

The Basics of Turkey Hunting in Washington



Photo by Curt Fretz



**Washington Department
of Fish and Wildlife**
Wildlife Program
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The information contained in this manual was collected from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife website (wdfw.wa.gov) and its employees unless otherwise cited. (2016)

Introduction

Welcome to turkey hunting! This course should provide you with basic knowledge about turkey hunting in Washington State and give you a general guide to be successful. It should also serve to help you in your hunting pursuits.

In our Basic Hunter Education course, we teach students how to hunt safely. This course is designed to give you an overview of the biology and habits of Washington's turkey species and how to hunt them effectively. This guide will also help teach you about game handling, hunting equipment regulations and choices, correct shot placement, hunter reporting, and much more. These topics will help you become more knowledgeable as a hunter and make the animals you harvest become great table fare.

One thing to remember when pursuing any animal is that it is called hunting for a reason. You may not be successful in harvesting an animal every day, or every season. That's part of the enduring challenge and fun of hunting. Each season brings a new opportunity to hone your skills. To properly set your expectations, check the annual harvest statistics, which are posted on the WDFW website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/game-harvest>.

For most of us, hunting is about much more than a successful harvest. It's about spending time afield bonding with family and friends, watching the sunrise over the mountains on a crisp fall morning, and having exciting stories to tell when you get home.



Photos by WDFW and Shari Brewer

License Choices

WDFW offers many different licenses that allow you to hunt various game species in Washington. To hunt turkey in Washington, you will need to purchase a small game license and a turkey transport tag. You can also receive a discount if you purchase your small game license and a big game license as a combination license. Remember that you will not receive the discount unless the license items are purchased at the same time.

License choices are as follows:

- Small Game License
 - Allows you to hunt small game like upland birds and rabbits, as well as unclassified animals such as coyote.
- Any of the big game combos with the discounted small game license
 - Allows you to hunt the big game species denoted by the license, small game, and unclassified animals.

To hunt turkeys you must also purchase a turkey transport tag. You can harvest up to seven turkeys during the course of the hunting season. Three turkeys can be harvested during the spring season from April to May.

Only two (2) turkeys may be taken in eastern Washington and only one (1) of those may be taken in Chelan, Kittitas, and Yakima counties (combined); only one (1) turkey may be taken in western Washington per year outside of Klickitat County. Two (2) turkeys may be taken in Klickitat County.

Three additional turkeys may be harvested in early fall season in some GMUs, and one more turkey can be harvested in the late fall season. Remember that you cannot turn tags in for refunds, so you may want to buy as you hunt. Tags purchased during the spring season can be used in the fall season, since the tags are not tied to a specific season.



Photo by Joe Biggs

Turkey tag purchasers are required to report their turkey tags before the deadline of January 31. There is a section at the end of this booklet that provides you step by step instructions on how to report your tags.

Turkey Subspecies

Washington State is home to three sub-species of turkey. They are the Eastern, Merriam's, and Rio Grande. In 1960, Merriam's turkeys were introduced into NE and south central Washington State for hunting purposes. Since then, WDFW has introduced Eastern and Rio Grande sub-species to other suitable parts of the state. Turkeys now can be found in five of the six regions recognized by WDFW. Region 4 is the only area that currently does not have turkeys. Below is a map of the turkey distribution in Washington.

