

# • • INTRODUCTION TO HUNTING WILD TURKEY • •

## FISH & WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

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The Division of Wildlife funds conservation with **license sales and an excise tax** on firearms, archery, and hunting equipment.



## ABOUT BEARDS

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- Modified feather
- Protrudes from chest of male turkeys
- Get longer and thicker with age
- Some hens can have beards, not common



## HUNTING RULES & REGULATIONS

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Published annually



Protects animal populations



Covers wild turkey-specific information



## ABOUT WILD TURKEY

- Omnivores, excellent eyesight
- Diet: fruit, nuts, seeds, grasses, tree buds, insects
- Habitat: large trees, open areas
- Only birds with a "**beard**" can be harvested in spring
- **Jake**: immature male bird, 1 year old
  - Typically has beard less than 6 inches long
- **Tom**: mature male bird, 2 years and older
  - Typically has beard longer than 6 inches
- The tail of a tom forms an unbroken outline when fanned out, jake's has longer central tail feathers
- Females are typically smaller than males and have brown or buff-tipped breast feathers
- Males have black-tipped breast feathers

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## BEFORE THE HUNT

- **Scout** using satellite imagery first, then get boots on the ground
  - Look for food sources, suitable turkey habitat
  - Common sign: feathers, tracks, scat, dust bowls
- Obtain written permission for private property
- Practice with preferred hunting implement
  - Pattern shotgun to know maximum effective range
- Be sure to purchase your hunting license, turkey permit

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## NEEDED EQUIPMENT

- Shotgun with full choke and 4, 5, or 6 shot shotgun shells are most popular
  - Archery equipment is legal, not as popular
- Camo or earth-toned clothes (turkeys have keen sight)
- Turkey vest, cushion, chair makes things comfortable and convenient
- Decoys and turkey calls



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## GAME CHECK

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After a successful turkey harvest, Ohio hunters are required to complete a **game check** process. It helps the Division of Wildlife manage populations, and can be done online.



## USING THE WHOLE BIRD

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- **Legs and thighs** do well slowly cooked
- **Wing bones** can be made into calls
- **Feathers** can become a realistic decoy

## WHERE TO HUNT

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Wildlife areas, especially areas with good populations of wild turkeys



Property with mix of mature timber, early succession/grasslands, open areas (river bottoms are key in areas with lots of crop fields)



In mature forest habitat, focus on areas with mast-producing trees

## HUNTING STRATEGIES

- **Differ by season**
  - Spring: mimic hen calls to attract breeding males
  - Fall: call imitations to draw flock together
- Can hunt with or without decoys
  - If using, place in visible spots to turkeys, close to a large tree or cover for hunter to hide
- Hunt one location or be prepared to move around
  - If moving, caution must be taken as there may be other hunters
- Regardless of method, hunters must be stealthy and quiet

## PREPARING

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Once you have completed game check, you can break the bird down into **portions for consuming or freezing**

- Involves removing internal organs and separating into desired cuts of meat

## HUNTING LICENSES & PERMITS

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- **Required** to hunt any species, regardless of age
- Different **options** based on age, residency, if hunter education has been completed
  - **Apprentice license** for those without hunter education
- **Turkey permit** required to hunt wild turkey
- Download the HuntFish OH app to purchase and display your hunting licenses and permits

## INTERESTED IN TAKING THE NEXT STEP?

- The Wild Ohio Harvest Community offers in-person learning opportunities that build on the content in this module
- Find other learning modules, resources, and more!

