

Habitat Management for Wild Turkeys in Nebraska

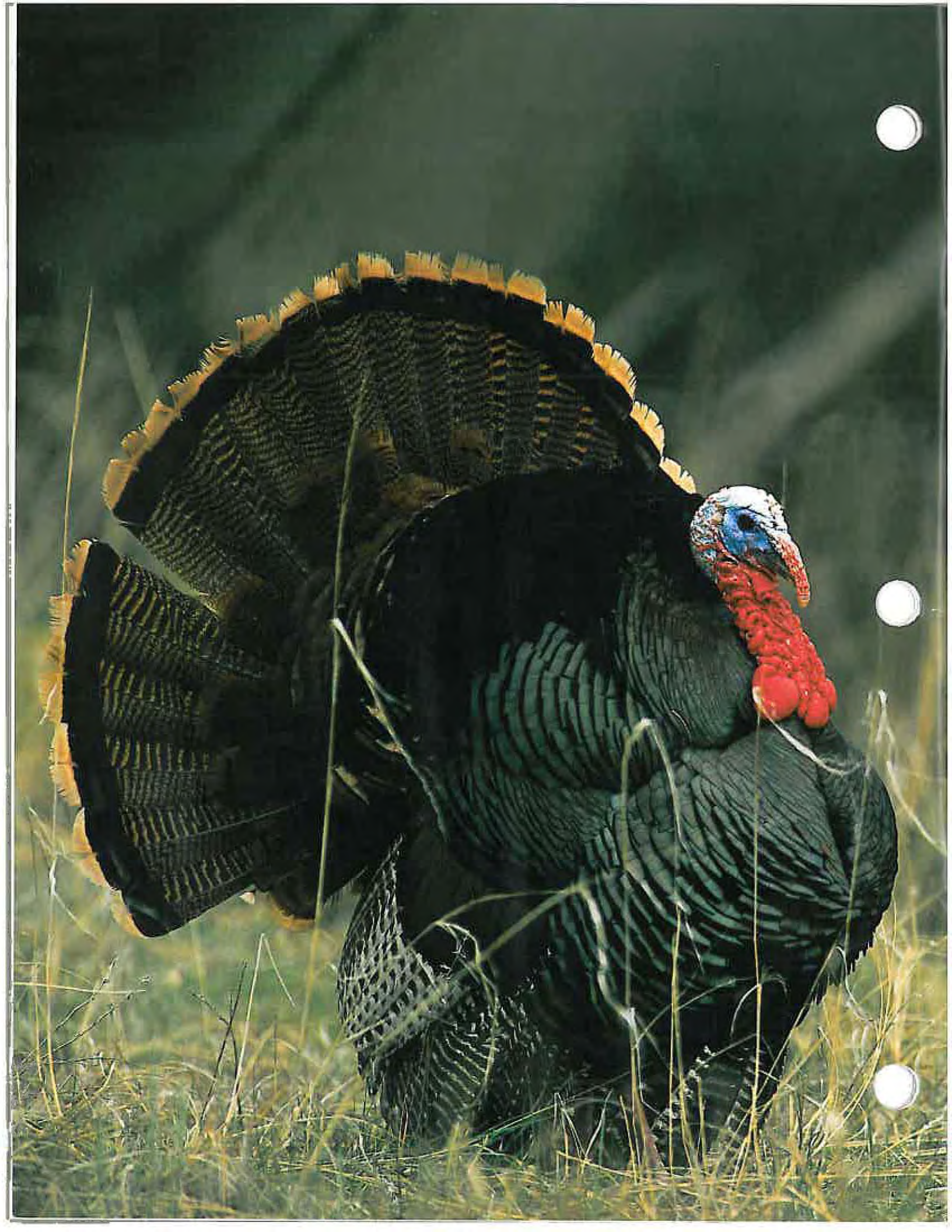
By

Brandon Houck, Regional Wildlife Biologist
National Wild Turkey Federation



Nebraska Game and
Parks Commission





The wild turkey is native to Nebraska, and populations are expanding and probably at all-time highs. An adaptable bird, the wild turkey is successful in today's changing landscape. But the future of this magnificent gamebird and other wildlife species depends on the management of Nebraska's private lands.

Many landowners wish to enhance the habitat on their property to increase opportunities for hunting and viewing wildlife, especially wild turkeys. Some properties can attract wild turkeys after appropriate habitat management practices have been applied, while others cannot.

