

# QUWF



Quail & Upland Wildlife Federation

Making a Difference for Wildlife and Clean Streams, One Acre, One Stream, at a Time

## THE HABITAT GUIDE

Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation

### Notes from the Dashboard: The landscape changing, not in a good way

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*Successful hunters will have much less frustration confirming their harvest and getting back to the celebration this turkey season, thanks to a new game checking option the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is offering through its website, **Page 14***

*The Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Wildlife Health Laboratory tested 5,276 samples for chronic wasting disease, and 726 came back positive — 13.7% statewide — and saw CWD prevalence for mule deer increase throughout the state, **Page 16***

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**By Craig Alderman** — When we formed QUWF, our focus was and still is on all private landowners, including veterans — who own 95 percent of the wildlife habitat in the U.S. — and protecting their privacy.

Though our members include many active hunters, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts, we stay centered on the landowners. Why? Because without them, *there is no wildlife, period. State and federal lands*

*are not the main source of outdoor use overall.*

With that, we knew the support of our mission to work with farmers, ranchers and hobby landowners to help provide answers, solutions, directions and plans, did not meet the “sponsor sales criteria” of consumer resource users of the land, hunters and anglers. The true numbers of actual landowners is very small compared to those who want to hunt and fish on those lands.

We have landowners that generationally have owned 250,000 acres. Even here in Missouri we have many with over 10,000 acres. Sponsors want increasing sales. Farmers, ranchers and hobby farmers are the most frugal, buying what they need to survive, not what the latest hunting invention is, new caliber or clothing.

***Notable to our cause are several American companies who get it. RUGER understands the message and has since our beginnings. They don't play games and understand the need for landowners as well as the hunters for the survival of all wildlife preserving the hunting heritage.***

***Truax Drills is another great American company that has worked with us to supply and train landowners on planting techniques and equipment.***

***Rocky Boots works to support our membership and habitat work with footwear we need all the time. All of them know the big sales will not come from QUWF, but from the users of the resources we work so hard to protect and enhance.***

***What we do provide, and they sincerely appreciate, is the land, through an with the landowners, to ensure a future with wildlife, clean streams and youth integration.***

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**Continued from Page 1 — *However, all of this is not the main issue. Loss of land is.***

In Missouri last year, ranked number 2 in cow/calf beef production in the U.S., we lost 14,980 farms in 2024. That represents 2.1 million acres gone from agriculture and wildlife. In 2022 to 2023, 12,000 additional farms were lost in Missouri. We have to stop this trend or it will not be just wildlife, it will literally be the food chain. It is a silent but deadly killer of all wildlife and the food chain.

**The latest survey by the USDA reflects in the next five to eight years, 45 percent of all farms and ranches will change hands, meaning they will not be farms.** Our farmers and ranchers are very senior in age. Commercial farms cannot gobble up enough land to fill the food needs and they sure do not care about wildlife or habitat, it is only about production profit.

The cost of farmland is unreachable for most now, and for new potential young farmers starting out, it is impossible to finance let alone add equipment to the tab. The family farm of 80 to 100 acres, historically our base, is impossible today. Today they need many of those size fields to make a profit.

Example, a family farm of 155 acres here locally was acquired for hundreds an acre in the 1980s, went up this weekend for \$950,000, roughly about \$6,500 an acre of what I classify as poor farm land. It has a small house built in the 1950s that itself would take \$100,000 or more to bring it back to livable condition. One 80-acre section is overtaken with honey locust from lack of care. The owner, a very senior lady, “hopes someone from California will buy it.” She has no family left that want to farm.

Families of farmers and ranchers, the sons and daughters, are reluctant to enter a job that pays little, requires immense personal time 24/7 and constant investment, refinancing and whose profits are controlled by middlemen they cannot influence. They and their families are required to be mechanics, welders, plumbers, metal and wood workers, chemical and fertilizer experts, assistant veterinarians, accountants, computer and drone operators, firefighters and weathermen.

Privacy with government programs is non-existent. Fuel, fertilizer, supplies and equipment all go up in cost, they are forced to absorb it. They have witnessed the pain of seeing parents and grandparents try to survive in an occupation they do love. A Farm Bill overrun with bureaucracy, waste and fraud does not give real relief just more “coaching with paperwork” for what the government wants done. So, their solution is to sell off the land for developers who again, could care less about wildlife or the resource and be done with it. Then finally, there is the weather, a challenge for all, never predictable, very few times is it right for agriculture (the right rain and the right time).

Hunters and outdoor resource users need to get involved not in just wanting to use the land but preserve it. More companies need to understand the investment is not just in selling widgets but preserving the lands and **PEOPLE** who work the land, for the future. No land, no critters, no food.

I had the privilege to work with August Busch and his conservation team, at the time CEO of Budweiser, on his conservation passions of ducks and quail. He often stated, “We cannot forget the individual who makes up our customer base, we help them in small ways, through small organizations working to preserve our conservation heritage. When they get together it is called the NFL Super Bowl or NASCAR, and we have the product ready there as well and they support us.” InBev, the current owner, has not a clue. Not knowing the true customer destroyed a brand’s market position, i.e. Bud Light. If we allow that with farmers and ranchers’ land, there is no coming back or changing products.

*Craig Alderman is the Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation executive director.*

**QUWF has four landowner coops: The Grouse Coop and the Niangua Coop in Missouri, and the Catskill Mountains Wildlife and Oregon Joint Wildlife coops.**

**Interested in forming a coop?**

**Email Craig Alderman at [admin@quwf.net](mailto:admin@quwf.net).**

## IN Gov. Braun to dedicate new wildlife area

**WHAT:** A dedication event to celebrate the official opening of Busseron Creek Fish & Wildlife Area (FWA), which is 3,950 acres of permanently protected land in Sullivan County comprising forests, woodlands, marshes, swamps, lakes, and grasslands. This is Indiana DNR's largest conservation project in 20 years.

**WHEN:** Wednesday, April 16, at 4:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Busseron Creek Fish & Wildlife Area

*Parking will be available along County Road 425 E [here](#) (39.1011117, -87.3341156). See the map below. A short walk will lead you to the dedication site on the property. Please arrive at the parking location by 4:20 p.m. to allow time to walk to the site. The dedication will be held outside on moderately uneven terrain.*

**Where to park:** Clicking on map will take you to Google maps.

Coordinates for parking area are 39.1011117, -87.3341156.

**WHO:**

- Governor Mike Braun
- Alan Morrison, DNR Director
- Christian Freitag, Executive Director, Conservation Law Center
- Mark Dobbs, NSA Crane Community Planning Liaison Officer
- Commander Nathan Ahrens, Naval Surface Warfare Center – Crane Division

**BACKGROUND:** This permanently conserved land, once part of the former Minnehaha FWA, was protected through a collaboration with the Conservation Law Center, leader of the Southern Indiana Sentinel Landscape; The Conservation Fund; National Fish and Wildlife Foundation through Walmart's Acres for America Program; The Nature Conservancy; and The U.S. Navy, the Naval Surface Warfare Center, Crane Division, and Naval Support Activity Crane.



## Purchase Ohio Wildlife Legacy stamp today

Conservationists can join thousands of wildlife supporters by purchasing the 2025 Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife. This year's legacy stamp is on sale now and features a hummingbird clearwing moth, a popular summer visitor to Ohio's backyard gardens.

Each year, the legacy stamp showcases a photograph of Ohio's native wildlife species, selected through an annual contest. The hummingbird clearwing moth photo featured on this year's stamp was taken by Roger Friedman of Westlake.

A hummingbird clearwing moth (*Hemaris thysbe*) is an important pollinator of native Ohio plants. This moth can be seen from April to September in fields, gardens, and meadows and it frequently visits bee balm flowers. Named for its resemblance to ruby-throated hummingbirds, this clear-winged pollinator is in the sphinx moth family.

For \$15, [Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp](#) purchasers receive a collectible stamp, sticker, and commemorative card. Stamp holders can also receive a discount on stays at nine of Ohio's state park lodges.

All of the stamp's proceeds go to wildlife conservation, with most benefitting species of greatest conservation need through the Wildlife Diversity Fund. The Division of Wildlife donates \$1 from every stamp sold to the Southern Wings program, which protects the overwintering habitats of Neotropical migratory birds that pass through Ohio.



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Ask Alexa to play 101.3 Real Country or AM 560 in the Morning, or go online and download the **free app**.

