

Learning to Hunt

Hosting a hunting-based outdoor skills event in your community



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Wisconsin

Department of Natural Resources

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Credits

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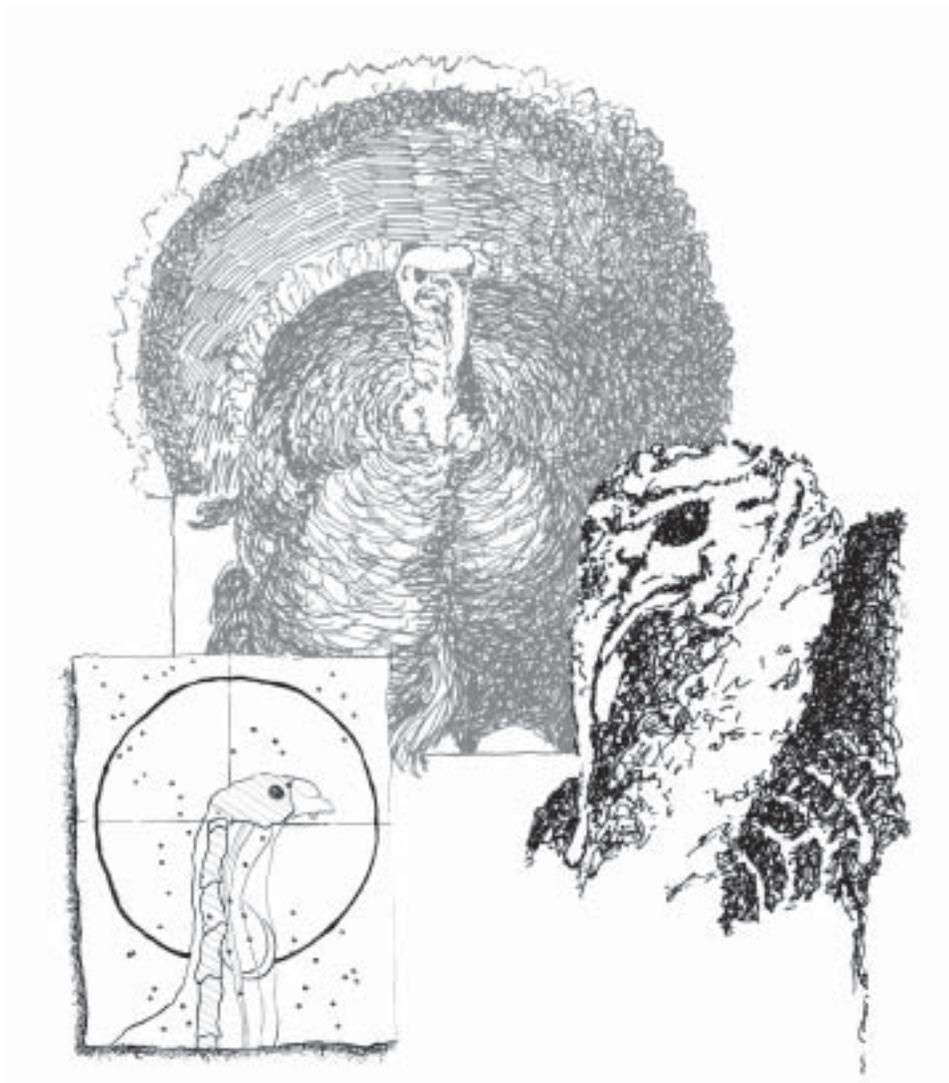
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Calling a Trophy Tom

Techniques of turkey hunting

Participants learn basic concepts about turkey hunting, including scouting, selecting the right firearm and ammunition, range of fire, calling, the need for camouflage, obtaining landowner permission and safety rules.



Station 16

Calling a Trophy Tom

Learning to Hunt

Objectives

Participants shall:

identify the wild turkey and its habitat.

identify places in the state likely to provide good turkey hunting opportunities.

identify which sex/age of wild turkey is legal bag for spring and fall hunting.

identify the steps needed to appropriately tag and register a harvested turkey.

