



# SHOW-ME GOBBLER

A Tri-Annual Publication of the George C. Clark Missouri Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation

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## Prescribed fire, Oaks, and Wild Turkeys

By Will Rechkemmer, NWTF Project Forester

Prescribed fire, oaks, and wild turkeys go together like whitetail deer and corn fields. While not mutually exclusive, prescribed fire can be extremely beneficial to oak woodlands, which in turn is beneficial to the wild turkey. Prescribed fire can alter the woodland and forest floor to benefit grasses and forbs, which directly benefit turkey nesting and brood rearing cover. Open woodlands are a preferred habitat for wild turkeys and restoring these woodlands is vital to the success of wild turkeys in Missouri.

### Prescribed Fire Basics

Prescribed fire is the intentional use of fire to restore or enhance habitats. It is used across the world in various habitats such as tall grass prairies, oak savanna and woodland, eucalyptus forests, and aspen stands. Prescribed fire is typically used to remove thick duff or leaf layers, control small woody trees and shrubs, and provide bare soil for seed germination, such as acorns. Within oak woodlands, prescribed fires are typically of low intensity (short flame lengths) and conducted during the dormant season, so as not to damage mature trees. These low intensity prescribed fires can effectively remove undesirable woody species by top killing them, allowing more light for forbs and grasses at the woodland floor. Increased light at the woodland floor also recruits oak seedlings, which eventually become the next generation of mature oaks. Compared to many species, oaks are fire-tolerant, and thrive in a fire driven system.

One important thing to consider is each woodland is different, and there is no “silver bullet” for restoration. In other words, prescribed fire is not always the best tool, or depending on management goals, timing and intensity of the prescribed fire may need to be adapted. Additionally, other management practices used in conjunction with prescribed fire may be beneficial to achieving goals, such as timber thinning. The use of prescribed fire with timber thinning is a common way to reduce dense overstory and restore open grass

and forb dominated oak woodlands for wild turkeys. Thinning timber also promotes mast crops (acorns) and healthy oaks within stands, providing a food source for wildlife and sustainable forest products.

### What You Can Do

Many of the oak woodlands in Missouri are dense and overgrown by woody shrubs and undesirable tree saplings. Additionally, many stands are overstocked (too many trees per acre) and need to be thinned to improve oak regeneration and wildlife habitat. If you own an oak woodland there are a variety of management practices that may be right for your property.

It is best to consult a forester or resource professional prior to developing a management plan for your property. With the help of a professional, you can determine which management practices may be suited best to your individual habitat goals and property. There are many cost share opportunities for woodland management in Missouri such as the EQIP program by NRCS and Missouri state cost share programs. If you own land in Missouri and are interested in prescribed fire or oak management, contact your local NRCS office and speak with a resource professional about your goals. If your property is in Dent, Howell, Texas, Shannon, Wright, or Oregon county, feel free to contact me at 319-572-3887 or [wrechkemmer@nwtf.net](mailto:wrechkemmer@nwtf.net) and I would be happy to work with you towards your habitat objectives.



Low intensity prescribed fire in an oak woodland.



Frequently burned oak woodland (left) vs. infrequently burned, overstocked oak forest (right).

**Advertising & Article Deadlines for the Show Me Gobbler Publication**  
**Spring Deadline = May 15, 2021**

# From The President

By Dan Zerr

## THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM:

The holidays are here, and, as we struggle to make all the necessary connections, invite everyone who needs an invite, and fix enough food to feed a substantial sized army, I hope that you find time to manage the controlled chaos that covers the most anticipated day(s) of the year. Opening Day!! No matter what your passion.

There are a thousand questions and problems to be ironed out this time of year. "Of all places, why do my waders leak there?" Why is ammunition so hard to find? Why do the reeds on my call stick together after a few chuckles? Why is this tree so much harder to climb than last year? Why am I exhausted after only three days of hunting? Where have all the critters gone?

But this is the time of year we live for. Enjoying the hunt, enjoying one another's company in the field. Good times and good people. To that end we usually fall into one of two groups. Group One makes the extra effort to pack all of the extra goods and supplies, camp stoves, BBQ Grills, and we eat like kings. Group Two is more of a subsistence hunter and make do with the basic food groups of a pop tart, snickers bar, and a Mountain Dew. And it all tastes good. It does nothing to diminish our passion for the outdoors. We have waited all year for this time to arrive and we intend to live it to the fullest. We have a common bond. Hopefully we will have the time and the where with all, to make sure everyone is having a quality experience.

Take time with the young or inexperienced hunters to explain what is going on, making sure they are in a good position to get a shot, maybe save a place for the old guy next to stove to warm

his creaking bones. Who knows, he may have a pearl of wisdom or a story too good not to share with you. Take the time to relish the hunt, and understand the harvesting part is the icing on the cake.

As we continue to strive to return to something approaching "normal", rest assured that your State Board of Directors have not been taking anytime off, but are continuing to ensure that the mission of the National Wild Turkey Federation stays on course. You all know these have been trying times. We had three spots on the board open for election, two incumbents, Dave Howlett and Tim Schwent agreed to run again, Kyle Larimore decided to step down, we wish him the best of luck and thank him for his service. Nominations for the board ended on November 1, 2020, and only one other candidate expressed interest on serving on the board. Please welcome Cindy Jones from the Bundt Cumbea Chapter in Lebanon. MO on board. Cindy has been very active in local chapter affairs and has been a driving force in helping their banquet succeed. She is an excellent candidate for the State Board.

