

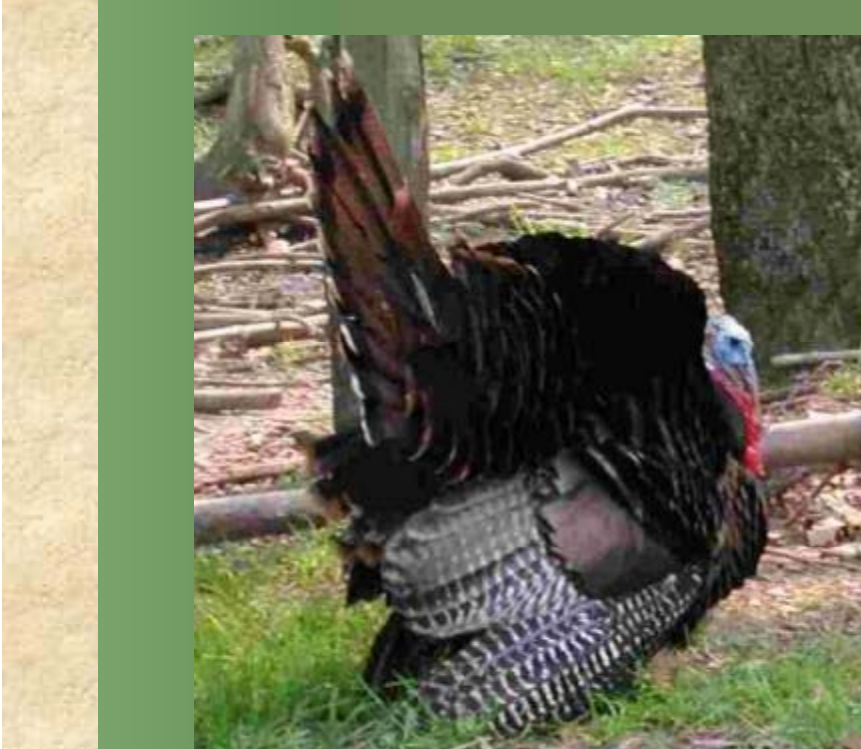
The Wild Turkey, its Habitat & Tips for Habitat Improvement



Mary Jo Casalena
*Wild Turkey Biologist,
Pennsylvania Game Commission*



Hen



Gobbler



Bearded Hen

- 0 – 33% of hens
- Depends on area
- Pencil thin
- < 8” long



Shape of their droppings reveals their sex.

Gobbler

Hen



Males create harems - Polygamous



Turkeys nest on the ground



Clutch size averages 10-12 eggs



Most predation is to nests



Incubation
28 days



Young are called Poult



First 6 weeks



Eat Insects



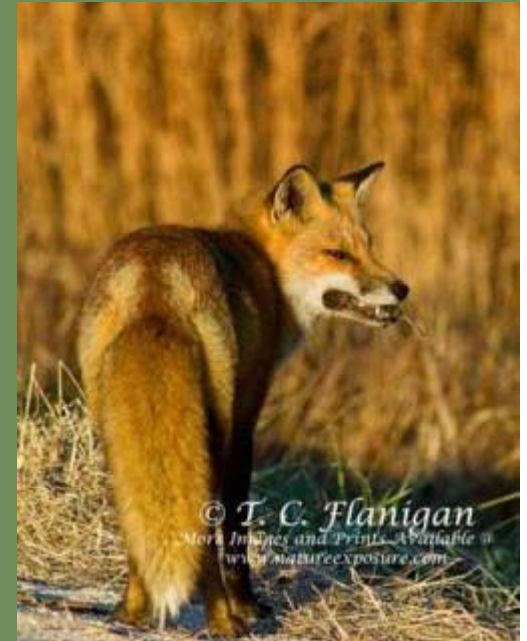
Within 2 weeks – roost off ground on low branches
- Decreases predation



