the blind near strutting areas, roost sites, or feeding areas. Doing some pre-season scouting will help you locate these sites. Try to make use of the natural surroundings as you prepare your blind. Positioning brush to form a circle with a group of trees immediately behind enables the hunter to blend in with the background. By leaving a small opening facing the area of turkey activity, you can create a relatively obstruction-free shooting lane.

Hunters must be able to sit in the blind and observe movement through the blind material. This gives them enough time to ready their equipment and come to full draw before a turkey enters the shooting lane.

Portable blinds have several advantages. They're usually lightweight, easy to position, and can be quickly set up. Many are made of cotton which tends to be a fairly quiet material in windy and adverse weather conditions. Portable blinds also provide some shelter from the sun and the rain. Just like natural blinds, they help to hide a hunter's movements. Portable blinds also do less damage to surrounding vegetation.

When to draw

One of the biggest problems most bowhunters have when hunting wild turkey is knowing when to draw. The act of drawing a bow and arrow itself presents unique challenges because of the turkey's superior eyesight and ability to detect motion. Many a hunter has been frustrated when a trophy gobbler eluded an otherwise painstaking hunt. Following are some key points to keep in mind:

- when a turkey gets within range, draw as its head moves behind a tree or some brush; then be ready to shoot when it reappears on the other side
- an excited gobbler in full strut will generally start to turn in circles; draw when its back is to you—its tail will be between you and its head
- a large gobbler in full strut will often pull its head down into its body as it drums; draw when the folds of the skin on the head and neck and the fluffed feathers around the head block the turkey's vision

Decoy tactics

Using hen decoys is a favorite tactic used by many bowhunters. Turkey calls also help to draw a gobbler close in anticipation of finding a hen. Unfortunately, not many large gobblers will remain in an area once they've determined there are no hens available. By using one or two hen decoys, the gobbler may come in close to display its beauty at a full strut. A decoy helps to hold the gobbler's interest, possibly giving the hunter enough time to draw a bow.

Decoy placement should be at a range where the gobbler feels it has enough room to strut, yet give the archer a good shot. For maximum effectiveness, place your decoys at about 10 yards from your shooting location. Hopefully, the gobbler will perform its strut around the decoys, presenting a fanned fanny at some point in the display. This will enable you to come to full draw and be ready for the proper shot. Use of multiple decoys including jakes sometimes produces mixed results and may increase safety problems.

A gobbler accompanied by hens may not respond to your hen calls or decoy during the first hour or two of the morning. However, don't become discouraged. In most instances, if the gobbler has heard your calls, it will eventually appear in your calling area.

Taking aim

Good shot placement is key to effective bowhunting wild turkey. A bad hit could result in a wounded bird taking flight and ending up far away from the hunting area. This creates a nearly impossible tracking situation. Daily practice with your equipment, year-round if possible, will help to ensure that you hit what you aim for.

The best shot is one that will break a turkey's spine. It immediately puts the bird down and gives you an opportunity to retrieve your trophy. If the turkey is standing erect, a shot aimed at the backbone between the two wings will bring the bird down. An equally effective shot is in the neck. However, it is difficult to hit consistently and results in either a hit or a miss. Don't try to shoot if the turkey is moving or bobbing its head. You can make a bird stand erect with a couple of sharp "putts" or "clucks" on your call.

If you are presented with a shot from the side, aim for the base of the wings. This will break either one or both wings, hit the spine, or pierce the vital area.

Aim for a spot four inches below the base of the neck if the turkey is facing you. This shot will sever the spine or damage the heart or lungs. If the bird has spotted you or appears to be looking directly at you, you'll need to determine if you have enough time to take aim, release an arrow, and still hit your mark.

A rear shot is probably the most difficult to execute. From this position, it's hard to pinpoint your target especially if the bird has its feathers fanned out. For best results, locate the vent or base of the tail and aim for that point. This should result in a hit to a vital organ or the spine.

