

PENNSYLVANIA

FALL 2006

TURKEY TALK

Publication of the PA State Chapter of the NWTF



LOOK INSIDE:

• **32nd Annual Rendezvous & Awards Banquet Registration**

• **Report on the 2006 PA Chapter Member Survey**

Visit us online at:
www.panwtf.com

...Lots More

PENNSYLVANIA TURKEY TALK FALL 2006

Publication of the PA State Chapter of the NWTF

Volume 32 Number 1



Photo Credit: Henry Zeman/NWTF

In this Issue:

From the President	3
32nd Annual Rendezvous & Awards Banquet Registration	4
Report On the 2006 PA Chapter Member Survey	5
Eriksen Speaks to House Game & Fish Committee	6
Reasons to Support Hunting License Increase Legislation	7
Group Hopes To Legalize Turkey Dogs	8
Safety - Is It On the Top of Your Agenda This Fall	9
Leadership Workshop Weekend A Big Success	12
Capture the Moment	13
Color Phases of the Wild Turkey	14
JAKES - Penn's Woods Spurs Holds Field Day	16
JAKES - A Much Needed Look Back	16
WITO - Moraine Event Great Success	17
Col-Mont Gobbler's Chapter Happenings	17
WITO - 6th Annual Event Held at Mt. Pisgah State Park	18
WITO - Events... Reminder... Update	19

PENNSYLVANIA TURKEY TALK

PO Box 351
Altoona, PA 16603

Editor
Walt Young
814-949-7266
turkeytalk@outdoortimes.com

Production and Layout
Lance Carowick
814-946-7419
turkeyart@outdoortimes.com

E-Mail PA NWTF at:
panwtf@go2pa.com

Copyright 2004

THE PENNSYLVANIA CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION

Pennsylvania Turkey Talk is published quarterly by the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Information in this publication is provided "as is" and without warranties of any kind, whether express or implied. The Pennsylvania Chapter of the NWTF makes no guarantees as to accuracy, currency, quality or fitness of any information presented in this publication. The Pennsylvania Chapter of the NWTF assumes no legal liability or responsibility for any incorrect, misleading, outdated or missing information.

The views and opinions expressed in Turkey Talk are those of the writers, who are responsible for the accuracy of content. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the NWTF.

The acceptance of advertising by the Pennsylvania Chapter of the NWTF does not constitute an endorsement of the products or services advertised. The publisher assumes no responsibility or liability for the publication of copy submitted by advertisers.

The Pennsylvania Chapter of the NWTF reserves the right to cancel or reject articles or advertising deemed inappropriate or unsuitable for Turkey Talk.

Anyone using any information from this publication does so at their own risk, and shall be deemed to indemnify the Pennsylvania Chapter of the NWTF. The publisher shall not be responsible or liable for any damage or injury resulting from such use.

The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue of Turkey Talk is December 2.

PA NWTF OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Dave Burdge

1593 Brocius Road
Brookville, PA 15825
Phone: (814) 328-2332
burdge@alltel.net

VICE PRESIDENT

Gene Alwine

144 Church Road
Davidsville, PA 15928
Phone: (814) 442-7959
genopanwtf@yahoo.com

SECRETARY

Bill Mackereth

2335 Shiloh Road
Woodland, PA 16881
Phone: (814) 857-7762

TREASURER

Jim Panaro

224 Buck Road
Ebensburg, PA 15931
Phone: (814) 344-6632
jim.panaro@resfuel.com

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Don Heckman

14 Slate Hill Road
Camp Hill, PA 17011
Phone: (717) 761-5925
dheckman@ezonline.net

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Jon Pries

612 Harman Road
Trout Run, PA 17771
Phone: (570) 634-2601
jongobbler@aol.com

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Gary Beatty

65 Donation Road
Greenville, PA
Phone: (724) 588-3342
gbeatty@thiel.edu



SUPPORTING MEMBER

Cover Photo by
**JOHN FORD/NATIONAL WILD
TURKEY FEDERATION**

From the President

Dave Burdge



Hopefully, all of you enjoyed the long, hot summer days of July and August. October is now upon us bringing all the beautiful colors of the turning maples, beeches, and oaks.

There seems to be an overabundance of spring poults of all sizes this year. I have seen poults from the size of grouse to almost full-grown turkeys. I have also seen groups of adult hens and gobblers checking for grasshoppers in the freshly cut fields near my home in Jefferson County. It looks like the fall turkey season should produce many exciting hunts throughout our Keystone State.

Our Presidents meeting in State College had the best attendance ever! Forty-eight local chapters were represented, and our two-day event was very exciting. Important information was given by Tammy Mowry about Women in the Outdoors; Bob Eriksen spoke about land management and food plots; Carl Mowry and Ray Smith presented information about new chapters in their regions; and Ray also presented the new core package for 2007. Larry Holjencin was

once again master of ceremonies. Saturday included our quarterly State Chapter meeting, followed by a picnic and skeet shooting. I would like to thank those who attended for taking the time from their busy summer schedule to participate in this special event.

Our State Board continues to work on many projects such as the Wild Turkey Management Plan and we also attend the PGC meeting and participate in the public comments portion of the meeting. It is very important to keep open communication between us to discuss the many changes that happen during the year. Items of discussion include turkey trapping, increase in hunting license fees, orange in spring hunting season, mentored hunting, and length of seasons and bag limits.

I wish all of you a safe and successful fall turkey season and thank all of you for your contributions of time, money, and efforts to keep Pennsylvania the leading state in conservation.

**Take A
Number!**



The Pennsylvania Chapter WT registration license plates are still available. Promoting the Pennsylvania Chapter and the National Wild Turkey Federation with our license plates is a great way to show your support and love of the wild turkey. Send a self-addressed stamped envelope with your membership number and phone number to Skip Sanderson, 6063 Glatfelters Station Road, Seven Valleys, PA 17360-8416. A signed application will be returned to you. Complete the application and send it with a check for \$20.00 to PennDot. Your plate should arrive in two to three weeks.

NWTF Staff Directory

REGIONAL DIRECTORS

Larry Holjencin, NW and NC PA
133 Timberline Rd.
Saint Marys, PA 15857
814-834-6492
timberline@alltel.net

Carl Mowry, SW and SC PA
288 Crisswell Rd.
Butler, PA 16002
724-283-5708
cmpanwtf@zoominternet.net

Ray Smith, Eastern PA
1133 Canoe Rd.
Jersey Shore, PA 17740
570-398-0721
rsmithnwtf@comcast.net

WOMEN IN THE OUTDOORS

Tammy Mowry
288 Crisswell Rd.
Butler, PA 16002
724-284-9201
tammynwtf@zoominternet.net

WHEELIN' SPORTSMEN

Jim O'Brien
17 O'Hara St.
Greensburg, PA 15601
724-216-5476
wheelinsportsman@comcast.net

REGIONAL BIOLOGIST

Bob Eriksen
27 Canterbury Rd.
Phillipsburg, NJ 08865
908-454-1882
boberikesen@juno.com



**32nd Anniversary
 Pennsylvania Chapter
 National Wild Turkey Federation
 Annual Rendezvous and Awards Banquet**

**Saturday, January 6, 2007
 Ramada Inn - State College -- 814-238-3001
 (rooms \$67/night; please call for reservations
 and mention NWTF for special rate)**

Seminar Speaker at 1:00 p.m.

**Scott Basehore
 Turkey Dogs**

*Prime Rib &
 Stuffed
 Chicken
 Dinner*

*JAKES Hunt of A
 Lifetime on Live
 Auction*

Seminar Speaker at 2:30 p.m.

**Bob Eriksen, NWTF Regional Biologist
 Black Bears**

*Silent Auction,
 Live Auction,
 Guns,
 Prints, Raffles*

*Drawings for Sponsor
 and JAKES Hunt of a
 Lifetime*

Awards Banquet with the Premiere
 Introduction of the 2007 Banquet Package
 Along with Chapter and Individual Awards
 5:30 p.m.

****Early Bird Core Package Raffle**
 \$300 worth of tickets for \$100 Deadline December 15**

Custom One-of-A-Kind Turkey Calls From Scott Basehore, Dale Rohm,
 Mike Lapp, Dennis Strawbridge, Roger Parks, and others
 plus other One of a Kind Items on the Live Auction

**Make Checks Payable to: PA CHAPTER NWTF
 Mail to: Rhonda Henry, 151 Trent Road, Friedens, PA 15541 (814) 443-6241**

<input type="checkbox"/> Adult Banquet Meal Ticket	\$ 30.00	TOTAL	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Child Banquet Meal Ticket (10 & under)	\$ 15.00		\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Bird Raffle Package	\$100.00		\$ _____
		GRAND TOTAL \$	_____

Name: _____

Address: _____

(Names of all people attending): _____

***** Tickets Will Be Held At The Door *****

Survey Says...