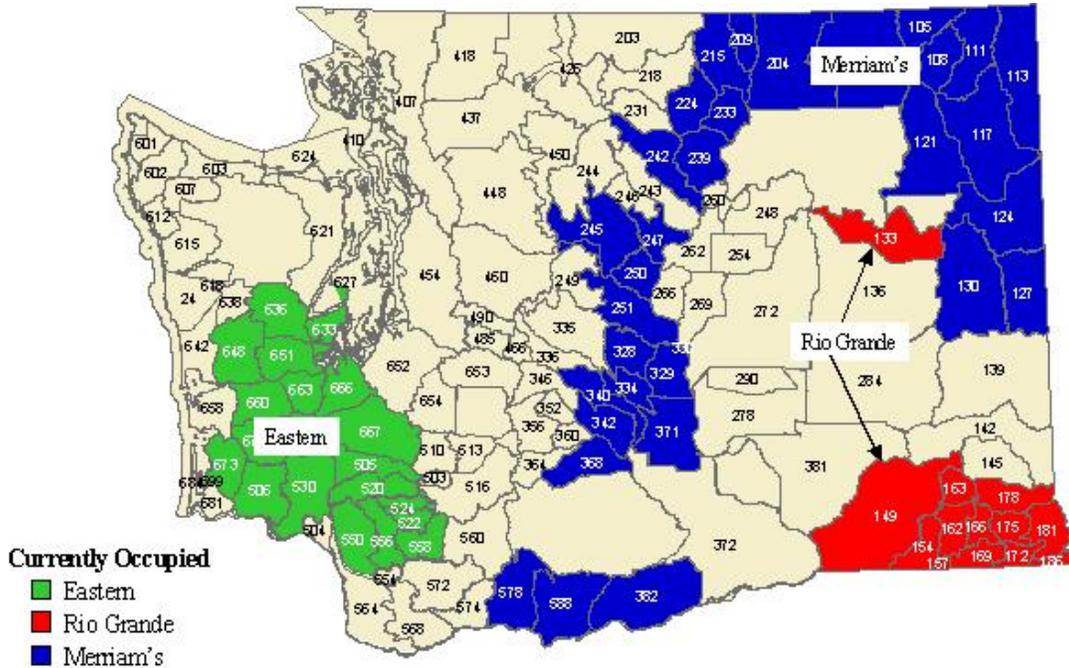


Photo by National Wild Turkey Federation

Eastern

The eastern subspecies was transplanted to Washington from the eastern United States. These turkeys like to live in forests with a mix of evergreen and deciduous trees. The trees they like to use are Douglas fir, western hemlock, western red cedar, red alder, and big leaf maple. They also like to eat the soft mast of Pacific dogwood, hawthorn, Oregon grapes, huckleberries, blackberries, cherries, and crab apples. The Eastern wild turkey is found in western Washington and only about 50 are harvested each year.

- Chestnut brown tail coverts
- Tail feather tips are buff or chocolate brown
- Adults may weigh 25 lbs. or more

Merriam's

Merriam turkeys are native to the coniferous mountains and canyons of Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona. They live in the canyons and forests of northeast and central Washington. These turkeys prefer forests that contain ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, western white pine, Engelman spruce, Douglas maple, willows, cottonwoods, and aspens. In Washington, they eat grass leaves and seeds, ponderosa pine seeds, acorns, grasshoppers, forbs, and fruits like wild strawberries. Also, they prefer to roost in Douglas fir and grand fir trees.

- White or buff tail coverts
- Nearly white tail tips
- May weigh up to 25 lbs.



Photo by WDFW



Photo by National Wild Turkey Federation

Rio Grande

Texas, Kansas, and Oklahoma are the native stomping grounds for the Rio Grande turkey. These are the only species in Washington that prefers to nest within .25 miles of a permanent water source. Their winter roost sites are normally in wooded streamside areas. They eat insects, grass and sedge seed heads, hackberry, prickly pear, fruit and seeds of various shrubs, and the foliage and forbs of grasses. The Rio Grande turkey is found from Spokane and Lincoln counties south into the Blue Mountains of Washington.

- Light brown tail coverts
- Buff/tan tail tips
- Legs appear longer than other varieties

Hunting Techniques

Most turkey hunting is done in the spring when male turkeys (toms) are displaying to female turkeys (hens) in a bid to become their mate. The great thing about spring hunting is that the birds are generally vocal and respond to calls and decoys. In Washington you can harvest up to three turkeys during the spring season.

Fall hunting is a bit different than spring hunting because the birds are gathering for the upcoming winter months. They are generally just feeding and moving throughout the day. Hunters can harvest up to four turkeys during the general fall seasons. An additional bird can also be harvested during the fall special permit season if you put in for and are drawn for a special permit.

Spring Hunting

Spring turkey season is a great way to get outdoors after a long winter. You can use a locator call to determine if there are toms or jakes (immature tom) in an area. Often toms will respond with a shock gobble to any loud, sudden noise. Once the season opens, use locator calls or hen yelps to locate a tom. When you get a response, set up your blind or find a location to easily conceal yourself. Look for meadows or small openings in areas with a lot of food. It is recommended to sit with your back to a tree, stump, or hill side to protect you from another hunter and help with camouflaging you. If you have a decoy, try to place it about 20 yards from where you will be sitting. Once you are set up, use your turkey call to draw in the birds. Generally hunters use hen yelps, clucks, and purrs to draw in toms.