After the hit

Unlike big game, a wounded gobbler does not leave a blood trail, and sometimes a wounded bird will fly up to 100 yards before dropping to the ground. Therefore, it's important to watch as well as listen as a turkey runs or flies away, note its direction of travel, and follow immediately.

Turkeys have a tendency to hide just about anywhere, and even wounded birds can be difficult to locate. Disturbed leaves and underbrush often reveal a turkey in hiding. Once you've located your gobbler, you may have to shoot another arrow into the bird in order to anchor it. Remember to practice bowhunter safety at all times. Never move or run through the woods with an arrow nocked on the bowstring.

There are several tracking devices on the market today that make the job of trailing a wounded gobbler much easier. By far the most popular is a string tracker that attaches to the arrow and plays out as the turkey flies off.

Using a string tracker can be a bit tricky at first. Shot accuracy can be reduced on distances of 25 yards or more, so it's better to keep your shots within 10–15 yards. You need to leave some slack in the string in order to draw the arrow properly, at the same time taking care that the string doesn't catch on bushes or other rough surfaces and play out behind you. Use 30-pound line—it's less likely to break, and dark colored string is recommended because it's harder for a gobbler to detect. The use of a string tracker does not guarantee you will recover every bird you've hit. Good shot placement is most important to your success. However, with practice, a string tracker can be a useful piece of equipment.

Bowhunting the wild turkey is perhaps a hunter's ultimate challenge. It's an opportunity for the skilled archer to outwit the monarch of the woods and take home a worthy trophy.

Turkeys and Trophies

A wild turkey gobbler is a real trophy and many hunters will probably consider having it mounted. The most common mounts are those with the tail, beard, and possibly the wings displayed. A full mount requires extra care in the field. Here is a list of things to consider:

- Call several taxidermists in advance of the hunt to obtain price quotes and special field care instructions. Expect to spend \$200 or more for a full turkey mount.
 - Visit several taxidermy shops to examine the quality of their bird mounting work. Most taxidermists will be proud to show you examples.
 - Ask the taxidermist about field dressing the bird. Most prefer to do their own gutting and skinning, and may charge extra if there was improper field care.
 - Take a small handful of cotton on your hunt. At the kill site, stuff small wads of cotton into the turkey's mouth, nostrils, and shot holes to keep blood off the feathers.
 - Bring the ungutted bird to a taxidermist the day it is shot, if possible. If the weather is warm, go to the nearest town and temporarily store the bird in a cooler.
- a) If you field dress the turkey, be very careful not to get blood on the feathers. You will need a knife, a box of corn meal, and a small cloth to lay on the underside of the tail.
 - b) Place the bird on its back and put the cloth over the tail section so it is close to the vent. Use another piece of cloth or other absorbent material to cover the feathers on each side of the cut. Make a cut from the vent to the point of the breastbone. Sprinkle the corn meal liberally on the cut as it is being made to soak up excess blood. Properly done, the feathers will stay clean.
 - c) Next, withdraw the entrails. Keep sprinkling corn meal on the incision whenever blood begins to appear on feathers. Wipe the inside of the body cavity clean with a rag to prevent blood from draining onto feathers. Do not attempt to remove the crop.



DNR staff photo

d) After the turkey is gutted, chill it until you reach a taxidermist.

- To avoid the need to re-freeze the bird, see if the taxidermist will skin the bird while you wait, or return later the same day to pick up the meat.

Take time to really look at your bird and appreciate it.

Cleaning and Cooking

Turkeys that are not going to be mounted should be field dressed like any other upland bird. The entrails can be removed by the usual cut from the vent to the brisket. The idea is to let the inside of the bird cool as quickly as possible. Hunters must be prepared to care for their bird properly until they return home. If camping, you will need a large cooler with an adequate supply of ice. Fill an airtight bag with ice and place it in the body cavity before packing the whole bird in ice. Birds spoil and can be wasted by improper care.

Birds can be plucked or skinned later. Plucking helps keep the meat from drying out during cooking. Dipping the bird in scalding water greatly facilitates feather removal.