After we have regained our sanity, by partaking of the bounty in fall hunting seasons, let's not forget our families and those we left at home. Let them know that we realize how blessed we are to have them in our lives, as they allow us to be the passionate fools we have become. They are an integral part of our lives, and we thank them and thank God for them.

May all of you have a blessed holiday season.

*Thanks For All You Do,  
Dan*



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**ARTICLE SUBMISSION NOTE:**  
The staff of the Show-Me Gobbler thank you for your contributions to the publication. Please feel free to submit future articles with photos to the contact information listed above. Submission requirements: Digital copy submitted in Microsoft Word. (please contact us if you can only send hard copy) Digital photographs only. Please use at least 225 resolution (dpi), or medium to high settings from your phone. Photos submitted outside of these guidelines may not be suitable for printing. Please include photo captions and credits for each photo submitted. Thanks again for your contributions and we look forward to your participation in the future.

**Please consider sharing your story in the Show Me Gobbler Publication  
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Chase McAfee of Gateway Longspurs, with a beautiful bird.



Chris Comstock of Lake Show Me Gobblers.

# The “New” Normal

By Mike Allen — Regional Director, National Wild Turkey Federation

Boy oh boy, what a year this has been. We are all tired of hearing about Covid, shut-downs, elections, etcetera, etcetera, and etcetera.

2020 started off in January with a bang for the NWTF. By the first of March your organization was on track for record setting numbers. Memberships, net dollars, which fund all the great things we do, controlled expenses, everything was going the right way. Our national convention in Nashville was record setting. Then in mid-March everything came to a screeching halt.

There were some very difficult decisions made by the management team of the organization, and the national board of directors. Our staff was reduced, and then reduced again a couple of months later to keep our expenses in line with revenues. Cuts were made throughout every facet of the NWTF. By the end of the fiscal year in August we had gone from 89 regional directors across the country a year ago, down to 39. These very difficult decisions were made with the survival of the NWTF in mind, and should not be taken as reflections on any of the staff members affected.

The NWTF also reduced the regional biologist staff numbers, headquarters staff, and warehouse staff.

Also, the decision was made to forgo ordering any new product for 2021 events. We all learned to do “virtual” events online. We utilized product in our warehouse inventory, which generated cash-flow. The NWTF Call For All campaign asked chapters and our members to dig deep and we were able to meet fiscal goals which enabled the organization to move forward.

As 2021 nears, we are again trying to make decisions that will ensure the health and prosperity of the NWTF moving forward and into the future. The national board of directors made the decision to suspend all expenditures through the Super fund for 2021. This means we will not take requests for funding of projects, equipment, or habitat work in 2021. It also affects the scholarship program, and all outreach programs, JAKES, Women in the Outdoors, and Wheelin’ Sportsmen. Your regional director has, or will, share a link with you for direct application of the NWTF national scholarship, sponsored by Mossy Oak. All seniors wishing to apply may do so. Your local chapter will then be notified of any local JAKES members that have applied, in the event that the local chapter desires, and has the means to fund, a local scholarship for 2021.

Our national convention, normally held in Nashville, in February, will be a virtual event, centered out of the Wonders of Wildlife Museum in Springfield MO. There will be more information coming, as soon as possible, but please take a few moments to check it out. On that same theme, the decision was made to forgo the Missouri State Awards banquet, typically held in early January. Hopefully 2022 will see us back on track with both our state and national conventions.

With so much uncertainty in the air, we are looking at doing more events virtually in January and February. We do not want to postpone events until later in the year, and then maybe not be able to be successful. We also would not want to have 40-50 banquets in May or June in Missouri. That might be too much of a good thing! Virtual events have proven to be a viable option, so much so that your regional director will be discussing the possibility of doing something virtual, even if your local chapter will be holding an in-person banquet. Our ordering processes have changed, and the changes will strengthen the financial position of the NWTF. We will no longer have to borrow millions of dollars to order product one to two years prior to banquets, and then hope we raise enough money with them to fund all the great work we all want to do. Those processes for ordering, while different for us, are not new to other conservation organizations like the NWTF. We are working with a slate of preferred vendors to ensure we have great items at our events, and that will help us raise the dollars needed to move our mission forward.

Most of us are creatures of habit, and change comes with difficulty. 2021 may test us, but I am certain that the volunteers and members of the NWTF will rise to the occasion, and find ways to not only succeed, but grow the organization that we all hold dear. I would ask those of you that serve on committees to help us make choices that are best for your area. If you are a member, I would ask you to consider volunteering to serve on a committee. Help us ensure that the wild turkey, and the preservation of our hunting heritage, continue to grow and prosper into the future. The field staff, your state board of directors, the management team, and national board of the National Wild Turkey Federation appreciate all you do, and know we can count on you into the future.

*Mike Allen*  
Regional Director, Missouri

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## North Missouri Wild Turkey Research Update: What We Have Learned & Next Steps

By Reina M. Tyl — Resource Scientist for the Missouri Department of Conservation

In past Show-Me Gobbler articles, previous MDC Wild Turkey Program Leader, Jason Isabelle, provided updates about an ongoing wild turkey research project that was being conducted in north Missouri. The data collection portion of that project finished up last year, and we are using the information gathered during that study to develop models that will allow us to better monitor wild turkey abundance, harvest rates, and other demographics from year to year. In this article, I will discuss what we learned from the recent north Missouri research project and what we hope to learn from the next big wild turkey research project.

