



# EASTERN WILD TURKEY

BIRD ID

SEASON INFORMATION

HUNTING TIPS

By the early 1900s, unrestricted market hunting and drastic reductions in habitat had eliminated wild turkeys in Iowa. For many years, the thunderous gobbles of the wild turkey were absent from Iowa's woodlands and forests. This silence was broken in 1966 when the Iowa Department of Natural Resources initiated a program to return the wild turkey to Iowa. Wild turkeys were released at several sites across the state, with the first release occurring in Lee County, Iowa. Over the past 30 years, the restoration of Iowa's wild turkey population has resulted from natural expansion from the early release sites.



## TURKEY FACTS

Males are typically 42-48 inches tall and weigh 17-30 pounds; females are typically 32-38 inches and weigh 8-12 pounds.

Turkeys can run up to 25 mph and fly up to 55 mph.

Turkeys prefer woodland habitats mixed with agricultural fields and feed on waste grains, insects, wild fruits and tree nuts.

Turkeys nest from April - June, and lay an average 11 eggs in shallow depressions in the ground.

## IOWA SPRING TURKEY SEASON INFORMATION

Turkey hunting regulations appear in the *Iowa Hunting & Trapping* regulations online and from license retailers.



SHOOTING HOURS:	One-half hour before sunrise to sunset
BAG LIMITS:	Daily & season possession limit one bearded or male turkey each valid license and transportation tag
LOCATIONS:	Entire state is open to hunting
LICENSE AND FEES:	Small game license, habitat fee & turkey license

### HARVEST REPORTING & TAGGING REQUIREMENTS:

- Tag must be attached to the turkey with the date of kill shown within 15 minutes of bird being located
- Turkey must be reported by midnight on the day after it is tagged at [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov), a license vendor or calling the phone number listed on the tag

## HUNTING TIPS

### GUN/BOW CHOICE:

Shotguns and muzzleloader shotguns not smaller than 20-gauge are the only legal firearms for turkey hunting. Archery equipment including longbows, recurves and compound bows is also an option. Arrows must be at least 18 inches long and must be tipped with broadheads, or with blunthead with a minimum diameter of 9/16 of an inch.

### AMMO CHOICE:

Permitted shot sizes are No. 4, 5, 6, 7 1/2 or 8 in lead, or non-toxic shot in sizes 2 through 8. Lead shot larger than No. 4 and non-toxic shot larger than No. 2 is illegal to possess while turkey hunting.

### WHEN TO HUNT:

It is very common for hunters to go out at '0-dark thirty.' Yet, there is nothing wrong with heading out at 10 or 11 a.m. That turkey will still be there.

### CALLS AND DECOYS:

There are as many turkey calls on the market as there are bass lures. Beginners should keep it simple - a box or slate call - and practice. Practice builds confidence. Commercial decoys are legal; live decoys are not.



*Slate Call*



*Box Call*

## WHICH SEASON TO HUNT TURKEYS IN IOWA:



Iowa offers five seasons for spring turkey hunters. In early season, when vegetation is open, that gobbler can see a hen through several hundred yards of woods. Be in place and concealed. Get into thicker cover, a tree blowdown; break up your pattern. Later, when it is green, you can move a little; adjust your position. Turkeys will more likely 'sneak' the call. So be ready.

By the end of third season, hens are starting to nest. Toms don't often reply to calls so there can be a lot of sneaking often by the sub-dominant tom. Late seasons run longer, and the days are longer, too, giving more hours to hunt. Weather is also more stable.

### HABITAT

Wild turkeys found in Iowa thrive in mature oak-hickory forests. Turkeys primarily eat nuts, seeds and berries (collectively called mast) produced in greatest abundance in middle-aged to mature stands of oak trees. Turkeys are large, strong-walking birds capable of covering a range of 1-2 square miles in a day, searching for suitable food items by scratching in leaf litter.

## SAFETY AND ETIQUETTE:

- Avoid wearing patriotic colors - red, white and blue. These colors are also shared by gobblers.
- Bring a blaze orange game bag or turkey vest to use to carry the harvested bird out of the woods.
- If someone comes in to your area, make a loud statement like "Hey hunter over here."
- If you walk in on someone, turn and walk away.
- Do not load firearm until at your hunting site.
- Always be aware of what is beyond a bird before you shoot.
- Avoid using a gobble call.
- Always ask permission to hunt on private lands.

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
on where to hunt in your local area,  
contact your regional DNR wildlife biologist.