Fall Hunting

Hunting turkey during the fall is similar to hunting deer. Turkeys are generally in larger flocks made up of hens and their offspring or smaller groups of toms. Look for travel corridors and feeding areas that the birds are using. Set up an ambush point on travel routs between the roost tree and the feeding area. Set up similar to the spring hunting information above. Sometimes you can coax hens closer to your ambush point by using some soft hen calls and juvenile turkey 'kee kees'. Listen to the birds and imitate the calls they are making.

General Turkey Information

Food and Feeding Habits

Wild turkeys will eat just about anything that provides them with nutrition. They will eat fresh green vegetation, seeds, fruit, invertebrates, plants, and sometimes small lizards or frogs. A field full of grasshoppers in turkey country is sure to attract birds. Turkeys feed right after flying down from the roost in the early morning and in the evening.

Tracks

Turkey tracks can be found in snow, soft mud, or light dirt areas. Their track is very distinctive. It is about four inches long, characterized by three long toes that face forward, and one little toe that faces back, about one inch. The middle toe of the hen is smaller (less than 2 ½ inches) than a mature tom (more than 2 ½ inches). When strutting, toms will also leave wing drag marks.



Photo by Andy Arthur

Droppings

Turkey droppings somewhat resemble goose droppings and can be useful in determining the gender of the bird who left it behind. They are similar in size but not always in color. Hen droppings are usually a single pile while a tom usually leaves an elongated "J" shaped dropping about two inches long. Finding droppings may signify that this area is being used by turkeys. But

it also may mean that they just passed through. Try a locator call or soft clucks and yelps if you find a lot of droppings to see if there are turkeys in the area. If you find a lot of droppings below a tree, you may have found the roost tree. Make sure to take note of where the tree is so you can use the knowledge to your advantage.



Hen Droppings
Photo by Rich Mann



Tom Droppings
Photo by Rich Mann

Roosting Areas

Turkeys generally roost in trees. However during nesting season, some hens may stay on the nest to protect the eggs. During the summer, most roost areas are 30-100 foot trees that are close to where the birds have been feeding. Winter roosts seem to be more deliberate and the turkeys generally use traditional night time roosts. They like to use the largest trees in a grove and tend to roost as near to the top of the tree as comfortably possible. Hunting birds at the roost site may disrupt normal patterns and is not recommended. Set up about 70 or more yards from a roost site and call the birds to you when hunting.

Hunting Equipment

Legal hunting equipment is as diverse as the companies that create and sell them. There are many books that have been written about the different types and uses of firearms and archery equipment. With limited space and time, the regulations for the hunting equipment will be discussed below. Legal hunting equipment for turkey hunting is limited to shotgun, muzzleloading shotgun, archery, or crossbow in Washington. This section details legal hunting equipment at the time of the writing of this booklet.

Shotguns

Shotguns are the most widely used hunting equipment when hunting turkeys. Any shotgun can make a good turkey gun as long as it shoots straight and can have a full or extra full choke. The choke helps group the shot together. Some



Photo by Brad Johansson

shotguns have interchangeable choke tubes and a threaded barrel that allows shooters to change their shotgun's choke based on their needs for shooting/hunting. If your shotgun does not have an interchangeable choke there are some ammunition companies that have developed turkey loads that are designed for use without super tight chokes. Hunters must use #4 shot or smaller (e.g., #6 shot is legal) to hunt turkey. Remember that the larger the number of shot, the smaller it is.

It is unlawful to hunt game birds, including turkey, with a shotgun capable of holding more than three shells. Make sure your shotgun holds three or fewer shells. If it is designed to hold more than three, the manufacturer should have also supplied a magazine plug to fill the space to only allow the three rounds.

