

Picture perfect turkey struts his stuff

By Carolyn Plotts

The Norton Telegram
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Wild turkeys were reintroduced into Kansas in the 1960s, by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, and the agency says the program has been a great success.

The department reports that huntable populations of turkeys exist in nearly every county. In western Kansas, the dominate species is the Rio Grande turkey, which originated in central Texas and has spread north.

Turkey hunter Ryan Manning, Norton, said another breed filtering down from Nebraska is the Merriams.

This has been a good year for turkeys in Kansas, state game officials say. Wildlife staff report increased turkey sightings in many areas as birds gather for winter roosting. All of Kansas except Unit 4 (west central and southwestern Kansas) allows fall hunting.

"I know it's going to be a good hunting season," says Deanna Sumner of northwest Norton County. "I've seen bunches of turkey going right across our back yard every morning."

Motorists have spotted flocks roaming the fringes of many towns.

Manning said October offers some



THIS tom turkey fanned his tail feathers in full strut.

— Photo by Bill Bussen

of the best turkey hunting. The combination of good turkey populations, uncrowded hunting, and mild fall weather make October an excellent time to hunt turkey. He said fall hunting is more challenging because turkey breeding season is in the spring.

He said in the fall, the birds are more wary and they tend to group up.

"They can see everything," he said. "Their vision is so sharp. If you are trying to move in on a group, you could have a hundred pairs of eyes on you."

Often, he said, a hunter can stalk the birds or break up a group, then hide and call them back. Public wildlife areas and Walk-In Hunting Area lands often hold large numbers of turkeys in October before hunting pressure moves them to private land.

REQUIREMENTS

All hunters must have in their possession a valid permit to hunt turkey and a Kansas hunting license.

There are other rules for military personnel, full-time students and non-residents. Check the Department of Wildlife and Parks website at www.kdwp.state.ks.us for details.

Only one application per person may be submitted for a turkey license. Hunters may hunt only within the management unit printed on their permits.

FALL HUNTING SEASON

Season: Oct. 1 through Nov. 27; Dec. 10 through Dec. 31; and Jan. 7 through Jan. 31.

Fall Turkey Permits in Units 1 (which covers most of northwest Kansas), 2 and 3 and game tags for Unit 2 may be purchased over the counter at any license vendor from July 1 through Jan. 30.

No permits are authorized in Unit 4, which includes parts of Sherman and

Thomas counties.

Shooting Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

Legal Equipment: Shotguns 20 gauge or larger using shot sizes 2-9; long, recurve or compound bows.

Limit: Each hunter may obtain one turkey permit and three turkey game tags. Residents and nonresidents who purchase a turkey permit may also purchase as many as three turkey game tags valid in Unit 2 only. Fall turkey permits and game tags are valid for both male and female turkeys.

HUNTER EDUCATION, AGE

Anyone born on or after July 1, 1957, must be certified by an approved course in hunter education before they can hunt in Kansas. The one exception is anyone 15 and younger may hunt without hunter education certification, provided that they are under the direct supervision of an adult, 18 years old or older (21 for the youth turkey season).

Hunters must carry a certificate verifying course completion while hunting until age 27.

Youths 12 and older may hunt by themselves provided they possess a valid hunter education certification and a valid turkey permit.

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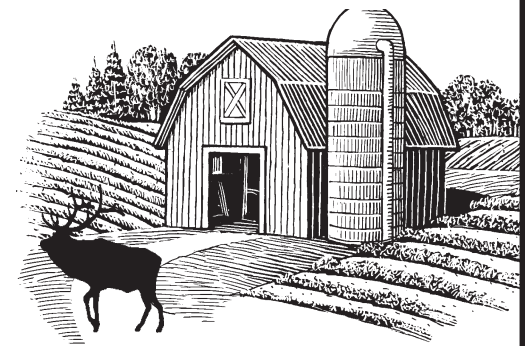
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