

GUIDES FOR WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT - HABITAT NEEDS FOR WILD TURKEY

Good turkey habitat contains mature stands of mixed hardwoods, groups of conifers, relatively open understories, scattered clearings, well-distributed water, and reasonable freedom from disturbance. Openings are essential for brood range. Home range is about one square mile. Turkey diet consists primarily of grass and weed seeds in the fall, mast and forage in winter and spring, and forage and insects in summer. Acorns, dogwood berries, clover and pine seed are the foremost foods. Soybeans, corn, chufas and pasture are the agricultural crops most frequently used.

TIPS FOR IMPROVING WILD TURKEY HABITAT*

General:

- Create stands up to 100 acres
- Distribute stand ages
- Maintain Stream Management Zones (SMZ's) of hardwoods
- Establish long rotations in hardwoods (60-90+ yrs.)
- Thin timber frequently during rotation

Regeneration:

- Maintain mixed stands when possible
- Regenerate pine types by clearcut or seed tree methods
- Encourage up to 50% of hardwood types as hard mast species
- Do not convert hardwoods to conifers
- Retain roost trees and cypress ponds

Prescribed Burning:

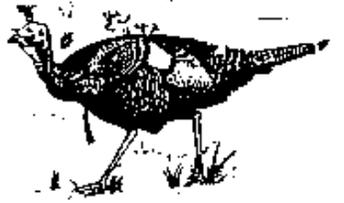
- Burn frequently (3-5 yrs.) to encourage herbaceous growth
- Limit burns to winter months

Direct Habitat Improvements:

- Provide openings planted with clover
- Eliminate fall tillage of crops and leave some grain unharvested
- Avoid nesting and brooding areas from March-June

Additional References

In-depth information on life history, habitat needs and management of forest and open lands for wild turkey is covered in the following publications: USDA-NRCS Wildlife Habitat Management Institute, Fish and Wildlife Habitat Management Leaflet No. 12, Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*), November 1999; Mississippi State University Extension Service (MSU-ES) Publication 2033, Forest Management for Wild Turkeys; and MSU-ES Information Sheet No. 636, "Wild Turkey". Additional information on managing foods for wild turkey is provided in the MSU-ES Publication 2111, Wildlife Food Planting Guide - for the Southeast.



Wild Turkey Foods by Habitat Type *			
Habitat	Foods		
Openings	Grasses/Grass Seeds: Paspalum species Panicum species Legume species	Forage: Clovers Grasses Sedges	Insects: Grasshoppers Millipedes Insect Larvae
Moist Bottomland	Snails	Worms	Insects
Pine Plantations	Grasses/Grass Seeds	Herbaceous green forage	Insects
	Pine Seeds		
	Soft Mast		
Mixed Pine-Hardwood Stands	Soft Mast: Dogwood Cherries Spice Bush Blackberries Grapes	Blackhaw Blackgum Huckleberries Dewberries Strawberries	Seeds: Pine species Sweetgum Magnolia
Mature Hardwood	Acorns	Hard Mast: Beechnuts	Pecans
Cropland	Oats	Grain: Corn	Soybeans

***Source - Mississippi State University Extension Service Publication 2033, Forest Management for Wild Turkeys.**

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