

Kentucky Afield Outdoors: Spring turkey season approaching



The landscape awakens almost spontaneously from its winter slumber. Winter flocks break up into smaller groups. Innumerable turkey calls and lifelike decoys reappear at sporting goods retailers.

Turkey hunters interpret these occurrences as signs that it will not be long before they are easing into their spots before dawn, filled with anticipation.

In Kentucky, hunters still have ample time to scout and develop a game plan to increase their odds of success in the upcoming spring turkey season. This year, Kentucky's youth-only season is the weekend of April 7-8. The start of the 23-day general statewide season follows on April 14. It ends May 6.

"Start at the computer then get out in the field to find birds," said Zak Danks, wild turkey program coordinator with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. "Know some different approaches you might take and where you can move based on gobbling you hear once the season starts. Think about some good set-up spots or places to put your decoys, or vantage points to see birds."

Virtual scouting can save precious time for hunters looking to hunt public land. Topographic maps and satellite views may reveal access points, existing trails, open fields, wooded areas, elevation changes and creeks or

fences where approaching gobblers could hang up. Kentucky offers dozens of wildlife management areas and other lands open for public use. As a reminder, turkey calling is not allowed from March 1 until the opening of the youth-only season, and from the close of that season until the opening of the statewide season. Hunters may still use an owl, crow or other calls to locate turkeys while scouting.

It is always a good practice before the season to shoot your shotgun at a paper turkey head target using different brands of turkey loads. By patterning a shotgun ahead of time, the hunter knows the shotgun will shoot where it is aimed and deliver an acceptable number of pellets to the turkey's vital area (head and neck).

"One thing I've learned over the past several years is just how good the hunting can be later in the season," Danks said. "Last year, in particular, I had hunters contacting me well after the season ended saying they were still hearing turkeys gobble. So don't get discouraged if you don't have success early on. There's still time to find turkeys throughout the season."

In Kentucky, the spring hunting seasons are timed to give gobblers enough time to breed hens before subjecting the birds to hunting pressure. Kentucky Fish and Wildlife monitors turkey reproduction

on a statewide scale through annual summer brood surveys.

Weather during the nesting period in May and June influences reproductive success. Heavy rains in Kentucky and surrounding states during that timeframe last year affected nesting success, which reflected in a statewide average of 1.2 poults per hen. A figure of 2.0 or higher is optimal. Hunters should expect to encounter fewer of the more easily fooled jakes as a result this season.

Kentucky annually ranks first or second among surrounding states in the number of turkeys taken per square mile.

Hunters took a record number of birds during the 2010 spring season and have averaged more than 31,000 birds over the seven seasons since.

Last spring, hunters reported taking 33,061 birds, which represents a 6 percent

increase over the previous year and the third highest total on record. Muhlenberg County led all counties with hunters reporting 681 birds taken there. Looking at it differently, Pendleton County led the state with 1.76 birds harvested per square mile.

The majority of counties are showing a stable to increasing harvest trend over the past decade. Some counties are exhibiting lower harvest totals. In response, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife is expanding efforts to monitor the turkey population and reproduction. Feedback from hunters will play an important role.

A new spring hunting log and post-season survey will soon be available on the department's website at www.fw.ky.gov. On the homepage, type "Spring Turkey Hunting" into the search box. The log serves

to collect information about a hunter's daily hunting effort, number of turkeys seen,

heard and harvested, observations about weather and other species observed. The post-season survey will include questions about spring hunting experiences.

"Our harvest totals tell us that we're still in a pretty good situation on a statewide level," Danks said. "We are hearing from people who tell us they're not seeing as many turkeys as they had in the past. Most of that is from counties that have shown a decrease in harvest. What's the reason? It's difficult to determine on a statewide scale when all we've had to go on is harvest. We need information on hunter effort on a county level.

"The information gained from these hunter surveys and logs should help us track trends across the state."

Hunters are allowed a limit of two bearded birds during the spring season, but no more than one bearded bird may be taken in a day.

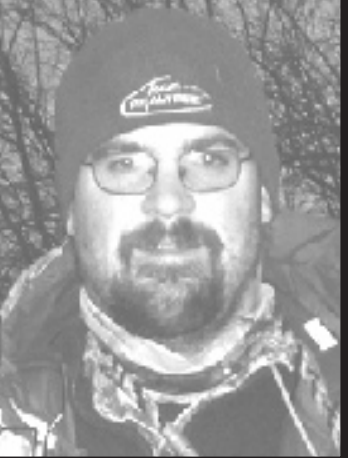
The 2018 Kentucky

Spring Hunting Guide provides information about current regulations, licenses and permits, legal equipment, safety tips and more. Find it online at fw.ky.gov or wherever licenses are sold.