**Continued from Page 3** — The remaining Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp proceeds go to the state's Wildlife Diversity Fund. This fund supports habitat restoration, wildlife research projects, educational materials, and efforts to conserve endangered and threatened species. The fund ensures that all wildlife species, from the hummingbird clearwing moth to the barn owl, have the habitat, resources, and protection necessary to succeed in Ohio's varied ecosystems.

**Southern Wings** is an initiative of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), an organization which gives a collective voice to state, provincial, and territorial fish and wildlife agencies in North America. Through Southern Wings, AFWA is helping migratory birds across their annual lifecycle, supporting conservation at breeding, migration, and nonbreeding sites. The program has contributed more than \$4 million to projects in Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean.

Ohio residents can anticipate entering the 17th annual Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp Photo Contest this summer, with the winner featured on the 2026 legacy stamp. Shorebirds and wading birds are the subject of the 2026 stamp.

*The mission of the Division of Wildlife is to conserve and improve fish and wildlife resources and their habitats for sustainable use and appreciation by all. Visit [wildohio.gov](http://wildohio.gov) to find out more.*

*ODNR ensures a balance between wise use and protection of our natural resources for the benefit of all. Visit the ODNR website at [ohiodnr.gov](http://ohiodnr.gov).*

## Joint statement of Alabama leaders concerning jubilees

A jubilee is a naturally occurring phenomenon that happens in only two locations in the world, Mobile Bay and Tokyo Bay, during which large numbers of fish and crustaceans are forced into shallow water due to low dissolved oxygen in the water. Jubilees are not "fish kills" and the fish, shrimp, and other marine life generally return to normal behavior when the conditions change. However, the events bring sea life right to the shore where they can be seen and harvested.

These events are special times in the lives of coastal residents and visitors. It is impossible to predict the exact location, time, and duration of a jubilee which makes planning uncertain for participation in this uniquely Alabama event. Individuals must abide by creel limits, size regulations, and other laws and regulations that protect Alabama's valuable marine resources from overharvest during these events.

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has worked with Representative Matt Simpson, who represents parts of the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay where most jubilees occur, to provide information to residents and visitors alike to ensure they can participate in these events within the law and enjoy the bounty of Mobile Bay. Although still required to remain within size and creel limits, persons can use a handheld net or can pick up flounder, crabs, shrimp, and other marine life by hand without having to first obtain a saltwater fishing license, including during jubilees.

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**Continued from Page 5** — “Jubilees are a special occurrence unique to our wonderful Bay and are something that has been a part of so many families’ histories and stories for decades here in Baldwin County, so I am thankful and appreciative for Commissioner Blankenship’s hard work and cooperation to help us make sure that residents and visitors alike can enjoy them safely and legally,” said Representative Matt Simpson. “This is a great example of government helping people without getting in the way, making sure that a legacy event like a jubilee can continue to be enjoyed by everyone.”

“I have enjoyed the conversations with Representative Simpson on jubilees and life on the coast and am glad we have legislators that are passionate about the resources we are so richly blessed with in Coastal Alabama,” said Conservation Commissioner Chris Blankenship. “As a longtime coastal resident and the place where I have spent the majority of my career with the Department, I look forward to residents and visitors having a great spring and summer of fishing and outdoor recreation on Mobile Bay.”



## Wildfire potential is high during spring months

**Editor’s Note: Increased fire dangers in late spring and summer dynamically change conditions at times to enhance large wildfires. Be exceptionally careful while enjoying the woods and fields or working the same. High winds, low humidity and the lack of any rain combine for exceptional danger. Lightning, sparks from equipment, controlled burns that become uncontrollable and the human element that just like to start fires. Be watchful all the time.**

**Be prepared, do you have a plan? Do you have equipment ready, flappers, fire rakes, backpack sprayers, tractor sprayers to assist firefighting efforts? Do you have an exit plan in case the fire gets out of control and that includes protecting your livestock, pets and equipment. The Grab and Go personal items you will need, check books, personal ID and critical records all need to be ready to go.**

**Are your access roads open and clear to fully get around all areas of your property woods and fields? It takes us weeks after the winter storms to get all access roads, creek crossings and fences cleared.**

Outdoor enthusiasts need to be aware of ground conditions while enjoying spring activities.

Increased human activity outdoors in spring, combined with dead ground vegetation and high winds, make this time of year highly susceptible to wildfires.

Because of highly variable weather patterns, North Dakota experiences a distinct spring fire season every year. With that in mind, it’s important to pay attention to the fire danger index, and to follow the appropriate measures.

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**Continued from Page 6** — Hunters and anglers are urged to keep up with the daily rural fire danger index, issued by the National Weather Service, to alert the public to conditions that may be conducive to the accidental starting or spread of fires.

In addition, county governments have the authority to adopt penalties for violations of county restrictions related to burning bans. These restrictions apply regardless of the daily fire danger index and remain in place until each county's commission rescinds the ban.

Information, including restrictions, on [current fire danger indexes](#) is available at [NDResponse.gov](http://NDResponse.gov).



## Oklahoma releases 2025 gobbler report

April 12 and 13 is youth spring turkey hunting season in all of Oklahoma. Hunters 17 and younger will have the first chance to harvest a gobbler during these two days ahead of the regular spring turkey season, which runs from April 16 to May 16 statewide.

Bill Dinkines, chief of wildlife for the [Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation](#), said winter turkey flock survey results show a general increasing trend in statewide numbers, with some parts of the state higher than others.

"Last year's quail hunting season was one of the best in years, and we are hopeful that our turkey season returns similar results," Dinkines said.

The wildlife department is continuing a 4.5-year, \$2 million research effort to investigate turkey population declines and what can be done long-term to manage turkey populations. Researchers are examining nesting success, nesting site characteristics, and cause-specific mortality of poult and hens, along with genetic health studies.

Hunters wanting to support biologists in current turkey research, along with ODWC's conservation and management efforts, can simply [purchase a hunting license](#), whether they intend to hunt or not. Each hunting license sold secures federal matching funds at a rate many times the price of the license, giving ODWC more resources to fund wildlife conservation activities.

For those hoping to harvest a tom turkey this year, several ODWC biologists in the field have shared reports from their regions in this year's Gobbler Report.

### **NORTHWEST REGION**

*Report by Eddie Wilson, Wildlife Senior Biologist*

**Current gobbler activity:** Toms are currently grouped up with hens. Toms are strutting and doing some gobbling while establishing dominance.

**Condition of habitat:** Conditions have been very dry throughout the northwest and Panhandle counties. Recent rainfall in the northwest will help vegetation green up and increase food availability. Nesting and escape cover are good due to late summer rain last year.

**Reports from landowners or scouting hunters:** Landowners and hunters are reporting stable bird numbers throughout the northwest and Panhandle counties with slight to moderate bird increases in some locations.

**WMA best bets:** [Canton](#), [Fort Supply](#) and [Cooper](#) Wildlife Management Areas all provide the opportunity to find a tom. Lands enrolled in the [Oklahoma Land Access Program](#) also provide some excellent turkey hunting opportunity throughout the northwest.

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**Tips for success:** Spend as much time as possible scouting the area you intend to hunt. Hunt all day if you can, not just mornings.

**Mistakes to avoid:** Avoid calling too often. Always be patient and give toms plenty of time to get to you. Be still!

**Opening-day expectations:** Bird numbers in the northwest continue to be much lower than they were 10 years ago. On the bright side, numbers have increased some over the past year. Weather permitting, toms should be gobbling and responding to calls by opening day. Public hunting lands will likely be busy. Introduce a new hunter to turkey hunting this season. Be courteous to your fellow hunters and hunt safe!

**SOUTHWEST REGION**

*Report by Ron Smith, Southwest Region Wildlife Supervisor*

**Current gobbler activity:** Turkeys have been broken into smaller groups for two to three weeks. Toms are actively strutting and sparring with others to maintain the social order. Smaller groups of hens have moved off to themselves, and individuals are beginning to separate into nesting behavior. The breeding season is in full swing.

**Condition of habitat:** Habitat conditions across most of the southwest are improved over the previous few years. Recent rains have produced good green-up. Winter wheat is in good condition. Cover will be mixed, with the most extreme southwest portion of the region still showing impacts of lingering drought from recent years.

**Reports from landowners or scouting hunters:** Landowners are reporting improved numbers and seeing birds in areas they have been absent for the past three to five years. Most are seeing improved numbers of Jakes and 2-year-old birds. Scouting hunters are seeing great gobbler activity with strutting throughout much of the day. Weather has provided a moderate transition into spring with temperatures and moisture allowing more activity throughout the day.