A Report on the 2006 PA Chapter Member Survey

BY BOB ERIKSEN,
NWTF REGIONAL BIOLOGIST

A member survey was published in the summer edition of *Pennsylvania Turkey Talk*. The objective of the survey was to collect information on how chapter members felt regarding certain current issues affecting turkey hunting, future turkey hunting opportunities, and the Game Commission. Because a number of "hot" issues have come to the forefront this year, the Pennsylvania Chapter Board of Directors thought it wise to learn about member opinions. The survey consisted of twelve questions on current issues, and members were requested to return their survey forms by the end of August. The Board of Directors hoped for a very good response to this survey, feeling that there were a number of potentially volatile issues to stimulate interest among our members. The response was a bit disappointing. By the end of the survey period, slightly more than 300 members had returned their forms. However, it is still likely that the response is representative of the way our members feel about the issues. In non-random surveys like this one, most people with strong feelings on any of the issues raised in the survey do respond.

On the issue of current legislation that would allow the Game Commission to regulate Sunday hunting, Pennsylvania Chapter members were nearly evenly split. Given the options of stating that they were strongly in favor, somewhat in favor, somewhat opposed, strongly opposed, or had no opinion on this issue, members weighed in slightly in favor of this legislation (51.3% favored). Forty-five percent of respondents indicated that they opposed granting the Game Commission the authority to regulate Sunday hunting and 3.7% had no opinion.

Members were asked whether or not they supported establishing a second youth spring gobbler hunting day on the Sunday after the regular youth hunting day. Our members seem to be split on this issue as well. Just over half (50.3%) of chapter members responding to the survey opposed providing a second youth day on Sunday. Nearly five percent (4.6%) had no opinion about this issue, and 45.1 percent supported establishing a second youth spring hunting

day on Sunday.

There was strong support among chapter members for eliminating the regulation requiring spring gobbler hunters to wear an orange hat while moving. Sixty-six percent of respondents supported eliminating the orange requirement while 29 percent opposed such a change and 5 percent had no opinion on the matter.

Almost sixty percent of the survey respondents (59.5%) reported that they did not purchase a second tag license for the 2006 spring gobbler season. Just over forty percent of our responding members (40.5%) reported buying a second tag. Members purchased second tags at a far greater rate than turkey hunters in general. Only about 3.5% of turkey hunters at large purchased a second tag based on Game Commission sales last spring and the number of turkey hunters estimated by the PGC Game Take Survey. Of those members who purchased second tags, 77.6% indicated that they did not kill a second gobbler. Some 22.4% of responding chapter members who purchased second tags reported harvesting two birds last spring.

Support was very strong for extending the spring gobbler season through May 31 and providing three or four additional hunting days by doing so. Nearly seventy percent (69.1%) of survey respondents supported such a change in regulations. Almost twenty-four percent of responding members (23.7%) opposed extending the season and 7.2% had no opinion on the issue.

Recent legislation created a Mentored Youth Hunting Program in Pennsylvania. When asked if they planned to participate in this program by taking a young hunter out in 2007, less than 40 percent of members (38.8%) indicated that they did plan to participate. Sixty-one percent of respondents (61.2%) said they did not plan to take a young hunter out on a hunting trip. This response may be a result of unfamiliarity with the new program or because the hunters responding do not know of any young people interested in trying spring gobbler hunting. However, the positive response to this question about plans for 2007 by thirty-eight percent of members represents an improvement over 2006 when only 14.9 percent of responding members indicated that they took a young hunter out spring hunting.

More than half (52.7%) of survey respondents supported extending the hunting hours for the special youth spring gobbler hunting day so that young hunters could have all day to hunt. Just over six percent of respondents (6.6%) had no opinion about extended hours for the youth day and 40.7 percent of respondents opposed the idea. Results from a question about extending hunting hours for the entire spring gobbler hunting season were similar. Almost fifty percent of members (49.8%) indicated that they were in favor of extended spring hunting hours, 46.1 percent were opposed and 4.1% had no opinion. Based on this survey, it appears that chapter members favor longer spring hunting hours by a small margin.

It is well known that the Game Commission is experiencing difficult financial times. Pennsylvania Chapter members responding to this survey indicated that there is substantial support for a general hunting license increase among our members. Almost 70 percent of responding members (69.8%) support a license increase, while 26.2 percent oppose an increase and 4.0 percent are undecided. In addition, there is overwhelming support for the creation of a turkey-hunting license or stamp that would be required of all turkey hunters. More than seventy percent (70.4%) of survey respondents are in favor of such a license or stamp and 28.6 percent are opposed. Only one percent of respondents had no opinion about the creation of a required turkey license or stamp.

Your Pennsylvania Chapter Board of Directors will use the information gleaned from this member survey to plan the approach to changes in regulations for turkey hunters. It is apparent that chapter members would like to see changes in the regulations affecting the use of orange and an extension in spring season dates through the Memorial Day weekend. It is also clear that members support the concept of a turkey hunting license in any hunting license increase package that comes out of the legislature and that they would favor extended hours for the special youth spring gobbler hunting day. Thank you for participating in the survey. Your opinions are important to both the Board and to the Game Commission.

Eriksen speaks to House Game and Fish Committee

On June 8, 2006, Bob Eriksen, Regional Biologist for the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, addressed the members of the House Game and Fish Committee. Following is a transcript of his testimony.

House Game and Fish Committee Members:

My name is Robert Eriksen. I am here this morning representing the Board of Directors and membership of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. I am a professional wildlife biologist with more than thirty years of state wildlife agency service experience. Our chapter and its 22,000 members in the Commonwealth have been a strong force in the field of conservation since 1975. Our mission is the conservation of the American wild turkey and the preservation of the hunting tradition. To that end, we have spent more than four million dollars here in Pennsylvania since 1985 on habitat enhancement projects, land acquisition, wild turkey research, and outreach programs designed to encourage hunter recruitment and retention. Many of our projects would not have been possible without the great cooperation of the Pennsylvania Game Commission and its many dedicated employees. The rapport we have with the PGC is outstanding and we support the agency's programs and wildlife management strategies. Science-based wildlife management is imperative for the secure future of our cherished wildlife resources.

The cost of doing business has increased greatly since the last hunting license increase in the 1990s. In that decade, negotiated salary increases for long-term employees, the price of petroleum products, prices of replacement equipment, including new vehicles and ancillary expenses, have risen sharply. We all are aware of those changes and how they affect our personal finances. The Game Commission has continued to provide services and programs to its customer base in spite of these changes, but in the past two years, the budget has been stretched to the breaking point. Services, programs, and replacement of personnel lost to retirement have suffered.

Our chapter supports increases in hunting license and related fees as proposed in House Bill 2601 as a means of generating much needed income for the Game Commission. This bill proposes an increase in the regular adult resident hunting license from the current level of \$19.00 to \$34.00.

That increase provides a good starting point for providing the PGC with resources necessary to begin to restore services and fill staff vacancies. The proposals within HB 2601 to increase costs for certain existing tags and stamps and create new stamps have the potential to provide more than 21 million dollars of additional revenue to the agency. In addition to the existing fee proposals within HB 2601, our chapter would request that the committee consider adding a cost of

The Pennsylvania Chapter has supported the creation of a turkey-hunting stamp since 1978, and we wholeheartedly endorse this provision within HB 2601. We would urge the committee to make a turkey hunting stamp part of any license-increase legislation introduced to the Assembly.

living adjustment (COLA) to any license increase bill sent to the General Assembly. Provisions for a COLA would help to limit the probability of large increases in license costs in the future.

The board of directors of our chapter discussed the concept of a Conservation Stamp at a recent meeting. While our board has not queried the membership on this issue, they are generally supportive of the concept of such a stamp with a fee set by the legislature. However, the feeling of the board is that hunters should be exempted from the requirement of a Conservation Stamp as hunters are already providing funding for PGC programs and services through hunting license sales. It is important to note,

however, that our board members would much prefer dedicating 0.5- 1.0 percent of the state sales tax as an alternative for providing a permanent funding source necessary to support important PGC conservation programs. We would also request that all transaction fees associated with sales from the automated license system be passed along to the license purchaser.

While the proposals within House Bill 2601 are projected to produce in the vicinity of 21 million dollars, it is likely that additional funding would be necessary to support the Game Commission annual budget. This is especially true if the Game Commission receives additional unfunded legislative mandates. Therefore, our members would be supportive of legislative actions creating revenues of 24 to 27 million dollars for the agency.

Our members are pleased to note that among the proposals within House Bill 2601 is a provision for the creation of a turkey-hunting stamp. This provision would require both spring and fall turkey hunters to have the stamp before pursuing wild turkeys. The Pennsylvania Chapter has supported the creation of a turkey-hunting stamp since 1978, and we wholeheartedly endorse this provision within HB 2601. We would urge the committee to make a turkey hunting stamp part of any license-increase legislation introduced to the Assembly. In the last membership survey conducted four years ago, some 75 percent of respondents expressed support for a turkey-hunting stamp. Support for such a stamp has increased within our membership, and we believe support to be higher than the 75 percent indicated in the last survey.