Certain habitat types without trees or herbaceous cover, such as grassland or cropland, are not suitable for wild turkey management. In these places, other species should be the focus of habitat improvement efforts.

Basic habitat requirements of wild turkeys include spring and summer nesting and brood-rearing cover, fall and winter feeding and thermal cover, water and roosts. Though the components of wild turkey habitat are listed separately, they must occur in an appropriate pattern across the landscape to meet all the annual needs of wild turkeys. Most habitat types can meet multiple needs when managed appropriately.

Not all properties are capable of holding wild turkeys through the entire year. For example, a site might meet the needs of nesting birds in spring but not provide appropriate food or cover in fall or winter. The home range of wild turkeys varies each year from a few square miles to several thousand acres. There is no dominant limiting factor for wild turkeys across Nebraska. Each region and even each individual property may need different habitat improvements.

A strutting gobbler is a beautiful sight and many landowners dream of seeing wild turkeys on their property. Wild turkeys cover lots of ground to find the habitat components they need throughout the year.

Cover, left, right and below photos by Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC)



Nesting Habitat

Nebraska is home to three subspecies of wild turkeys – the Merriam's, which is the most common, the eastern, and a hybrid of the two.

Most nesting by wild turkeys in Nebraska occurs between April 15 and July 1. In most years, 75 to 100 percent of adult hens will attempt to nest. Ten to 30 percent of juvenile (one-year-olds) Merriam's and 50 to 100 percent of juvenile easterns will attempt to nest. An average of 12 eggs is laid, followed by 28 days of incubation. Thirty to 60 percent of nests will successfully hatch. If a nest is destroyed, up to 70 percent of hens will re-nest.



Providing suitable nesting cover can increase the likelihood of wild turkeys reproducing on your land.

Grasslands, woodlands, small abandoned crop fields (old fields), native hay and alfalfa meadows can all serve as nesting habitat. There are similarities in nesting habitat throughout the range of the wild turkey. Nest sites often have overhanging vegetation and dense surrounding cover. Shrubs and saplings are often present at woodland nest sites. Shrubs, thickets and herbaceous vegetation such as grasses and broadleaf "weeds" or forbs are important at grassland nest sites.

A variety of management techniques can be used to increase available nesting cover for wild turkeys. In rangelands and pasturelands, maintaining well-interspersed shrub thickets, such as sumac and buckbrush (coralberry), is important. If brush is controlled with herbicides or prescribed fire, select scattered clumps of brush should be left untreated.



Shrub thickets such as smooth sumac provide nesting sites and escape and loafing cover. Certain shrubs also provide food. *Photo by Brandon Houck, National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf)*

Adequate standing herbaceous vegetation in the form of grasses and forbs is also important nesting cover on grazing lands. Grazing rates should be light enough that when livestock are removed in the fall or winter, some vegetation will remain and be available to turkeys in early spring. It should also allow regrowth prior to the nesting period.

Ideally, the average height of ground cover should exceed 12 inches in early spring when hens are choosing nest sites.

Rotational or deferred grazing systems that allow pastures to be rested often provide increased herbaceous nesting cover. Spring prescribed burning should be limited to small burns of 250 acres or less to avoid removing all nesting cover from large areas. Burns should be conducted by early April, prior to the onset of nesting.

Prescribed burns can thin undesirable trees and allow sunlight to reach the ground. This creates a flush of new growth that hens can utilize for nest sites and brood rearing. *Photo by Bryan Burhans, NWTf*

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) fields can provide valuable nesting cover for wild turkeys. Nests tend to be near edges, so emergency haying activities should be restricted to centers of fields and should not be conducted until after July 1. Seed mixes should be diverse and include native grasses and forbs, especially legumes. Shrubs should also be planted. Management of CRP is discussed later in the Brood Habitat section.

Alfalfa fields and hay meadows often attract nesting hens. Haying activities can destroy nests and occasionally kill nesting hens. To avoid disturbing nests, first cuttings should be delayed until early July after the peak hatching period and after most poults become mobile enough to avoid equipment. Obviously, this is not always practical due to economics and the desire for optimal hay quality.

Woodlands are also used as nest habitat, especially for early nests. Vegetative cover in woodlands tends to become available earlier than in grasslands, particularly grasslands dominated by warm-season grasses. Although turkeys prefer open woodlands for most of their activities, maintaining patches of dense cover of up to two feet in height can increase availability of woodland nest sites. Shrubs and small diameter hardwood stems are often found at woodland nest sites.