**WMA best bets:** [Packsaddle](#), [Black Kettle](#), and [Waurika](#) WMAs.

**Tips for success:** Put in as much work as you can scouting. There may be some areas overlooked due to lower numbers and areas where they have been absent for some time. Be prepared to hunt all day. Use your scouting observations to plan your best approach into hunting areas. Try to reduce disruption to their daily cycles until you work your way into position. Be aware of differing regulations for private land and public use management areas. Remember to E-check your bird!

**Mistakes to avoid:** Leaving the field too early can limit opportunity. Practice your approach and calling techniques while trying not to overdo it. Let them go about their routines and try to work yourself into the mix.

Find QUWF Online!



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**Continued from Page 8 — Opening-day expectations:** 2025 should provide the greatest opportunity for success we have seen in some time. Improved numbers are very encouraging. Expect hunter traffic to be up, so keep your options open.

## CENTRAL REGION

*Report by Jay Rouk, Wildlife Biologist*

**Current gobbler activity:** Recent warm temperatures have encouraged turkey flocks to split up from winter flocks and into breeding groups. Gobblers have begun spring mating rituals and can be heard gobbling off roost and strutting in their lekking zones, especially on calm, cool mornings. Hens have been reported leaving groups to begin nesting.

**Condition of habitat:** The warmer temps and recent rains have promoted the rapid appearance and emergence of spring plants. Oak trees are starting to leaf out, and most fields are green with cool-season grasses. Most wheat fields are lush and will be attractive to turkeys until the crop becomes tall.

**Reports from landowners or scouting hunters:** Turkey hunters who have been scouting have reported an increase in turkey numbers compared to recent years. Toms have been observed strutting and escorting hen groups. There are numerous sightings of single hens foraging and even a report of a nest with several eggs. Sightings of turkeys in fields and crossing roads have become more common.

**WMA best bets:** [Kaw WMA](#) near the Kansas border has considerable ag production that usually produces turkeys. [Deep Fork WMA](#), within reasonable distance of Tulsa and Oklahoma City, has seen increased turkey numbers in surrounding areas. [Hickory Creek WMA](#) is a traditional good choice for south-central hunters.

**Tips for success:** 1. Scout ahead of time and determine the turkey's daily patterns. This will allow you to anticipate the turkey's movements and give you an edge over other hunters. 2. Know the "lay of the land." Turkeys will often move in ways that make sense if you know the terrain and topography. They often will resist coming to calls if they must cross natural obstacles. 3. Wait them out. Many turkeys are interested in your calling but are distracted by flock activities. In some cases, they will return later (sometimes much later) to your location seeking you out.

**Mistakes to avoid:** 1. Don't give up too soon. The morning usually has the most turkey group activity, but gobblers often become receptive to calling later, once the hens have moved on to forage. 2. Don't give up if gobblers are quiet on the roost. Public land birds can be very quiet. Stay hidden if you are in a position where you expect them to be, as they may show up quietly. 3. Use caution if/when using gobble-type calls and decoys. These can attract other hunters. Avoid clothing and motions that may confuse other hunters into thinking they see you as a gobbler. This is especially true for public lands.

**Opening-day expectations:** Opening day usually starts off with the greatest number of hunters in the field of any time. This can result in multiple hunters pursuing the same bird(s). Hunters will need to be considerate of others and apply "hunting courtesy." This may be the time to rely on scouting or late-day hunting plans to gain an advantage over competing hunters. Dedication and persistence will go a long way toward bagging that gobbler.

## NORTHEAST REGION

*Report by J.D. Ridge, Wildlife Senior Biologist*

**Current gobbler activity:** Flocks have been breaking up and birds are spreading out. Reports have varied across the region, but gobbling activity is generally reported as good, especially while birds are on the roost. There have been several reports of strutting toms with hens over the last couple of weeks.

**Condition of habitat:** The spring green-up is well underway, and conditions across the region are reported as good to excellent. Insects are emerging and appear to be in good abundance. Immediate bird response has been reported for several areas where prescribed burns have been conducted.

**Reports from landowners or scouting hunters:** Landowners are reporting seeing more birds, indicating better reproduction and recruitment last spring. Scouting hunters report observing increasing breeding activity with even some single hens being observed.

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**Continued from Page 9 — WMA best bets:** The region has several WMAs open to turkey hunting. [Cherokee Game Management Area](#) is a good option and should hold a fair number of birds.

**Tips for success:** Scout the areas you plan to hunt. There will likely be less hunting pressure on weekdays. Plan to hunt all day if possible. Brush up on private and public land regulations in the [Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Regulations](#).

**Mistakes to avoid:** 1. Movement while calling a responsive gobbler. A turkey's ability to detect the slightest of movements cannot be overstated. 2. Not being familiar with the terrain. Approaching birds can "hang up" on fence lines or natural terrain features such as drainages, thickets, etc., so think about this when scouting. 3. Giving up too quickly. If a responding gobbler goes quiet, be patient. He may just be sneaking in the rest of the way.

**Opening-day expectations:** Bird numbers appear to be a little better than last year, so opportunities are out there. Expect hunting pressure to be high on public land, especially early in the season. Above all, be safe and enjoy being outdoors in the springtime!

## SOUTHEAST REGION

*Report by Eric Suttles, Southeast Region Wildlife Supervisor*

**Current gobbler activity:** Turkey mating behavior is very active. As expected, the birds have begun to break up into smaller groups, and the males are actively displaying to the females. This is a typical phase of the mating season, and it is accompanied by increased gobbling. Gobbling is nearing its peak as we get closer to the opening day of turkey season.

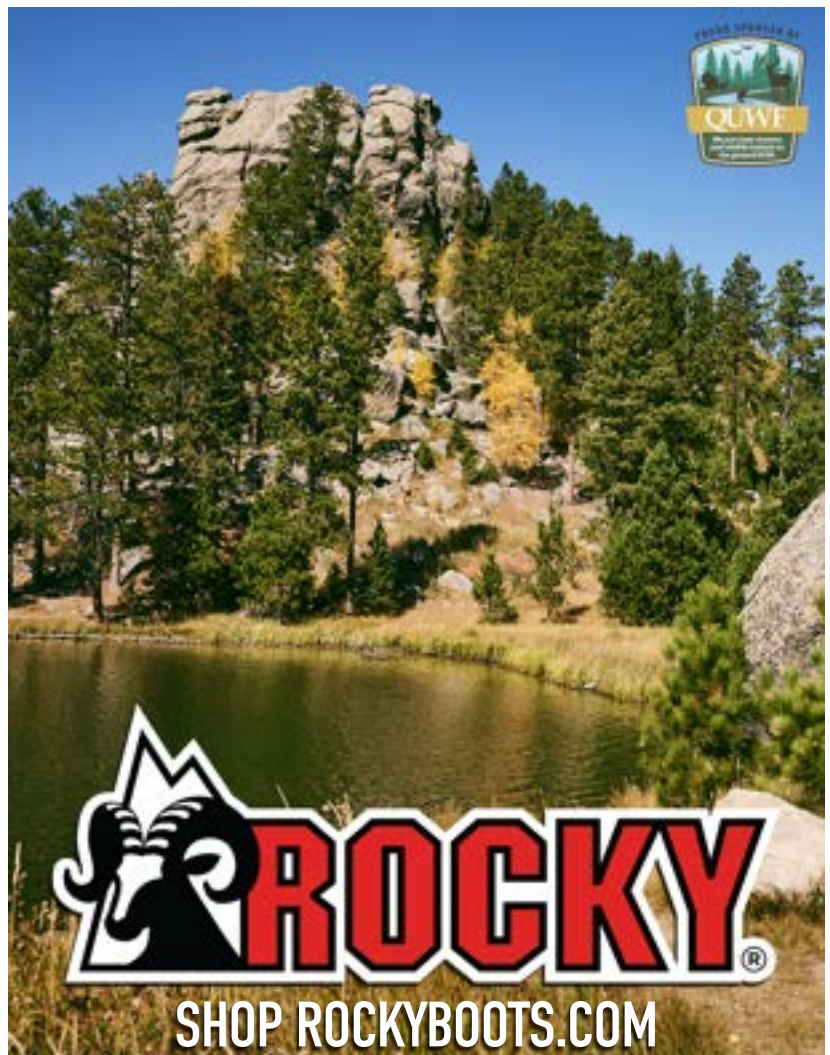
For those who are interested in scouting for tom turkeys, mornings and late evenings are ideal times to listen and observe.