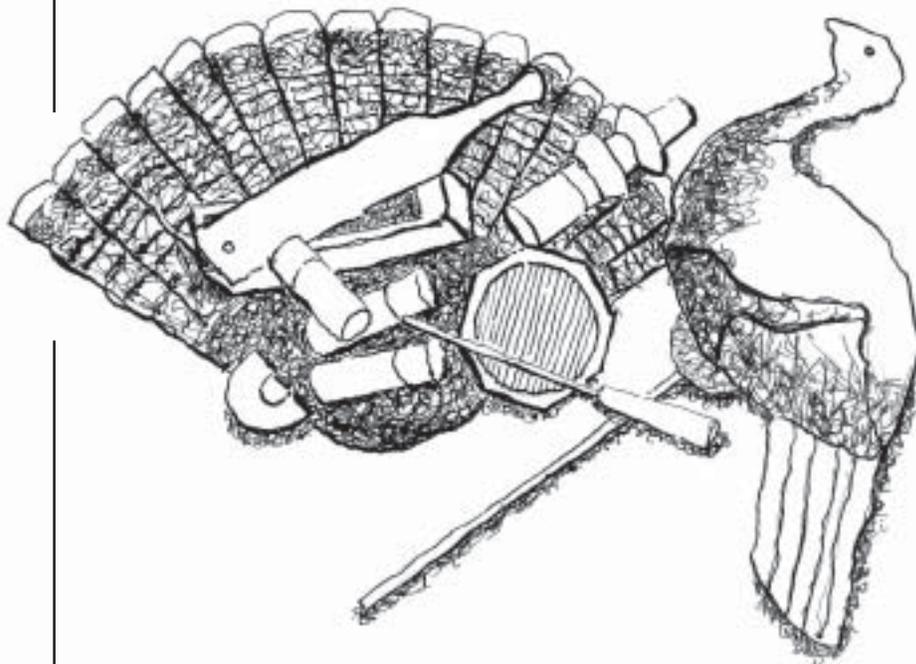
demonstrate the ability to accurately judge which turkeys are within shooting range.

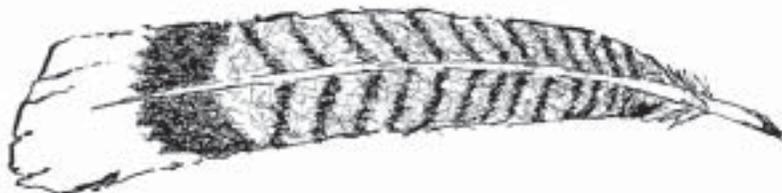
identify correct shot placement.

demonstrate safe and ethical hunting behaviors.

demonstrate how to build an effective blind.

demonstrate how to appropriately dress for turkey hunting.





Equipment

Variety of realistic turkey decoys, including toms, jakes and hens and/or a set of cardboard, hardboard or plywood turkey decoy silhouettes with an uninflated red balloon pinned or taped to the chin of a tom turkey silhouette.

8 1/2" x 11" paper or cardstock with a number written on it for each decoy

Heavy marking pen

Blind building materials such as camouflage netting

12-gauge shotgun and No. 4 and No. 6 shot

Camouflage clothing, head net, gloves, gun sock, camouflage tape, and camouflage face paint

Slate, box, spring-box, diaphragm, and gobbler shaker turkey calls

Crow and owl calls

Turkey calling techniques cassette tape

Tail mounts, beards, and tail, wing and body feathers from toms and hens

Preserved samples of turkey feet (with spurs)

Preserved droppings of both toms and hens

Tags used for tagging and registering turkeys

2 signs: "Hunting by Permission Only" and "No Hunting / No Trespassing"

Landowner Permission Cards

Stick of summer sausage or venison sausage

3 x 5 index cards

2 to 3 pencils

Spring and fall turkey hunting regulation pamphlets

Copy of **Wisconsin Turkey Hunter's Guide**

Turkey carcass (check with local warden)

Cardboard, salt and Borax

Paper silhouette targets

Stool

2 wooden or metal stakes

Roll of wire

2 clothespins

Note card or small slip of paper per participant

New diaphragm calls to give as prizes

Turkey tail feathers to give away

Artificial sinew and/or thin strips of leather

Rustic glass or ceramic beads

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Station Setup

Set up a blind near the place where the participants will gather. Try to block their view of what's in front of the blind. Set out a variety of realistic or simple silhouettes; some within 40 yards, others farther away. Group at least one tom with hens, so that the hens are blocking a clear shot of the tom. Have a strutting tom next to a jake that has its head stretched out. Place a stack of 3x5 cards and a few pencils inside the blind.

On a nearby tree post a "Hunting by Permission Only" sign. On the far side of your demonstration station post a "No Hunting / No Trespassing" sign.

If you plan on allowing participants to pattern a shotgun, set up two stakes with a wire stretched between the two tops. Pin a paper silhouette to this wire with two clothespins. Make sure there is a safe backstop for this exercise. Check with your local warden for assistance in setting up this part of the activity.

If the site is appropriate, simulate a turkey dusting and scratching area. Make some turkey tracks in the dust, mud or sand using the preserved feet of a tom or hen.

Have a variety of turkey calls available so participants can practice using the various calls. If budget allows, you might want to have some unused diaphragm calls to give as prizes to those who are first to answer a tough question you pose to the group.



Set out examples of full body mounts, breast mounts and tail fan mount with an attached beard. Have plenty of tail feathers on hand along with artificial sinew or leather strips and beads for the creative arts activity at the end of this station.