Muzzleloading Shotguns

Muzzleloaders come in all makes and models. No matter who manufactures the muzzleloader, it has to meet the following criteria to be legal to hunt wild turkey within Washington State:

- Muzzleloader: A firearm that is loaded from the muzzle and uses black powder or a black powder substitute.
- A muzzleloading firearm shall be considered loaded if a powder charge and a projectile, either shot or single projectile, are in the barrel and the barrel or breech is capped or primed.
- It is unlawful to hunt wildlife using a muzzleloading firearm that does not meet the following specifications:
 - A muzzleloading shotgun must have a single or double barrel
 - A muzzleloading shotgun used for turkey must shoot #4 or smaller shot.
 - Persons lawfully hunting small game with a double barrel, muzzleloading shotgun may keep both barrels loaded.

Muzzleloaders are a great way to hunt with a method that has been around for hundreds of years. With muzzleloaders, make sure you use a black powder or black powder substitute that is rated for your muzzleloader. If you use the incorrect powder, it could be disastrous. Some other helpful safety hints include:

- Never fill the muzzleloader directly from the powder can as it could spark and ignite the powder in the can.
- Mark your ramrod when the muzzleloader is empty so you can make sure it is empty upon storage.
- Be sure to seat the wad and shot directly on top of the powder charge.
- Store powder and percussion caps in separate dry and cool places.

Beware of what is known as a hang fire. This happens when the trigger is pulled, the percussion cap ignites, but the firearm does not go off. Make sure to keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction for at least 30 seconds. If it still does not fire in that 30 seconds, put on another cap or re-prime the pan, and fire again. Make sure the nipple is clean on percussion locks.

Archery Equipment

Archery equipment consists of many types of bows that are commercially available today. All of these bows have to meet the following criteria to be used to hunt wild turkey in Washington State.

- Mechanical broadheads are legal to use for all archery hunting.
- It is unlawful to have any electrical equipment or electric device(s) except for illuminated nocks, attached to the bow or arrow while hunting.
- It is unlawful to shoot a bow and arrow from a vehicle or from, across, or along the maintained portion of a public highway.
- It is unlawful to use any device secured to or supported by the bow for the purpose of maintaining the bow at full draw or in a firing position.
- It is unlawful to hunt wildlife with any bow equipped with a scope.

Bows can generally be placed in one of two categories, compound or traditional. Compound bows are the most popular hunting bow because of their ease of use. The mechanics of the bow allow for the shooter to more easily draw and hold than the traditional bows. The compounds have what is called let off. At a certain point in the draw, the draw weight is reduced by as much as 85%. These bows are always strung and ready to go.

Traditional bows are either Long Bows or Recurve Bows. There is no mechanical let off when holding these bows at full draw. However, these bows are just as effective at harvesting animals as compound bows (if you are proficient with them). These bows have to be strung before use because if you kept the bow strung it would lose power by forming to the strung position.

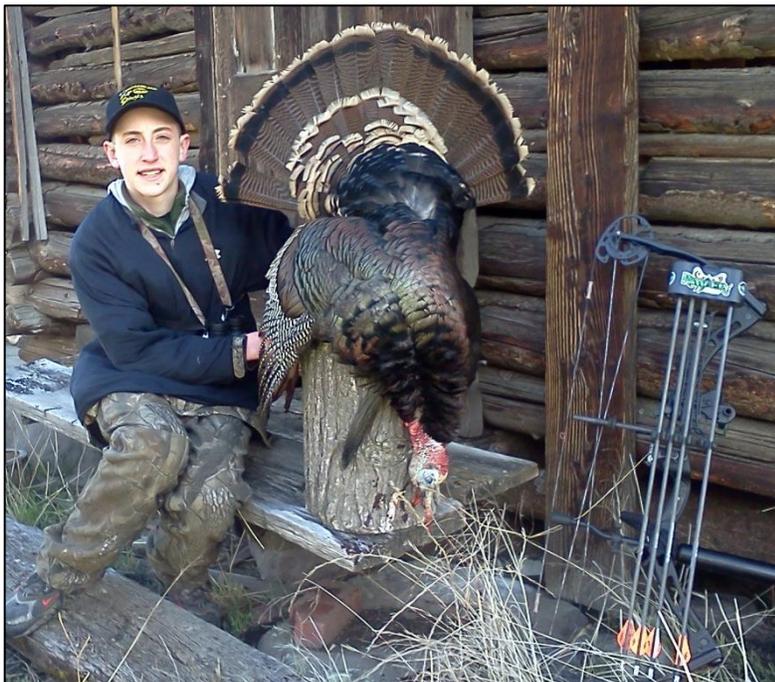


Photo by Wyatt Taylor

There are several types of arrows available for hunters, generally constructed of wood, aluminum, or carbon fiber. Refer to the manufacturer's table to determine which arrow type and size fit your bow and shooting conditions. If you are unsure of the arrows to purchase, consult with an archery retailer, and they can help determine which is appropriate for your bow. Broadheads should be used when hunting with archery equipment. These also come in many different shapes and sizes.

