

NWTF Technical Committee Representatives' Report - PA Chapter NWTF

Board of Directors Meeting, March 3, 2013

**Submitted by: Mary Jo Casalena, Wildlife Biologist II,
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Harvest Management

The number of fall wild turkey season harvest report cards received is being finalized by our Data Resources Division. The preliminary fall 2012 turkey harvest was approximately 13,600; 45% below the previous 10-yr average. The decrease can be partially explained by below average poult recruitment, and abundant mast crops in many WMUs, which dispersed the already small flocks. Hunter participation is determined via the annual game-take survey, which is currently being conducted.

PANWTF Habitat Committee

The wild turkey biologist worked with the habitat committee to review the 83 wild turkey habitat improvement proposals submitted, totaling \$162,376.

PANWTF funded 76 proposals covering 1,306 acres of private and state lands in Pennsylvania, totaling \$130,209 PANWTF habitat superfund dollars – much of which will be matched with cooperator monies/labor, so the total on-the-ground dollars for habitat improvement could be twice that amount. This, along with the PANWTF's seed subsidy and conservation seed programs, demonstrates the PANWTF's great partnership for improving wildlife habitat throughout Pennsylvania.

Fifty-one of the 76 proposals (61%) are for PA Game Commission projects totaling \$87,761.40 funded to the Game Commission by PANWTF. Some proposals could not be funded or were funded at a lower level than requested because there simply were not enough funds for every project.

PRELIMINARY Fall 2012 Wild Turkey Hunting-Related Shooting Incidents

Preliminary reports continue to show no fall turkey hunting incidents for 2012. The 2012 reports will be finalized by April 2013.

Wild Turkey Season Recommendations, Fall 2013 & Spring 2014

As per recommendations from staff, the Board of Commissioners proposed the following changes to the fall 2013 wild turkey hunting seasons, which will be finalized at the April 14-15, 2013 meeting:

1. Decrease the first segment of the fall season in WMU 1B from 2 weeks to 1 week due to below average population indices for the last 3 years and the precipitous decline in 2012 to the lowest population indices on record. The fall season was liberalized in 1999 (7 days to 2 weeks), and in 2011 the 3-day Thanksgiving holiday season was added.
2. In accordance with the hen wild turkey study design, to determine the effect of season length on hen harvest rates, the first segment of the fall season in Study Area 1 (WMUs 2C, 2E, 4A, 4B and 4D) will be increased to 3 weeks (from 2 weeks), and in Study Area 2 (WMU 2F and 2G) will be decreased to 2 weeks (from 3 weeks). Changes are to remain in place for 2 years (2013-2014) for the duration of the study, to provide adequate sample size for analyses.

No changes are proposed for the 2014 spring season.

Hen Turkey Survival and Harvest Rate Study

Winter trapping continues through March with a goal of leg banding 155 wild turkey hens per Study Area, including 30 to be fitted with backpack style satellite transmitters. As of 27 February we have leg banded 70% of our goal; 123 in SA1 (including 16 equipped with transmitters) and 93 in SA2 (including 7 equipped with transmitters). We also incidentally trapped and leg banded 56 males thus far (32 in Study

Area 1, 24 in Study Area 2). Please continue to report flocks of female wild turkeys within the two Study Areas to Mary Jo Casalena, Bob Eriksen or your local Wildlife Conservation Officer.

We currently are monitoring 54 transmittered hens (28 in Study Area 1, 26 in Study Area 2), with 6 additional transmitters to deploy. As expected, hen mortality has been low with no natural mortalities yet this year while turkeys have been in winter flocks. All newly transmittered hens have remained within 1 mile of their wintering areas. Two transmittered hens trapped last year in Study Area 2 travelled over 13 miles from their nesting areas to their current wintering areas and two travelled over 3 miles. Movements of transmittered hens in Study Area 1 from nesting to wintering areas have been 2 miles or less.

We have received over 50% response rate thus far (from 10,000 total surveys) from the 2012 fall turkey hunter survey. We provided hunters the option of responding via the internet, which may have increased responses. The survey is designed to help determine fall turkey hunter participation, recruitment, and satisfaction with the fall turkey hunting season structure during the study. Survey data will be analyzed and reported prior to the April Board of Commissioners meeting.

One of our wild turkey trapping volunteers, a freelance video producer, filmed a recent turkey trapping event in Clearfield County and kindly posted it on You Tube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JX3OGuulsQ>.

In cooperation with the BI&E we posted the following on the wild turkey web page: an explanation of why the fall wild turkey hunting seasons are proposed to be changed in the hen turkey study areas; results of the 2008 Wild Turkey Hunter Survey; and results of the 2010 Fall Wild Turkey Hunter Survey.

NWTF Annual Convention

We are proud to report that Richard Cramer, Land Management Officer in Forest and Warren Counties received the national NWTF Joe Kurz award! We extend a sincere thank you to the state chapter for recognizing him at the state level and providing him the opportunity to win this prestigious national award. Rich joined two other Pennsylvanians (Don Heckman and Dale Rohm) who all received national honors at the Convention, along with several turkey calling contest winners and State and Local Chapter awards. Roger Hartless was also recognized as the PANWTF WCO of the year award winner.

John Dunn, Game Management Division Chief, Bureau of Wildlife Management, attended the national wild turkey technical committee meetings and presented an update on the hen wild turkey study, which is being partially funded by NWTF and state chapter.