Revenues derived from the turkey-hunting stamp should not be earmarked specifically for wild turkey management work, but should be a part of the budget of the Game Commission. Working from a budget without earmarked funds allows an agency to direct resources to areas of need within its strategic plan. This new funding source would provide steady funding for the agency to tap for the purpose of fully implementing the "Management Plan for Wild Turkeys in Pennsylvania." This important document is currently in the revision process. The existing plan has been a useful document, but a lack of adequate funding prevented full implementation of the plan. A steady and dependable source of funding for the next several years will allow the Game

Continued on page 12

Reasons to Support Hunting License Increase Legislation

BY DON HECKMAN, WILD TURKEY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

PA NWTF and our 82 local chapters support and fund wild turkey management projects for the betterment of the wild turkey resource and turkey hunting. Through opportunities provided by PGC, DCNR, ANF, and Corps of Engineers, NWTF volunteers have met the past challenges of habitat improvement, land acquisition, turkey-hunter safety education, and wild turkey management.

While our turkey-management goals include supporting and funding "Management Plan For Wild Turkeys in Pennsylvania," we also support PGC efforts for all wildlife and game lands management, law enforcement, and hunting and trapping information and education services and programs.

Improving wildlife habitat, creating new game lands habitat as opportunities become available, and planning habitat management are key objectives for Pennsylvania's wildlife.

For the PGC to come up to full staffing requirements, to provide for WCO education and training, and to function in the twenty-first century as directed by their strategic plan and numerous species management plans, additional revenue is vital to meet future fiscal requirements and responsibilities. The cost of doing business has escalated over the past 10 years and will escalate as much if not more over the next 10 years.

PGC communications, outreach programs, and ongoing services and planning projects require fiscal management to meet financial requirements. In order to provide expected results, PGC revenue must increase over the next 10 years to meet future business and strategic planning goals.

Increasing hunting license and tags through legislation and alternative funding sources are being reviewed on Capitol Hill. Hunting license legislation in the form of HB 2601 has been introduced and is in the House Game and Fisheries Committee. This legislation will provide additional yearly revenue to support PGC programs and services when signed into law.

HB 2601 includes a turkey-hunting license to further fund the PGC Game Fund. PA NWTF supports the turkey-hunting license, which would provide additional revenue to support the PGC's "Management Plan For Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania" and all species management plans.

The \$5 resident license fee and \$20 non-resident license fee will be twofold for turkey management. First, the revenue generated from the license fee can be used to fund the 7 objectives and 29 strategies of the wild turkey management plan. Second, with proper management tools available to collect research and field data and turkey hunter data, wild turkey biologists will be able to continue recommending and supporting future turkey hunting opportunities as wild turkey populations continue their current expansion and population trending.

Why should turkey hunters support a turkey hunting license?

- Statewide wild turkey population peaked above 400,000 in 2001; 10 year statewide average is around the 344,000.

- When it comes to turkey hunting, we are in the "good old days" — but those times may not always be here.

- With more than 305,000 estimated turkey hunters and prior to 2006 relatively little work dedicated specifically to research and management of the wild turkey resource and turkey hunters, these "good old days" could quickly become a thing of the past.

- A steady source of funding for the PGC "Management Plan For Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania" will allow the Game Commission to manage wild turkeys and turkey hunting more efficiently and effectively.

- The current PGC wild turkey management plan has not been fully implemented because of a lack of adequate funding.

How will a turkey-hunting license help?

- Improved and more detailed information on wild turkey harvests will become available.

- Better research data to provide the information biologists need to make management decisions.

- Leg-banding and radio-telemetry studies will provide better research data and information to the Game Commission for their needs to make management decisions.

- More habitat improvement projects helping to increase turkey populations and improve all wildlife habitats.

- Turkey-hunter safety material will be provided directly to turkey hunters. Turkey-hunting safety could be improved.

- Better law enforcement aimed specifically at wild turkey violations.

- Determine how many turkey hunters there are in Pennsylvania, allowing biologists to make turkey management decision recommendations based on factual turkey hunter density numbers, not on estimates.

How will the turkey hunter benefit?

- This license will help ensure the future

of the hunting you enjoy.

- Funds will provide turkey hunters with specific turkey hunting and turkey biology information, turkey hunting safety, and ethics material.

- Turkey hunter surveys will give you the ability to express your concerns and opinions about turkey management in Pennsylvania.

- Additional funds could be used for purchasing more game lands, providing additional public lands to hunt.

- Habitat enhancement projects on state and federal lands will attract turkeys to these lands, providing additional hunting opportunities.

- Better research data and hunting information about our turkey populations could result in expanded hunting opportunities in the future.

Wild turkey biologists collected research data and developed turkey management regulations to properly manage the resource from the 1950s to the late 1990s. No statewide wild turkey research projects have been started or completed prior to 2006. Many regional research projects have been completed from the 1950s to the 1980s. TMA 7B wild turkey task force and research project, now called WMU 5A, was conducted from 1996–2006.

The first-ever statewide wild turkey research project was started in January 2006 with the gobbler leg-band study. This study is partially funded through the National Wild Turkey Federation Research Grant-In-Aid program.

Through trap and transfer and conservative seasons and bag limits, wild turkey populations have now expanded their home range into new regions of Pennsylvania and doubled their population numbers in this past 20 years. To continue expanding and increasing populations, the PGC "Management Plan For Wild Turkeys In Pennsylvania" needs to be fully funded, all objectives followed, and all strategies implemented.

Our wild turkey resource is a valuable asset to Pennsylvania. We have managed the resource for nearly a century using the most basic information available to biologists. In the twenty-first century, it is time to manage wild turkeys with the best available research and data. A turkey-hunting license would be able to fund additional wild turkey research, improve methods to provide better wild turkey management data, to provide turkey hunter information, and to ensure a bright future for these great birds in Pennsylvania.

For further information on wild turkey management look on the PA NWTF Web site: www.panwtf.com.

Group hopes to legalize turkey dogs

BY MARK NALE

If your idea of a “turkey dog” is a low-fat wiener, maybe it’s time to learn about a very specialized style of turkey hunting. This type of hunting is legal in most states surrounding Pennsylvania, but not here. Keystone State turkey dog owners must currently travel to other states, such as New York, to enjoy their sport. A small, but dedicated group of hunters would like to change the law. Turkey dogs can make for exciting hunting.

“My 13-year-old son Brad and I were walking back to the truck after an uneventful seven-hour New York turkey hunt when our dog Abbie disappeared. About five minutes later, we heard her excited yipping in the distance – Abbie’s high-pitched flock-busting bark,” said Scott Baseshore. “I saw a turkey flushing about 300 yards away, and we headed in that direction to set up.”

Abbie crawled into a special camouflage bag and lay quietly as Scott and Brad waited for the woods to settle. Scott began to call and was soon rewarded with an answer. Scott talked turkey with his homemade box call, enticing the bird closer and closer, as his son waited for an open shot.

“Abbie would whimper sometimes when the turkey answered and maybe turn her head in the direction of the bird, but otherwise she was still,” explained Baseshore. “Brad shot a nice bird from that flock, and we never would have even known they were there had it not been for the dog.”

Brad is now a man, and unfortunately, Abbie, Baseshore’s black-and-white-spotted John Byrne turkey dog, had to be put to sleep a year ago. Nonetheless, the above hunt stands out in his mind as typical of the way turkey dogs can add to a hunting experience.

Most Pennsylvania hunters are not even familiar with the term “turkey dog,” for the use of dogs to hunt turkeys has been forbidden in this state for as long as anyone can remember. Unethical, lazy, not sporting, illegal, and unfair might be terms used by many to describe

the practice.

According to Ron Shealer, of Spring Mills, turkey dogs are used during the fall season to scent turkeys and then break up the flock. The dog only barks when it sees birds. After the flock is scattered, the dog is trained to crawl under a camo blanket or into a camo bag and lie next to the hunter while the hunter is calling, competing with the dominant hen.

“It is amazing to see these dogs work and then go into a camo bag and calmly lie still until the birds come in,” exclaimed Shealer.

A group of hunters, many members of the American Wild Turkey Hunting Dog Association, are now making an effort to change Pennsylvania game law to allow hunting with turkey dogs. According to Shealer and Baseshore, the use of turkey dogs is already legal in New York, West Virginia, Virginia, Ohio, New Jersey, and other states. These hunters are contacting legislators, meeting with organizations, and talking with the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Baseshore commented that there are many misconceptions about the use of turkey dogs. It isn’t a lazy man’s hunt. Sometimes you hunt harder when using a dog than without. All of the dog hunters whom he knows think that it is highly unsportsmanlike to shoot at flushed birds. That practice also endangers the dog. Their specially bred and trained dogs break up the flock, and then the hunter still has to call in the birds.

Baseshore’s dogs come from John Byrne, a well-known breeder in Virginia. His dogs are one-third setter, one-third pointer, and one-third Plott dog. Puppies run nearly a thousand dollars each and come with a written agreement to never breed your dog.

Shealer presented information on the use of turkey dogs at the January board of directors meeting of the PA Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

“We discussed the legalization of turkey dogs at our board meeting, and our organization



Mark Machamer of Williamstown, Dauphin County, and Turk, his John Byrne turkey dog.

will remain neutral on the subject at this time,” said Don Heckman, Executive Officer with the PA NWTF. “It is my understanding that specific legislation will be needed to change the law, and we’d like to see the actual bill before we offer an opinion,” elaborated Heckman, who has been on a turkey dog hunt. “In general, we like to see specific bills, rather than broad-based legislation. That way we would know exactly what we were supporting or not supporting.”