There is a broadhead that has outstretched blades designed to

be shot at the neck region. These are called guillotine broadheads. Guillotine broadheads are designed to decapitate the turkey, hence the name. These should only be used if you are 100% confident that you can accurately hit the target. You may want to purchase the same weight broadhead as the field points you are using for target practice to minimize sight adjustment in your bow.

Crossbows

Crossbows were made legal to hunt with in 2015. Crossbows are gaining popularity amongst hunters because of their accuracy and speed. It is unlawful to discharge a crossbow from a vehicle or from, across, or along the maintained portion of a public highway.

- Mechanical broadheads are legal to use for all archery hunting.
- Guillotine broadheads can also be used with crossbows.

Clothing and Concealment

In hunting as in everything else, if you are not comfortable you won't enjoy your experiences as much as if you were comfortable. This is why how you dress is being covered in this manual. Below are some suggestions on choosing boots, camouflage clothing, and blinds. Remember that these are suggestions and finding what works for you is the key.

Remember to obtain permission from the landowner prior to placing ground blinds and if you are on public land, check the regulations of the agency that owns the land.

Boots

Hunting boots will help support your ankles and also keep your feet dry and warm. Wet and/or cold feet when hunting can make for an uncomfortable day. Some boots have insulation in them to help combat the cold. When choosing a boot, think about the kinds of hunting you will be doing and the temperatures in which you will be hunting. If you are primarily an eastern Washington hunter, you may want to get the boots with 2000 grams of insulation to help on those frigid mornings. But you also may have some hot foot issues when hunting turkey in May.

Layering

When dressing for any hunt, make sure to take into consideration what you may be doing. Dressing in layers will allow you to regulate your body temperature more efficiently. The idea is to wear only the layers that you need to stay warm and dry at the time, but have the option to take a layer off or put another layer on if conditions change. In cool weather, for instance, you'll probably want to wear fewer layers to hike up a steep incline, but will want to put another layer or two on once you are setup at your hunting spot and likely to be sitting for a while. A tough pair of jeans or brush pants also may be a good idea to help protect your legs when working in brush.

Camouflage

When turkey hunting, you can wear camouflage clothing to help conceal yourself from the birds. The number of camouflage patterns and manufacturers is dizzying. Just remember to try to match a pattern with the kind of habitat and climate you are going to hunt. Several of the bigger camo pattern companies have all purpose patterns that will work in a lot of different locations. These can be effective if you are unsure of where you may be hunting. If all else fails, you can use the old style of green, brown, and black camo that is common in popular culture. Remember to camouflage your face with a face covering or face paint and your hands with gloves. A turkey vest is another good investment as it generally has a seat cushion built into it.

The basic idea of camo clothing is to break up the outline of your silhouette and get you to blend into the habitat. Animals are instinctively afraid of humans and if they see the shape of a human, they will not stick around for you to possibly get a shot at them.

Sometimes no camo is better than a contrasting camo pattern. If you are hunting the timber for turkey and are wearing camo that was designed for waterfowl hunting, you will stick out like a sore thumb. At that point, wear clothing that is similar in color to the surrounding country.

Also, because the weather in the Pacific Northwest is generally wet, having warm waterproof camouflage clothing can increase your comfort level and improve the experience.

Blinds

Turkeys have outstanding vision, so minimizing movement and being totally concealed is the key. Ground blinds are becoming more and more popular. Commercial ground blinds are designed to pop up and provide total concealment on the ground. Just popping this blind up does not guarantee concealment, so try to place brush and cover around the blind to help conceal it. Make sure to keep the windows in the back zipped up so as to not silhouette yourself. Ground blinds should be set out in advance of your hunt, if possible, so the game become accustomed to the blind.