Turkey Hunting Safety Tips

- Keep the muzzle of your gun pointed in a safe direction.
- Treat every firearm as if it is loaded.
- Be 100% sure of your target and what's beyond it.
- Make sure your firearm is unloaded and the action is open except when actually hunting. Always leave the safety on until just before you take the shot.
- Attend a Wisconsin Turkey Hunter Education Clinic before you go on your first turkey hunt.
- Never wear red, white, blue, or black when turkey hunting. Wear a blaze orange vest and hat when walking to or from your turkey hunting stand.
- Never use a gobble call during the hunt. This may draw attention from other hunters who may try to stalk you, thinking you are a gobbler.
- To reduce the chance of being accidentally injured by another hunter, sit at the base of a tree with a trunk wider than your body. You can see an approaching hunter and you are protected from the rear. Choose a call position from which you can see well. Don't hide in a blow down or thicket, as this may make it difficult for other hunters to see you, and prevent you from verifying an incoming bird as a legal target.
- Never try to sneak up on, or drive wild turkeys toward another hunter or cut between a caller and a turkey. Always call the turkey to you. The less moving you do the safer and more effective you'll be.
- The use of turkey decoys is increasing. Manufacturers are even promoting the use of jakes and strutting gobblers. This may be dangerous, because another hunter may see the decoys and assume they are real. Most turkey hunters who use decoys use hen decoys to attract toms. If you use one, place it so you are out of the line of fire if another hunter shoots at it. In a wooded setting, make sure a large tree or trees shield your position from the decoy. If you're in the open, face the decoy directly toward you or away from you, so its broadside is most visible to approaching hunters, thus keeping you out of the direct line of fire. Carry your decoys in a bag or backpack so another hunter will not mistake them for the real thing.
- Never wave, whistle or make turkey calls to alert an approaching hunter to your presence. Always shout to reveal your presence to an approaching hunter. Never assume you are the only hunter in the woods. Assume every sound or movement is another hunter until you can safely identify it. The most critical moment of any turkey hunt is when you decide to pull the trigger. During the spring turkey hunting season, be absolutely sure that the bird you see has a beard. This is the **ONLY** positive means of identifying a legal bird under all conditions.
- Never use noise, movement or color to confirm a legal bird. A person walking in the woods can sound like a turkey. Color can be deceiving, particularly in poor light. Remember this rule and repeat it to yourself – **See the turkey's beard before you shoot.** Never let excitement, nerves, panic, or peer pressure guide your behavior. Strive to remain calm and rational. There isn't a turkey in the woods worth a human life or injury.
- If you shoot a turkey or have decided to quit hunting for the day, unload your shotgun. If you have shot a turkey, tag it immediately and wrap an orange vest or band around its body with its wings folded in. Then walk out of the woods using the most visible route you can. Remember to always wear blaze orange when you are moving.

Station 16

Calling a Trophy Tom

Learning to Hunt

Background Information

The wild turkey is the largest game bird in Wisconsin and is a member of the same family of birds as the grouse, pheasant, partridge and quail. Adult males, called gobblers or toms, average about 21 pounds. Adult females, called hens, average about 10

pounds. Some gobblers exceed 30 pounds. For a complete background summary of the wild turkey's natural history, management, hunting regulations and hunting techniques, refer to the **Wisconsin Turkey Hunter's Guide**.



Spring turkey hunting is the most dangerous sport in the United States involving a firearm. Part of the reason is that some hunters believe turkeys to be so intelligent that they must shoot at the first opportunity, without taking time to be safe.

so they shoot before they've had a chance for positive identification – only to find out that the flash of movement was a person. Hunters must always think before they shoot, and they must always be 100% certain of their target and what lies beyond.

But turkeys are not intelligent. They don't have reasoning powers. They are cautious and wary. The other reason spring hunting is so dangerous is that some hunters want to get a turkey so badly that they risk making a mistake. They feel 90 percent sure that what they're about to shoot is a gobbler,



Activity

A

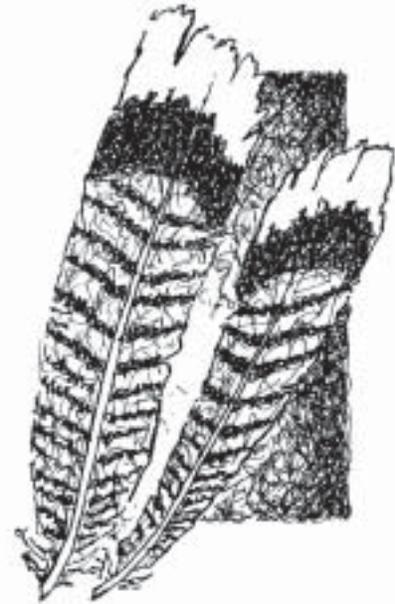
Where to hunt-- What to see

Procedure

As participants arrive at your station, begin calling to them using one of the turkey calls. Ask them if they know what animal makes that sound. Tell them it's the wild turkey, if they can't guess. Explain the various activities they will participate in at your station.

Tell your group that you are going to go over some information they need to know if they are going to hunt wild turkeys in Wisconsin. Hand out copies of the current or previous year's turkey hunting regulations for spring and fall. Review some of the important information in the regulations such as how turkey hunters are selected, how to purchase a license and stamp, how to tag and register a harvested turkey. If you have a turkey carcass on hand, you can use that to demonstrate how to tag a turkey.

