



Let's Talk Turkey

Lesson activity – Wild Turkey Management

Wild Turkey – Forest Habitat and Food types

Seasonal Habitat Needs

Nesting (Spring)

Turkey hens nest in a variety of habitat types, including pine forests and young cutovers/regeneration areas, old fields, hay fields, and rights-of-way. Nest sites generally

have dense, small plant cover and some shrub cover at the ground level, with some kind of woody form around the nest. Most nests are within 10 yards of a forest edge,

such as a logging road or firebreak.

Broods (Summer)

Young turkeys eat mostly insects the first couple of weeks after hatching and then quickly begin to pick up fruits and seeds. For poult protection, vegetation dense

enough to afford some cover from predators is necessary. Forest edges next to fields and openings can provide this cover and are excellent brood habitat during this vulnerable time. Overall, you can use many different types of forested habitats for hens with broods, if adequately dense herbaceous vegetation (for insect production) with some brushy cover nearby is available. Ideally, brood habitat should be mixed with nesting habitat so broods won't have to move far.

Range Shifts

In the fall, turkeys begin to shift their ranges as food sources change to items such as dogwood fruits and oak acorns. Many times, forests will provide better winter range for turkeys than other vegetative types, as mast foods, such as acorns, become available. Turkeys may move from pine plantations into mixed pine-hardwood or hardwood stands now, but well-managed (thinned and burned) pine stands may still see heavy use in winter (pine seed is good turkey food).

They use openings a lot in the spring breeding season to display and mate. The openings also provide greens and insects for food.

Keep roost trees that are next to water sources.

In general, all timber management operations should include erosion control and site restoration work, where you replant disturbed areas with species such as clover, bahia grass, wheat, or others that may provide feeding, nesting, or brood-rearing cover.

Wild Turkey Foods by Habitat Type

Openings *Grass/Seeds Forage Insects* Paspalums, Clovers, Panicums, Grasses, Legumes, Sedges

Grasshoppers, Insect Larvae, Millipedes

Moist Bottomland Snails, Insects, Worms

Pine Plantations Grasses, legumes, Insects, soft mast, seeds, green forage, pine seed

Mixed Pine/Hardwood Stands *Soft Mast Seeds* Dogwood, Grapes, Longleaf Pine, Blackberries, Dewberries Sweetgum, Huckleberries, Blackhaw, Magnolia, Blackgum Cherries, Spice Bush

Mature Hardwood *Hard Mast* Acorns, Beechnuts, Pecans

**The above information was from Mississippi State article on Forest Management for Wild Turkeys*