Wild turkeys are cooked almost exactly the same as domestic birds. The one difference is that wild birds do not have as much fat. Adding strips of bacon to the bird's breast will reduce drying during cooking.

Maps for Use When Hunting Wild Turkeys

Hunters unfamiliar with the typical turkey habitat terrain might be in for a surprise. By obtaining appropriate maps and /or aerial photographs, hunters can save time and energy during their scouting and hunting.

Topographic maps

Topographic maps show a wealth of information, including rough terrain (common in turkey country), roads, streams, building sites, etc. They are invaluable for locating land features that could provide good hunting sites.

Maps are ordered by quadrangle names. Most of the newer “quads” cover about 50 square miles each. Older maps are smaller scale and include about 200 square miles. If you know your exact hunting area, buy only the quadrangle that includes your hunting spot. Quadrangle maps may be obtained from:

- Minnesota DNR website:
www.dnr.state.mn.us (see map function on DNR's home page)
- U.S. Geological Survey
2280 Woodale Drive
Moundsview, MN 55112
763/783-3100
- U.S. Geological Survey / Distribution
Section
DFC - Box 25286
Denver, CO 80225
302 / 202-4700

Maps are also available from private map companies.

County plat books

Also known as a county atlas, a county plat book indicates county roads, a township at a time, and also lists the names of landowners. This may save valuable time

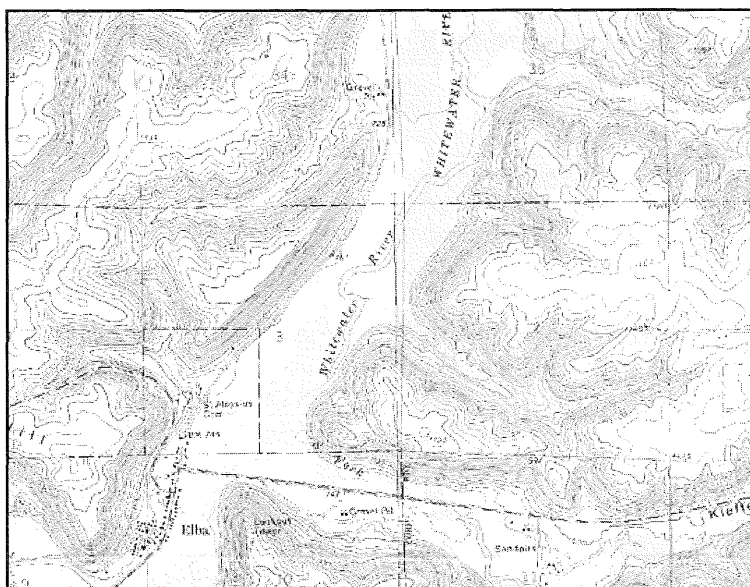
when trying to obtain permission to hunt private land, as required by the Minnesota Trespass Law.

Plat books are available for every county in Minnesota by contacting the appropriate county courthouse. Courthouse clerks keep information on current land ownership.

Aerial photographs

Aerial photographs combined with topographical maps can save time and prevent tired leg muscles. There are numerous aerial photographs of the turkey range taken each year to supplement various farm programs. By studying these photographs, you can determine the type of crops or crop residues, tree cover, open areas, and much more.

Aerial photographs are available at county Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) offices. Photocopies are inexpensive and cover small areas. Actual photographs may be clearer and cover a larger area, but they might have to be ordered in advance.



Topographic maps are invaluable for locating land features that could provide good hunting sites.