Appropriate timber harvests can enhance nesting habitat by thinning trees. Brood habitat can benefit from well managed logging too. *Photo by Jay Langston, NWTF*

Timber harvest and prescribed burning activities should be restricted during the nesting season. Logging outside the nesting season can create a flush of new growth – great nesting cover for the next few years. For example, thinning pine stands on north-facing slopes, within drainages and along creeks in the Pine Ridge can reduce competition with hardwoods such as green ash and chokecherry. Slash from logging operations provides additional nesting cover and should be left scattered and not piled.

While carefully managed grazing of woodlands can help maintain good turkey habitat, grazing should be restricted before and during nesting periods to allow for adequate nesting cover. To avoid damage to young seedlings and shrubs, woodlands should only be lightly grazed and should not be grazed every year. This may require fencing riparian (streamside) areas and woodlots if cattle have access to them. Grazing during the growing season can prevent woodlands from naturally regenerating with new trees. Careful monitoring is recommended.



The riparian area on the left of the fence will provide great nesting cover and bugging habitat. Without the fence to exclude livestock the cover would be like that on the right.

Photo by Brandon Houck, NWTF



These young poults have a very high protein requirement for growth and feather development. Quality brood habitat is critical to their survival. *Photo by NWTF*

Brood-rearing Habitat

Wild turkey poults leave the nest almost immediately after hatching. The brood-rearing period for wild turkeys in Nebraska runs from late May through late August. This is the period when hens are raising young poults. During the first four weeks after hatching, 50 to 70 percent of poults die due to inclement weather or predation. High quality brood habitat provides a good food supply for poults and concealment from predators. Poults have very high protein requirements and feed heavily on invertebrates such as insects and spiders during their first weeks to meet this demand. Broods therefore favor plant communities that

produce an abundance of invertebrates at ground level.

Habitat best suited for brood rearing has at least 70 percent of the vegetative cover in forbs, legumes and grasses averaging 12 to 20 inches in height, and is within 100 yards of woody escape cover. Forbs and legumes produce more invertebrates than grass-dominated communities. It is not desirable to have 100 percent of the ground covered by vegetation because poults cannot move under these conditions. Some bare ground is necessary. This type of cover provides both food and concealment for broods, and allows hens an unobstructed view of approaching predators.

Poults generally do not forage in row crops because pesticide use and lack of plant species diversity causes invertebrates to be scarce. Refraining from pesticide use on the outer edges of row crop fields has been suggested as a means of increasing their value as brood habitat. Leaving strips along woodland edges untilled and unplanted for a season will produce weedy areas valuable as brood habitat. Alternatively, such areas can be planted to legumes such as clovers or alfalfa or fall disked to stimulate forb

growth the following spring and summer.

Alfalfa fields are extremely valuable as wild turkey brood habitat. They are a rich source of protein from both the alfalfa leaves and abundant invertebrate production. Haying does not reduce the value of alfalfa to broods, but unmowed strips could be left along woodland edges since fields will not likely have adequate concealment cover for two or more weeks after mowing.

Woodlands are also valuable to broods. Riparian woodlands are especially valuable because the increased moisture provides high quality cover and forage. Broods prefer to use savanna-like stands with open, grassy understories rather than dense understories dominated by woody plants. An even mix of grassland to woodland is ideal.

Stands with open canopies are more likely to have abundant grasses and forbs in the understory than those with closed canopies. Timber harvest can open dense stands.

In western Nebraska, where woodlands are often limited to narrow streamside zones, there are few instances where trees such as cottonwoods or green ash should be removed. If there is substantial

Alfalfa fields are frequented by hens during spring and summer while they nest and raise broods. *Photo by Brandon Houck, NWTF*





Where appropriate, plantings of trees and shrubs in riparian areas will enhance wildlife habitat and improve streambank stability and water quality. *Photo by Brandon Houck, NWTF*

invasion of Russian olive, it should be controlled to maintain some open space and prevent the exclusion of beneficial shrubs and trees such as buffaloberry, American plum, cottonwood and green ash.

Farther east, however, removal of some trees, including cottonwoods, might be necessary.