Hunters also will have an opportunity to have their questions about spring turkey season answered during a special "Kentucky Afield" TV call-in show scheduled Saturday, March 24. The live one-hour show will air at 8 p.m. Eastern/7 p.m. Central on Kentucky Educational Television (KET). Joining host Chad Miles for the show will be Danks and pioneering turkey hunter Harold Knight.

Author Kevin Kelly is a staff writer for Kentucky Afield magazine, the official publication of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. Get the latest from Kevin and the entire Kentucky Afield staff by following them on Twitter: @kyafield.

Wanderings from the Woods & Water
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In the Storm

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Matthew 7:24-27

I was struggling on what to write about this week when this scripture crossed my mind. Maybe it's just me, but it sure seems like we have got a lot of rain here lately. There were even threats of severe storms. Well anyway, the Lord put this on my heart to write about. Hopefully it helps someone out there struggling.

The wise and foolish builder is some of my favorite scripture. It doesn't matter if you're a Christian or not the storms are a coming. They can show up on the radar of life from mild to severe. It can come in the form of a lost job or death of a loved one. I can guarantee 100% chance of life storms, unlike the weather-

erman who is wrong 80% of the time.

There are ads on tv and radio asking are you prepared for storms. Do you have flashlights, batteries, water, medical supplies etc. Things one will need to weather the storm and still be standing afterwards. Do you have everything you need when the storm hits?

Well I am probably not the best prepared for a bad weather event. My preparedness consists of going to the basement when a bad storm is on its way. I will have a flashlight unless the boys haven't lost or ran the batteries down. With that statement, we probably won't have a light. We will be in the basement in the dark. I am however prepared for life storms. My house is built on the ROCK/JESUS CHRIST. When the storms come and I know they will, I am ready. The alternative is having a house built on sand. When the storms hit the house on sand you will be washed out to sea.

The best way to be a prepper for life storms is #1 Accept Jesus as your Savior. #2 Read His word the Bible. #3 Pray without ceasing. You do that and you will be prepared for the storm. When the storm clears you will still be on the ROCK!

Are you prepared? Until next week, get out and enjoy God's creation!

Estill Lady Engineers		
2018 ECHS Girls Softball		
Apr 3	Lee County	A 6:00
Apr 5	Madison Southern	A 5:45
<u>Tates Creek Spring Fling</u>		
Apr 7	Somerset	A 10:30
	Tates Creek	A 2:00
Apr 9	Powell County	A 5:30
Apr 10	Garrard County	H 6:00
Apr 12	Montgomery County	H 6:00
Apr 13	Madison Central	H 5:45

Estill County Engineers		
2018 ECHS Boys Baseball		
Apr 4	Menifee County	A 6:00
Apr 5	Morgan County	A 6:00
Apr 7	Knott County Central	H 4:00
Apr 9	Madison Southern	A 5:30
Apr 10	Powell County	H 5:30
Apr 13	Lee County	A 5:30
<u>Rowan Viking Classic</u>		
Apr 14	Nicholas County	A 3:30
	Rowan County	A 5:30

Estill Lady Engineers		
2018 ECMS Girls Softball		
Apr 9	McNabb	A 6:00
Apr 10	Wolfe County	H 6:00
Apr 11	Madison Middle B	K 5:30
Apr 12	Lee County	K 5:30
Apr 13	Rockcastle County	H 6:00
Apr 14	Caudill Tournament	A 3:15
Apr 16	Madison @ Caudill	A 5:30
Apr 17	Lee County	A 5:30
Apr 19	Breathitt Sebastian	A 4:00
Apr 22	Conference Tournament	
- Apr 29		@ Caudill
Apr 30	Paris	A 6:00

Estill County Engineers		
2018 ECMS Boys Baseball		
Apr 6	Rowan County	A 5:30
Apr 7	Rowan County	A 5:30
Apr 9	Jackson County	H 5:30
Apr 12	Foley	A 5:30
Apr 13	Rockcastle County	H 5:30
Apr 14	Hazard/Perry Central	A
Apr 16	Madison Middle	A 5:30
Apr 17	Jackson County	A 5:30
Apr 19	Caudill	H 5:30
Apr 20	Breathitt County	H 5:30
Apr 21	Allen Central Tourney	A
Apr 27	Powell County	A 5:30
Apr 30	Magoffin County	A 5:30



Join us for a hike to the Tucker Abner Cave!

We will be hosting a family-friendly, guided hike to Tucker Abner Cave. This is a 10-15 minute hike to the cave and the spring inside. It is suitable for most fitness levels.

Sunday, April 8

Due to limited parking available, meet at Estill Springs Elementary in the gravel lot at 1:30 to carpool. Carpool will leave promptly at 1:45.