Using a Compass and a Map

Hunter's responsibility

It is the hunter's responsibility to know:

- How to get where you want to go
- Where you are (whose land you are on)
- How to get back to where you started from

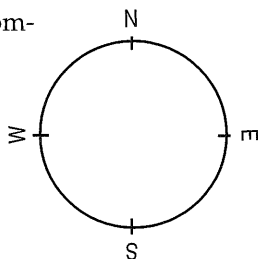
Safe and responsible hunters learn to use a compass and to read and use a variety of maps so they do not get lost. Getting lost generally occurs when a person lacks navigating skills or poorly planned the outing or both. Getting lost results in much undue stress for family, partners, and friends, not to mention the considerable cost incurred in attempting to find the lost hunter. It seems ironic that on many occasions when missing people are finally recovered, they are carrying a compass. When asked why they didn't use the compass to find their way back, their reply is either they didn't know how to use it, or they didn't believe what the compass was telling them.

The following section on map and compass is designed to introduce you to navigating with the use of map and compass—tools that can help you become a more responsible hunter.

How to use a compass

Using the compass alone

Learn the directions on the compass first: North, South, East, and West. Look at the figure and see how they are positioned. North is the most important.



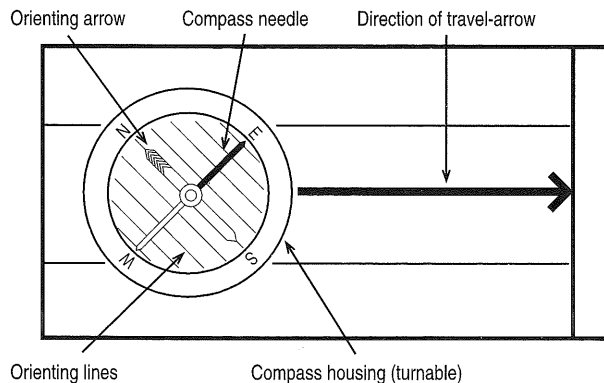
The orienteering compass

The red and black arrow is called the compass needle. On some compasses, the arrow might be red and white, but the red part of it is always pointing towards the earth's magnetic north pole. The needle is contained in the compass housing. On the edge of the compass housing, there is a scale from 0 to 360 indicating degrees, or bearing. Generally, the letters N, S, E, and W are used for North, South, East, and West. If you want to go in a direction between two of these positions, you would combine them. For example, if you want to go in a direction just between North and West, you simply say: "I would like to go northwest."

Let's use that example: You want to go northwest. You find out where northwest is on the compass housing. Then you turn the compass housing so that "northwest" on the housing comes exactly where the large direction of travel-arrow meets the housing.

Hold the compass flat in your hand so that the compass needle can turn. Then turn yourself, your hand, and the entire compass (just make sure the compass housing doesn't turn) until the compass needle is aligned with the lines inside the compass housing.

Now, it's time to be careful! It is extremely important that the red, or north part of the compass



needle, points at north in the compass housing. If south points at north, you would walk off in the exact opposite direction of where you want to go! So always take a second look to make sure you did it right.

Another problem you might encounter is local magnetic attractions. If you are carrying something made of iron, it could disturb the magnetic needle. Even a staple in your map might be a problem. Make sure there is nothing of the sort around. There is the possibility for magnetic attractions to exist in the soil as well. This is known as "magnetic deviation." While rare, magnetic deviation might occur if you're in a mining district.

When you're sure you've got it right, walk off in the direction the travel-arrow is pointing. To avoid getting off course, make sure to look at the compass quite frequently, say every hundred yards at least, but don't stare down on the compass. Once you have your direction, aim on some point in the distance, and go there.

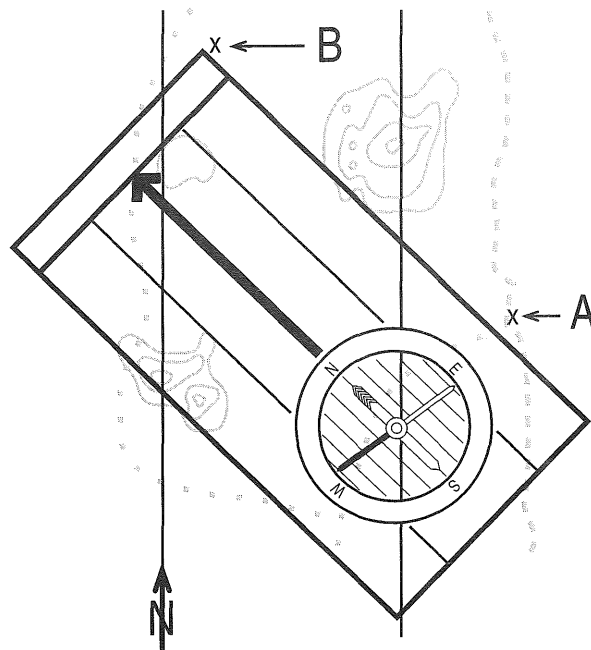
When do you need to use this technique?