Blinds can also be constructed with burlap, 1 x 1's, spray-paint, and some string. Cut the 1 x 1's to about a four foot section. Drill holes in the 1 x 1's and lace the burlap to them. Spray paint the wood to be a dark color and put streaks of green, black, and tan on the burlap. You will then have your own blind that is easy to transport.

Depending on the surroundings, you may be able to fashion a very functional blind from available materials such as tree limbs, grass, or sagebrush. Be sure to "brush up" any blind with whatever natural vegetation occurs at the site you're hunting.

Where you build or place your blind may well be as important as how it looks and how well it hides you. As a general rule it's best to be situated with the wind in your face for turkey. If you are not sure of the wind direction, there are wind indicators that can be purchased from sporting goods stores. One of the most used is a powder in a squeeze bottle that will create a puff of smoke and drift with the wind. Also you can use the old standby of picking up some dry

grass and dropping that from about eye height and it should give you an indication of the wind direction.

Turkey vest

Some hunters also choose to purchase a turkey vest. This is a tool that will help carry gear into the turkey woods more easily. These vests also generally have a foam seat to help make hunters comfortable when sitting for long periods of time.

Knives

There are about as many types of knives available in today's sporting goods stores as there are people to buy them. They have many different shapes, uses, designs, and materials. One thing to keep in mind is a sharp knife is a good knife. Any knife can be used to care for your game. However, some are designed specifically for different jobs. When picking a knife, you will want to find something that works for you. Keep a sharpener in your pack for touching up the blade when field dressing the animal.

Optics

Generally you do not need a spotting scope or binoculars for turkey hunting. However, they are helpful to locate birds, observe their movements, or watch them go to their roost.

You will notice optics have a designation such as 8 x 42. These numbers correspond to the construction. The first number is the level of magnification. In the 8 x 42 example, the image is magnified 8 times. The second number is the diameter of the objective lens of the optic. In the 8 x 42 example, the objective lens is 42mm wide. The higher the objective lens, the bulkier the optics can be. However, the larger the objective lens, the clearer the image will be, due to more light entering. You may want to go into a sporting goods store and test out some of the optics before deciding on a specific size or model.

Calls

There are many types of calls that can be used for turkey hunting. They generally fall into two types – friction and air operated calls. Most calls are used to simulate the calls of a hen turkey. A couple of calls do imitate the gobbling of a mature tom. However, these calls can also call in other hunters looking to harvest a mature tom and should be used sparingly. Practice makes perfect when using these calls. Take some time, read the directions from the manufacturer, and practice calling when you can. Below are some of the calls that are used for calling turkeys.



Friction calls

Pot and peg call - These calls are also sometimes called slate calls due to the materials traditionally used to construct the striking surface. However, many more materials are being used and produce the same great sound. The call works by causing friction between the striker (the pen looking stick) and the face of the call.

Photo by WDFW

Box call - The box call is aptly named as it is basically a box with a movable lid to make the sounds. Calls are made by putting pressure on the lid and drawing it against the edges of the box.



Photo by WDFW

Push button call - These calls are very easy to operate but sometimes do not give you the versatility of a slate call or box call. Push button calls are generally mounted on the shotgun or crossbow and used for the last few calls. It makes a yelping sound which can cause the turkey to pause and give the hunter their shot.

Air Operated Calls

Diaphragm call - This is the most difficult of the calls to master. Since all you are using is your mouth to make the call function, it can be very frustrating to learn. This method frees your hands up to do other things while calling, such as aiming at a strutting tom. This call requires a lot of practice to become proficient. One trick to practicing is keeping the call in your car. Call to yourself while commuting to work, going to the grocery store, or scouting for any other hunting season.



Photo by Rich Mann

Locator call

You might have seen crow, owl, hawk, or even peacock calls on the shelves in the sporting goods stores and wondered who in the world is hunting those birds. These are known as locator calls. During the spring months, tom turkeys will gobble at just about any loud, sudden sound. Using a locator call will help locate the turkeys without bringing them to your location. Locating the flock will give you a better idea of where and how to set up once the season begins.

Gobble tube

This call is shaken to produce gobbling type sounds. It can be effective for challenging and bringing in mature toms, but can also call in other hunters.

Wingbone call - The wingbone was traditionally made from the wing bones of the turkey. There are commercially available calls made from plastic materials as well. This call makes yelps and clucks but can be difficult to operate without the proper practice. It does require you to use your mouth to make the call, but does not offer the hands free calling that the diaphragm call offers.