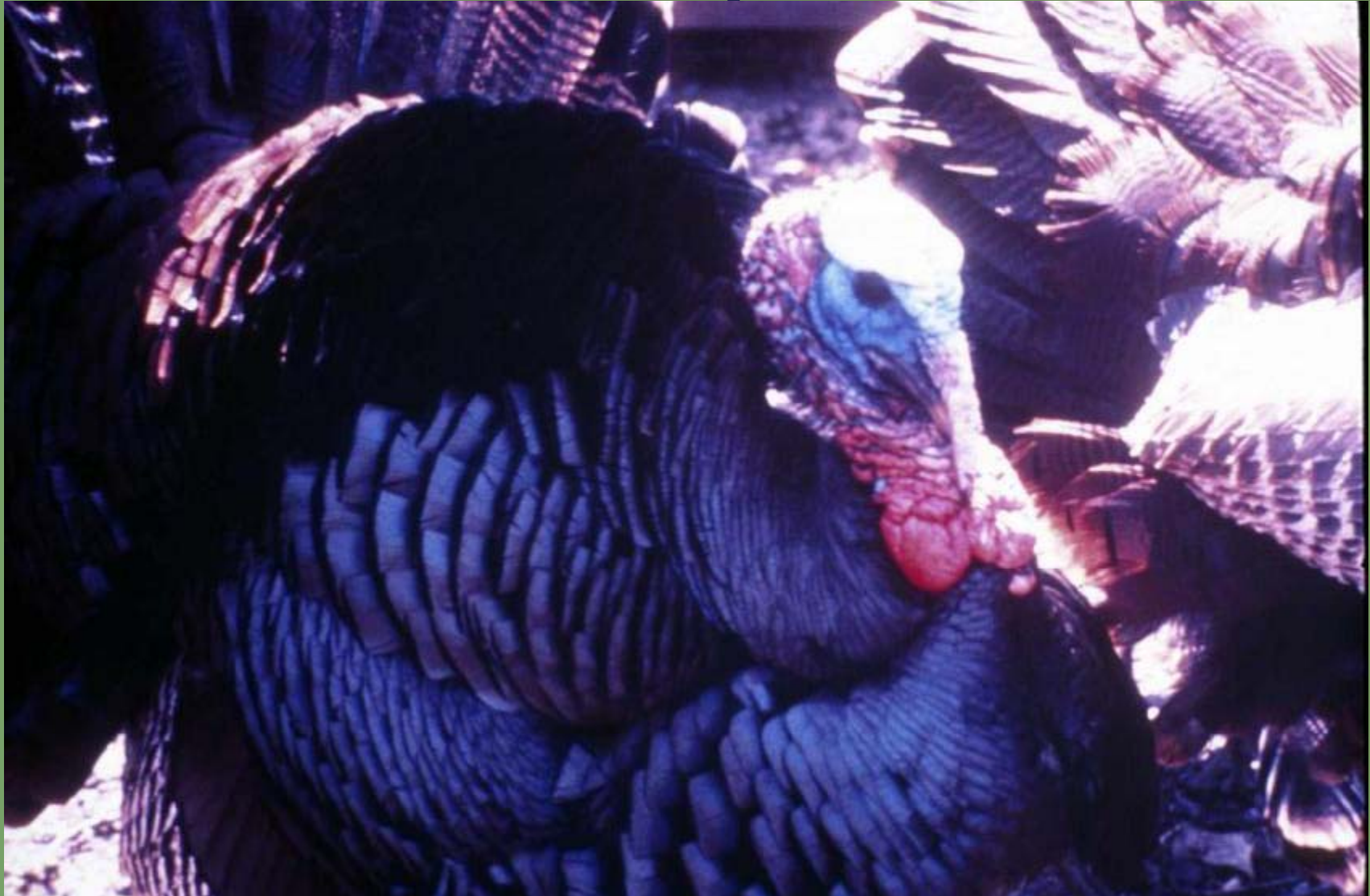
Juvenile



Turkeys are prey species



See Nearly 360°



Superb Hearing

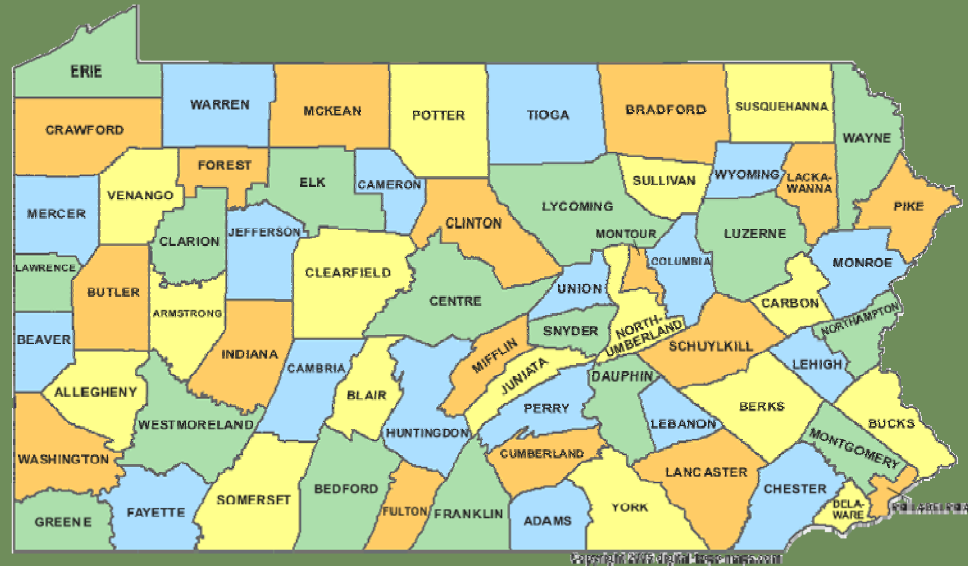


40-55 mph, up to 1 mile



Notable runners – 18 mph

Where do you FIND them?





Extensive
Forests?

Agriculture?





Woodlot/Field Borders?

Forest Openings?





Residential
Areas?

Cities?



Ideal Habitat

60% Wooded, 40% Agric./Shrub





When in Different Habitats? Somewhat Seasonal



Spring

Openings for breeding



Nest Sites

Summer

**Openings for
bugging**





Fall's Feast of Foods



Dogwood

Acorns



Grapes

Winter

Spring Seeps



Thermal Cover



Openings/Agric.

Deep Woods



Turkeys' Biggest Needs:



Winter food

Secure Nest Sites



Summer
Brood habitat



What can landowners do for Habitat Management?

Provide Interspersion (Mixing) of Habitats



Plant or daylight mast-producing trees

White Oaks



Scarlet Oaks

Plant, enhance food/shelter producing trees/shrubs

- Flowering
Dogwood



- Conifers-winter cover

Create or Enhance Openings

- 3 – 5% of land
 - 100 ac. = 3 – 5 acres of openings



Before you do:

- Consider adjacent land
- Are other openings nearby?
 - Powerlines/pipelines
 - gas wells



Timber Harvest

- Log landings can become openings
 - Relatively level
 - Easily seeded
- Logging roads can be reseeded
 - linear openings



Type of opening?

- Perennial
 - Permanent food/cover
 - Low maintenance
- Annual
 - Plant every year



Placement

- Less than 1 mile apart
 - Unless linear opening between
- Consider adjacent cover
 - By escape cover
 - Winter - on low slopes by winter cover
 - Summer – by nesting cover



Size/Shape

- 0.5 - 2 acres each
- Irregular shaped,
or
- Long, narrow