The overall goal of the recent north Missouri research project was to gather the information we needed—survival, reproduction, and harvest rates—to develop regional wild turkey population models for Missouri. These models will

provide us with an improved method of monitoring regional turkey populations and making harvest management decisions. Considering recent declines in turkey abundance in Missouri, and with the realization that fluctuations in abundance are likely in the future, these data are valuable not only in the assessment of harvest regulations, but also in our ability to provide justification for management decisions to folks, such as yourself, who are invested in the state’s turkey population.

For 5 winter trapping seasons from 2014 through 2018, our wild turkey research crew captured flocks of turkeys in Marion, Monroe, Putnam, and Schuyler Counties. The turkeys were baited into capture sites and captured using rocket nets. All captured turkeys were aged, sexed, and fitted with an aluminum leg band. Each leg band had a unique identification number and

Continued on next page.

North Missouri Wild Turkey Research Update ... continued from page 3.

contact information engraved into it, so hunters could report the harvest of banded turkeys during the hunting seasons. This band-recovery information allowed us to estimate harvest rates of gobblers, jakes, and hens during the spring and fall seasons. Essentially, we determined how many banded turkeys were harvested out of the total number of banded turkeys available for harvest each season to estimate the harvest rates.

In addition to receiving a leg band, all males and some hens were fitted with backpack-style radio transmitters. Using an antenna and a radio receiver, we kept track of these radio-marked turkeys. We used directional antennas to determine the location of each radio-marked turkey, and we listened to the radio signal from each transmitter at least 2 days each week to determine if the turkey was alive or dead. During the nesting and brood-rearing seasons, we monitored hens 3 to 5 days per week for survival. If we detected a mortality signal while checking on a turkey (this signal would activate if a transmitter did not move for 8 hours), we located the transmitter and attempted to determine cause of death by examining turkey carcasses, transmitters, transmitter harnesses, and signs at the site where transmitters were recovered. We classified turkey mortalities as predation, illegal kill, legal harvest, crippling loss, or other (disease, vehicle collisions, etc.).

We determined whether a hen was incubating a nest if the hen was found in the same location for 3 consecutive days. After determining the onset of incubation, we marked the nesting area by approaching the nest to within ~50-m of the nesting female. We took compass bearings from 4 or more locations surrounding the incubating hen and placed a small piece of flagging at each location. This way, after the radio-marked hen was no longer sitting on the nest, we could locate the nest bowl using our flags and compass bearings. After marking the nesting area, we monitored incubating hens from a distance to make sure they were still sitting on the nest each day. Once a hen was located away from the nest site for 2 consecutive days, we located the nest and determined if the hen successfully hatched the clutch of eggs or not. We determined how many poults hatched from the nest by counting the eggshell and membrane remains. If the hen had a successful nest attempt, we would locate and flush the successful hen at 28-days post-hatch to see if she still had any poults. We determined how many poults survived to be 28-days old by counting how many poults were still alive out of the number that initially hatched from the nest.

Using the information we gathered, we estimated annual survival of gobblers, jakes, and hens. We found that hen annual survival during the study was comparable to other studies of wild turkeys, including previous research conducted in north Missouri during the 1980's. Gobbler annual survival was relatively high compared to most reported estimates of gobbler annual survival, and jake annual survival was within the upper range of reported estimates from other studies. Since annual survival of wild turkeys in north Missouri seemed to be similar to or greater than estimates from other studies, including studies from several decades ago when turkey populations were increasing, this tells us that it is unlikely the population decline observed in recent years is being driven by turkey survival.

Another interesting finding from this study was that our harvest rates—during both the spring and fall seasons—were relatively low compared to

reported harvest rates from other populations of turkeys. The spring harvest rates of males, both gobblers and jakes, were among the lowest rates reported, including being lower than an estimate of gobbler harvest from the Missouri Ozarks. Over the course of the study, the main cause of death for gobblers was hunter harvest, and hunter harvest was a significant contributor to jake mortality as well. The low harvest rates observed during this study help explain why the gobbler and jake annual survival rates were on the high end of reported estimates.

During the 1980's, participation in the fall firearm turkey season was at its peak (over 45,000 permits sold statewide during the 1986-1989 seasons) and about 4% of the hen population was harvested each fall. During the fall hunting seasons captured by this study, only about 1% of hens were harvested each fall. This lower hen harvest rate is not surprising considering fewer than 15,000 fall firearms permits were sold statewide each year of the study.

One of the most eye-opening discoveries from this study came from the reproductive rate estimates observed during the springs and summers of 2014 through 2018. There are multiple ways we measure how well a turkey population is reproducing. We look at how many hens attempt to nest each year (nesting rate), how many of those nests successfully hatch (nest success), and how well the poults survive (poult survival). We also consider how many hens try to nest again if their first nest fails (renesting rate), how many eggs hens lay in each nest (clutch size), and how many of those eggs hatch (hatching rate or hatchability).

What we found, was that several of those reproductive rates—nesting rate, nest success, and poult survival—were lower than estimates of those same rates in north Missouri during the 1980's. This means that, in general, fewer hens were attempting to nest, fewer of those nests were successfully hatching, and fewer poults were surviving to be 28-days old than in the 1980s. Perhaps the most shocking result was how poor poult survival was during some years of the study. The number of poults that survived to be one-month old during 2016 and 2017 were especially low, and this result corresponds with the poor poult-to-hen ratios observed during the statewide wild turkey brood survey during those same years. Even in years where the weather seemed favorable for a good hatch, poult survival remained low. We are still uncertain about exactly what factors are having the greatest impact on turkey production in recent years.