Explain that your participants will need to know where to hunt. Ask them to open their regulation booklets to the page showing the Turkey Management Zones. Point out that turkeys are plentiful in



southwest Wisconsin, but become less common to entirely absent in our northern counties due to poor habitat and climate conditions.

Since most wild turkey hunting land is privately owned, it is important to scout an area at least two weeks prior to the season opener. This is a good time to seek and gain permission to hunt. Look for tracks along roads and trails, plowed fields, and creek bottoms. Show the participants a dried turkey foot and ask a volunteer to make some tracks in the dirt. Also show them some dried droppings that you preserved. Point out that a tom's droppings are long and J-shaped while a hen's droppings are usually small blobs. A heavy concentration of droppings under a tree indicates a roosting tree.



If you can re-create or find real examples, illustrate what dusting areas and turkey scratchings look like. Dusting areas are found mostly in the summer and are an important sign to look for when scouting for fall turkey hunting. You won't find dusting areas during wet spring weather. Birds flock to dust in the same spot, which makes it easier for you to see the sign. Birds often dust themselves near the edges of cultivated fields, sandy streams or creek bottoms.

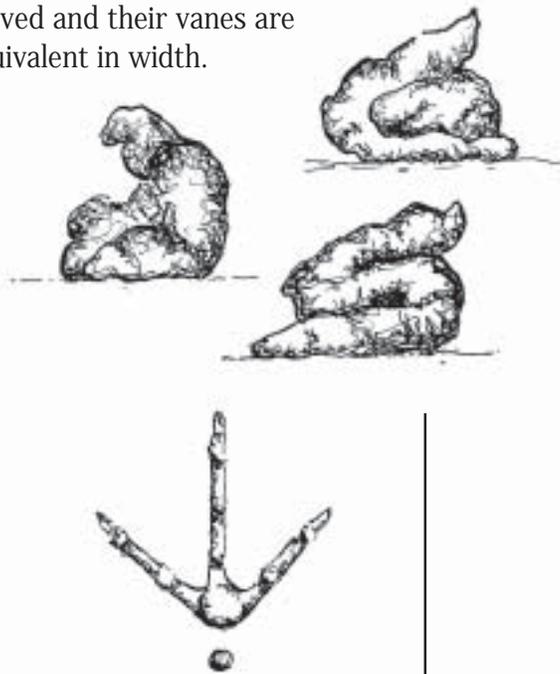
Scratchings can be found almost anywhere in woods inhabited by turkeys. If leaves are turned over and the ground is still moist, the birds are using the area. With a little experience, hunters will be able to distinguish between fresh

scratchings and abandoned ones, and be able to tell the direction the turkeys were traveling. Leaves are piled directly behind a scratching turkey.

Feathers are another sign that turkeys are in the area. Because gobblers do quite a bit of fighting in the spring to establish dominance, they lose some feathers. Show feathers from different parts of the body. Black-tipped feathers are from the breast of a gobbler. Hen's feathers are buff-tipped or brown. Show the difference between a tail feather and a wing feather. Point out how the wing feathers are curved and stiff, with one side of the vane shorter than the other. Tail feathers are not as stiff or curved and their vanes are equivalent in width.



Gobbler Signs



Hen Signs

Activity
B

Gaining the landowner's permission to hunt

Procedure

Since most wild turkey hunting in Wisconsin takes place on private property, get your group involved in some role-playing. Select one participant to be a landowner standing near the "Hunting by Permission Only" sign. Whisper to this participant to be very receptive to the hunters. Ask for another volunteer to be a landowner standing near the "No Hunting / No Trespassing" sign. Whisper to this volunteer, that no

matter how nice or polite the hunters are in asking, do not grant permission to hunt. This landowner can be pleasant or unpleasant.

Ask two participants to be prospective turkey hunters looking for a place to hunt in a few weeks. They've kept their eye on these two parcels of land and are now prepared to ask each of the landowners for permission to hunt



their land. Give them some Permission Cards to fill out. Give one card to each participant for future use.

Have the selected participants act out in front of the group how they would go about getting permission to hunt turkeys from each landowner. Talk about etiquette, and remind hunters to bring along some small gift as a token to say, "Thanks for letting me hunt on your property." Summer sausage or homemade venison sausage makes nice gifts.

Talk about the different reactions of the two landowners. What can be done about landowners who will not allow hunters to hunt on their property? Absolutely nothing, except to thank them for their time and to be on your way.