Baseshore, from Denver, in Lancaster County, has been an avid turkey dog enthusiast for many years – traveling to New York, West Virginia, and Virginia to pursue his sport. He offered testimony at the Game Commission meeting in January.

“Through the years, I have found myself carrying a gun less and less, preferring to take someone new to the sport or friends who have hunted with dogs before and love it. There have also been many times I’ve taken my dog just for the pleasure of watching her work,” said Baseshore.

“In Virginia and West Virginia, fall dog hunting is a time-honored tradition dating back to the 1800s. There is no adverse effect on the resource in these or other states. Allowing

the use of dogs also gives sportsmen extended leisure time throughout the year in training their dogs. Another benefit of using a turkey dog is their help in recovering wounded game. There have been several birds that I would not have recovered had I not been using a dog,” explained Baseshore.

The dog enthusiasts feel that using a turkey dog should be no different from hunting rabbits with a beagle or pheasants using a setter. They say that the current law prohibiting the use of turkey dogs is discriminatory against those few hunters who would like to use dogs.

Baseshore commented in his testimony, “I would like to say that in my 30-plus years of turkey hunting, I have taken many more fall birds without the use of a dog than with one, and I have spent countless days afield with a dog only to come up empty-handed. Here in Pennsylvania, we would just like to see hunters have that choice.”

Editor’s note: This article originally appeared in the *Centre Daily Times*. Mark Nale, who lives in the Bald Eagle Valley, is a biology teacher and member of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association. He can be reached at MarkAngler@aol.com.

Safety:

Is It on the Top of Your Agenda This Fall?

BY BOB ERIKSEN,
NWTF REGIONAL BIOLOGIST

He was convinced that he had heard turkeys yelping up the hill from the logging road on which he was walking. Slowly and steadily, he made his way toward the source of the sound; carefully placing his feet down to avoid making any noise and moving tree to tree so that he had cover and could survey the woods ahead. He didn't try to call though he had a slate call in his pocket. The leaves were a little wet from rain a day or so earlier, and he was confident in his ability to sneak close enough to the flock for a shot.

There it was again! This time he distinctly heard a string of lost yelps, and the bird wasn't too far away! Easing along, he deliberately tried to keep large trees between him and the birds he was hearing occasionally. Short of breath from the uphill climb, he paused by a big oak. As he did, he heard more yelps. This time he saw movement about 70 yards away. There it was – the bird he was sneaking in on! He raised the little rifle and peered through the scope. He was shaking, but he could plainly see the bird's head in the reticle. Its head was moving as the turkey yelped. He'd better make the shot quickly before the bird noticed him leaning against the tree. He couldn't believe how close he had gotten. What great luck!

The hunter steadied himself against the massive tree, eased the safety off, centered the crosshairs on the moving head, and began to squeeze the trigger. Not for a minute did he doubt what he saw in the scope. It was a hen turkey, plain as day, moving its head as it made a long series of yelps. It was standing right next to a large tree, and it looked like there might be another turkey right next to it. At least there was another dark object close to it. Unsure of his ability to hit the head, he dropped the crosshairs a few inches to the dark body of the bird, and the crack of the .222 echoed through the trees. But instead of the sound of a turkey's last wing beats, the hunter heard men yelling, "I'm shot! You shot me! Help!"

Both hunters were hit. The bullet passed through the knee of the first hunter; the knee on which his box call rested in an ungloved hand. The second hunter took bullet fragments in the calf of his right leg as the bullet continued its path after passing through the first hunter's badly injured knee.

For a second, the shooter turned away in panic. One of the injured hunters yelled, "You'd better not run off and leave us!" He knew he had to do the right thing. The



NWTF Photo

shooter turned and headed up the hill toward the two bleeding hunting partners in utter disbelief. How could he have done this? How could he have made such a mistake? After giving the injured men what little help he could, he set his rifle down and headed out of the woods for help, promising to be back as soon as he could. Neither injured hunter had any life-threatening injuries, although one had a badly damaged knee and both bled profusely.

Most of us ask ourselves how anyone could make such a mistake. We don't understand how the circumstances leading up to a turkey-hunting shooting incident can possibly combine in a person's mind to convince him that he sees a turkey. We can't see how the shooter can possibly take a shot when he does not plainly see a turkey. But excitement and circumstances do combine and cause hunters to make mistakes. That is precisely why each of us, as responsible turkey hunters, must be particularly careful. The incident I described did not happen in Pennsylvania, but it easily could have. Both the shooter and the victim made mistakes in this case, but the ultimate responsibility lies with the shooter. Your decision to pull the trigger is one you cannot call back.

When you hunt this fall, make sure you hunt defensively. Never call while standing out in the open. Use a large tree or other object to provide cover and break up your outline. Avoid wearing anything colorful that

could be mistaken for part of a turkey. Use camouflage wisely, covering your face and hands. Set up where you have good visibility. If you see another hunter approaching, call out in a loud voice to make sure the hunter is aware of your presence. Do not wave or use a turkey sound to alert the approaching hunter. Be careful when you carry and set out decoys. Most of all, remember to treat every gun as if it were loaded. Never point your firearm at anything you do not wish to kill, and be absolutely certain of your target and what is beyond. Better to take an extra few seconds to carefully check and possibly lose an opportunity to take a turkey than to make a decision that you'll regret for the rest of your life.

There is good news in the area of turkey-hunting safety in Pennsylvania. The last three fall turkey hunting seasons have been the safest on record. In 2003, there were only two fall turkey-hunting shooting incidents in the state. In 2004, there were five, and last season (2005), only two incidents statewide. Between 1994 and 2002, the average number of incidents per year was about 13. For the past three seasons, the average has been three. We do not know what forces have combined to cause this downward trend, but all of us would like to see it continue. Let's make sure it does by being alert and careful as we take to the woods in pursuit of those fall flocks. Have a safe and successful fall season.

Pennsylvania Super Fund Enhances Habitat Statewide

BY BOB ERIKSEN,
NWTF REGIONAL BIOLOGIST

Back in February, the Pennsylvania Chapter Super Fund Habitat Committee met at S. B. Elliot State Park to review habitat project applications from the Game Commission, Bureau of Forestry, Army Corps of Engineers, and local chapters. There was, as usual, a limit to the budget and lots of good project proposals. Some project proposals were put on hold, some were partially funded, and others were given full funding. The committee reviewed and funded more than 80 habitat-improvement projects for 2006. Each chapter associated with a habitat-project proposal received funding for at least one project. Several chapters submitted numerous projects and wisely numbered them in order of priority to make the committee's task of making decisions a little easier.

As soon as the weather warmed up, crews began to break ground on projects in 50 counties around Pennsylvania. Some of the projects were new efforts, others were designed to maintain existing wildlife openings and food plots. Still others were completions of projects begun in 2005. As time goes on, more of our habitat projects will be dedicated to maintaining permanent openings and other habitat improvement projects initiated in the past. The natural world is not static and keeping a good food plot productive requires an annual effort. Since the Pennsylvania Chapter began to funnel funding toward habitat improvement, literally thousands of acres have been affected. Agency crews need to focus on keeping those projects productive as much or more than creating additional new projects. So if the land management officer that works with your chapter has slowed the pace of creating new openings that is likely the reason why.

Red Rock Chapter Projects

In early June, the Red Rock Chapter held one of several workdays the chapter schedules during the course of the year.

This lively chapter is actively involved in habitat-enhancement efforts on two huge game lands, State Game Lands 57 and 13 in Wyoming and Sullivan counties. When the Red Rock folks plan a workday, chapter members show up. Their workdays are well planned and much is accomplished, but the days are a social event too. On June 10, 22 chapter members gathered to work all day and have lunch together. Most of the work chapter members do is coordinated by land manager Gene Weiner of the Game Commission and David Butler, the chapter habitat coordinator. Chapter President and State Chapter Board Member Dale Butler, Vice President Tony Landi, Secretary Bill Arnold, and Treasurer Joann Margitsh help to plan things on the ground for workdays.

The June workday was focused on three sites on State Game Lands 57. The Beth Run Project is a new wildlife opening, 1.25 acres in size. The site was timbered in 2005, and chapter members worked on site prep, rock removal, addition of lime and fertilizer, and planting of rye, oats, clover, and trefoil. On nearby Cider Run, the chapter worked on two openings, each about two acres in size, adding lime and fertilizer and planting the openings with a mix of clover, oats, and trefoil.

Earlier in the year, the chapter performed five acres of border cutting along a complex of linear food plots called the Sorber Mountain Project. This project involved three weekends of labor by 11 chapter members.

Col-Mont Chapter Projects

This chapter has worked closely with land manager Keith Sanford on a number of projects in the Columbia and Montour



Red Rock Chapter members gather to plan their June workday on SGL 57 in Wyoming County.



A tractor operated by the Red Rock Chapter is used to disk a new opening on SGL 57. Chapter members added lime and fertilizer and seeded the opening on their workday.

County area. In July, chapter members Bill Satteson, Gary Smith, and Scott Walker visited projects done recently on State Game Lands 84 and 329, along with Keith Sanford, Ben Jones of the Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management, and me. Our mission was to look over the projects completed in the past and determine what course of action to take on these enhancement projects in the future. The fields maintained with Super Fund dollars looked good, but some will be in need of attention in the future.