That's where the next big wild turkey research project in Missouri comes into play. A lot has changed over the past few decades. We have seen increasing populations of some wild turkey nest and poult predator species. There has been broad-scale losses of nesting and brood-rearing habitat in north Missouri as grasslands have been put into agricultural production. In the more forested areas of the state, forest maturation due to less frequent logging has prevented the growth of early successional vegetation which provides food and cover for turkeys. We are seeing an increase in extreme weather events during the spring and summer, including more frequent flooding events. Additionally, there is evidence that insect abundance—the main source of food for young poults—is in decline. We are starting a new research project with the goal of determining how these different factors are affecting wild turkey reproduction and what we can do to mitigate the negative effects on production. We are excited to begin work on this new project, and I look forward to providing you all with updates on our progress over the next several years.

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# The George C. Clark Missouri State Chapter Member Harvest Page

Share your outdoor experiences with your NWTF peers, PLEASE submit them to John Burk at [jb Burk@nwtf.net](mailto:jb Burk@nwtf.net) with a brief photo description and they will be considered for the harvest page section of your Show Me Gobbler newsletter.



Dylan Smith showing off his four beard tome, shot in Henry County with a shotgun.



Alisa Uptain, and her coach, Tim Hendershott, with a mature 8 pt shot at 100 yds after killing a nearby tree. She is a member of Locust Creek Longbeards.



Lisa Beumer of Walt Beumer Memorial Chapter with her Oklahoma buck.



Henry Collop of the Parkville Gobblers with a 10 pt buck during youth season. Special thanks to RD Mike Allen for help on the tracking job.



12 year old Cole Erwin harvested a buck with his guide Mike Allen (NWTF Regional Director) during the 2020 firearms season.



Kirk Hendershott, with a 6.5 yr old 10pt taken by spot-n-stalk, he is a member of Locust Creek Longbeards.



Brian Duckett, with his 9 pointer harvested in Wayne County on opening morning.



Troy Odell Springtown Wattlebacks with a fine 2020 rifle buck.



Former NWTF Regional Director, Timmy Besancenez, and his youngest son, Rylee Besancenez, with a decent opening day double.



# Feral Hog Control on Missouri's Private Lands!

By Justin Ferguson, NWTF Project Forester

The State of Missouri has a rich history of conservation success stories. During the 1800's and early 1900's, game species populations were depleted. While many of the species that we hold dear were in danger of extirpation, Missourians rose to the challenge. The restoration of wild turkey and whitetail deer are regarded as huge accomplishments. At the same time, Missourians created a conservation-funding model envied by many nationwide. Over time, new conservation challenges have arisen. Today non-native, invasive species are one of the greatest conservation challenges that the State of Missouri has seen since the restoration of wildlife populations. While, invasive plant species are certainly a huge problem, invasive animal species are also problematic. Of particular importance in Missouri is feral hogs.

Feral hogs are not a new problem in Missouri, but their abundance has certainly increased over the past few decades. Feral hogs present a slew of conservation and economic threats in our state. They compete directly with native species for food and space. Hogs prove to be very effective at consuming acorns. In years of poor acorn production (like this year), this is especially problematic as deer and turkey rely on acorns to get them through the wintertime when other food sources are dormant or unavailable. Due to their excellent sense of smell, hogs are efficient predators of turkey nests. In addition to utilizing food resources, hogs also destroy habitat by disturbing soil through rooting and wallowing activity. Rooting and wallowing degrades quality vegetation communities and contributes to soil loss from erosion. Rooting in pastures can lead to significant economic loss to farmers. The damage caused by feral hogs is exacerbated by the prolific breeding nature of their species. A sow can easily produce a dozen offspring per year.

As a Project Forester with NWTF, I am tasked with providing technical forestry assistance to private landowners in the St. Francois Knobs region of the Ozarks. I assist quite a few landowners in Iron, Madison and Reynolds counties, which are all badly hit with the feral hog problem. During my day-to-day activities in these counties, I frequently come across hog sign or actually view sounders of hogs. While frustrating, I have come to realize that hope is not lost in control of hogs. The hog eradication partnership between Missouri Department of Conservation, USDA APHIS, and the US Forest Service is certainly a step in the right direction on a region-wide level. On a local level, landowners do have the ability to reduce hog abundance and manage the damage they cause.

Recently, while visiting a property in Iron County I came across abundant hog damage and ultimately ran into a sounder of hogs numbering well over two



Left unchecked, wild hogs will populate aggressively, and cause problems for landowners.



Well placed large traps are very effective in lowering hog populations.

dozen. This landowner does not have the ability to handle the hog problem his property is facing on his own. I put the landowner in touch with the local Conservation Agent to obtain assistance in controlling hogs on the property. The Conservation Agent is coordinating with a hog trapper to remove the sounder from the property. This is a good example of the assistance available to private landowners by MDC or other agencies and is particularly beneficial for absentee landowners.