**Condition of habitat:** As the season progresses, we are seeing the typical signs of spring. The plants and trees are beginning to exhibit vibrant green foliage. Thanks to abundant rainfall and moisture conditions indicated by the current drought index, the habitat is expected to be favorable for the upcoming breeding season.

**Reports from landowners or scouting hunters:** Gobbling surveys are reporting toms spread out far and wide across the landscape. Very few survey sites are reporting more than a couple of birds at best. Turkeys seem to be spread out but are accessible in various locations.

**WMA best bets:** [Honobia Creek WMA](#) and [Three Rivers WMA](#) offer access to nearly 260,000 acres of remote mountainous forest for those who choose to purchase a Land Access Permit. Exemptions apply for those 17 and younger or 64 and older.

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# Notes from the Road:

## Control what you can control



**By Nick Prough** — I wanted to follow up further with this month’s article on the topic of habitat management, but specifically on the subject of controlling what you can control on your land or tract of land you are managing.

As with many things in life, some things on our land or during our habitat management are not directly controlled by us. The first thing that always comes to mind is the weather, which all of us deal with constantly, whether you’re a farmer, rancher or just a land manager. I could write 10 articles alone related to weather influences on habitat and populations of wildlife you are trying to manage for, but for today I am trying to focus on things you as the landowner or land manager can control.

I often talk about the three pieces of the puzzle to many landowners I meet with wanting to either enhance their wildlife habitat or to improve it in one way or another. Those three pieces we have at QUWF always kept in the forefront of our modeling for successful habitat management efforts on projects of all sizes, although the specific percentages of those influences of the puzzle pieces (or pie pieces) have been debated and changed over the years, as we continue to learn more from research projects we have been involved in or studied other information gathering the core principles stay the same. Those three key pieces to the puzzle are habitat, weather and predation.

If you manage just one of the three (or don’t consider the effects of all three influences) then you are only going to have part of the puzzle. We have seen this for decades on countless landowner projects that just consider one piece of the puzzle. This has never been truer than in today’s landscape we face out there each and every day. Yes, there are other smaller factors that can have some effects, but those three main pieces of the puzzle always need to be considered. I always hear people say, “Well, you need a little luck,” but I like to use the quote, “Luck doesn’t live here.” Once again, we can’t control “luck.” We have seen this on countless landowner study sites over the years as well as on multiple QUWF research studies that continue to be worked on extensively and are seeing some excellent results that continue to be built on over multiple sights over multiple years.

So, we all know you can’t control the weather, you can just adjust and adapt to what weather conditions you are dealt both in the short term like flooding events or long term like long term multiple year droughts for example. So, we need to focus on, as I mentioned above, the two pieces of the puzzle we can control, that is the habitat and predation effects. In order to do this, we need to keep in mind habitat projects take time, and as was discussed in last month’s article, you can begin small and build on those efforts you previously completed and before long you will be making some significant strides towards your goals and objectives for your land.

The third piece of the puzzle is predator control, and although the old school of thought for several decades was you couldn’t do much about predation that is no longer the case in most biologist circles and predator control and especially nest predator control can and should be a significant piece of your puzzle if you want to maximize your efforts on your land you are managing. Some people consider this controversial or not a piece of the puzzle at all, but way too many landowners across the country have seen some very significant responses to their upland wildlife populations, especially ground nesting birds such as quail and turkeys when all three pieces of the puzzle are considered and managed consistently in unison. We have countless landowners seeing very significant results when all three pieces of the puzzle are considered, managed and come together very nicely with good nesting conditions taking place.

More information will be coming out further on this topic after nesting season and once hopefully with the increased brood rearing habitat that was created and brood rearing occurs this summer so stay tuned for that further information as well.

Keep up all the great work out there that each of you, your landowners, your chapters and conservation partners are doing, as you are definitely ... **“Making a Difference for Wildlife One Acre at a Time!”**

*Nick Prough is the QUWF chief wildlife biologist and landowner liaison.*

**Continued from Page 10 — Tips for success:** 1. Hunt in the afternoon. Toms will often be with hens in the morning but will be looking for more after those hens move off to feed or nest. 2. Be still and patient. Birds will often come in without gobbling. 3. Do not overcall. Calling and talking just to call often seems to annoy reclusive, mature toms.

**Mistakes to avoid:** 1. Calling too loudly or too much. Call when needed, but limit the amount and volume of calling. Think of it as communicating to a specific bird, not just any bird in the woods. 2. Don't go chasing. Trying to "sneak up" or chasing a bird is probably not going to work out. A better strategy is to stay out of sight and be patient for the tom to make the final approach. 3. Not going. The odds might be stacked against you. But if you do not go, you will never know what might have been. Also, success isn't just in the harvest. Take a youth hunting and make the day special, regardless of the harvest.

**Opening-day expectations:** Turkey numbers seem to be stable to slightly increasing in the region. If you have access to a hunting spot that has had birds in the past, you should expect to have birds again this year. Expect a hard hunt; limited toms on the landscape will likely have hens nearby.

Oklahoma's spring turkey season bag limit is one bearded turkey per hunter statewide. While bearded hens are technically legal to harvest, hunters should take every effort to identify any bearded hens and only target the toms.

Hunters have access to hundreds of thousands of acres of [public lands](#) open to wild turkey hunting. In addition, the [Oklahoma Land Access Program](#) offers walk-in access to private lands leased by the wildlife department.

To find out about license requirements, field tagging, E-check, and other turkey hunting requirements, consult the current [Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Regulations](#) found online at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com), on the Go Outdoors Oklahoma free mobile app for [Apple](#) or [Android](#) devices, or in print across the state wherever hunting and fishing licenses are sold.

## Maryland's spring turkey season opens

Maryland's statewide spring wild turkey season opens this month, beginning with the [Junior Turkey Hunt](#) on April 12. The regular spring turkey season opens for all hunters on April 18 and runs through May 23.

The [Maryland Department of Natural Resources](#) (DNR) anticipates that hunters should have ample opportunity due to recent increases in turkey numbers in many areas.

"Wild turkey populations remain strong across much of Maryland," [Wildlife and Heritage Service](#) Director Karina Stonesifer said. "Turkey hunting is a great way to enjoy the springtime woods, and with some luck, hunters may even bring home a prized gobbler."

The Maryland DNR [Summer Wild Turkey Observation Survey](#) documented average to above-average reproductive success in three of the last four nesting seasons. However, lower reproductive success in 2023 may result in fewer hard-gobbling two-year-old birds.

The Junior Turkey Hunt is open to licensed hunters aged 16 years and younger, provided they are accompanied by an unarmed adult (age 21 or older) with a valid Maryland hunting license. The Junior Turkey Hunt takes place April 12 statewide and continues on Sunday, April 13 [in select counties](#).

For the first part of the regular hunting season, April 18 through May 9, hunting is permitted from one half-hour before sunrise until noon. Throughout the rest of the season, May 10 through May 23, and during the Junior Turkey Hunt, hunting hours are one half-hour before sunrise until sunset.

**Continued on Page 13**



**Continued from Page 12** — The daily bag limit for the spring season is one bearded turkey, with a season bag limit of two bearded turkeys. Hunting is permitted on Sundays in certain counties. Complete regulations, including Sunday hunting dates, hunting license renewals, and check-in procedures can be found on the [Maryland DNR website](#). New hunters interested in getting their first Maryland hunting license for turkey season can do so by completing the department's [hunter education program](#).

Hunters that use the website or DNR app for turkey harvest reporting (check-in) should note that DNR will soon be transitioning to a new system that could impact availability. Hunters will be instructed to use the phone check-in system by calling 1-888-800-0121.

Hunters are also reminded to always prioritize safety when turkey hunting. Hunters should keep decoys out of sight until they reach a safe location with good visibility from all directions. Do not hide directly behind a decoy or use it to stalk birds. Always remain aware of your surroundings and assume other hunters may be in the area, even on private property.



## Akkar USA: A fresh face in shooting industry

Akkar USA, a leading shotgun manufacturer in North Kansas City, Missouri, blends heritage craftsmanship with modern engineering to produce firearms for hunting enthusiasts and competitive shooters. Founded in Istanbul in 1985, Akkar has expanded its operations to the US. This extension strengthens Akkar's global presence, offering American consumers durable, reliable, high-performance firearms.