We discussed the best and most cost-effective ways to ensure that the projects would remain productive for the long term. Mowing, top dressing, and other lower intensity maintenance options will be tried on Gowen City Complexes One and Two over the next couple of years. These projects (6 acres and 2.5 acres in size) look quite good today, but there are signs of changes taking place. Orchard grass has replaced much of the clover seeded five years ago. Some goldenrod and other less-desirable species are beginning to invade the fields.

In Complex Number One, the brood habitat established by a five-year-old project is becoming too thick in spots to be attractive to young poults. Similar conditions exist in Complex Two.

Game Commission crews will experiment with different approaches to maintenance on these complexes to look at costs and effectiveness. This experimentation will likely provide some new ways to enhance projects at a lower cost to the chapter. If that happens, we may be able to maintain more acres with the same number of dollars we are currently spending.

Schuylkill Spurs Chapter

In 2005, PGC Land Manager Matt Belding and land management crews in the

southeast region worked to create a few new openings on a ridge on SGL 326 in Schuylkill County. The complex of six openings 1 to 2.5 acres in size each will provide much needed brood habitat and deer fawning areas on this wooded game lands. I visited the site a year ago when foreman Jason Weikel and maintenance workers Mike Zimmerman and Drew Lambert were doing bulldozer and tractor work on the new openings. At the time, I thought the complex looked really promising.

The Spurs' project for 2006 entailed applying lime and fertilizer and seeding the openings and well as planting fruit trees. Some of the work was funded through the Hunting Heritage Super Fund, some through the chapter's own funds. This summer, Regional Director Ray Smith visited the site and was quite impressed with the openings now that they have been planted and are serving their purpose.

Plan for spring projects now

Remember that project proposals for habitat work need to be sent to PA NWTF President Dave Burdge by January 15, 2007. If you are working with a land manager or personnel from the Bureau of Forestry and would like to make arrangements to review a project, please give me a call. Though I can't possibly get to every project site, I am interested in assisting with planning of projects to maintain and enhance previous projects. Your chapter has contributed to habitat improvement whether or not there is a project close to home. Every project done in Pennsylvania is something you can be proud of as a Pennsylvania State Chapter member. Your contributions have improved more than 1510 acres just this year. No other state chapter comes close to the Keystone State Chapter in the realm of habitat improvement. Our relationship with natural resource agencies in Pennsylvania could not be better. We have great partners in the Game Commission, DCNR, the Army Corps, and Allegheny National Forest. Keep it up, Pennsylvania Chapter!

Leadership Workshop Weekend a Big Success

BY LARRY HOLJENCIN,
SR. REGIONAL FIELD SUPERVISOR

The annual Leadership Workshop weekend was held on Saturday, August 5 and Sunday August 6, 2006. The event began on Saturday evening at the Tyrone Sportsmen's Club. Ninety NWTF volunteers enjoyed a delicious barbecue meal, camaraderie, and friendly competition on the trap fields. Watching our "turkey hunters" shoot trap showed that many of them could hold their own on flying targets too. But regardless of the number of birds broken, everyone enjoyed the chance to make some noise and smell the gunpowder. The entourage then headed to the State College Ramada Inn to spend the night. Sunday's Leadership Workshop saw 115 volunteers from nearly 50 chapters in atten-

dance. This is the best attendance we have experienced at this annual get-together.

The meeting consisted of ten speakers who used video, overheads, and slides to cover the following topics and more: Super Fund deposits, expenditures, deadlines and funding limits; how to fill out greensheets for various projects, new safety DVD, PA Chapter news, Dart system, chapter development in 2006 and 2007 goals, PA NWTF membership and income rankings versus other states, Jerry Zimmerman memorials, preview of the 2007 banquet merchandise package, hunting license increase, turkey-hunting license, wild turkey management plan, banding study update, grant opportunities, membership survey, hunting access, Women in the Outdoors update, Wheelin' Sportsmen update, turkey dogs in the fall, and Mentored Youth Hunting update.

Following the presentations, chapter lead-

ers asked questions on: conservation seed distribution, all-day hunting, Mentored Youth Hunting, grants from outside sources, activities to have at JAKES events, banding study, number of hunters who harvested two spring gobblers, as well as other topics.

The meeting provides an opportunity for all chapters to be kept abreast as to what is going on within NWTF while at the same time having fun, sharing information, and making or renewing friendships. Every chapter is permitted to bring two delegates and the entire weekend (except claybirds and shotgun shells) is funded by the PA Chapter and NWTF.

The NWTF staff would like to thank all those who attended for taking time out of their busy schedules to participate in this important meeting. If you are a chapter officer, mark your calendar for August 4 and 5, 2007, for next year's workshop.

Eriksen speaks

Commission to manage the wild turkey resource more effectively.

Among the possible uses of such funding are the initiation and expansion of banding or radio-telemetry studies designed to provide accurate data on wild turkey productivity, recruitment, and harvest rates. Studies designed to evaluate habitat enhancement techniques to determine how best to spend money on habitat improvement projects would be possible as well. Recruitment and harvest-rate data can be used by biologists to ascertain the effects of current season structures and to evaluate the potential for expanding recreational opportunities to hunters. Such information has never been available to Game Commission wild turkey specialists.

Sales of a turkey-hunting stamp will provide the commission with a method of determining turkey-hunter numbers and will allow the agency to survey this select group of hunters to determine hunter experience and satisfaction levels. An accurate estimate of turkey-hunter numbers will provide biologists with another data point on which to make decisions concerning the resource.

One of the primary concerns among turkey hunters is access to educational materials to increase awareness of effective hunting methods and safety measures. Turkey-hunting stamp sales will give the Game Commission the ability to directly contact turkey hunters with this information, especially after the automated license system comes online.

The Game Commission is currently involved in many aspects of wild turkey management. Wild turkey regulation enforcement is a key component of the successful restoration and management of this species. Some of the monies derived from the sale of turkey-hunting stamps will likely be used for this phase of wild turkey management.

Our members have been particularly pleased with the efforts of Game Commission land managers and food and cover crews in establishing herbaceous openings and winter foraging sites for wild turkeys. Chapter members have contributed to this work with their fundraising efforts. Turkey-hunting stamp sales would provide additional funding for habitat improvement

from page 6

projects and would allow the commission to fully staff and provide equipment for land management crews around the state. The task of managing 1.4 million acres of state game lands is a daunting one and one that requires adequate staff and funding for equipment replacement and repair.

The eastern wild turkey is one of the most important and sought-after game species in the Commonwealth. We have managed this resource with only the most basic information available to commission biologists. The lack of detailed and current data has caused commission biologists to be conservative about providing recreational opportunity to turkey hunters. Creation of a turkey-hunting stamp will help give the commission the tools to collect essential detailed data, bring wild turkey management in Pennsylvania into the twenty-first century, and ensure a bright future for this great game bird in the Commonwealth.

We urge the House Game and Fish Committee to continue to explore funding options and to take action soon to relieve the financial crisis now affecting our Game Commission.



PGC personnel Dunkerley recognized by NWTF for outstanding work

LMGS Douglas Dunkerley recently was presented with the National Wild Turkey Federation's Outstanding Land Manager of the Year Award. Presenting the award are, from left to right: Game Commission Executive Director Carl G. Roe; Dave Burdge, NWTF Pennsylvania State Chapter President; LMGS Dunkerley; and Board of Game Commissioners President Thomas E. Boop. The wrong photo was used with the article about Mr. Dunkerley's award in the previous issue of *Pennsylvania Turkey Talk*. We apologize for the error and extend congratulations to Mr. Dunkerley for his service and dedication.

ATTENTION:

All PA National Convention Attendees!!

Please forward your completed registration forms to Dave Burdge, 1593 Brocius Road, Brookville, PA 15825 by December 10, 2006. Dave will forward all the PA registration forms to NWTF Headquarters and will arrange for all PA attendees to sit together at the evening banquets. If you need to reach Dave, his phone number is 814-328-2332, fax number is 814-328-2308, and email is burdge@alltel.net

NWTF Convention
February 22-25, 2007
Gaylord Opryland Hotel
Nashville, TN



Capture the Moment: Record your Hunting Adventure

COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL WILD
TURKEY FEDERATION

One of the best ways to remember your turkey hunting experience is by putting it on film. Whether it's pictures or video, both offer the ability for you to relive your hunt for years to come.

Below, the National Wild Turkey Federation's staff of videographers and photographers has compiled some tips to help you get started. Keep these tips in mind when photographing your trophy longbeard or videoing your child's first hunt, you'll have memories to share for a lifetime.

"These are the mistakes we see made the most in the field when videoing or photographing a hunt," said Matt Lindler, photography director for the NWTF. "By following these tips, you can make the experience one you can relive time after time."

Video Magic

From blown setups to tagging trophy longbeards, NWTF videographer Brian Godfrey has seen it all through the viewfinder of his camera. Here are some of his tips to shoot great hunting videos:

- Try to video with the sun on your subject.
- Use a tripod! Your footage will look smooth. Avoid tripods with braces between the legs. The braces can keep you from sliding under your camera and getting great, comfortable shots.
- Prepare to film hunts by practicing around the house. Cats, dogs, or even your kids playing outside will work.
- Don't zoom in and out too much. Get on your subject and stay there.
- Be sure to cover all of your camera gear

with camouflage.