You'll need to use this technique if you don't know where you are and you're without a map. However, you do know that there is a road, trail, stream, river, or something long and big you can't miss if you go in the right direction. And you know in what direction, or the approximate direction, you must go to get there. Then all you need to do is to simply turn the compass housing so that the direction you want to go in is where the direction of travel-arrow meets the housing and follow the steps listed above.

Using the compass in conjunction with a map

It takes practice, but before long you'll be able to use a compass along with a map to help you navigate terrain you've never been in before safely and accurately. Say you want to go from the trail crossing at "A," to the rock at point "B." Of course, to use this method successfully, you'll have to know you really are at "A." Put your compass on the map so that the edge of the compass is at "A." The edge you must be using is the edge that is parallel to the direction of travel-arrow. Then put "B" somewhere along the same edge, like it is on the drawing. Of course, you could use the direction

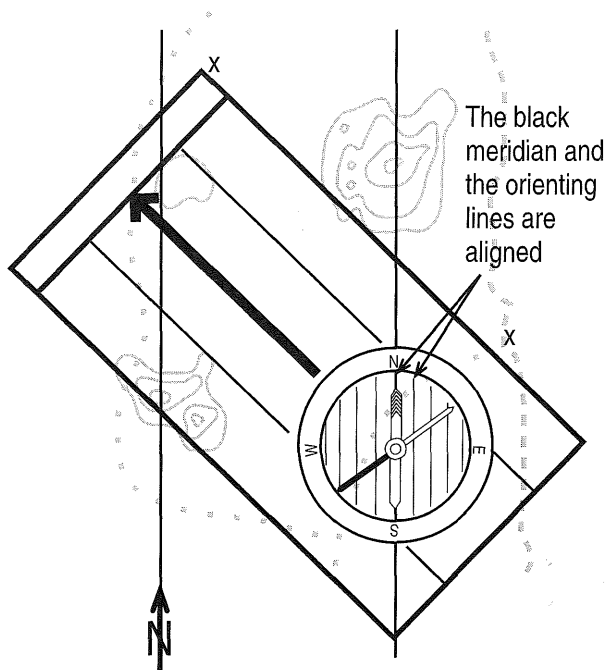
arrow itself, or one of the parallel lines, but it's usually more convenient to use the edge.



Take careful note: the edge of the compass, or rather the direction arrow, must point from "A" to "B." If you do this incorrectly, you'll walk off in the exact opposite direction of where you want to go! So, take a second look. Beginners often make this mistake.

Keep the compass steady on the map. Next, align the orienting lines and the orienting arrow with the meridian lines of the map—the lines on the map going north, that is. While you have the edge of the compass carefully aligned from "A" to "B," turn the compass housing so that the orienting lines in the compass housing are aligned with the meridian lines on the map. During this action, you don't need to be concerned with what happens to the compass needle.

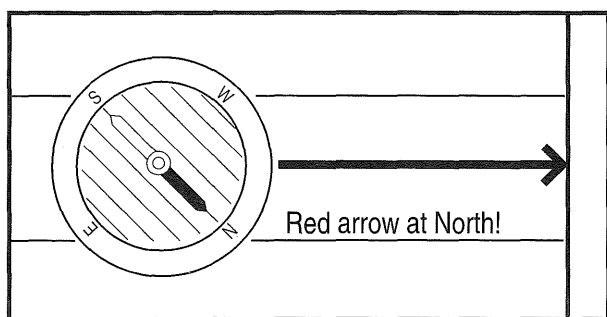
However, there are a number of serious mistakes that can be made here. First, let's discuss the problem of going in the opposite direction. Be absolutely certain that you know where north is on the map, and be sure that the orienting arrow is pointing towards north on the map. Normally, north will be "up" on the map. It is possible, though, to make the mistake of letting the orienting arrow point towards south on the map.