If a landowner has hogs using their property and is interested in trapping hogs, opportunity exists to handle the problem on their own. I have worked with a landowner in Reynolds County that has learned to trap and has successfully removed well over 600 pigs from his farm over the past 10 years. I know of several other landowners in surrounding counties that have removed hogs numbering in the hundreds. A good first step for an interested landowner would be contacting a full time hog trapper or their local Private Lands Conservationist to get advice on how to bait hogs to a trap site and to construct a sturdy trap to capture multiple hogs

at one time. There is also a wealth of knowledge available on the internet, from schematics for trap designs to Facebook groups dedicated to hog trapping. Be prepared to encounter a learning curve, as trapping hogs is often not an easy task. With some hard work and attention to detail, a landowner can contribute to the overall effort of hog eradication and gain a sense of satisfaction along the way.

Feral hogs in Missouri are proving to be a great challenge for conservationists but there is hope. Private landowners should not despair if they encounter hog sign or view pigs on their property as they have several opportunities to control local hog numbers and mitigate damage. Individual landowner efforts contribute to the bigger picture of region-wide hog eradication.

To report feral hogs to MDC or to speak with a trapper, call 1-573-522-4115 extension 3296.

<https://mdc.mo.gov/wildlife/nuisance-problem-species/invasive-species/feral-hogs-missouri>



Tim Hendershott, and his guide (son, Kirk Hendershott) with an old 8pt taken while he was trailing a hot doe. Tim is a former State Board member and a member of Locust Creek Longbeards.



USFWS Private Lands Biologist, Chris Woodson, with his 2020 rifle buck



National Forestry Initiative Forester, Tyler Cooper, with his 2020 rifle buck.



A big congratulations to Lindsay Balcer, daughter of Regional Director, Larry Neal.



Ben Edwards of Walt Beumer Memorial Chapter with his Illinois buck.



Paul Lowry of the Platte County Longspurs.



Rhett Pollard is nephew of State Board member Jason Pollard.



Kale Pollard is the son of State Board member Jason Pollard



Michelle Schwartz is the wife of CFM ED Tyler with a fine bow buck.

# Managing the Turkey Decline

By John Burk

Missouri residents, for decades, have enjoyed some of the best deer and turkey hunting to be found anywhere on earth. This is especially true if you hunt north of the river where our rich soils are blanketed by a mosaic of oak/hickory upland forests, legume over-seeded pastures, row crop, CRP ground in native warm season grasses, and capillaried by riparian habitats all combining to enable some of the highest carrying capacities you'll find anywhere. Talk to anyone that hunted turkeys in north Missouri in the late 1990's and early 2000's and they will tell you stories of April spring woods where the gobbling gobblers were too numerous to even count and winter flocks numbered in the hundreds. Talk to anyone that has hunted turkeys in the last 5 years and you'll hear mostly complaining that the gobbling gobblers are definitely countable and in some cases that count is zero. The turkey decline is real, significant, not unique to Missouri, and everyone would like to hear the spring woods filled with gobbling again. The reason for the decline is that our poults are not surviving at the same rate they were during those hay days in the early 2000's. Adult mortality has not changed, nesting and even hatching rates are also within the range of what has historically been considered normal. However, once hatched, the number of poults that we add to the fall population is significantly lower than what has been previously measured. The recently concluded 5 year study in northeast Missouri documented some of the lowest poult survival rates ever recorded in the Midwest...why? Although there are multiple reasons for this change, it is hard to ignore the fact that at the same time our turkey numbers have declined, populations of animals that eat eggs and poults have increased significantly. Although this relationship between higher populations of predators and lower populations of prey between now and the early 2000's seems pretty linear this is not a problem that is as easily solved as many want to believe.

Some are asking for the predator season to be extended and others think a bounty would be the right way to go. While many do not value furbearers and consider them a nuisance to be rid of, they are native species that belong on our landscape as much as the turkeys do. They just aren't being harvested anymore so there is nothing other than natural predation, disease, and vehicles managing their numbers. Regulations that govern the harvest of furbearers include unrestricted harvest within the open season (11/15/20-1/31/21). That means you can take as many as you are able to capture or call up and two-and-a-half months is plenty of time to get it done if that is what you want to do. The problem with the reduced harvest is not lack of time its lack of motivation. The fur market has been weak since the initial crash in the 1980's and it has been essentially nonexistent for the last 4 or 5 years with no anticipated recovery any time soon. Raw hides currently have essentially no value so no one is participating anymore. I love the unique challenge that the sport of fur trapping and predator hunting offers me and I still participate in both selling finished hides and other products in niche markets. However, this is a lot of extra work and most need the economic incentive that comes with a strong raw fur market because trapping and fur hunting is a lot of work and requires expensive specialized equipment and knowledge to be successful. Bounties would also not work. The bounty would have to be high enough to create a significant incentive and that would be cost prohibitive (in the millions).

Trapping will certainly hone your skills as a woodsman because being successful at it requires a more detailed understanding of animal behavior and it could even be considered a form of redneck brain exercise. If you put out several dozen sets, remembering how many you set, where they all are, and finding them in the dark of the predawn morning hours can be challenging. Trapping also gives me a different perspective and appreciation for the same piece of ground than when I look at it through my turkey or deer hunter eyes. Analyzing the landscape, assessing topographical features, reading tracks and sign in an effort to select a particular trap site and then properly setting and bedding the trap is something I have always enjoyed. The work is a little physical and once the finishing touches have been put on the last trap on the line the anticipation of what that line will produce the next morning has always

been a bit like a kid awaiting Christmas morning to dawn so they can find out what is under the tree to me. November through the end of January has always been a pretty special time for me and there is not much else going on outdoors-wise during the last month of the season so trapping is a great way to spend time outdoors at that time of year. Although I love to trap, and am pretty good at it, I do it because I enjoy the sport and not to "do my part" to help out the turkeys, rabbits, and quail. Predator control can only be achieved at the landscape level and that can only effectively and affordably be accomplished when everyone is out there applying harvest pressure across the board.