- Have preplanned cues for your hunters such as a word or signal to know when you're ready for them to shoot.

- If your camera has a manual focus selection, use it. Turkeys or deer walking through grass or in the woods will confuse the auto focus.

- Remember, a small field or food plot open to the sky will allow your camera to gather more light than hunting in the cover of the woods. This tactic will buy extra minutes early in the morning or at the end of the day.

Composition

- Get close to your subject.
- Use the golden rule of "thirds." Look through the viewfinder, then divide the scene into thirds horizontally and vertically. Place the subject's eye or other focal point where these lines intersect.

- Clean up the clutter. Make sure trash and other visual clutter is removed from the scene.

- Watch the background and avoid power lines, telephone poles, etc. Make sure foreign objects do not look like they're growing out of your subject's head.

- Take photos that show action and illustrate a point (putting a tag on your animal, walking toward the downed game).

- When people are in photos, focus on their eyes or face and try to avoid taking photos where people have their backs to the camera.

- Encourage your subjects to show pleasant facial expressions. Smiles are great!

Lighting

- Shoot with the sun at your back.
- Shoot in the early morning or late after-

noon for softer, warmer light.

- Use fill flash to eliminate shadows.

Hunting photography

- Search for an exciting background (gnarled tree trunks, rocks, flowering trees, etc.).

- Keep the animal in good shape after the kill. If you're going to photograph your trophy turkey, for instance, make sure the feathers are in good shape.

- Try to avoid posing the hunter behind the animal. Use the exciting background to pose the animal and hunter.

- Clean blood off the animal and subject. Place an animal's tongue in its mouth or remove it all together.

- Keep firearm muzzles and arrows in a safe direction and the action open.

- Don't be afraid to turn your camera on a vertical axis. A scene may look better vertically than it does horizontally. Shoot both ways.

- Centered is not always better. Sometimes the focus of an image looks better when it is not centered in the frame.

- Vary your shooting angle. Shoot a scene from as many angles as you feasibly can. This not only means from all sides, but also at different heights.

- Experiment with different exposure settings. Shooting at different exposure settings above and below the camera's meter reading is called bracketing. Sometimes your camera's meter can be fooled by extremes in light and shadow.

- Shoot at different focal lengths. Zoom in and out on a subject. Get close-ups as well as wide shots.

By following these helpful hints, you'll be on your way to taking photos and videos like the pros. Plus, you'll capture memories to share for years to come.

Color Phases of



An erythritic (red) adult gobble struts his stuff with a normal colored gobble. This photo was taken by an NWTF member in Wisconsin in the spring of 2006.



A very light smoke gray eastern hen photographed in southeastern Pennsylvania

BY BOB ERIKSEN,
NWTF REGIONAL BIOLOGIST

From time to time, biologists who work with wild turkeys receive telephone calls from hunters and other wild turkey enthusiasts who report seeing a white turkey traveling with a flock of normal-colored birds. Occasionally, calls are received from successful hunters who have taken a wild turkey that appears to be red or extremely dark compared to normal birds. Even more regularly, wild turkey biologists hear from hunters who may have taken a turkey with some patches of white color in the central tail feathers or patches of white on the primaries or other wing feathers. Often, the caller assumes the off-colored bird to be an escapee from a local farm or a bird with mixed ancestry. While that may be true at times, more often than not, the abnormally colored turkey is a real wild turkey and not a domestic or domestic cross.

Odd coloration occurs in all wildlife species to some degree. As a birder, I have observed white red-tailed hawks, a white robin with dark wings, a white chickadee, a white cedar waxwing with a normal colored tail, and an otherwise black starling with a white tail. In addition, as a biologist working at deer checking stations and fur sales, I have seen a number of piebald or partially white deer, one pure-white deer, and sever-

al white raccoons. Reptile collectors covet white corn snakes and other lightly colored reptile specimens.

Biologists refer to various color abnormalities of the wild turkey and other wildlife as aberrant coloration or color mutations. Odd-colored wild turkey specimens have been reported most regularly in the eastern and Florida (Osceola) subspecies, but occasional reports come from the western subspecies (Merriam's and Rio Grande) as well. Most likely they occur in Gould's turkeys and in ocellated turkeys too. It is theorized that the varying color abnormalities are caused by recessive genes that are fairly common in turkey populations. Color abnormalities are recessive traits that are expressed in the plumage only occasionally when both parents of a poult carry the recessive gene and pass it on to one or more offspring. Even within the same brood, several siblings may be of normal color while one or two show color abnormalities. An oddly colored hen turkey will usually produce normal-looking poults.

The most commonly reported color abnormalities are albinotic (albino), melanistic (black), and erythritic (red). Of these, the one that appears to occur most regularly is an incomplete albino commonly known as the smoke-gray mutant or the smokey-gray phase. Smoke-gray wild turkey specimens have been reported in both the eastern and Florida subspecies, and this color abnormal-

ity is more often seen in hens than gobblers. Why that is true, no one really knows, but it may have to do with different survival rates between jakes and juvenile hens. Young gobblers are more aggressive and inquisitive than their female counterparts. A light-colored jake might have a lower chance for survival than a similarly colored hen.

The smoke-gray color phase is an interesting study in wild turkey markings. All the black markings on the feathers are present, though they may be muted or ghost-like in appearance, looking more gray than black. The areas of the feathers that are normally brown have no color or are very lightly colored so they are either white or an extremely light shade of brown. From a distance, the bird appears to be white. The eyes, beard (if present), head, and legs of these specimens are of normal color. I have seen smoke-gray hens in the wild in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. Other biologists have reported on observations of smoke-gray wild turkeys in Virginia, Ohio, West Virginia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi. However, no true albino has ever been reported to have occurred in wild turkeys. True albinos would have pure white feathers, pink eyes, and no pigment in the legs. There may be other genetic abnormalities or traits that lessen the chance for survival among wild turkeys that are true albinos.

No one knows for sure how regularly the

the Wild Turkey



This erythritic gobbler was taken in 2005 in North Carolina. Most red phase wild turkeys have white primaries and secondaries, but this one displays black primary wing feathers.



A smoke gray adult hen photographed in central Pennsylvania.

smoke-gray color mutation occurs, and they are rare enough that studying their survival rates would be nearly impossible. It seems reasonable to assume that a light-colored poult would find it more difficult to hide effectively and might be more susceptible to predation while very young. Therefore, survival rates of smoke-gray wild turkeys might be lower than their counterparts of normal coloration. A friend of mine once observed a normal-colored eastern hen with nine poults. The poults were quite young when first observed, and four were light-colored. The brood was using an area close to their house and was seen regularly along the dirt lane leading from the main road to their home. By the time the brood was four weeks or so old, the white poults were missing.

Other examples of incomplete or partial albinism include partially white wild turkeys and birds with a few white feathers. Occasionally, wild turkeys with entirely white wing feathers have been reported. More regularly, hunters notice some white coloring on the central tail feathers (retrices) of birds they have harvested. Early in my career, I discussed this abnormality with Jerry Wunz, a well-known wild turkey biologist with the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Jerry was of the opinion that the presence of white markings on the central tail feathers was the result of a nutritional deficiency that occurred in late summer when these feathers are shed in the normal moulting pattern. In my experience,

this characteristic is more commonly seen in gobblers than in hens. I have observed the trait in eastern, Florida, Rio Grande, Gould's and Merriam's wild turkeys. Dr. Lovett Williams Jr. reported that white patches seen in the primary and secondary wing feathers of young wild turkeys may be caused by nutrition rather than genetic mutation, so Jerry's theory about the tail feathers makes good sense.

If you ever notice an oddly colored feather on a wild turkey you harvest, check the corresponding feather on the other side of the bird. Interestingly, white patches and other evidence of partial albinism or nutritional problems are usually bilaterally symmetrical meaning that the same feather on both sides of the bird will exhibit the same trait. I have noticed this before, but this spring, I saw a classic example of bilateral symmetry. My son harvested a gobbler in Pennsylvania. When we were admiring the bird at the base of the tree from which he shot it, I noticed that it had a white upper secondary covert on one wing. Sure enough, when we checked the other side, the same feather was white.

Other aberrant color phases occur much less frequently among wild turkeys. Melanistic or black wild turkeys are extremely dark in color. On such specimens, the parts of the feathers that are normally brown or gray are either very dark gray or black. The wings usually show indistinct barring as do the major tail feathers or ret-

rices. This gives the bird a very dark appearance. Though I have seen photos of melanistic wild turkeys, I have only examined one specimen, a gobbler killed in New York by a friend. The red or erythritic color mutation has been reported from several states in the southeast and from Missouri. Some of these birds are entirely red, or burgundy, in color. Others are red with white wings. I have never personally seen a red-phase specimen, but have seen photographs of these specially marked birds.

All three color mutations probably occur in every subspecies of the wild turkey. It is likely that some domesticated Mexican wild turkeys exhibited various color phases. When bred in captivity in small numbers, the genetic mixing that occurs in the wild did not take place and the color abnormalities may have occurred more regularly. Certain colors were preferred by domestic turkey breeders, and close breeding allowed those characteristics to breed "true," creating the variety of domestic turkey strains known around the world today.