Keep an eye on the edge of the compass. If the edge isn't going along the line from "A" to "B" when you have finished turning the compass housing, you will have an error in your direction which will take you off your course.

When you're sure you have the compass housing right, you may take the compass away from the map. Now you can read the bearing off the housing from where the housing meets the direction of travel-arrow. Be sure that the housing doesn't turn before you reach your target "B."

Hold the compass flat in your hand so that the compass needle can turn. Then turn yourself, your hand, and the entire compass making sure the compass housing doesn't turn. Turn it until the compass needle is aligned with the lines inside the compass housing.



The mistake is again to let the compass needle point towards the south. The red part of the compass needle must point at north in the compass housing, or you'll go in the opposite direction.

It's time to walk off, but you'll need to do that in a special way as well in order to do so with complete accuracy. Hold the compass in your hand, the needle well aligned with the orienting arrow. Then aim, as carefully as you can, in the direction that the travel-arrow is pointing. Fix your eye on some special geographic feature—one that is located as far as you can see in that direction. Then go there. As you go, be sure that the compass housing doesn't turn. If you're in a dense forest, you might need to aim several times. Hopefully, you will reach your target "B" when you do this.

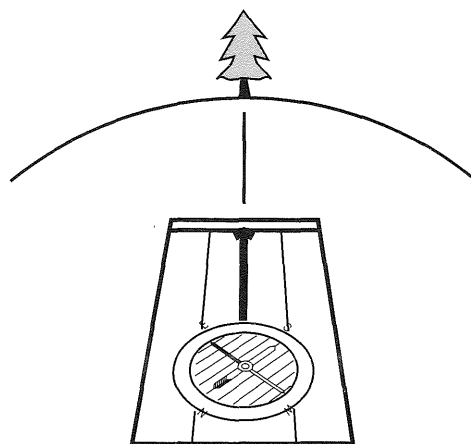
At this time, you may want to go out and practice reading your compass.

Magnetic declination

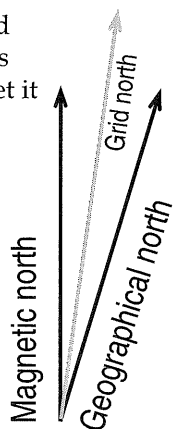
Unfortunately, there is something called "magnetic declination." Magnetic declination occurs when the compass needle points towards the magnetic north pole and the map is pointing towards the geographic north pole, but they are not the same place.

First, you'll have to know how large the declination is in degrees. This depends on where on earth you're standing. Topographic maps from the U.S. Geological Survey give the declination for the map. You have to remember, the declination changes significantly in some areas, so you'll need to know what it is this year.

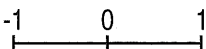
The declination is given as, for example, "15 degrees east." When you look at the figure, you can pretend that plus is to the right, or east, and minus



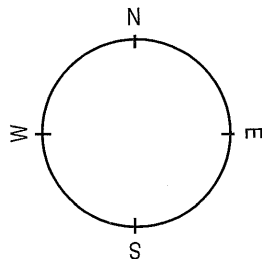
is to the left and west—like a curved row of numbers. When something is more than zero, you'll subtract to get it back to zero. And if it is less, you'll need to add. In this case, you'll subtract 15 degrees to the bearing by turning the compass housing, according to the numbers on the housing. Now, finally, the direction of the travel-arrow points in the direction you want to go. Again, be careful to aim at some distant object, and off you go.