Light grazing can help maintain open stands. Grazing will, however, reduce the amount of herbaceous cover available for broods, and should be deferred until mid-summer when broods are more mobile. Prescribed burning can also be used to maintain open stands.

Woody cover in some areas is lacking and limited to narrow corridors along small rivers and streams. Habitat improvement there should focus on expansion of existing cover naturally or through supplemental plantings.

Well-managed native rangelands can provide good foraging habitat for turkey poults. Light to moderate grazing and prescribed fire can improve prairies as brood habitat. Areas that are never grazed or burned often develop thick, rank stands that are difficult for poults to move through.

Areas that are heavily grazed do not provide the concealment that young wild turkeys need, or the lush, green forbs and grasses needed to produce invertebrates. Burns designed to enhance brood habitat should be less than 250 acres to allow good interspersed nesting and brood cover. Scattered shrub thickets such as dogwood, sumac, and plum should be maintained for feeding, loafing and escape cover.

For several reasons CRP fields rarely provide high quality brood habitat. First, CRP often consists of just a few species of grasses and few, if any, forbs. Such plant communities do not produce sufficient quantities of invertebrates. Second, if the vegetation in CRP fields is not managed, thick, rank stands develop with excessive accumulations of dead vegetation from previous years, and there is little or no bare ground. This makes it nearly impossible for poults to move about and forage.

Several methods exist for improving the quality of brood habitat provided by CRP. Planting high-diversity seed mixes, including native and introduced forbs, especially legumes, can increase the amount of insects provided for poults. Existing stands can be improved by light disking and interseeding forbs. This increase in the proportion of cool-season plants in a stand of warm-season grasses can improve the value of the habitat for both nesting and brood rearing. Early spring prescribed burns can remove dead grass and allow poults to move and forage more easily.

This CRP stand has a good mix of grasses and forbs and is in close proximity to a woodland where birds roost.

Photo by Brandon Houck, NWTF



Fall and Winter Habitat

Feeding and roosting cover are important components of fall and winter habitats. Fall food supplies must be sufficient to build up fat reserves for winter. Winter food supplies must maintain energy balances. Roost trees are important for providing protection from predators throughout the year. Roost areas that provide protection from cold winds are especially important during late fall and winter.

In much of Nebraska, agricultural crops are prevalent in fall and winter diets of turkeys. Fall tillage of cropland should be avoided because waste grain is less available in tilled fields. Crop fields used by turkeys are usually adjacent to mature woodlands that provide roosts and protection from inclement weather. Leaving unharvested strips of grain along field edges can enhance winter habitat.

Hard and soft mast, including nuts, seeds and fruits from trees, shrubs and vines, are important food sources for turkeys during fall and winter. Plantings of mast producing species can enhance winter habitat. Large, quality mast-producing trees, especially oaks, should be protected from timber harvest. Mast producing shrubs should be protected during brush control activities in rangelands.

Waste grain is an important part of the fall and winter diet of wild turkeys in Nebraska. Fields should not be tilled until spring.

Photo by Brandon Houck, NWTF

Woodlands that have somewhat open understories allow turkeys to easily forage for mast. Open understories usually occur in mature stands with high canopy closure and large, mature trees. These types of stands also tend to correspond with high levels of mast production. Timber stand improvements that remove smaller competing trees and invasive trees such as eastern red cedar, honey locust, Osage orange or elms around large mast trees can improve overall mast production. Any wooded draws or fingers containing mast-producing species that extend into grasslands or croplands should be preserved.

Direct supplemental feeding of grain is not recommended by wildlife biologists. Feeding wild turkeys can concentrate birds and increase the likelihood of disease and parasite transmission. Feeding can also lead to formation of nuisance flocks when birds become dependent on humans. During severe storms, wild turkeys can go several days without food.

Supplemental food plots however, can benefit wild turkeys during fall and winter. Food plots are plantings of grains, legumes and perennial grasses and forbs (see food items list). Plots should be one-half to 4 acres in size and optimally occur within 100 yards of woody cover.





Use of plots by other species such as deer should be anticipated when determining plot size; if deer are abundant, larger plots may be required. A secondary value of food plots is their effectiveness in attracting wildlife to specific areas for harvest during hunting seasons.

Management for fall and winter roosts should attempt to provide dense stands of large, mature trees. Along many streams and rivers, cottonwoods are particularly important as roost trees. Ponderosa pines are important in northern and western Nebraska.