If you want to do something that WILL make a difference for the turkeys, another physical outdoor activity that is best done at this time of year is active forest management. Most of our forested land in Missouri is overstocked and closed canopied. There are roughly twice as many trees in our average Missouri woods than there should be to maximize the health and growth rate of each tree. By felling or girdling excess trees, the ones that remain will grow larger crowns that produce more acorns as well as put on height and diameter much faster than when it is competing with other trees for water and soil nutrients. For detailed information on how to effectively implement active forest management on your property it is best to contact a resource professional. The NWTf has 3 Project Foresters servicing different areas of the state that provide technical assistance to private landowners. Tyler Cooper services most of northwest Missouri ([tcooper@nwtf.net](mailto:tcooper@nwtf.net)), Justin Ferguson services St. François and surrounding counties ([jferguson@nwtf.net](mailto:jferguson@nwtf.net)), and Will Rechkemmer services Texas and surrounding counties ([wrechkemmer@nwtf.net](mailto:wrechkemmer@nwtf.net)). If you are interested in receiving technical assistance in an area they do not cover you can also go to <https://mdc.mo.gov/contact-engage> for contact information on your MDC resource professional that serves your county. Although I recommend seeking professional advise directly from a resource professional I will offer the following general guidelines. Selecting which trees you should remove is usually determined by species, size, and shape. You want to get rid of trees that don't have much economic or wildlife value (maples, elms, ironwood, some hickories). Another determination would be to keep a diversity of species that are valuable. With oaks, having a mix of white oak and red oak species is better than favoring all whites or all reds. White oak acorns take one year to develop and red oaks take two. White oaks flower 2 weeks ahead of reds and drop their bounty pretty much all at once early in the fall while reds sprinkle throughout the fall and winter. From a wildlife perspective, the benefit to managing for this diversity is somewhat of an insurance policy against a total mast failure. Both deer and turkey rely heavily upon acorns during the fall and winter so wherever there are acorns that is where the deer and turkey will be. Great mast crops are also linked to deer and turkey productivity the following spring. The next determination would be removing trees that are ill formed or suppressed. Another simple rule of thumb that can help you gauge how much to cut is to take the diameter at breast height (DBH) measurement of the tree you are keeping, multiply that by two, convert that to feet, and remove everything else in that circle. In other words, if you have a 15 inch tree, remove everything within 30 feet of that tree. The next determination would be how to manage the volume of trees to be removed. In many cases, the recommended thinning rate would be half the trees in your woods. Therefore, if you dropped them all you would have a treatment area that would look like tornado damage and, from a turkey management perspective, it would be too thick. I usually recommend dropping everything 8 inches or less and ringing everything bigger. Ringing is essentially, cutting completely through the cambium or bark of the tree all the way around it in two places about 3 or 4 inches apart. When the cambium is completely breached the flow of water and nutrients to the tree is cut off and the tree dies. The desired canopy gap still exists without creating the jumbled mess on the forest floor and the standing dead tree will provide foraging sites and probably also future denning sites as it decays over time. The canopy gaps created by these thinnings allow sunlight to reach the forest floor. The grasses and broadleaf plants that respond to this daylighting create excellent nesting and brood rearing habitat for turkeys and numerous other species that prefer this kind of vegetative structure. To maintain this structure you will eventually have to also incorporate the use of prescribed fire or the grass and broadleaf plants will be replaced by tree seedlings. A portion of this type of vegetative



structure can also be beneficial but when the entire stand is allowed to turn into a hardwood thicket it is no longer usable space for wild turkeys.

Trapping and predator hunting is a challenging and rewarding pastime that I encourage everyone to try but it does not move the needle much at the scale it is currently being done when it comes to increasing turkey populations. If you want more turkeys on your place you get a lot more bang for your buck by focusing on providing high quality nesting and brood rearing habitat. Predator control is probably the most expensive thing that you can effectively do and even then, it rarely mitigates for marginal habitat quality. It doesn't take many predators to impact turkey populations when nesting and brood rearing habitat is low quality or sparse. However, when your nesting and brood rearing cover is of high quality and abundant, more of your poults will survive and your

population WILL increase. If you think about it, it makes sense. When you have great nesting and brood rearing habitat you also actually have higher predator densities because good habitat is good for everything and prey populations determine predator populations, not the other way around.

November through April is a great time to be an outdoors person. Deer seasons are in full swing on the front end and from mid-November until the end of January you can learn a new skill that I have found adds significantly to the quality of my outdoor year. Perfecting your "honey hole" can be accomplished from January through mid-April and the end of that window will provide you with the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of your labor.



Brody Carr, Parkville Gobblers JAKES member, with his youth season harvest.



Brandon Bennett is the son of State Chapter Chairman, R.L. Bennett, with his first elk.



Jacob Kaiser of Platte Purchase with an Oklahoma Rio.



Committee member, Don Masek, of the Kingdom of Callaway Limbangers with an enormous 8 pointer this season.



Hannah Masek is the Daughter-in-law of Don Masek with her buck taken on the same farm, both on opening day of the 2020 rifle season.