When someone tells you about an oddly colored turkey within a flock of wild birds, remember that it is more likely an aberrant color phase than a free ranging domestic bird. If it is a domestic or a bird of mixed ancestry, chances are its future will be short. Check the next gobbler you kill for oddly colored feathers. You may find that once you start looking you'll see some interesting variation in wild turkey colors.

Penn's Woods Spurs hold JAKES Field Day

SUBMITTED BY DANIELLE STRALEY

On Saturday September 9, the Penn's Woods Spurs Chapter held their first JAKES Field Day. The event was held at the Crowfoot Rod and Gun Club in Murrysville. The event was open to kids from ages 8 to 17 and was attended by 30 children and their parents.

The field day provided the children with the opportunity to experience the outdoors through hands-on activities, education, and family fun. Participants spent the day rotating between five event stations, which included archery, .22 shooting, fishing, trap-shooting, and turkey calling.

The event focused on conservation and outdoor recreation with expert instructors teaching the children about the equipment and wildlife management while emphasizing fun and learning.

Thanks to the support of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission,



Gene Alwine, instructs the kids on how to use the glass and box turkey calls

and Penn's Woods Products, all of the kids were provided with bags at the end of the event which included informational materials, activities, and a glass or box turkey call.

It was a fun-filled day that enabled the kids to have fun in the outdoors and gain a greater appreciation of the traditions we are trying to conserve.



Carl Bailey holds up his bluegill, the first catch of the day

A Much Needed Look Back

BY H. "BUMPER" BAUER

In these times of stress and uncertainty, when most of the news is not good and only appears to be getting worse, we all feel a need occasionally to return to a time when the world around us was less hectic. When I need such a boost, I have found that there is nothing that puts the bounce back into my step any quicker than than to step back to more innocent times and look at the world through a child's eyes. So when Gene Alwine the Vice President of PA NWTF invited me to attend a JAKES Day event sponsored by the Whitehorse Mountain Chapter at Hillside Lodge in Berlin, I eagerly accepted.

The event was held July 28 and 29. A total of 48 young folks, 32 boys and 16 girls ranging in age from 2 to 14, attended the event accompanied by their parents. The first evening the youngsters were treated to a lesson in beginner turkey hunting presented by Steve Morocco, the owner of Turkey Duster Game Calls, and Joe Penna.

The following day the activities included: shotgunning, instructed by Brad Maust, Joe McKenzie, and Mike Adams; .22, and BB Gun instructed by Rick Stutzman and Ron Trent; fishing demonstrations by Doug Miller; Archery by Fred Deem and Jay

Deem; muzzleloaders instructed by Bob and Patty Truax; rocket-net demonstration by WCO Stan Norris and Deputy WCO Bunk Harding; trapping demonstrations by member of the Pennsylvania Trappers Association; bird feeders by Rhonda Henry and Janice Harding.

A pat on the back and your support should go to all the members, volunteers, and sponsors who helped in one way or another to make this event the success that it was.

Sponsors for this event included: Sheetz, Somerset; Black Timber Outfitters, Somerset; Dicks Sporting Goods, Greensburg, Pennsylvania Game Commission; Pennsylvania Deer Association; PA NWTF; and Tammy Ferrari, station sponsor.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time spent at the event and came away with the knowledge that our future as sportsmen is alive and well. All one had to do to confirm that fact was look into the eyes of any child there and see them so full of the wonder of what they were experiencing thanks to all of those involved in this program.

You, too, can experience this special feeling by taking a child to one of these events or becoming a volunteer through your local chapter of the NWTF.





Moraine WITO event another great success

The Moraine Chapter held its 8th annual Women in the Outdoors event on July 15. This year, 50 women participated in the daylong schedule of activities. The event was once again held at the Butler City Hunting and Fishing Club in East Butler. The ladies were who were pre-registered for the event chose five expertly instructed classes during the day. Throughout the day classes such as archery, outdoor cooking, ATV, shotgunning, kayaking, canoeing, muzzleloading, fly-fishing, rifles, handguns, talking turkey, basic car care, self-protection, first-aid, map and compass, PA Outdoors and you, know PA, outdoor grill cooking, backyard habitat, rubber stamping, and making stepping stones. The classes were enjoyed by everyone.

Thank you goes out to the committee for a great job in getting the event coordinated, and to all of our instructors who are fabulous, thank you. To the Pennsylvania Game Commission and their staff who are always willing to instruct classes, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission who are always willing to instruct our canoeing and kayaking classes, and also Moraine State Park staff for instructing a class this year. To the club for donating the facility to us, thank you so much. Finally, thank you to all the participants who made this such a great event. It's always gratifying to see the looks



on the faces when they find out they have overcome a challenge or have just found a new found love in shooting a shotgun, casting a fly rod, or paddling a kayak.

Next year's event is scheduled for July 14, 2007. Be on the look out for the registration form early next year.

Col-Mont Gobbler's Chapter Happenings

SUBMITTED BY SCOTT WALKER

For the Col-Mont Gobbler's Chapter, 2006 has been a busy and exciting year so far. Our year got underway in January as we participated in the Early Bird Sports Expo in Bloomsburg. We hosted the Pennsylvania State Championship Turkey Calling contest as well as two youth contest and an amateur contest. We also had the PA NWTF simulator set up for kids of all ages to test their skills at a variety of turkey targets.

In February, we hosted our twelfth-annual Hunting Heritage Banquet. The 140 folks who attended the event had a wonderful time, and we raised more than \$28,000 this year.

In April we did a project with the Pennsylvania Game Commission land manager, Keith Sanford and his staff. Fifteen chapter members and volunteers planted about 800 to 1000 white spruce seedlings on state game lands in Columbia County.

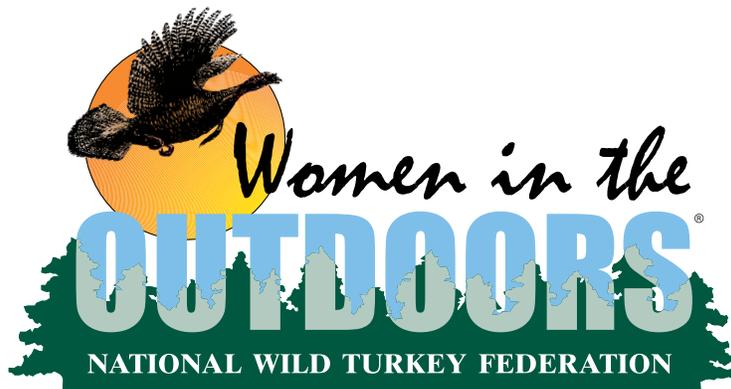
In May, the chapter gave away it's first scholarship to a well deserving senior. Steve Homalo was presented with a \$500 scholarship. Steven will be attending Villanova University in the fall.

In July the Chapter participated in a Youth Field Day event at the Orangeville Sportsman's Club. Approximately 50 young hunters were treated to a day of turkey-hunting safety, shooting targets, hunting scenarios, and turkey anatomy.

The Chapter will be participating in another Youth Field Day in August at the North Montour Sportsman's Club. There will be approximately 100 youths at this event, and we will again cover shooting skills, turkey-hunting safety, and turkey anatomy. As you can see, we have been a very busy and active chapter in 2006. The rewards of all the hard work of the volunteers is being well distributed through out Columbia and Montour counties.



Col-Mont Gobbler's Chapter President Bill Satteson presents a check for \$500 to their scholarship winner Steven Homola. Steven will be attending Villanova University this fall.



Sixth-annual Women in the Outdoors Event Held at Mt. Pisgah State Park

SUBMITTED BY NICOLE CARMAN,
PARK NATURALIST

A new record was set at Mt. Pisgah State Park on August 12, when 131 ladies attended the 6th-annual Women in the Outdoors Event there. "I haven't had this much fun since I was 8 years old," was a comment overheard from a participant. From shooting clays for the first time, to paddling in Stephen Foster Lake, to creating a stepping stone to place in their flower garden, the ladies really enjoyed the day. Ken Hunter, from WNEP-TV's "Pennsylvania Outdoor Life" was on hand to record the day's events for the TV show.

Participants were able to choose four of the following classes: Kayaking, instructed by Joan Cashin; Horseback Riding, instructed by Vivian Hall; Cooking with Herbs, instructed by JoAnn Chappell; Black Powder, Clays, and .22's, instructed by Charles Fox, Gerald Chandler, and Bill and Joyce Burgess; Garden Décor Crafts, instructed by Beverly Hunter; Turkey Calling, instructed by Clark Dunbar; Water Gardening, instructed by Lynette Ambruch; Fly-fishing, instructed by Warren Singer and Pam Charlesworth; Wildlife Photography, instructed by Amy Debach; Orienteering, instructed by Bill Bowers and George Rogers; Survival and First Aid, instructed by Pat Beebe; Lavender Essence Oils, instructed by Paula Phy; Camping and Hiking, instructed by Diane Kalata; Birdwalk/Wildflower ID, instructed by Charlene "Bird Lady" Miller.