strip (linear
roadway)



GET SOIL TESTED!!

- know how much lime/fertilizer the soil needs
- Lime
 - 2 Tons/Acre
 - Apply in Fall/Winter
 - Every 3-5 yrs
- Fertilizer
 - 250-500 lbs/Acre
 - Apply during planting



Annual Openings/Food Plots

- Require annual planting
- Susceptible to annual weather
- Sunflower, buckwheat – difficult to grow where habitat is over-browsed



Annual Openings/Food Plots

- Can change food types each year
- Good for spring or fall hunting
- Let crop stand for winter food
- Plant in strips



Annual Openings/Food Plots

- Rent planting equipment from County Conservation District
- Although buckwheat sometimes difficult to grow
 - Establishes well
 - Favored by deer



Perennial Openings

- More convenient
- Some Annual maintenance



Perennial Openings

- Plant a mix of legumes and grasses
- Legumes = Nitrogen fixers – good soil builders
 - Clovers, birdsfoot trefoil, partridge pea
- Grasses
 - Annual:
 - Buckwheat or
 - Winter Wheat –
 - 1st green vegetation; late winter
 - Perennial
 - clump grasses
 - Grasses eventually out-compete legumes



Perennial Openings w/ annual grasses

- Spring planting – seed mix can be planted with oats or annual ryegrass
- Fall planting – can be planted with winter wheat or rye
- Keep vegetation short for poults to travel through



Shrubs/Trees

- Plant in clumps
- Or around perimeter of opening
- Or scatter plantings
- Leave 25 – 30'
between trees for
disking/mowing
- Fence/tube plantings



Shrubs/Trees For Wildlife

- Fall/Winter Food & Overhead protection

- Crabapple
- Flowering Dogwood
- Blueberry

- Plant a variety

- Native species

- Avoid Invasive - Autumn Olive
- Or Japanese Barberry



Year-round Wildlife Use

Enjoy!