JAKES member, Hayden Jeffers, of Honey Creek Strutters, with his first bird taken in 2020

# Missouri's Cost Share Assistance Programs

By Tyler Cooper, NFI Forester

Among the NWTF's goals is providing more habitat for the wild turkey and other wildlife, while at the same time expanding hunting opportunities for hunters both beginning and advanced. This article is about how making new or improving habitat is possible at a small (landowner) scale. The NWTF is partners with the Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS), Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), The United States Forest Service (USFS) and many other agencies and organizations. Together with our partners we have wonderful programs that are designed to assist you (the landowner or operator) with planning and implementing good practices for the land, water, and wildlife.



NRCS landowner field day.

The NRCS offers multiple programs such as Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Some of these programs are made possible by the Farm Bill legislation. I want to go through each program briefly so you (the landowner) can see if any of these programs are right for you. CRP has been around a long time, but what many people don't know is that there are many different practices with different funding options that fall under the CRP umbrella. There is CRP for tree plantings for Riparian Buffers, re-establishment of warm season grass fields, re-establishment of native prairie plantings, programs specific to quail and re-introduction of their native habitat, restoration of native wetlands, and many more. CRP is a 10 or 15 year contract that requires the landowner to meet the goals of the chosen program (i.e. keep invasives out, plant native species, not turning the land back into crop...) and, in return, they receive an annual payment per acre, per year, for the life of the contract.

Next on the list is EQIP. EQIP is one of the most diverse and customizable for landowners. The program is competitive and the landowner must fill out an application form with their local NRCS office. The program contract can be anywhere from a year to 3 years and has a vast range of practices. For this particular article we will stick to wildlife but let it be known they have practices for farm ground, pastureland, hay land, forestland, prairie, warm season grasses, feed lots, and the list goes on... EQIP is simple, once you have an application you pick your practice (this example: Edge Feathering), you implement your practice on the designated area that you and the planner agree upon and a certified planner or technician comes and certifies the

work. Once this is all complete the payment is made to the landowner for their work. Payment rates differ on all practices but are designed to cover from 60-75% of the cost.

CSP is last but not least and very competitive. This program is a 5 year contract that gives an annual payment basis on the entire farm or farms enrolled. The payments are based on the number of Resource Concerns met at the time of application. Once your application is approved you must complete 2 practices or enhancements within the 5 year contract. These are also cost share based and the years you get them completed you get a payment for the practice on top of your annual payment. There are a lot of practice and enhancement options just like EQIP but in this program if you agree to the contract you cannot change any of the land uses in that 5 years and if you fail to complete the practices the money must be returned. So there are more stipulations with CSP but it also has the perks of an EQIP contract with annual payments attached!

MDC has cost share assistance available as well. Their landowner assistance program (LAP) is on a 1st come 1st serve basis and has limited funds. The program is similar to EQIP in the fact that once the practice is finished the payment is made. The Funds are at a state level and run out quickly, but the program is great as it is easy to apply for and implement. For information on any of these programs please reach out to your local NRCS office or MDC office to talk to a planner or Private Lands Conservationist about these programs and which best suits your needs. Our NWTF Foresters in the state can also be of assistance but have a more limited range.



MDC PLC meeting with landowner.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/mo/home/>

<https://mdc.mo.gov/regional-contacts>

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# The National Wild Turkey Federation's Dr. James Earl Kennamer Scholarship Program

Sponsored by Mossy Oak

The NWTF is now accepting scholarship applications that will only be accepted online. To apply online visit <https://your.nwtf.org/scholarships/>

Applications will be accepted November 15, 2020- March 1, 2021.

## Purpose:

The purpose of the NWTF Dr. James Earl Kennamer Academic Scholarship Program is to recognize and reward an NWTF member, who is currently a senior in high school, for their outstanding academic achievement, community involvement and leadership roles. The National Scholarship Winner will receive a \$10,000 scholarship sponsored by Mossy Oak.

## Eligibility:

1. Students should be graduating seniors with a 3.0 on 4.0 scale or equivalent grade point average. (If transcript indicates a scale other than 4.0, student should have a minimum of 3.75 on a 5.0 scale, 4.5/6.0 scale, 5.25/7.0 scale, 6.0/8.0 scale, 6.75/9.0 scale or a 7.5/10.0 scale). Students must upload copies of transcripts for review. Finalist GPA and transcripts will be verified.

2. Students must be pursuing a degree at an accredited institution of higher education (i.e. Junior College, Community College, Technical College, College or University).

3. Students must actively participate in hunting, support the conservation of the wild turkey and the preservation of our hunting heritage. A copy of current hunting license is required.

4. Students must hold a current NWTF membership and upload a copy of their membership card. If you are not a current member of NWTF, visit [www.nwtf.org](http://www.nwtf.org) or call (800) THE-NWTF to join. Include a copy of your online receipt or ask our membership department for an ID number to include with your application for membership verification purposes.

5. Students must be involved in school extra-curricular activities (i.e. FFA, Ecology Club, Science Club, Beta Club, Student Council, etc.).

6. Students must demonstrate leadership among his or her peers.

7. Students must demonstrate community leadership and/or involvement (i.e. 4-H, civic group or club, scouting, volunteer work).

8. Students must upload an essay (300 word limit) exhibiting dedication to conservation and preserving our hunting heritage. Essay must include:

- why you will be a good investment if you are awarded this conservation scholarship

- any experiences and background that demonstrate your dedication to conservation and the preservation of our hunting heritage

- why hunting is important to you and/or your family

9. Students must upload two letters of recommendation, one of which must be from a NWTF leader (another from teachers, counselors, community or clergy (do not include relatives))

10. Employees and national board members of the NWTF and their family members are not eligible to participate in the program.