There is a fast method to find the declination wherever you are. This method is advantageous because it corrects for any local conditions that may be present. This is what you do:



1. Determine by map inspection the grid bearing from your location to a known, visible, distant point. The further away, the more accurate it gets. This means you have to know where you are and be pretty sure about one other feature in the terrain.



2. Sight on that distant point with the compass and note the magnetic bearing. Do this by turning the compass housing so that it is aligned with the needle. You now read the number from the housing where it meets the base of the direction of travel-arrow.
3. Compare the two bearings. The difference is the declination.
4. Update as necessary. You shouldn't need to do this very often, unless you travel in a terrain with lots of mineral deposits.

Uncertainty

You can't always expect to hit exactly what you are looking for. In fact, you should expect to get a little off course. How much you get off course often depends on the things around you; for example, how dense the forest is, if there is fog, and above all, visibility. Ultimately, it depends on how accurate you are. You do make things better by being careful when you take a course, and it is important to aim as far ahead as you can see. As a rule of thumb, under normal forest conditions, the uncertainty is one-tenth of the distance traveled. If you go 200 yards on course, it is possible that you end up a little off course by perhaps 20 yards or so. If you're looking for something smaller than 20 yards across, there is a chance you'll miss your mark.

Practice! Practice! Practice! Get a compass and a topographic map of an area that you're familiar with and use them together.

Video: "Wild Turkey Hunting Success and Safety"

While viewing the video, look and listen for characteristics that indicate a male turkey. The male, called a tom, turkey is the legal bird while spring hunting. Characteristics are: only toms strut, have a visible beard, gobble, and their head color is brighter (note the colors) than the female.

1. What is wild turkey hunting success? _____

2. What was the reason one turkey hunter shot another? _____

3. What is the term used that leads an experienced hunter to shoot another hunter? _____

What does it mean? _____

4. What is the first thing a hunter should do to make sure this does not happen to them? _____

5. What are the five strategies that lead to a successful and safe hunt? Explain in detail.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

Put hunting pressure in perspective by:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

On the behalf of the National Wild Turkey Federation and its local chapters in Minnesota, we wish to thank you for attending this Turkey Hunter Clinic. We hope you have success in your next trip afield this spring, whether you harvest this grandest of all gamebirds or just thrill to the sound of its gobble and majestic display at full strut. But, more importantly, please remember two things:

- be safe—identify your target, and
- respect the private landowner—ask for permission to hunt on their property.