Activity C

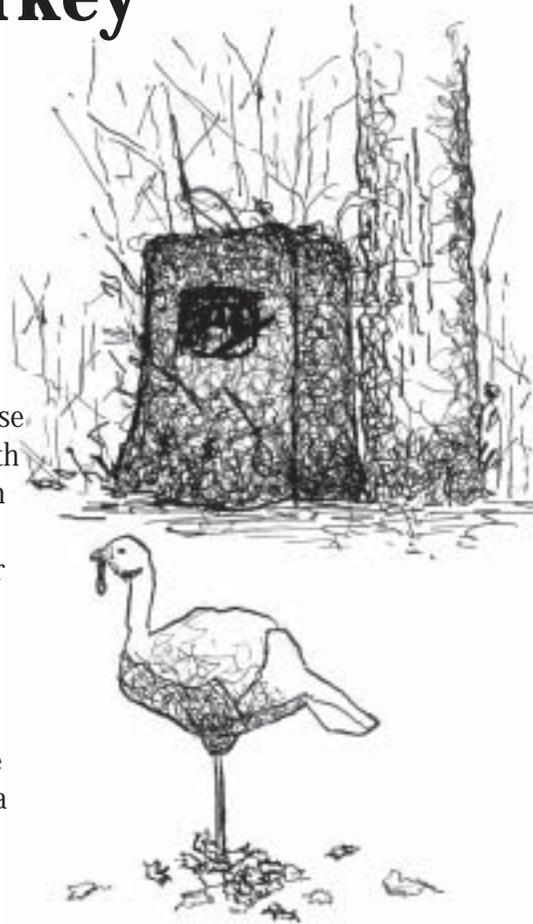
Building turkey blinds

Procedure

Tell the group that a blind isn't necessary to hunt turkeys, but it does allow the hunter more freedom of movement. Otherwise the hunter must sit very still, with little or no movement. Tell them you've set up a blind that you'd like them to enter, individually or in pairs. Inside the blind, they'll find a stack of index cards and pencils. Have them look at the turkey decoys set up in front of the blind. Ask them to write the number of each decoy and then a "Y" for "Yes, I'd shoot that turkey," or a "N" for "No, I wouldn't shoot that turkey."

After everyone has visited the blind, review the answers and tell them why they should or should not shoot each of those turkeys.

Tell the group that you've previously determined this area has turkeys in it. Ask them to find a place where they will set up their blind. More than one person can choose a particular spot. Remind them to look for a place where they are not hidden very well. Tell them they need to be able to see all around them so they can see approaching hunters. Turkeys are reluctant to approach a thicket



that they cannot see into. Tell them it is important not to go searching for the turkey during the season, but rather use calls to bring the turkey to them. Provide various camouflage materials and other blind building items to the participants. Demonstrate how to use existing brush to build a blind. Ask them to place one or more decoys in relation to their stand. As a group, critique the placement based on the information given in the **Turkey Hunting Safety Tips** outlined in the Background Information section of this chapter.

Calling in your turkey

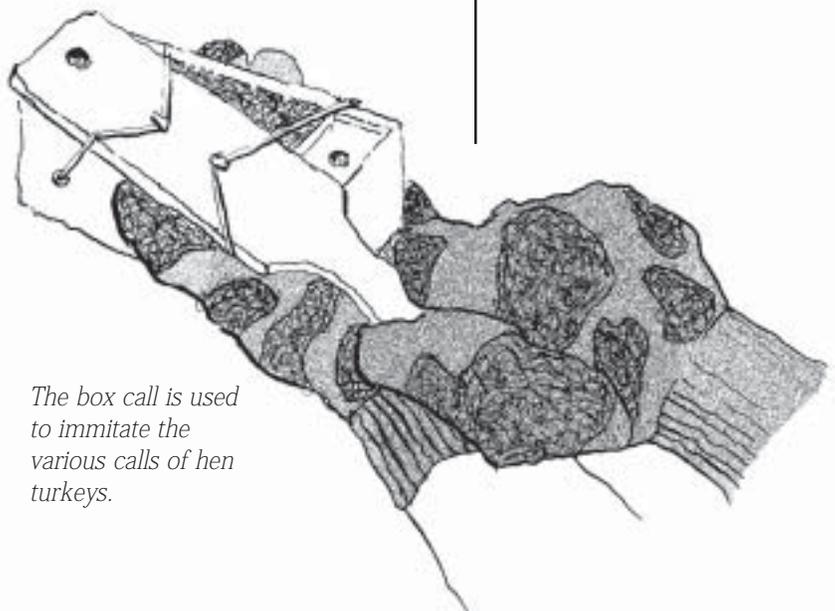
Procedure

One of the most important pieces of equipment a turkey hunter needs is a turkey call. Two basic types of calls include friction calls and mouth or air-operated calls. Friction calls are the most popular. They use two surfaces for rubbing together. This creates friction that produces sounds that a hen can make. Mouth or air-operated calls use your breath to produce a variety of hen turkey calls. A third type of call, called a shaker, produces a gobble when the hunter rapidly shakes the call. Some calls, called shock calls, imitate the calls of crows or owls and are used to locate the birds first thing in the morning. This “shock calling” shocks the birds awake and they often call when they hear these sounds.

Demonstrate the use of a variety of box and slate calls. Point out that a major disadvantage of friction calls is that hunters must use their hands to call. The movement could very likely spook the turkey, or prevent a hunter from shooting in time.