## Selection Process:

1. Students must apply on the official online NWTF scholarship application form <https://your.nwtf.org/scholarships/> by March 1, 2021. Incomplete submissions will not be considered, students must have ALL documents available for upload before beginning the application process. No paper applications will be accepted.

2. The national scholarship committee will select the National winner by April 1, 2021.

3. Winners may not be notified until their high school awards banquet.

4. The national winner will be asked to attend the NWTF National Convention the following year to be recognized.

## Disbursement of Funds:

Students may use their scholarship at any accredited institution of higher education (i.e. Junior College, Community College, Technical College, College or University). The money must be used for tuition, books, fees and housing. This is a one-time award.

If you have additional questions about our national scholarship program please contact: [tcarroll@nwtf.net](mailto:tcarroll@nwtf.net)

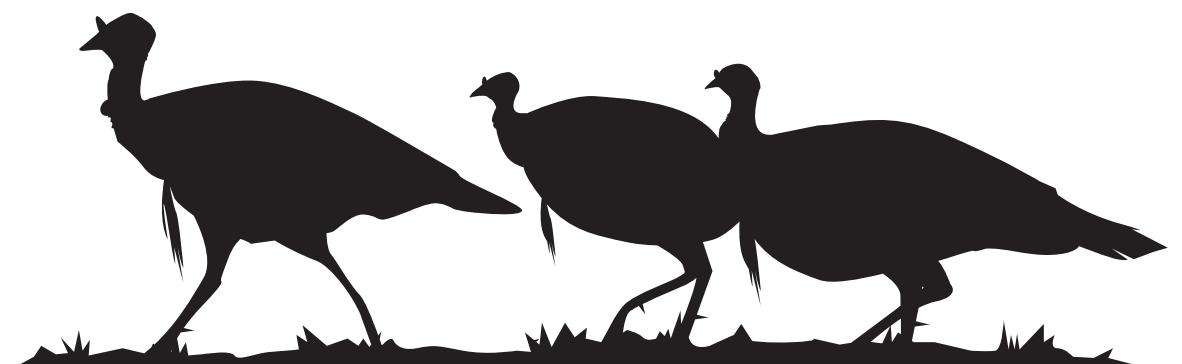
If you have questions about the local scholarship program contact a local staff member



The 2020 State scholarship winner John Gerhold received his local chapter \$300 check from MC.



Grayden Gaines and his state \$2,000 check from State Chapter President Dan Zerr at the Kirksville Ridgerunners Annual Banquet.



# Longbeards refurbish targets at archery park

By Leader Publications

The city of Arnold received a helping hand to keep targets at the Jim Edwards Archery Park in good shape.

On September 12, seven members of the St. Louis Longbeards, a local chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, along with members of the South County Archers, replaced parts of the eight targets at the park, said Pat Aubuchon, supervisor for the Arnold Parks and Recreation Department.

The park, which opened in June 2018, is on Telegraph road located by the Meramec River and Flamm City Boat Ramp.

Mitch Norris headed the effort (to repair the targets), which they did for free. They didn't have to completely build new targets, some of the pieces of the existing targets were able to be reused.

Mitch Norris said it was the second time members of the two groups worked together on the targets.

The targets needed an overhaul because they were getting in bad shape. If you shot at the target, the arrow could go all the way through and go out in the weeds. They have been used a lot. We wanted to get it up to code and make it safe for everybody to use it.

Mitch and team cut new pieces, reassembled the target's, and painted them. This saved the city employee's roughly 20 hours by helping and completing this work.

The city of Arnold says the archery park has attracted plenty of archers and the COVID-19 has not stopped people from using the park. Archers can shoot and still maintain the 6 feet of space recommended to limit the spread of the virus.

We believe that at least 1,500 people go in there a month to use the facility, Norris said.

The park typically sees an increase in archers during September as many hunters prepare for archery season.





President of the David Blanton Memorial Chapter, Darren Jones, and a old school archery buck. Way to go Darren!



Eldo Meyer of the 4 Rivers Chapter with his 2020 rifle buck.



Logan Burk, son of DB John Burk, with a dandy public land bow buck.

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**Things to know about our seed program:**

The year-old or older seed that makes our program possible has a germination rate of greater than 60% (most is greater than 80%) or we wouldn't offer it.

This is a national program so how much seed we get is dependent upon national supply and demand. Therefore, placing an order only guarantees that you will get the seed IF it becomes available.

We do not control when the seed gets here but it has always been well within the planting window.

The delivery locations will be Cape Girardeau, Kirksville, St. Joseph, and St. Peters.

Seed location coordinators will contact everyone on the list associated with their site once the seed arrives.

All distribution sites will likely have seed days. The dates and times available for seed pickup will be determined by the coordinators of those sites once the seed arrives. You will be notified of these dates by the coordinators of those sites.

The seed we can most likely count on will be Roundup Ready corn, Roundup Ready soybeans, and milo. Clearfield sunflowers may or may not be available but we have ordered some for Missouri if they do become available. Same rules apply, you **MUST** be a member to purchase the seed, it **CANNOT** be harvested, and the limit on corn is 5 bags per member.

If you are interested in ordering some seed, please fill out the information below and return it to John Burk, 7152 Tomahawk Lane, Steedman MO 65077 or e-mail me the same information to [jburk@nwtf.net](mailto:jburk@nwtf.net).