

**NWTF Technical Committee Representatives' Report - PA Chapter NWTF  
Board of Directors Meeting, June 3, 2012**

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**Final 2012-2013 Wild Turkey Seasons**

While the PGC Board of Commissioners did not change wild turkey season lengths or bag limits during the April meeting, they did approve mentored youth hunting for fall turkey hunting and permitted the use of rifles for fall turkey hunting in WMUs 1A, 1B and 2A. WMU 2B remains shotgun and bow and arrow only. Fall 2012 turkey season dates are:

WMU 2B (Shotgun/bow and arrow only): Oct. 27-Nov. 16 and Nov. 22-24;

WMUs 1A, 1B, 2A, 2C, 2D, 2E, 4A, 4B and 4D: Oct. 27-Nov. 10 and Nov. 22-24;

WMUs 2F, 2G, 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, 4C and 4E: Oct. 27-Nov. 16 and Nov. 22-24;

WMU 5A: Oct 30-Nov. 1;

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

Spring 2013 junior season, statewide: April 20. Hunting hours close at noon.

Spring 2013 season, statewide: April 27-May 31. Hunting hours close at noon, April 27 – May 11.

Hunting hours close one-half hour after sunset, May 13- 31.

**Harvest Management**

Although our data resources division is still entering report cards into the database for the spring 2012 season, as of 23 May, we received 25% more harvest report cards than by the same time last season. Last year's preliminary final harvest of approximately 43,000 turkeys was 3% higher than the previous 5-year average. We continue to receive report cards 15 days after the close of the season, at which time we make our final count. Beginning last year hunters also were asked to report time of kill to assess the percent harvest occurring after noon.

Special turkey licenses sold for the 2012 spring season was 13,142, a 13% decrease from 2011 (15,159), but a 50% increase from the average sold prior to the computerized Point-Of-Sale Licensing System. POS allows special turkey license sales 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 2011 season to determine hunter attitudes, satisfaction and daily participation with the new season structure. Results are being summarized.

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 61 hens with satellite transmitters since last winter, there are currently 43 transmitters active as of 24 May (24 in Study Area 1; 19 in Study Area 2). Study Area 1 is comprised of WMUs 2C, 2E, 4A, 4B and 4D; Study Area 2 is comprised of WMUs 2F and 2G.

Preliminary data from satellite locations indicate that at least 29 of the 43 hens with transmitters (67%) had nested or begun incubating by 24 May, an increase from 51% at the beginning of May. As expected, a larger percentage of adult hens have begun incubating versus juvenile hens (70% versus 60%).

Reports of harvested leg banded gobblers increased from 25 during the first 10 days of the season to 38 at 23 days into the season. Of these, 11% were jakes, 53% were two-year old gobblers and 16% were three years old. Our gobbler study showed gobbler life expectancy typically is 3 years or less. However, thus far 21% of the reported leg banded gobblers were four or more years old, one of which was 6 (banded as a juvenile in Monroe County). Of the six leg band reports from New York, one was a 7-year old gobbler.

Rocket charges were 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. The Game Commission thanks the PA Chapter NWTF for continued financial support with this study, purchasing charges and bait used for trapping.

**Wild Turkey Management Plan**

The turkey hunter survey specified in the TMP (Strategy 3.1), conducted every 5 years to assess turkey hunter knowledge, attitudes and satisfaction, was scheduled to be conducted in 2012, but will be postponed until after completion of the hen study final report in 2015. We currently have 2 annual turkey hunter surveys: the fall turkey hunter survey in conjunction with the hen study, which will conclude in 2014 and assesses fall turkey hunter attitudes/participation/recruitment; and the new annual spring gobbler survey conducted immediately after the spring season to collect harvest and effort data (to replace spring harvest data from the annual PGC Game-Take Survey).

The current TMP expires 2015. For the next TMP, 2016-2025, we are considering changing the timing of this survey to every 10 years. During the current TMP we greatly expanded turkey seasons, bag limits, wild turkey research and human dimensions information, all of which allowed us to acquire much needed information. We therefore might not need a general turkey hunter survey quite as often during the next TMP cycle.

The annual review of the wild turkey management plan strategies is underway in preparation for discussion during the annual PGC/PANWTF Cooperative meeting (June 4, 2012). 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 6 HRSIs from this spring's turkey season, non fatal, as of 30 May (see table below). 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.

County	Region	Date	Cause	Fatal	Offender	Victim
Dauphin	SE	05/11/201 2	Shot for Game	No	1	1
Warren	NE	05/01/201 2	Line of Fire	No	2	1
Lycoming	NC	05/02/201 2	Shot for Game	No	1	2
Washington	SW	04/30/201 2	Shot for Game	No	1	1
McKean	NC	05/07/201 2	Line of Fire	No	1	1
York	SE	04/30/201 2	Unk - Possible Line of Fire	No	1	1

**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 3 spring turkey hunting season news releases, provided hunting forecast for

several outdoor writers and individual turkey hunters, responded to more than 30 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 Bureau of Wildlife Management Director, Cal DuBrock, 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 in 2010, we continue to monitor 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 within the Michaux State Forest, as an additional index of the turkey population. This year we also added two new weekly turkey survey routes throughout the valleys east and west of South Mountain to begin assessing the expanding turkey population off the mountain and throughout the remainder of WMU 5A.