Traditional winter roosts should be marked and protected from timber harvest. Without winter roosts within a mile, some winter feeding areas might become unusable. In the deciduous forests of eastern Nebraska, many different hardwood tree species are used for roosting. In these cases, management should be aimed at protecting groups of large mast producers that are also suitable as roost trees. Lone trees and shelterbelts are usually not suitable as roost sites.

Water Developments

Wild turkeys need water throughout the year. During certain periods, turkeys can get most of their water through the foods they eat, especially invertebrates and soft fruits. To assure that adequate water is present, at least one perennial water source should be available per square mile. Springs, streams, creeks, rivers, sloughs, ponds and lakes are all suitable water sources. Windmills and other livestock waterers are also satisfactory, as long as they are operational all year and wild turkeys can access the water. Overflow might be necessary to allow poults to access water. Guzzlers or manmade catchment and water storage devices can be installed in areas where water is scarce. These devices require maintenance and maintenance should be a strong consideration prior to placement. The Panhandle is probably the only region in Nebraska where water developments are needed for wild turkeys.

Wild turkeys begin roosting off the ground as soon as they can fly, usually at two weeks. They roost in trees every night to avoid predators. *Photo by NGPC*

Where natural water sources are scarce, artificial developments such as guzzlers are necessary.

Photo by Brandon Houck, NWTF



Plants of Value to Wild Turkeys

Wild turkeys are generally classified as opportunistic omnivores, which means they eat whatever nutritious food is most available, whether it is plant or animal matter. Many plants can be established or encouraged through management strategies that will produce insects, greens, and seeds for wild turkeys.

From studies in Nebraska and other states with similar wild turkey subspecies and habitats, a list of food items has been created. Some of the plants listed can be planted, while others can be encouraged through various forms of management, such as disking, or burning.

Some plants listed are not used as food but have other value, such as providing roosts. When plantings are being considered, always attempt to use native species, which are more likely to be adapted and survive, and less likely to become invasive. The common name of each plant is listed, followed by the scientific name and the region in which the plant is native or most common. It is recommended that you visit your local Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Natural Resources Conservation Service or Nebraska Forest Service office to ensure the desired species are adapted to your particular site and soil conditions and for planting date and rate recommendations.

In the final set of parentheses, letters are used to represent use by wild turkeys as follows: N = nesting cover; B = brood-rearing habitat; F/W = fall and winter food; R = roosts; C = cover for loafing, escape from predators, shade or protection from cold winds; and SM = soft mast in spring/summer. Hunters should also find this information useful when scouting and deciding where to hunt for wild turkeys.

Trees

- Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) Pine Ridge, Wildcat Hills, Central Niobrara Valley and westward. (F/W, R, C)
- Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) Eastern half of state. (F/W, R, C)
- Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) Missouri River Valley north to Sioux City. (F/W, R, C)



Bur oaks provide mast in the form of acorns.

Photo by Brandon Houck, NWTF

- Black Oak (*Quercus velutina*) Missouri River Valley north to Omaha. (F/W, R, C)
- Chinkapin Oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*) Southeast. (F/W, R, C)
- Swamp White Oak (*Quercus bicolor*) Southeast. (F/W, R, C)
- Rocky Mountain Juniper (*Juniperus scoparium*) Dry sites in Panhandle. (F/W, C)
- Eastern Cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) Statewide. (R, C)
- Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) Statewide. (F/W, R, C)
- Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) Statewide. (F/W, R, C)
- Bitternut Hickory (*Carya cordiformis*) Missouri River Valley north to Sioux City. (F/W, R, C)
- Shagbark Hickory (*Carya ovata*) Missouri River Valley north to Omaha. (F/W, R, C)
- Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) Missouri River Valley north to Omaha. (F/W, SM, C)
- Box Elder (*Acer negundo*) Statewide. (F/W, R, C)
- Red Mulberry (*Morus rubra*) Missouri River Valley. (C, SM)

- Silver Maple (*Acer saccharium*) River floodplains in east. (F/W, R, C)
- Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) Missouri River floodplain north to Omaha. (R,C)
- Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) Missouri River Valley and Lower Platte River Valley. (F/W, C)
- Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*) Missouri River Valley and Lower Platte. (F/W, C)