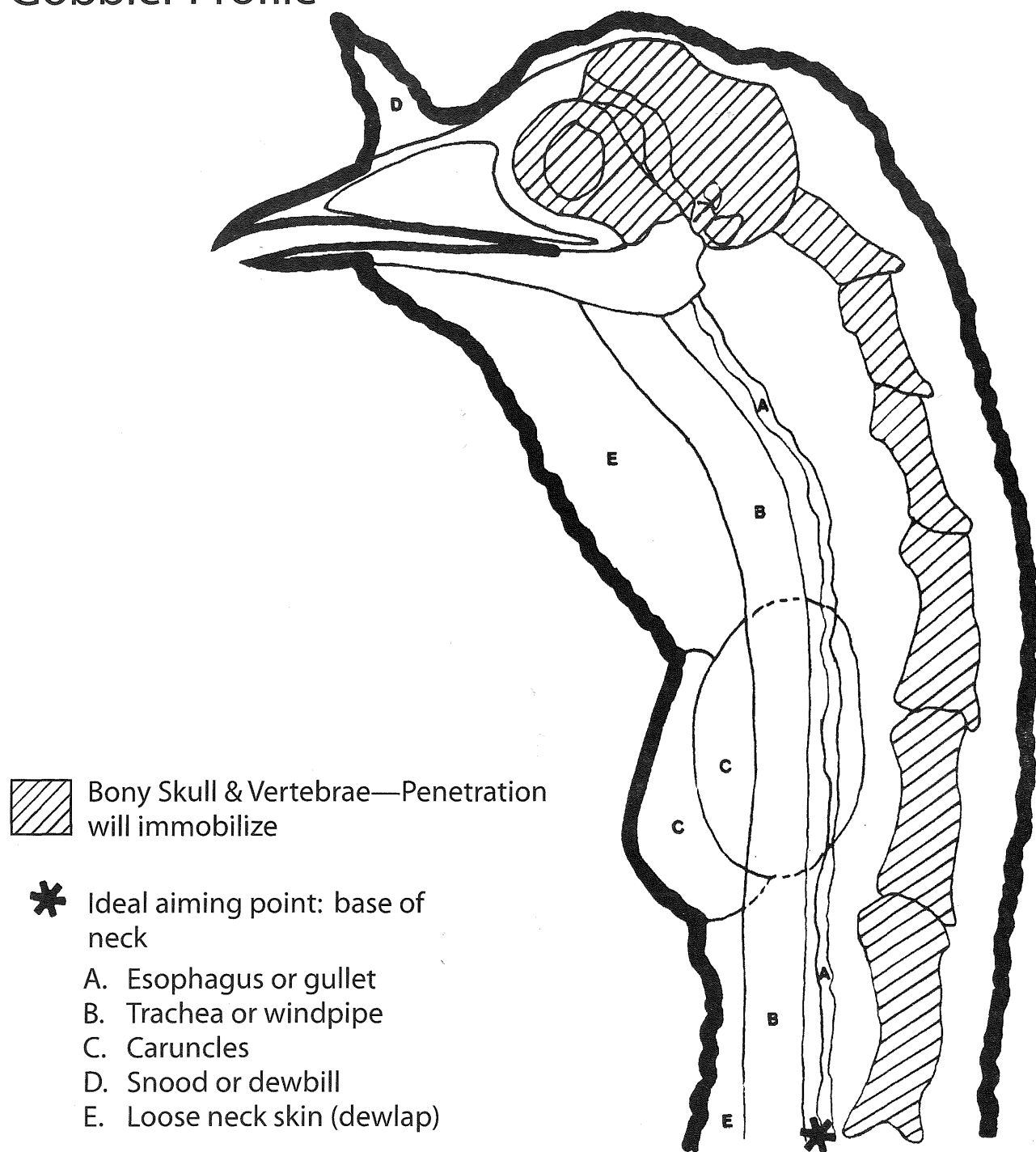
And either before or after, please join us in our efforts to expand your turkey hunting opportunities and protecting your right to hunt into the future.

For more information, contact:

Tom Glines
Regional Director
National Wild Turkey Federation
13075 Linnet Street Northwest
Coon Rapids, MN 55448
612/727-2717



Gobbler Profile



Make Copies of Drawing for Patterning Shotgun

Drawing by John M. Idstrom using X-ray of adult spring gobbler. X-ray by Paul H. Pelham, C.V.M.

[illegible]

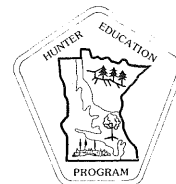
NOTES

Certification and Class Information

- For duplicate Advanced Hunter Education, Bowhunter Education, Firearms Safety, and Snowmobile Safety certificates, call 1-800-366-8917. There is a charge for the duplicate certificate.
- For a listing of Firearms Safety and Snowmobile Safety classes, call 651/296-4819.
- For a listing of Advanced Hunter Education and Bowhunter Education classes, call 651/296-5015.

For more information, contact:

Department of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4040
651/296-6157 metro area
1-888-MINNDNR (1-888-646-6367) toll-free in Minnesota
Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD)
651/296-5484 metro area
1-800-657-3929 toll-free in Minnesota
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us>



© 2001, State of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is available to all individuals regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, age, sexual orientation, or disability. Discrimination inquiries should be sent to MN-DNR, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4031; or the Equal Opportunity Office, Department of the Interior, Washington, DC 20240.

This information is available in an alternative format upon request.



Printed on recycled paper containing a minimum of 10 percent post-consumer waste and soy-based ink.