Akkar USA offers a striking selection of over/under, pump, side-by-side, and special-purpose models for the ultimate shooting experience. Designed for both safety and performance, our shotguns honor a legacy of hunting and sport shooting. Every



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Leveraging decades of engineering expertise, Akkar USA combines time-honored techniques with advanced technology to uphold its legacy of quality. Whether a seasoned hunter, a sport shooter, or a beginner, the extensive lineup of Akkar shotguns caters to various needs and preferences, all backed by exceptional customer service and local support. Akkar USA is committed to making high-quality firearms accessible with competitive pricing, reflecting our dedication to value without compromise.

With 17 years of gun industry experience, David Miller, CEO, leads Akkar USA. “At Akkar USA, we’re proud to craft shotguns that merge tradition with modern performance,” says Miller. “Whether in the field or on the range, our goal is to provide a firearm that’s reliable, durable, and built to perform. We’re excited to bring Akkar’s legacy of quality to the American market and stand behind every shotgun we sell.”

Akkar USA proudly offers premium shotguns that blend old-world craftsmanship with modern design. By choosing Akkar USA, hunters and shooting enthusiasts are investing in a legacy of excellence, reliability, and community. Experience the precision and passion of Akkar shotguns, crafted in Istanbul and backed in the USA.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.akkarusa.com>.

# AR Game and Fish unveils express check option

Successful hunters will have much less frustration confirming their harvest and getting back to the celebration this turkey season, thanks to a new game checking option the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is offering through its website.

Kyle Curry, assistant chief of information technology for the AGFC, said Express Check is a simple way to get your bird checked without the trouble of trying to remember passwords to log into your license account.

“If you have the smartphone app, you can use it like always, and you can still check harvested turkeys through the website by logging in, but we know about 30 percent of our hunters still try to use the telephone checking system to bypass all the passwords and login requirements,” Curry said.

“On opening morning or other high-traffic hunting times, you may end up on hold for a few minutes before an operator is available. A couple of minutes seems like an eternity when you’re on the side of a mountain with a single bar or two of service, so we’re trying to give people an easier way.”

Verifying your harvest through Express Check is as simple as going to [www.agfc.com](http://www.agfc.com), clicking on Game Check in the top right corner of the webpage, and entering your turkey tag number, your last name and your date of birth. If your turkey tag is valid, you’ll get a confirmation number and your checking process will be complete.

“We’re planning to use the Customer Identification Number in the future, but for now, we’re using the eight-digit tag number issued to each turkey tag,” Curry said. “This number is available only on the [turkey tags issued through the license system](#), so people who purchase through a vendor need to

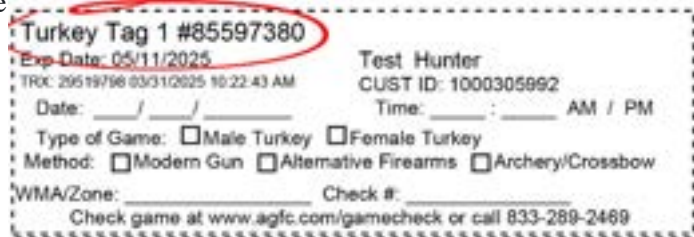
make sure they get the turkey tags from the vendor in addition to their hunting license.”

Curry says checking your turkey through the smartphone app will be identical to last year’s process. Phone checking will have one fairly major difference with the implementation of automated checking using computerized voice prompts and keypad entry with your phone.

“You can still get to a human operator if you need assistance with your checking process, but your first option will be to use the computerized system over the phone,” Curry said. “That will help reduce waiting on phone lines and remove some of the confusion with misspoken words or bad connections, making conversations difficult.”

Arkansas’s turkey season opens April 21 statewide. In Turkey Zone 1, it closes April 29; it continues through May 11 in Turkey Zone 2.

The Special Youth Turkey Hunt for hunters younger than 16 is April 12-13. A full list of turkey regulations is available in the [2024-25 Arkansas Hunting Guidebook](#).





Visit the Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation online! Scan the QR code.

# NSSF: Firearm industry economic impact rises

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The total economic impact of the firearm and ammunition industry in the United States increased from \$19.1 billion in 2008 to \$91.7 billion in 2024, a 379 percent increase, while the total number of full-time equivalent jobs rose from approximately 166,000 to over 383,000, a 130 percent increase in that period, according to a [report](#) released by the NSSF, the firearm industry trade association.

On a year-over-year basis, the industry’s economic impact rose from \$90.5 billion in 2023, to \$91.7 billion in 2024. The firearm industry has broader impacts throughout the economy. It supports and generates business for firms seemingly unrelated to firearms, at a time when every job in America counts. These are real people, with real jobs, working in industries as varied as banking, retail, accounting, metal working and printing among others.

The firearm and ammunition industry paid nearly \$11 billion in business taxes, including property, income and sales-based levies. An additional \$886 million was paid in federal excise taxes, which directly contribute to wildlife conservation.



Continued on Page 16

## QUWF welcomes All veterans. All the time.

The Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation was formed to focus on and help veteran landowners, veteran sportsmen, and all veterans who are interested in the great outdoors.

QUWF staff will help all veterans find and get benefit assistance through the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) or other resources.

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We are the ONLY VETERAN FORMED and managed national wildlife and conservation organization in the U.S. QUWF and our chapters support veteran businesses as well. Let us know.



**Continued from Page 15** — “Our industry is a vital economic contributor to every state and every community. These are companies employing men and women from all walks of life and they prove daily that the American firearm and ammunition industry is strong,” said Joe Bartozzi, NSSF President and CEO. “This industry proudly provides the means for law-abiding citizens to exercise their Second Amendment rights. Our industry enables Americans to engage in the American traditions of recreational target shooting and hunting, and we are the primary source of wildlife conservation funding in America. The growth of the firearm industry equals more jobs that add to our local economies, averaging \$68,300 in wages and benefits, up from \$67,500 reported last year. Since 2008, federal business tax payments increased by 340 percent, Pittman-Robertson excise taxes that support wildlife conservation by 152 percent and state business taxes by 238 percent.”

The annual [Firearm and Ammunition Industry Economic Impact Report](#) provides a state-by-state breakdown of job numbers, wages and output covering direct, supplier and induced employment, as well as federal excise taxes paid.

## WY Game and Fish tests more than 5,000 samples for CWD

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department’s Wildlife Health Laboratory tested 5,276 samples for chronic wasting disease, and 726 came back positive — 13.7% statewide — and saw CWD prevalence for mule deer increase throughout the state.

Game and Fish released its 2024 CWD Surveillance Report this spring. Samples tested from mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk and moose included hunter-harvest, targeted and road-killed animals. Of those samples tested, 19.4% came back positive in hunter-harvested mule deer bucks, 29.2% in hunter-harvested white-tailed bucks and 2.3% in adult, hunter-harvested elk. The percentage of mule deer bucks increased from 2023 at 18.9%. The percentages for white-tailed deer and elk decreased from 2023 at 30.3% and 2.8,% respectively. There were no positive CWD samples from moose.

The number of submissions were slightly higher from 2023, where there were 5,100.

CWD is a fatal disease of the central nervous system in mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk and moose. It belongs to the group of rare diseases called transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. These disorders are caused by abnormally folded proteins called prions. There is no cure or vaccine for CWD. There have been no cases of CWD in humans and no direct proof humans can get CWD. However, the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization recommend not consuming CWD-positive animals.

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In 2024, CWD was detected in three new deer hunt areas — 31, 53 and 94 — and three new elk hunt areas — 23, 84 and 126. Earlier this year, CWD was found in three additional elk hunt areas — 62, 87 and 93 — and on four elk feedgrounds in western Wyoming.

To determine CWD prevalence in individual herds, five-year averages were calculated to ensure a significant sample size. The Project herd in the Lander Region continues to have the highest CWD prevalence in the state at 66.3%. The Shoshone River herd in the Cody Region is second at 47.6%.

The Iron Mountain herd in southeast Wyoming had the highest CWD prevalence among elk at 10.1%.

The North Bighorn elk herd in north-central Wyoming was second at 9.1%, a noticeable increase from 7% from 2019-23.

**Continued on Page 17**

**Continued from Page 16** — Prevalence calculated at the herd until level provides managers with perspective on herd unit health and can direct herd level management actions. However, CWD levels are not uniform across a herd and can accumulate in hot spots of higher concentration within these herd units.