The three basic air-operated calls are the yelper, the tube call and the diaphragm call. The diaphragm call has the advantage that a hunter doesn't have to use his or her hands while calling. The hunter can also make all the calls of the turkey on a diaphragm call. But these calls are fragile, don't last long, and because of their small size are easily lost. They also require much practice to master. Demonstrate these air-operated calls. If you have extra diaphragm calls as prizes, draw participants' names from a hat and help the winners practice a bit in front of the group. Demonstrate the following types of calls to your group. If you don't feel skilled or comfortable enough to demonstrate these calls, then use one of the instructional cassette tapes available at most sporting goods stores.

Activity D



The box call is used to immitate the various calls of hen turkeys.

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Learning to Hunt

Plain Yelp: This is the sound most commonly associated with turkeys and is the standard call for working in a spring gobbler. These are best done in a series of 2 to 5 in a row, very even in rhythm.

Tree yelp: This slow, soft, nasal sound of 3 or 4 yelps is the first sound a turkey makes at daybreak from its night-time roost. This call can only be heard on still mornings in a roosting area.

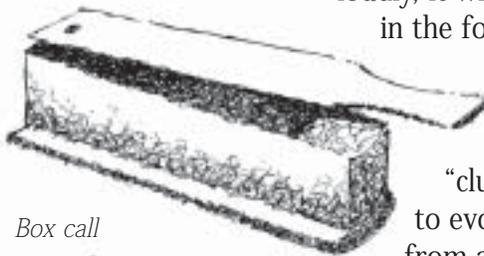
Cluck: This short, soft, single syllable, non-musical tone has several meanings. If made too loudly, it will alarm turkeys. Use it in the following way: "cluck," pause briefly, "cluck, cluck," pause, "cluck," pause, "cluck," pause, "cluck, cluck." It is used to evoke an answering cluck from any nearby turkey.

Purr: This is a soft call used by turkeys when communicating to each other. Use it with clucks when gobblers are in close but not quite close enough.

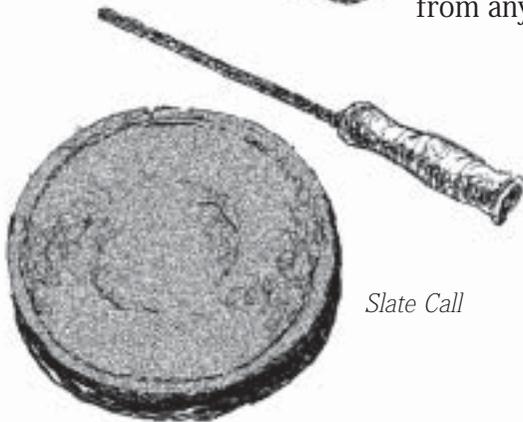
Putt: This is a short, sharp, loud cluck. Do not use it. It is the alarm call of the turkey.

Mating call: Make three yelps rising in volume, pause briefly, then two soft clucks. Repeat two or three times. Call softly because turkeys have excellent hearing.

Cackle: This is an excited call of a hen. It is a series of 12 or more yelps that rise abruptly in pitch and cadence and then gradually decline in pitch and cadence. Often the yelps are very short and staccato-like.



Box call

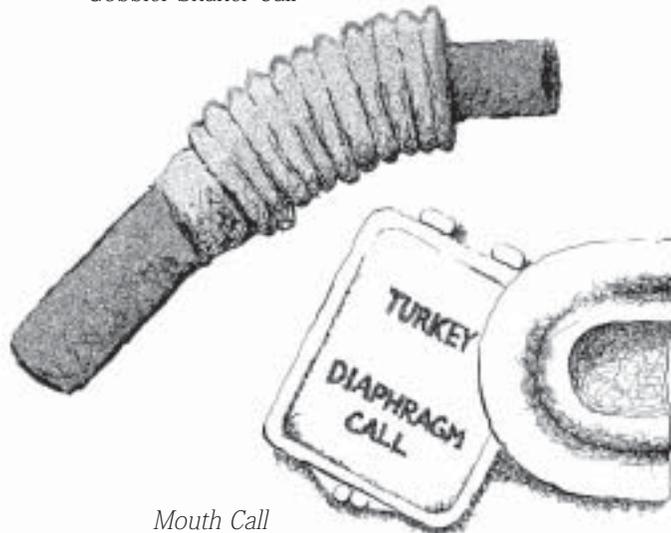


Slate Call



Crow Shock Call

Gobbler Shaker Call



Mouth Call

Clothing and equipment

Procedure

Clothing. Demonstrate the different types of clothing for turkey hunting. Point out the need to camouflage the entire body, face, boots and hands. Also show how to camouflage a gun. Camouflage gun socks are available for guns, as well as camouflage tape and paint. A camouflaged jacket does not make the hunter invisible, but conceals only the parts that are camouflaged. A person who wears partial camouflage may be concealing just enough to make the visible parts look like those of a turkey. A shiny cheekbone, a shiny or light-colored gun stock or action, part of a T-shirt, tops of socks, handkerchiefs, hands, boots and boot soles are all items that, when exposed, can lead to accidents. If hunters choose to wear camouflage, they should be thorough. They want an approaching hunter to see them completely, or not at all.

