

**NWTF Technical Committee Representatives' Report - PA Chapter NWTF
Board of Directors Meeting, June 5, 2011**

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Final 2011-2012 Wild Turkey Seasons

During the April PGC Board of Commissioners meeting, the Board gave final approval to the following fall 2011 and spring 2012 turkey seasons.

The restructured fall season dates for 2011 are as follows:

WMUs 1A, 1B and 2A (Shotgun/archery only): Oct. 29-Nov. 12 and Nov. 24-26;

WMU 2B (Shotgun/archery only): Oct. 29-Nov. 18 and Nov. 24-26;

WMUs 2C, 2D, 2E, 4A, 4B and 4D: Oct. 29-Nov. 12 and Nov. 24-26;

WMUs 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C, 4C and 4E: Oct. 29-Nov. 18 and Nov. 24-26;

WMU 5A: Nov. 1-3;

WMUs 5B, 5C and 5D: Closed to fall turkey hunting.

Spring 2012 junior season, statewide: April 21. Hunting hours close at noon.

Spring 2012 season, statewide: April 28-May 31. Hunting hours close at noon, April 28 – May 12. Hunting hours close one-half hour after sunset, May 14- 31.

Harvest Management

Although our data resources division is still entering report cards into the database for the spring 2011 season, as of 28 May, with two full days remaining in the season, we received 10% less harvest report cards than by the end of the 2010 season, but 16% more than the end of the 2009. We continue to receive report cards 15 days after the close of the season (June 15), at which time we make our final count. Beginning this year hunters also were asked to report time of kill to assess the percent harvest occurring after noon.

Special turkey licenses sold for the 2011 spring season was 15,159, a 12% increase from 2010 and a 56% increase from the previous average since the special license was introduced in 2006. The increases during the last two years most likely are due to the computerized Point-Of-Sale Licensing System allowing this license sale from July 1 until the spring season opens. Prior to POS, license sales were limited to January 1 – April 1.

Wild Turkey Hen Harvest Rates and Annual Survival Rates Study

A turkey hunter survey was mailed to 10,000 general license holders after the fall 2010 season to determine hunter attitudes, satisfaction and daily participation with the new season structure. In summary, it appears, at least with this initial survey year, we did not recruit new turkey hunters, and did not reactivate former fall turkey hunters. But we did provide existing turkey hunters additional recreation opportunities with the new season segment during the Thanksgiving holiday. The majority of participants were satisfied with their 2010 fall turkey hunting experience. Available time, higher turkey populations and places to hunt are more important factors influencing fall turkey hunting participation than season structure. A PowerPoint presentation is provided separately showing more detailed results.

The turkey biologist worked with the PGC Regions and PCFWRU at Penn State regarding data management and locating transmitters from mortalities. As expected, once hens dispersed from winter flocks, mortalities of transmitted hens began, mainly predation. Of the 119 total hens transmitted since January 2010, 34 transmitters are active as of 2 June (18 of 61 in Study Area 1; 16 of 58 in Study Area 2).

Outcome of the other 85 transmitted are: 7 stopped functioning or were destroyed; 7 fell off due to equipment failure; 1 hen slipped out of transmitter harness; 1 censored (died within 1 week of trapping); 2 died from researcher error; 3 died of natural infection/disease; 3 legally harvested; 3 illegally harvested; 20 general predation; 12 mammalian predation; 9 avian predation; and 17 unknown cause.

As of 26 May, hunters reported harvesting 3 bearded hens that were legbanded (\$100 reward for reporting) as part of the study (2 in SA1, 1 in SA2). Because bearded hens are legal to harvest during the spring

season, we legband bearded hens at the proportion they are incidentally trapped; we do not seek out bearded hens for trapping. Three additional female reward bands were reported: 2 roadkilled and 1 found killed by a predator while it was incubating a nest. Legband reports of male turkeys harvested to date are 44 (non-reward bands); 26 leg-banded between 2006–2009 during the gobbler harvest rate study and 18 leg-banded between 2010-2011 during the hen harvest rate study. One gobbler banded during the gobbler study was 5 years old (harvested in Centre Co)! So far during the all-day portion of the spring season 87% of the 15 reported legbanded gobblers were harvested prior to noon.

One problem we have encountered is the transmitter harness design is failing after approximately 15 months on some birds, such that some transmitters are falling off live hens. We are working with the transmitter manufacturer to rectify the problem with all transmitters we have retrieved to date prior to the next turkey trapping season that begins mid-August.

Rocket charges are to be delivered for the upcoming late summer turkey trapping season when we will leg band an additional 150 hens (75 per Study Area), focusing on brood flocks to obtain a sample of leg banded juvenile hens. Transmitters recovered from mortalities will be redeployed after they are redesigned.

Wild Turkey Management Plan

The annual review of the wild turkey management plan strategies is underway in preparation for discussion during the annual PGC/PANWTF Cooperative meeting (June 8, 2011). Each PGC Bureau is reviewing management plan strategies they are responsible for to show outputs and outcomes, if the timeframe for accomplishments is being maintained, and identifying potential problems with implementation.

Hunting Related Shooting Incidents (HRSIs)

Preliminary information to date shows 5 HRSIs from this spring's turkey season, one unfortunately being fatal. Three are 2-party, failure to identify target incidents (NW Region); one self-inflicted from the NE Region (Susquehanna County); one self inflicted, fatal from the SW Region (Westmoreland Co). The victim shot himself in the chest with a 12 ga. as he was descending from a tree-stand. Please note this is a preliminary report, may not include all incidents and final results may change as investigations proceed. We will provide an update during the next quarterly meeting.

Information and Education

In cooperation with the Bureau of I&E MJ Casalena recorded 3 additional Radio PA segments regarding the spring turkey season, prepared the spring turkey hunting season forecast news release, provided hunting forecast for several outdoor writers and individual turkey hunters, responded to more than 25 phone and email inquiries regarding timing of the spring season, turkey hunting and biology/population/habitat management.

NWTF Convention

The two PGC award recipients and Turkey Technical Committee member, Mary Jo Casalena, enjoyed the Convention and associated meetings. The PGC is very appreciative of the financial assistance from PANWTF to defray part of the Technical Committee member's travel expenses.

Michaux State Forest Summer Sighting Surveys

With the re-opening of fall turkey season in WMU 5A, we are continuing monitoring the turkey population in the Michaux State Forest, where the majority of the turkey population and harvest exists. Thanks to a well-established cooperative effort among the PGC, DCNR Bureau of Forestry (BOF), and volunteers from local NWTF chapters, the 14th year of weekly Summer Sighting Surveys on the Michaux State Forest are underway to provide an additional index to turkey population trends besides our harvest and hunting success trend data for WMU 5A. This is the area of the turkey radio-telemetry study where we investigated the causes of the suppressed wild turkey population and closed the fall season from 2003 - 2009 to aid in population recovery. Additionally, since 2002, BOF staff record each day, turkeys they see and miles driven, as an additional index of the turkey population.