Photo by Rich Mann

Decoys

Turkey decoys can be effective when hunting. They can attract, distract, challenge, or instill confidence in the turkey you have your eyes on. Decoys come as a Hen, Jake, or Tom. The Hen decoy is great for pulling in toms that are strutting in spring. Jake or small bodied tom decoys can be used to bring in toms that feel they are challenged for their hens. Some decoy safety tips are:

- Don't carry an uncovered decoy
- Establish a minimum 50 yard line of sight
- Set the decoy about 20 yards out from your blind
- Look before you move
- Call out to an approaching hunter. Do not wave your hand

Where to Go

Finding hunting access on private lands in Washington State is becoming more of a challenge. However, there are still a number of options available to hunters on public land. WDFW's wildlife areas are good places to start. WDFW also has a lot of private landowners who have signed up to allow public hunting access on their lands. These lands can be found on the WDFW Hunting Access webpage <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations> as well as a booklet on how to find hunting access.

The "Hunting Regulations Webmap" provides users with a different way to review the Hunting Regulations. Users can explore regulations data by either selecting criteria for a search or clicking on the map to find out what hunts are available for their selected Hunt Type. In addition, it has the capabilities to look at public/private ownership, show private lands hunting opportunities, map water access sites, and display satellite imagery. The data shown in this webmap are an extension of the printed PDF pamphlet and not an authoritative source of WDFW hunting regulations. This tool is also available for use on smart phones. It can be found online at <https://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/huntregs/>.

If hunters want to gain access to private property, they should scout their desired area and locate lands they might want to hunt. Once a hunter has located properties to hunt, he or she can knock on the door of the landowner. If the hunter can't locate a house, landowner contact information can be obtained from the county tax assessor office. Landowners may refuse to grant permission. If they do refuse access, make sure to thank them for their time. Hunters who are persistent in their search will most likely gain access to some lightly hunted areas and make new friends along the way. Other options include hunt clubs and hiring a guide who has access to private farms and ranches.

The department's website contains annual hunting prospects that detail WDFW biologist's expectations for hunting for the current year's seasons. These prospects are broken into 17 districts that mark where a particular biologist is responsible. Hunters can find the hunting prospects online at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations>.

Hunting Ethics

All hunters should be hunting ethically. There are many interpretations on ethics and what they mean, but before starting your hunt, think of what you believe is ethical and put it against what the public as a whole may think is ethical. Being ethical hunters will improve public perceptions of hunting and will benefit the sport. WDFW encourages you to raise your ethical bar to the highest level.

Some things that are considered un-ethical in regards to hunting are:

- Shooting at birds when they are outside your hunting equipment's effective range.
- Shooting birds while on the land, water, or foliage
- Hogging all of the shots from your hunting party
- Shooting a deer or elk at 1000 yards
- Using a bow or firearm that is not properly sighted in

Shot Placement

Shot placement is crucial when trying to harvest a turkey. As ethical sportsmen and women, we should strive to only take good shots and make the most humane kill. This can be achieved by only shooting when you are 100% confident in the shot. Part of being confident is practicing with your hunting equipment before the hunt. Another way to be confident would be to know exactly where to put the shot. Also be sure to note if there are any obstructions between you and the turkey when shooting. A branch or twig can significantly impact a projectile's trajectory. Below are suggested shot locations when harvesting turkey with the two different types of hunting equipment types.

Shotgun

No matter which shotgun you are using, a head/neck shot is the preferred method for harvesting turkeys. This prevents meat loss due to shooting up the breasts and turning them to hamburger. Aim for the middle of the neck right where the feathers start to appear.



Photo by National Wild Turkey Federation

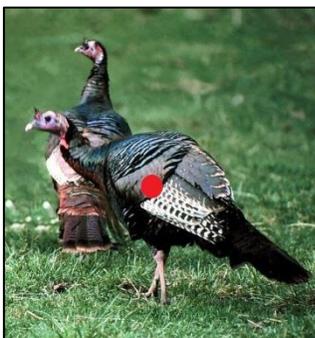


Photo by WDFW

Archery/Crossbow

If you are shooting the guillotine style broadheads that are meant to decapitate the bird, aim just like you were using a shotgun. With regular broadheads you will want to aim for the vitals that are just below the wing joint when broadside, base of the tail when the tom is strutting and facing away, or just above the beard when facing head on.

the spine up and under the lungs. Grasp the heart and gizzard and pull out the entrails.