Through 2024, 95% of Wyoming's mule deer hunt areas and 62 percent of elk hunt areas were considered endemic for CWD. Game and Fish will continue to conduct yearly surveillance focused on priority and mandatory areas. In areas where CWD has not been detected, CWD sampling is critical for early detection of the disease as management strategies can change with the status of CWD prevalence.

“Wyoming's CWD surveillance would not be possible without the participation of our hunters,” said Jessica Jennings, Game and Fish Wildlife Health Lab manager.

“We encourage hunters to check the Game and Fish website for the 2025 priority and mandatory testing areas, check current CWD prevalence on the interactive CWD map and no matter where you hunt, please consider having your animal tested for CWD.”

All CWD testing is free for animals harvested in Wyoming and especially encouraged in those areas where we have insufficient data.



## Statement from conservation commissioner on HB 509

Last week, HB 509 (related to deer breeders) was introduced by Representative Jeff Sorrells of Hartford. This bill should be disturbing to all ethical sportsmen, hunters, and citizens in Alabama. Alabamians have a constitutional right to hunt and fish in this state. HB 509 would jeopardize that right. The deer breeder legislation would declare that deer within a breeder facility are personal property of the owner, like pets. Deer breeders then place those pet deer in small pens or fences and they could be shot by individuals for a large fee paid to the breeder. This practice is neither ethical nor sporting, and tarnishes the reputation and traditional hunting methods shared by hunters and sportsmen alike.

The legislation also limits the ability of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to adequately inspect these facilities and test for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) or other diseases. Most concerning, the legislation would allow the reckless transfer of diseased deer by deer breeders to any facility, property, or person anywhere in the state. This would drastically increase the risk of the spread of CWD or other diseases to all parts of Alabama and threatens the \$2 billion economic impact traditional hunting provides for the businesses of our state, especially in the rural areas. This is totally unacceptable.

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is strongly opposed to this legislation. The reckless disregard in this legislation for the rights of deer hunters, the citizens of Alabama, the economic impact of hunting, and the deer population is disturbing and unfathomable. The legislation is assigned to the House Agriculture and Forestry Committee. Contact information for House Agriculture and Forestry committee members is provided below.

### House Agriculture and Forestry Committee Contact Information

Alisha Glover, Clerk

Email: [alisha.glover@alhouse.gov](mailto:alisha.glover@alhouse.gov)

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Continued on Page 18

**Continued from Page 17** — Phone: (334) 261-0450

Danny Crawford, Chairman

Email: [danny.crawford@alhouse.gov](mailto:danny.crawford@alhouse.gov)

Statehouse phone: (334) 261-0516

District phone: (256) 871-1944

Steve Hurst, Vice Chairman

Email: [steve.hurst@alhouse.gov](mailto:steve.hurst@alhouse.gov)

Statehouse phone: (334) 261-0415

District phone: (334) 280-3276

**Click here** and select Agriculture and Forestry Committee for a complete list of committee members.

Chris Blankenship, Commissioner

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

## Liberty thanks customers for supporting American jobs

**PAYSON, Utah** — Liberty Safe, the largest U.S. manufacturer of home and gun safes, is proud to recognize and thank the countless American consumers who choose products made in the USA with a special offer.

"While the new tariffs are intended to encourage companies to manufacture in the USA, we are proud to say that building safes in the USA has always been the primary focus at Liberty," said Dave Foley, CEO at Liberty Safe. "And we'd like to recognize the customers that support us with a special limited-time offer that will be applied across our safe line up and can be used in addition to our other offers."

Liberty Safe produces more safes in the USA than any other safe manufacturer, employing hundreds of American workers and using millions of pounds of USA-made steel. While most safe companies import their products, Liberty remains committed to domestic production.

**Continued on Page 19**



**Continued from Page 18** — “Our goal is simple,” Foley added. “We strive to keep and grow our production in the United States while delivering unmatched value to our customers. That means better quality, better service, and peace of mind that your purchase supports American workers and communities while you secure that which you value most.”

To show appreciation for their customers, Liberty Safe is providing a limited-time offer. By using the code MADEINUSA during checkout at [libertysafe.com](http://libertysafe.com), customers can take advantage of an additional 5% discount on their full lineup of safes — on top of current sales and promotions. For example, when combined with Liberty's current Tax Season Sale, that's up to 15% off.

Liberty Safe encourages shoppers to visit [www.libertysafe.com](http://www.libertysafe.com) to take advantage of these limited-time added savings.

#### About Liberty Safe

Liberty Safe is the leading manufacturer of safes in the United States, offering a wide range of products renowned for their security, quality, and reliability. They offer home safes, gun safes, and vault doors, engineered to fit a variety of needs and protect what you value most. Liberty Safe employs expert American craftsmen in their Payson, Utah facility, and they support hundreds of independent Liberty Safe dealers throughout the USA. For more information, visit [www.libertysafe.com](http://www.libertysafe.com).



## Safe storage of firearms keeps them out of wrong hands

**Editor's Note: Though every state may have suggestions for firearm storage, it is prudent for all to put all firearms, when not in active use, into a secure safe all the time. They should be stored unloaded. Handguns as well, and the old saying, “if its not on your hip, lock it up”.**

**If you keep a firearm for security, safes are made for quick access for handguns and long guns. Use them. If your safes are electronic for access, change the batteries yearly. Dual access is a recommendation.**

**If you have a home security system like Blink, have a camera to monitor the location of the safe and all access to it.**

**As a suggestion, change clips every few months to exercise the springs. Unload the removed clips. Label and number them with a white paint pen.**

**All ammo should be stored in a cool, dryer place like a basement. Ammo will adjust to the relative humidity (RH) of its location, so if you intent to go out shooting, give it time to acclimate to the RH where you are.**



With the close of Maryland's deer seasons, many hunters have already put their weapons of choice into storage, at least until spring turkey season. While firearm safety during hunting season is covered extensively during the [hunter education program](#), safe firearm storage out of season is one topic that Maryland hunters should always review and practice.

One of the “golden rules” of firearm safety is that firearms should be stored unloaded and in a locked location, separate from ammunition.

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**Continued from Page 19** — Other important rules of firearm safety – referred to as the [Ten Commandments of Firearm Safety](#) – can be found on the [Department of Natural Resources Hunter Education website](#).

The location in which a firearm is locked can vary, and there's not a single correct method of storage. Many hunters prefer to store their firearms in a safe, which is preferred over a cabinet or wall rack. The visible options should be avoided to prevent access by children, thieves, and at-risk individuals. While safes are typically the most secure option, it's not always the most feasible. Smaller, less conspicuous lockboxes may require a key, combination, or fingerprint to unlock. They can also be permanently mounted to prevent theft. Quick access options are available such as biometric scanners or RFID chips, for those that have firearms for home protection.

Though the larger and more secure options are ideal, other locking options should be considered. **Cable locks** are often distributed by local police and health departments and are effective methods of rendering a firearm unusable while locked. The device works by creating a closed loop through the chamber or action of a firearm to prevent firing. **Trigger locks** are another viable method which blocks use of the firearm's trigger with a clamshell-style lock. It's important to note that trigger locks can still allow for the firearm to be loaded and the action to be cycled, possibly leading to accidental discharge in some circumstances.

No matter which locking method is used, a safely-stored firearm is much less of a risk than an unsecured firearm. The consequences of unsecured firearms in the home can be deadly, leading to unauthorized access, accidents, serious injury, or suicide. Keeping firearms out of the hands of children and other at-risk individuals is among the most common reasons for safely storing firearms.

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) research from 2003 to 2021, 1,261 children aged 0-17 suffered unintentional firearm injury deaths. Among those, 74 percent of the fatal incidents occurred when the firearm was stored loaded and 76 percent when the firearm was stored unlocked.

**Continued on Page 21**



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**Continued from Page 20** — There are additional options for safely storing firearms outside the home. Some owners of firearms may elect for out-of-home storage for times such as during the holidays when young relatives may be visiting. Maryland offers a [safe storage map](#) that can be accessed online and provides locations that will temporarily store firearms. Alternatively, firearms can be temporarily stored with a trusted friend or neighbor that is legally allowed to possess firearms in the state of Maryland.

Hunters and conservationists should consider the listed safe storage options for their firearms. Following these practices can prevent unintentional [breaking of laws](#) regarding access to loaded firearms, but more importantly, can potentially save lives.

## 2025 Montana migratory bird stamp announced

*Stamp to help raise awareness for wetlands conservation*

A trio of tundra swans winging their way through a gray sky in the shadows of Rocky Mountain peaks is captured brilliantly in the 2025 Montana Migratory Bird Stamp.