Stress the importance of wearing a blaze orange vest and hat when entering or leaving the woods, especially when carrying a turkey. Colors that should never be worn

during turkey hunting season are red, white, blue and black. Other hunters can associate these colors with a tom turkey. Black looks like the body of the bird, and red, white and blue are colors of a tom's head.

Activity E



Station 16

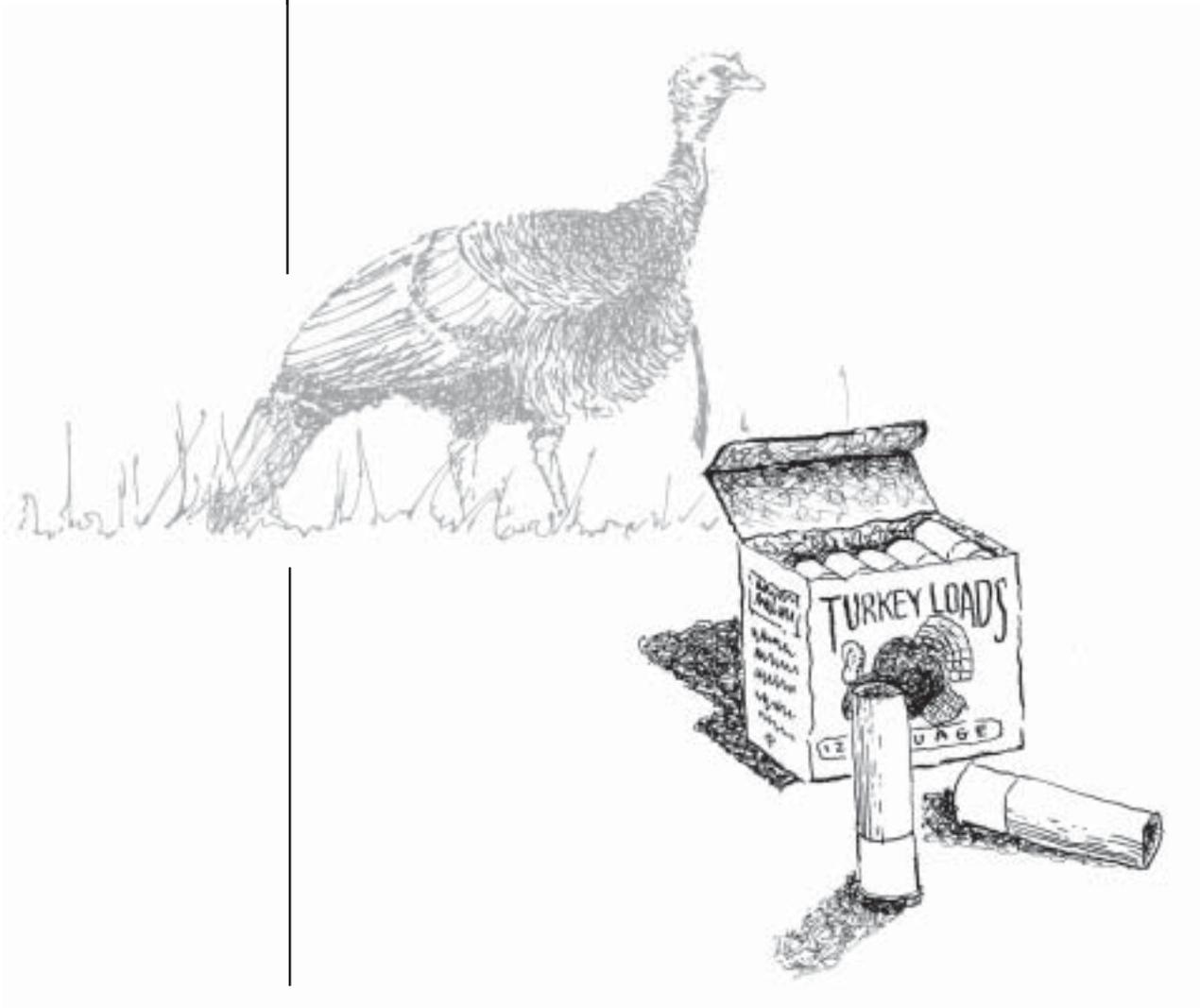
Calling a Trophy Tom

Learning to Hunt

Guns and Ammo. Review the most frequently used types of guns and ammunition. Most turkey hunters use a 12-gauge shotgun. Smaller guns should not be used because the chance for crippling a bird increases. Some turkey hunters like to use 10-gauge shotguns because they offer the advantage of more pellets, but they are also much heavier and the recoil is much harder on the shoulder.

The most popular choke for turkey hunting is a full choke, which gives the tightest pattern. A tight pattern is important in order to strike the vital head and neck area to ensure a quick, clean kill.