Shrubs

- Rough-leaved Dogwood (*Cornus drummondii*) Eastern half. (N, B, SM, C)
- Red-Osier Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*) Statewide. (N, SM, C)
- Smooth Sumac (*Rhus glabra*) Statewide except Panhandle. (N, B, F/W, C)
- Skunkbush Sumac (*Rhus aromatica*) Western half. (N, B, F/W, C)
- American Plum (*Prunus americana*) Statewide. (N, B, SM, C)
- Western Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos occidentalis*) Statewide except extreme southeast. (N, B, F/W, C)
- Buckbrush, Coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*) Southeastern. (N, B, F/W, C)
- Black Raspberry (*Rubus occidentalis*) Eastern half. (N, B, SM, C)
- Choke Cherry (*Prunus virginia*) Statewide. (SM)

- Sand Cherry (*Prunus besseyi*) Sandhills. (F/W)
- Downy Hawthorn (*Crataegus mollis*) Eastern, northern, and northwestern Nebraska. (F/W)
- Dwarf Chinkapin Oak (*Quercus prinoides*) Southeast. (N, F/W, C)
- Buffalo Berry (*Sheperdia argentea*) Statewide except Sandhills and Southeast. (SM, C)
- Saskatoon Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) North. (SM, C)
- Juneberry, Downy Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*) Southeast. (SM, C)
- Black Currant (*Ribes americanum*) Statewide except Southeast. (SM)
- Golden Currant (*Ribes odoratum*) Statewide. (SM)
- Wild Gooseberry (*Ribes missouriense*) Eastern half. (N, SM)
- Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*) Eastern half. (SM, C)
- Prairie Rose (*Rosa arkansana*) Statewide except Southwest. (SM)
- Wild Rose (*Rosa woodsia*) Western half. (SM)

Vines

- River-bank Grape (*Vitis riparia*) Statewide. (SM)
- Oregon Grape (*Berberis repens*) Northwest. (SM)

American plum provides soft mast and cover. Photo NGPC



- Poison Ivy (*Rhus toxicodendron*) Statewide. (SM)
- Green Briar (*Smilax hispida*) Missouri and Platte River Valleys. (N, SM)
- Woodbine (*Parthenocissus vitacea*) Statewide. (SM)
- Bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*) Statewide except Southwest. (SM)

Grasses and Sedges

- Little Bluestem (*Schizachrium scoparium*) Statewide. (N, B, F/W)
- Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*) East and moist areas in West. (N, B, F/W, C)
- Sand Bluestem (*Andropogon hallii*) Sandhills. (N, B, F/W, C)
- Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) East and Sandhills. (N, B, F/W, C)
- Eastern Gama Grass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*) Eastern third. (N, B, F/W, C)
- Canada Wildrye (*Elymus canadensis*) East and moist areas in West. (N, B, C)

Many vines such as wild grapes produce soft mast that wild turkeys will eat during summer and fall.

Photo by Brandon Houck, NWTF



- Green Needlegrass (*Nassella viridula*) Northwest. (N, B)
- Prairie Sandreed (*Calamovilfa longifolia*) Western half and sandhills. (N, B, C)
- Western Wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*) Most of state. (N, B, C)
- Sand Dropseed (*Sporobolus cryptandrus*) Statewide. (N, B, C)
- Sideoats Grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*) Statewide. (N, B, F/W)
- Fescue Sedge (*Carex breviar*) Statewide. (F/W)
- Foxtail (*Setaria spp.*) Most of state. (B, F/W)

Legumes

- Alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) Statewide. (N, B, F/W)
- Yellow Sweet Clover (*Melilotus officinalis*) Statewide. (N, B)
- White Sweet Clover (*Melilotus alba*) Statewide. (N, B)
- Purple Prairie Clover (*Dalea purpurea*) Statewide. (N, B)
- White Prairie Clover (*Dalea candida*) Statewide. (N, B)
- Foxtail Dalea (*Dalea leporina*) Eastern half and northwest. (B)
- Partridge Pea (*Cassia chamaecrista*) Eastern half. (B, F/W)

This stand of Indian grass might serve as a nest site. It appears to be too dense and lacking forbs to be good brood habitat.