You can remove the crop (a sac filled with what the turkey's been eating) by making a cut on the neck of the turkey and reaching down and removing it (step B). This can be done in the field or at home since there are no fluids that may contaminate the meat. The crop is located at the top of the breast. The crop has a thin membrane so remove it carefully so that you don't break it open. Rinse out the carcass with water and wipe with paper towels if you have these available. It is never recommended to store meat that is wet.

Plucking turkey is a very time intensive task. To make it easier, you can boil water in a large stock pot that will allow the bird to be dipped into the water. Do the dipping outside as the large bird will likely make the stock pot overflow boiling water. Be Careful! This lightly cooks the skin and makes the feathers easier to remove. If you do not have a stock pot that large you can just pluck them without the water.

Remove the feet by cutting around the knee area making sure to sever the tendons. Bend it to the side to make this easier. Discard the feet unless you are feeling adventurous and want to try bird feet. You may want to save the beard and spurs as a memento of your hunt. Check out YouTube for how to save mementos of your turkey hunt.

Once you have the bird plucked, wash the bird and pat it dry. Now you are ready to have some great table fare!

Hunter Reporting

Hunter reporting is an integral part of hunting any animal that requires a tag. It allows WDFW staff to accurately measure the harvest, and coupled with winter surveys of the animal species will help with setting the next year's hunting seasons. Since the information is necessary for WDFW to effectively manage the game animals, this is a mandatory report even if you did not harvest. If you fail to report by the deadline of January 31 then you will be subject to a \$10 administrative penalty. Remember that you have to report on all tags that you purchase except cougar. Below is a step by step process to report your tags. If you have trouble with the online system, you can also call 877-945-3492 and report by phone.

- Go to fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov
- Under the "I want to Submit" section on the left hand side (Highlighted in Orange), Select "Hunter Report".
- Select the "Submit Report" Box in the top left hand corner of the page.
- Enter all customer information fields. Then click "GO".
- If an error occurs, "customer not found, please try your search again." Verify the information that was entered.
- Select the first species under the "Choose a tag to report on:" section.
- Answer all questions that are on the screen. The questions will change based on the answers provided.

- When completed, the report will issue a message that says, “You have finished the hunter report. Click FINISH to save all of your answers. Click “FINISH” when completed.
- A confirmation page will come up that will show the report has been submitted successfully.
- Write down the submittal date and the confirmation number, this information may need to be referenced at a future date.
- When completed use the Back button on the screen and it will take you back to the page that shows which tags need to be reported on or have been reported.
- Repeat the process for all tags with an outstanding report.
- This information is used to set future hunting seasons in conjunction with WDFW field staff population surveys.

Ten Basic Safety Rules

1. Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction and under control.
2. Treat every firearm as if it were loaded.
3. Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to fire. Use your safety, but remember that safeties sometimes fail.
4. Be sure of your target and what lies beyond before firing.
5. Never place or carry a loaded firearm in a motor vehicle.
6. Never use a firearm unless you are familiar with how it works. If you need an owner's manual, write to the manufacturer.
7. Never cross a fence, climb a tree, cross a stream or jump a ditch with a loaded firearm.
8. Never point at anything you do not want to shoot.
9. Unload firearms when not in use. Store firearms and ammunition separately.
10. Never use alcohol (or drugs) before or during shooting.

Learn More about WDFW's Hunter Education Program

Website

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/huntered/>

Email

huntered@dfw.wa.gov

Regional Offices

Region 1 Spokane Office: (509) 892-1001
Region 2 Ephrata Office: (509) 754-4624
Region 3 Yakima Office: (509) 575-2740
Region 4 Mill Creek Office: (425) 775-1311
Region 5 Vancouver Office: (360) 696-6211
Region 6 Montesano Office: (360) 239-4628
Headquarters Olympia Office: (360) 902-8111

More Information

For more information about the Hunter Education Program, contact our staff in Olympia at (360) 902-8111.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

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If you need further assistance or information, please contact the Olympia office of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife: (360) 902-2349, or Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), (360) 902-2207.