The winning artwork is by Florida artist John Nelson Harris. His painting of a three tundra swans was selected from among more than 50 submissions from artists around the United States. Harris is the designer of more than a dozen conservation prints and stamps, including duck stamps for California, Oklahoma and Washington. He's been the winning artist for the Montana Migratory Bird Stamp for two years in a row.

FWP launched the Migratory Bird Stamp contest in 2024 to help raise additional awareness and appreciation for wetlands conservation and the benefits of intact wetlands to people and wildlife. The Montana Wetlands Protection Advisory Council selected the winner in of this year's contest in February.

"Intact wetlands are critical pieces of habitat for wildlife and they're important for landowners," said FWP Director Christy Clark. "Water is critical and therefore wetland conservation is an important part of what we do as an agency."

Wetlands are critical for many wildlife and aquatic species, as well providing critical ecosystem functions like flood control, groundwater recharge and water purification. FWP's Migratory Bird Wetland Program helps landowners and other conservation partners develop and fund projects that protect, conserve, enhance or create high-quality wetland habitat.

**The 2025 Migratory Bird Stamp is not required to hunt migratory birds in Montana.**

This year, all hunters who purchase a Migratory Bird Stamp will be sent an email with the winning artwork and offering them a sticker sheet.

Additionally, people want to support wetland conservation but don't hunt, they can purchase a sticker sheet and other promotional items through [Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation](#).

For winning the 2025 Migratory Bird Stamp contest, Nelson receives a \$2,000 prize paid for by contributions from Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation, Montana Audubon and Ducks Unlimited.



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@quwfinc  
Updated regularly!**

# Tags needed to bag a turkey this spring

Arkansas turkey hunters will need to add one more item to their hunting vest this season: an Arkansas Turkey Hunting Tag. The tags and a valid hunting license are required to enable the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to more accurately judge the number of hunters taking to the field in the search of a gobbler.

The resident versions of the turkey tags, labelled RTT for adults and YTT for youth hunters, are free but must be acquired through the AGFC's licensing system before the hunter takes to the woods. Even residents who hold lifetime licenses and disability licenses are required to add this free permit to their licensing account before hunting. Checking out the tags will enable all resident hunters a total of two legal gobblers.

Nonresidents have a few more hoops than resident hunters to jump through if they wish to chase an Arkansas turkey. For nonresident hunters under 16, the Nonresident Youth Turkey Tag remains free and will be the only license they need. Adult hunters, on the other hand, will need to either purchase a Nonresident Turkey Tag (NRTT) for \$100 in addition to their Nonresident Annual Hunting License (NBG), which costs \$410, or they may opt for the newly created Nonresident Annual Turkey Hunting License (NRTL), which includes a tag, for \$325.

"Many hunters who chase turkeys in Arkansas may not have an annual license from last deer season, so we wanted to offer this \$325 license as a more affordable option for nonresidents wanting to pursue turkeys in Arkansas," Brad Carner, deputy director of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, said.

"If you already hunt deer here, you can just buy the \$100 tag to add to your annual license as well. Whichever way is more economical will work."

Nonresidents who hold a Non-expiring Lifetime Hunting and Fishing Permit from their time as residents in Arkansas will still need to get the Nonresident Turkey Tag in the license system, but will not be charged the \$100 fee when they check out of the system.

Regardless of the license, all nonresidents will need to choose wisely this spring, as all nonresident options are limited to a single legal turkey per year.

"The Commission has heard from many hunters through the regulations public comment process as well as during informal conversations about the idea of reducing bag limits for turkeys to one per year in order to preserve hunt quality and protect Arkansas's turkey flock," Carner said. "Although very few hunters actually harvest two birds, the Commission did decide to opt for a more conservative limit on nonresidents after many discussions."

According to Susan Porter, AGFC licensing manager, one additional turkey tag option may appear in Arkansas's license system for some hunters. The code NBLTP represents another free turkey tag, this one specifically for Mississippi residents who are hunting land that falls under the Arkansas/Mississippi reciprocal agreement.

"They will need to have all licenses required to hunt in Mississippi, but some of these lands are on the Arkansas side of the Mississippi River, so they will need to get this free turkey tag to transport their bird back across state lines to check it with Mississippi's license system," Porter said. "That is the only scenario where a hunter in Arkansas would need this particular tag on their license profile."



**Continued on Page 23**

**Continued from Page 22** — Arkansas’s turkey season opens April 21 statewide. In Turkey Zone 1, it closes April 29; it continues through May 11 in Turkey Zone 2. The Special Youth Turkey Hunt for hunters younger than 16 is April 12-13. A full list of turkey regulations is available in the [2024-25 Arkansas Hunting Guidebook](#).

All turkeys harvested in Arkansas must be checked via [agfc.com](http://agfc.com), the AGFC mobile app or by phone within 12 hours of harvest. If they are checked immediately upon harvest, the turkey does not need a physical tag attached to it. If the hunter is unable to immediately check the bird, then they must affix a possession tag indicating the hunter’s name, CID number and the date and time of harvest that must remain with the bird until it is checked. Checking should also be more convenient this season, as the AGFC plans to roll out a new “express check” option on its website beginning with the Special Youth Turkey Hunt. Visit [www.agfc.com/licenses](http://www.agfc.com/licenses) to procure your turkey tag.

## PA game commission releases deer estimates

Pennsylvania hunters harvested about 11% more deer in the 2024-25 hunting seasons than they did the year before, according to Pennsylvania Game Commission estimates released today.

The statewide 2024-25 harvest is estimated at 476,880 deer, 175,280 of them antlered deer and 301,600 antlerless. By comparison, the statewide 2023-24 harvest was estimated at 430,010 deer.

Most of that year-over-year increase is attributable to the antlerless deer harvest. The 2024-25 buck take was up 2% over the year before, and 9% over the most recent three-year average. The 2024-25 antlerless harvest increased 17% over the year before and 21% over the three-year average.

Far from cause for concern, that was partly by design, said Game Commission Deer and Elk Section Supervisor David Stainbrook. The Game Commission’s objective was to reduce deer numbers in Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) impacted by Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), where deer impacts on forest health are occurring and where populations are increasing, contrary to objectives.

Beyond that, he said, many variables can impact harvest totals from one year to the next. That’s why wildlife managers, out of necessity, take the long view and evaluate numbers WMU by WMU.

“Harvest estimates can fluctuate from year to year from a number of factors, so we caution reading too much into annual variation in harvest,” Stainbrook said. “The trends in data are what give a truer picture of what’s going on. We manage deer over longer periods of time, for example looking at six-year population trends.”

Each and every year, however, hunters play a critical role in managing Pennsylvania’s deer populations, said Game Commission Executive Director Steve Smith. By buying their hunting licenses, obtaining available antlerless deer tags and filling them, hunters help guide local deer populations toward target levels.

**Continued on Page 24**



**Continued from Page 23** — As deer populations rise, the task becomes all the more important, Smith said. “Pennsylvania’s hunting heritage is strong, and deer season reliably brings immeasurable enjoyment to hundreds of thousands of hunters who spend fall and winter days afield with family and friends, celebrating tradition,” Smith said. “But those hunters also are key to managing an important resource so many of us care about. We rely on their commitment to conservation and they deserve our thanks.”

The Game Commission’s harvest estimates are calculated using antlered and antlerless harvest reports submitted by hunters in combination with data from deer checked by crews at processors across the state, Stainbrook said. Last season, hunters reported 147,000 deer – by far most often using the online reporting form – and Game Commission personnel checked more than 27,000 deer at processors around the state.

Across the state, about 28% of hunters took an antlered deer. That’s the highest success rate since at least the late 1980s. And, as has become the norm since the implementation of antler point restrictions, most of those bucks were older ones. Two of every three were at least 2.5 years old. That’s a huge change from decades ago, when most of the harvest was made of up 1.5-year-old deer.

Meanwhile, hunters turned about 26% of antlerless tags into a harvested deer. That’s consistent with past seasons. So, too, is the fact that about 69% of those deer were adult females.

Looking at the harvests by season, hunters once again took more deer overall in the regular statewide firearms deer season than in any other. It accounted for an estimated 283,760 deer, counting 86,530 antlered and 197,230 antlerless.

Archers, meanwhile, took an estimated 87,540 antlered deer and 90,600 antlerless, while muzzleloaders got an estimated 1,210 antlered deer and 13,770 antlerless.