Photo by Brandon Houck, NWTF





Partridge pea and other legumes attract many invertebrates- poult food! Photo by Brandon Houck, NWTF

- American Vetch (*Vicia americana*) Statewide. (N, B)
- Canadian Milkvech (*Astragalus canadensis*) Statewide. (N, B)
- White Clover (*Trifolium repens*) Southeast. (B)
- Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*) Eastern half. (N, B, F/W)

Other Forbs

- Canada Tickclover (*Desmodium canadense*) Northern and eastern. (B, F/W)
- Illinois Bundleflower (*Desmodium illinoense*) Eastern third. (B, F/W)
- Common Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) Western three-fourths. (B, F/W)
- Western Ragweed (*Ambrosia psilostachya*) Statewide. (B, F/W)
- Giant Ragweed (*Ambrosia trifida*) Statewide except Sandhills. (B, F/W)
- Annual Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) Statewide. (B, F/W)
- Rigid Sunflower (*Helianthus rigida*) Statewide. (B, F/W)
- Maximillian Sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*) Statewide. (B, F/W)
- Woolly Croton (*Croton capitatus*) Southern third. (B, F/W)
- Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) Statewide. (B)
- Lanceleaf Ground Cherry (*Physalis virginica*) Statewide. (B, SM)
- Watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*) Southeast and western two-thirds. (F/W)
- Smartweed (*Polygonum spp.*) Statewide. (B, F/W)
- Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*) Eastern third. (B, SM)
- Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) Statewide. (B, SM)
- Pasque Flower (*Anemone patens*) Northwest, northeast, and south-central. (B, SM)
- Wild Onion (*Allium canadense*) Eastern half. (B)

Agricultural Crops (Waste Grain)

- Wheat (N, F/W) • Corn (C, F/W)
- Rye (N, F/W) • Oats (N, F/W)
- Milo (C, F/W) • Soybeans (F/W)
- Millet (F/W) • Barley (N, F/W)
- Triticale (N, F/W) • Sunflowers (F/W)

Invertebrates (All found statewide)

- Grasshoppers and Crickets (*Orthoptera*) (B)
- Bugs (*Hemiptera*) (B)
- Beetles (*Coleoptera*) (B)
- Spiders (*Arachnida*) (B)
- Snails (*Gastropoda*) (B)
- Millepedes (*Myriopoda*) (B)
- Butterflies and Moths (*Lepidoptera*) (B)
- Flies (*Diptera*) (B)
- Ants (*Hymenoptera*) (B)
- Others

Getting Started

With some basic information in hand, you can now begin thinking about managing your property for wild turkeys. The next step is to contact a wildlife biologist or other natural resource professional for an on-site visit. He or she will be able to give you recommendations specific to your property and some agencies (NRCS, NGPC and others) offer cost share funds for wildlife habitat improvements.

You might even consider developing a simple management plan detailing how you will manage for different needs of wild turkeys and other wildlife. This plan should include discussion of activities that influence habitat, such as prescribed burning, grazing, timber harvest, and haying. Also include plans for plantings such as mast producers, grass/forb mixes and grains. In many cases, cost-share money is available for certain management practices. Again, contact a wildlife biologist for specifics in your area.

This patch of sunflowers and grasses is great brood habitat as long as it is in proximity to quality woodlands. *Photo by NGPC*



Improving habitat can be rewarding in many ways. Not only will you enjoy seeing more wildlife and increased hunting opportunities, but you will also increase the value of your property. Your hard work will be appreciated for generations.

Funding for this publication provided by:

- The National Wild Turkey Federation, Nebraska State Chapter
NWTF is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conservation of the wild turkey and preservation of the hunting tradition. To find out more or to join, call 1-800-THE-NWTF, (1-800-845-6983) or visit www.nwtf.org or www.nenwtf.com
- Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
- USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Contact Information

For assistance with management of your property, contact:

- Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Habitat Partners Section
2200 N. 33rd
Lincoln, NE 68503-0370 (402) 471-0641
<http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/wildnebraska/>
Alliance office: (308) 763-725
Bassett office: (402) 684-2921
Norfolk office: (402) 370-3374
North Platte office: (308) 535-8025
Kearney office: (308) 865-5310
- USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
See your phone book under U.S. Government, or go to <http://www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov/> for the NRCS office nearest you.



The results of good habitat management. Photo by NGPC

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the many professionals and volunteers who provided editorial comments and suggestions for this publication.

Under federal and/or state law, discrimination is prohibited on the basis of race, color, religion, age, gender, marital status, national origin, disability or political affiliation. If you think you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility or want more information, contact the Affirmative Action Officer, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Lincoln, NE, 402-471-0641; the Equal Opportunity Commission, Lincoln, NE, 402-471-2024, TTY / TDD 402-471-4693.