It's best to use either No. 4 or No. 6 shot for turkey hunting. Anything smaller than No. 6 increases the likelihood of crippling a bird.



Patterning your shotgun

Procedure

If time, location and resources allow, give participants an opportunity to pattern a shotgun you've provided for them. Before letting participants shoot their guns, however, review the safety information found in the Background Information section.

Once you've stressed the safety points, then it's time to allow participants to pattern the shotgun. Explain that participants should pattern their gun from the position they will probably be in when they shoot their turkey. This is because the position they are in can affect the way they hold their shotgun and this can change their point of aim. Have participants try patterning their shotgun while sitting on the ground, sitting on a stool and standing, so they can get a feel for the different performances.

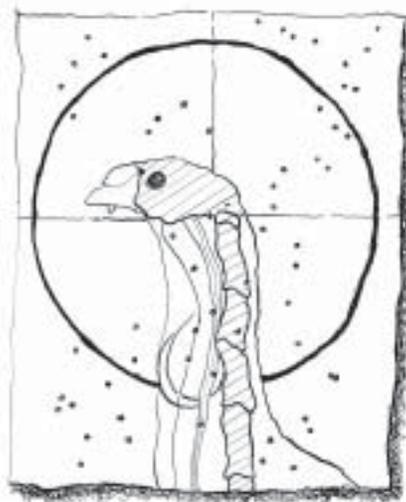
When you pattern a gun, wear the same clothes you'll wear when you hunt. A head net, hat and other clothes can affect the way you hold

the shotgun. Patterning a shotgun should be a dress rehearsal of the planned hunt.

Tell participants they should aim above the feather line on the neck, above the wattles and below the beak. It's best to shoot when the head is sticking up, rather than while the tom is strutting with his head drawn in against his body. If a tom is strutting in front of them, they need to get him to raise his head. They can usually do so by calling once – a short putt or cluck – but be ready to pull the trigger as soon as the head comes up – don't wait.

A key point to make with your participants is hunting distance. To increase chances of a clean, quick kill, turkey hunters should not shoot at a turkey that is over 40 yards away. It's hard to see a beard when the bird is more than 40 or 50 yards away in the brush, and the beard is the only consistent identifying characteristic of a legal springtime turkey. Have the participants practice pacing off 40 yards from their stand.

Activity F



Now that you got your turkey

Activity G

Procedure

Turkey hunting is carefully monitored in Wisconsin. Demonstrate how to properly tag and register a turkey using a roadkill or other bird obtained from a local warden. Explain that once a turkey is killed, the hunter must validate the carcass tag by cutting the slit corresponding to the day of the kill. Then the tag must be attached by sealing it around the featherless part of the turkey's leg.

Once a bird is properly tagged, it is time to field dress it so the body cavity can cool down as fast as possible, thus preventing meat spoilage. Demonstrate how to field dress a turkey. Like any other upland gamebird, start by cutting from the vent hole up to the brisket. Remove the entrails. Tell participants that they may want to save the heart, liver and gizzard in a plastic bag if they want to eat them later.

Successful turkey hunters then must take their tagged turkey and

registration stub (attached to the carcass tag) to a designated registration station. The station attendant will remove the carcass tag and clip on a metal tag (the same ones used for deer hunting).

Demonstrate how to pluck a turkey for baking. To pluck the bird, dip it first in scalding water to help soften the skin and loosen the feathers. While plucking is more time-consuming and messier than skinning, it does allow you to leave the skin on which keeps the bird from drying out during oven baking.

Once you have plucked a bird, you can demonstrate how to skin a turkey. You can use another turkey carcass or use the one you just plucked (don't forget to tell participants that they don't need to both pluck AND skin their turkey). Tell participants that if they choose to skin a bird, they should wrap the turkey in foil or baking bag during cooking. They may also want to add strips of bacon to reduce drying during cooking.



Making lasting memories

Procedure

Tell participants that if they are successful in harvesting a turkey, they can make some lasting memorabilia by getting all or part of their turkey mounted. Show them some of the different types of mounts. You may want to provide the names and phone numbers of local taxidermists.

You can help participants learn how to make some mounts of their own. One of the most popular types of mounts is the spread tail and beard. A larger mount would include the fanned wing feathers. To preserve the tail, spread it out into a fan shape, then pin the feathers to a piece of cardboard or Styrofoam. Sprinkle salt and Borax on the fleshy parts of the tail. Allow the fan to dry for several weeks. Then unpin it. It will remain fanned out indefinitely. Protect the mount by sprinkling Borax into the feathers. The preserved tail and beard can then be mounted on either a homemade board or one purchased from a sporting goods store.

Give each participant



one or two turkey tail feathers, some artificial sinew or thin strips of leather and beads. Have them tie the sinew or leather onto the pointed shaft end of the feather. String a few beads onto the sinew or leather and tie off. Participants can take this decoration home with them.



References

Wisconsin Turkey Hunter's Guide, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Publication #: WM214-98-Rev, 1998. (training manual)