A [map](#) showing a breakdown of the harvest can be found on the Commission’s website, [www.pa.gov/pgc](http://www.pa.gov/pgc).



## Nonresident license fee increases in Utah

A lot of bills were passed during the 2025 legislative session, and March 27 was the deadline for Gov. Spencer Cox to sign or veto them. There were several bills related to wildlife management that were signed into law this legislative session — here are just a few to be aware of.

### **SB8: State Agency Fees and Internal Service Fund Rate Authorization and Appropriations**

This new law allows the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources to increase nonresident license fees up to double the previous cost in order to purchase large blocks of land for hunting and fishing. However, the bill does not mandate that those fees will automatically increase by double. All resident fees will remain the same.

“We’re reviewing the intended goals of the legislation and are evaluating each fee based on the relevant market values of neighboring states and the opportunities we offer,” DWR Director Riley Peck said. “This legislation is intended to increase revenue to allow us to purchase public land for the specific use of protecting wintering wildlife populations. The legislature also allocated \$50M to the DWR, specifically for the purchase of large land parcels to secure hunting and fishing on these properties into the future.”

#### **Hunting and fishing fees for nonresidents will be increased, as follows:**

- Nonresident hunting, fishing and combination license fees will not double, but will see a moderate adjustment. Nonresident 365-day fishing licenses will increase from \$34 to \$49 for youth and from \$94 to \$120 for adults. Nonresident 365-day hunting licenses will increase from \$34 to \$44 for youth and from \$120 to \$144 for adults. Nonresident combination licenses will increase from \$38 to \$58 for youth and from \$150 to \$190 for adults. This change will be in effect July 1, 2025.

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- Hunt drawing application fees for nonresident hunters will also not be doubled. The new price will be \$21 per application, a \$5 increase, beginning on Sept. 1, 2025. There will be no changes to the fees for any applications, licenses and permits offered through the current 2025 big game application period.
- Nonresident hunting permit fees will be right-sized to value, based on the species and permit type. For example, limited-entry permit fees will be adjusted more than general-season permit fees, and once-in-a-lifetime species permit fees will generally see a higher increase, proportionally, than other permits. Nonresident buck deer permits for general-season hunts will increase from \$418 to \$599, and limited-entry permits will increase from \$670 to \$1,070. Nonresident bull elk permits for general-season hunts will increase from \$613 to \$849, and limited-entry permits will increase from \$1,050 to \$1,950.



These permit fee changes will not go through the DWR’s typical public process of review — involving the Regional Advisory Councils and Utah Wildlife Board — since they have already received legislative approval.

Changes to nonresident license fees will go into effect on July 1, 2025, and changes to drawing application fees and hunting permits will go into effect Sept. 1, 2025.

**HB309: Wildlife Amendments**

This new law requires anyone 18 years old or older to possess a hunting, fishing or combination license to access a wildlife management area or waterfowl management area in counties that are designated as “class one” or “class two” counties, which includes the following: Davis, Salt Lake, Utah and Weber. The law also updated the definition of a WMA, so there are less than 30 WMAs in the four counties where this new legislation applies.

Wildlife management areas and waterfowl management areas are properties owned and managed by the DWR for the following purposes:

- Conserving critical wildlife habitats
- Helping to minimize and mitigate wildlife depredation on private property
- Providing places where Utahns can go to hunt and fish

Currently, there are 194 WMAs throughout Utah, totaling over 500,000 acres, or 780 square miles. The WMAs range in size from a couple dozen acres to over 50,000 acres.

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**Continued from Page 25 — This new law also made a few additional changes, including:**

- Requiring a Utah Wildlife Board member to have a current, valid hunting or combination license while serving on the board, as well as possessing a license or permit at least three of the five years before becoming a board member.
- Requiring a Regional Advisory Council member to have a current, valid hunting or combination license while serving on the council, as well as possessing a license or permit at least three of the five years before becoming a council member.
- Clarifying the language for when a person can engage in night hunting for nonprotected wildlife.
- Updating details about depredation payments for livestock owners who have animals killed by wildlife.

This new law goes into effect May 7, 2025.

**HB378: Department of Natural Resources Funding Amendments**

This law levies a tax on certain new energy development projects. The additional revenue will go into the [Species Protection Account](#), which funds projects that benefit Utah’s native species populations and helps keep them healthy to prevent listings under the federal Endangered Species Act.

“This legislation is a big win for Utah’s native species in need of conservation attention,” DWR Habitat Section Assistant Chief Paul Thompson said. “The [Utah Wildlife Action Plan](#) identifies species and habitats that are in need of conservation, and this ongoing funding provided by renewable energy sources will greatly benefit this conservation work.”

This new law goes into effect Jan. 1, 2026.

**HB244: Wildlife Management Area Amendments**

This law creates a new waterfowl management area on state sovereign lands in northern Utah: The Bear River Bay Waterfowl Management Area. **The new WMA will be managed to:**

- Protect and sustain waterfowl, upland gamebirds, shorebirds, and other migratory and nonmigratory birds that use the Great Salt Lake ecosystem and surrounding wetlands.
- Preserve and enhance the natural function, vegetation and water flows under
- existing or acquired water rights to provide wildlife habitat.
- Provide recreational opportunities for hunting, fishing, trapping and wildlife viewing and public access for those activities through airboat and other small watercraft use.

This law goes into effect May 7, 2025.

**SB149: Natural Resources Modifications**

This new law allows the DWR to regulate hunting guides and outfitters in the state. Previously, guides and outfitters were regulated by the Utah Division of Professional Licensing. The law requires a guide, outfitter or spotter — who is being paid to assist individuals in hunting or fishing activities — to obtain a certificate of registration and pay a fee to the DWR. The legislation outlines the parameters of when a guide, outfitter or spotter can be compensated for their services and when their certificate of registration can be revoked.

The new law allows up to three guides, outfitters or spotters to assist a permit holder on a bighorn sheep, bison, moose or mountain goat hunt on public land. Permit holders for all other big game hunts are allowed up to two guides, outfitters or spotters on public land.

This part of the law goes into effect July 1, 2025.

For all your chapter needs, please call Leslie Casanova [direct](#) at Sportsman Insurance Agency at 1-800-925-7767.  
In most cases, Leslie can have your insurance the same day!  
Also, any questions concerning banquets and/or vendor programs, please call the QUWF National Office at (417) 345-5960.

# MDC reports 243 new cases of CWD

**JEFFERSON CITY, Mo.** – The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reports it has confirmed 243 new cases of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in Missouri deer in 35 counties. Seven of those counties had their first CWD-positive case: Audrain, Callaway, Lewis, Marion, Miller, Morgan, and Texas.

The CWD-positive cases were found through sampling and testing of more than 36,000 deer during the past deer-hunting season and post-season targeted-removal efforts with most cases being from hunter-harvested deer submitted for sampling.

Missouri has an estimated population of more than 1.5 million white-tailed deer in the state. CWD is a 100% fatal disease in white-tailed deer and other members of the deer family. The disease has been attributed to significant deer population declines in other states and threatens Missouri's deer population, hunting culture, and economy.

Most of the new CWD positive cases were from the more than 276,000 deer harvested during the 2024-2025 deer-hunting season.

MDC confirmed an additional 70 cases of CWD found through its targeted-removal efforts of 4,768 deer after the close of the deer season in localized areas near where CWD has been found.

“The goal of targeted removal is to remove CWD-positive deer and reduce deer density in these localized areas to slow the spread of CWD and protect Missouri's deer herd,” explained MDC Wildlife Health Program Supervisor Deb Hudman. “Targeted removal is a proven method to slow the spread of CWD and Missouri is one of several states that uses it to manage the disease.”

For more details on Post-Season Targeted Removal, visit [mdc.mo.gov/cwd](https://mdc.mo.gov/cwd).

Those new cases bring the total number of CWD positives found in the state to 815 over 46 counties since the first positive CWD case was found in wild deer by MDC in early 2012.

Although the number of CWD-positive counties increased, Hudman noted that CWD management efforts have kept infection rates low.

“Less than 1% of samples tested positive for CWD,” said Hudman.

According to MDC, hunters and landowners are critical partners in the fight against CWD and can assist the Department by continuing to deer hunt, by participating in CWD sampling, by following regulations designed to slow CWD spread, and by cooperating with targeted removal efforts. Learn more about CWD at [mdc.mo.gov/cwd](https://mdc.mo.gov/cwd).



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