A pig roast lunch, complete with corn on the cob, salt potatoes, pasta and fruit salads, was sponsored by Bastion Woodworking, with desserts of blueberry shortcake and ice cream. Each woman also received a t-shirt, embroidered patch, and a door prize. All of the women enjoyed the noon program of Dwight Runkle with his Drahthaar hunting dog, Bruno.

Thank you to the following local businesses and individuals for contributing to door prizes, equipment, and food for this Women

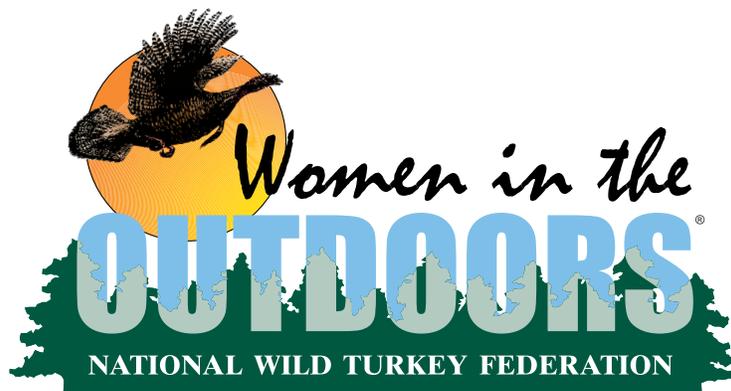


in the Outdoors event:

Aif's Distributing, Alexander's Gun Shop, AmZac Radio Shack, Armenia Mtn. Trading Post, Backwoods Home Magazine, Barb Manley Salon, Bass Pro Shops, Berkley – Pure Fishing, Beth Carman, Beverly Sherman – Avon, BiLo Foods – Troy & Canton, Bittner's Sporting Goods, Bob & Beverly Hunter, Bob & Chuck Bastion, Bowman's Creek Watershed, Candi Kellogg, Car Quest, Charlene Edger, Charlene Miller, Charlie's, Classy Crocks & Dips, Connie Chandler – Avon, Cooke's Pharmacy, Cooper's Sporting Goods, Country Joy, Creature Comforts – R.C. Smith, Creekside Archery, Crossroads Equipment, Curves for Women, Cynthia Locker, D&H Keystone Market, Deb McKernan, Direct TV - R.C. Smith, Doc's Irish Inn, Double Bull Archery, Endless Mountains Bakery, Endless Mountains Nature Center, Ettinger's Garden Center, Excalibur, Factory Carpet Outlet, Flynn's Beverage, Game Tracker, Gander Mountain, Gary Carpenter, GJ Hilfiger Hair, Gloria Riegal, Gold Canyon – Rebecca Bellows, Gramma's Kitchen, H.R. Rockwell & Son, Hampson's Farm & Garden, Henry Repeating Arms Co., Hoover Hardware, Hunter's Specialties, Hurley's Garden Center, Hurley's Great Valu, Illusions Hair Studio, Jamie Neiley – Tastefully Simple, Jen Clark – Corning YMCA, Jenkin's Versatile Shop, Jim's Sporting Goods, Jolley Farmer, Judy Johnson - Mary Kay, Jule's Artwear, Julie



Continued on page 19



2006 Pennsylvania Events

If you haven't been able to attend an event this summer, there is still one event left this year to attend.

Reminder

October 7, 2006

Delaware County Longbeards Chapter

Fran Dagney 610-353-1794, FrDa63@cs.com

Delaware County Fish & Stream, Brookhaven (Delaware County)

The PA State Women in the Outdoors event will be held March 23-25, 2007, at Camp Soles in Somerset County. Look for a registration form in the next issue of *Pennsylvania Turkey Talk*.

Women in the Outdoors Update

BY TAMMY MOWRY, NATIONAL COORDINATOR

Fall is in the air, and WITO events in the state are winding down. What a great year we've had.

I would like to thank each and every Event Coordinator and their Committee for a great job in coordinating the events this year. Without the Event Coordinators and their Committees doing the work it takes to put on the events, there would be no program. So,

please give yourself a pat on the back.

As great as 2006 was, I know 2007 will bring together even more great people and great events. I'm in the process of working with chapters and committees to schedule their events for next year. If you would like to bring an event to your area, please don't hesitate to contact me. I would be more than happy to visit with your chapter or committee to provide you with information on hosting a successful event.

Mt. Pisgah

Parker, Julie's Country Kitchen, Jurnack's Naturally, Kendall's Pro-Mart, Kim Carpenter, Kim's Primitive Accents, Kisner's Gems, Kitty's Personal Touch, Landing Strip Restaurant, Landon's Cedar Edge, Laura Smith, Laurie Hartman, Leona Meat Plant, Leroy's Restaurant, Liz Dincher, Lucia's, Magic Touch Salon, Mary Kendall Beauty Salon, Mary Lou Stroud, Mathews, Inc., Midway Truck Stop, Milky Way Farms, Monika Slater- Avon, Monro Muffler, Morning Times, MRJ's Sundae Time, Nancy Hetrick, Napa Auto Parts, Neva Allen, Nicole Carman, North Mountain QDMA, Oswald Cycle Works, Otis Technology, PA Fish & Boat Commission, Peterson's Country Collectibles, Pickering Winery, Pyrographic Wildlife, Quizno's Sub, Raychel Dibble - Mary Kay, Red Rose Diner, Redneck Calls, Sammy's Diner, Sandi Gamber, Seafood Delight, Settlement House, Sherwood Groves, Silver & More, Simply Terrie's, Skyline Cover, LLC, Smith's Fine Wood Products, Smith-Packard Chevrolet, Stones by Stalkers, Stull's Flower's, Sturm, Ruger & Col., Subway - Troy & Canton, Sugar

Hill Farm, Sullivan Trading Post, Summit, Susan Beach - Avon, Tessa's Belly Dance, The Hidden Artist, The Pantry, The Total Look, The Wood Store, Thompson Center Arms Co., Towanda Florist, Town & Country Cleaners, Traditions Performance Firearms, Troxell's Sporting Goods, Troy Auto Parts, Troy Sports Pub, Tygart Beverage, Video King, Villa Sena, Vinnie's Pizza, Walker Sports Grille, Waltman's Fruit Stand, Warner's Tractor Supply & Equipment, Warren Barney Singer, Warrior Lounge, Wendy's, Windy Acres Farm Produce Market, Woody's Country Store, Wren's Nest, and Yamaha Motor Corporation.

The silent auction and presenters were sponsored by Armenia Mountain Spurs Chapter of the NWTF, Big Pond Lions Club, Bob and Beverly Hunter, Endless Mountains Chapter of the NWTF, Judson's Agway, Ken and Sheila Hunter, Krise's Tire, Mt. Pisgah State Park, and Sylvania Lions Club. Kayaks were provided by Endless Mountains Outfitters, Mike Harkness and Renee Francisco. Please remember to support your local

businesses as they support worthwhile programs like Women in the Outdoors! A special thank you to the Jackson Family Farm, for the use of their field as a shooting range. The event photography was provided by George Miller.

Nicole Carman, Event Coordinator, would like to thank the following members of her committee, who spent many hours organizing and collecting donations and door prizes: Lynette Ambruch, Bonnie Bastion, Kim Carpenter, Peggy Crawley, Julie Fluke, Renee Francisco, Sandy Hannan, Sandi Gamber, Shirley Gamber, Beverly Hunter, Paula Phy, Beverly Sherman, Beverly Smith, Laura Smith, and Jean Young. The success of this event is largely due to the committee!

Plans are underway for the 7th-annual Women in the Outdoors Event at Mt. Pisgah State Park to be held on August 11, 2007. If you'd like to learn more about this outstanding program or to be a part of the planning committee for next year's event, please contact Nicole Carman at 570-297-2734 or e-mail nicolecarman@yahoo.com for more information.

**28TH ANNUAL
WILSON F. MOORE MEMORIAL
Masters
TURKEY CALLING CHAMPIONSHIPS**



Presented by the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation

Come See Some of the Top Callers in Country!!

The Masters Turkey Calling Contest will be held at the



Sunday, February 18, 2007 at the

Blair County Convention Center — Altoona, PA

For more information or to become a competitor contact
Greg Caldwell at 814-692-4707 or Pat Strawser at 717-692-3817

MASTER CHAMPION:

\$1,500.00 plus prize
plus the coveted
Masters Cup

2nd: \$800.00

3rd: \$700.00

4th: \$600.00

5th: \$500.00

6th: \$300.00 Gift Card

7th: \$200.00 Gift Card

JOIN THE NWTF — THE RESOURCE NEEDS YOUR HELP!

YES I'd like to join the National Wild Turkey Federation, a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of the wild turkey and the preservation of the hunting tradition. This membership also enrolls me in my state and local chapters.

Sign me up as: *(check one)*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular Member - \$30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Women in the Outdoors Member - \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor Member -\$225 | <input type="checkbox"/> JAKES Member \$5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wheelin' Sportsmen Member - \$25 | |

Charge my: Master Card; Visa

Credit Card Number: _____

Exp. Date _____

Name: *(please print)* _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

(Make checks payable to the NWTF)

Send completed application to:

Tammy Mowry, 288 Crisswell Road, Butler, PA 16002



Non-Profit Org
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Altoona, PA
PERMIT 150