

Record flock awaits Michigan turkey hunters

OUTDOOR INSIGHTS



Bill Parker

It may seem a little premature to be talking turkey, but what the heck, the application deadline for the spring hunt is Feb. 1 and that's less than two weeks away.

Michigan's turkey flock continues to flourish which should result in an exceptional spring hunt.

The eastern wild turkey was abundant in Michigan in the late 1800s, but as the state's popula-

tion grew the turkey population declined. As land was cleared for development much of the turkey's habitat was destroyed. By the early 1900s the turkey was all but extinct in Michigan.

In an effort to re-establish a flock in Michigan, the Department of Natural Resources began a stocking program in 1954. Using wild turkeys trapped from established flocks in Pennsylvania, the DNR released 50 turkeys in the Allegan State Game Area.

Over the next 10 years, additional releases were made and by 1964 the flock had grown to 2,000 birds. The reintroduction effort was intensified in 1983 and the results were impressive. By 1986

there were an estimated 18,000 birds. The number doubled to nearly 36,000 birds by 1988. Last year there was a record 75,000 turkeys in Michigan. The eastern wild turkey now populates nearly 28,000 square miles of hunting land in 33 Michigan counties.

"The problem is that there are so many turkeys it is much more difficult to keep track of them," said DNR gamebird specialist John Urbain. "We're right in the middle of our winter counts, but I would suspect the flock to be in the area of 55,000 birds."

Turkeys feed primarily on agriculture, waste grain and mast crops (especially acorns) through the winter. An abnormally cold

spring decimated most of last year's mast crop. But, as deer hunters know all too well, much of last fall's corn crop was left standing which is great for the turkeys.

"Since there is no mast crop they're probably pretty dependent on corn this winter," Urbain said. The good thing is that there is still a lot of standing corn and that should help the turkeys get through the winter. I think we have a record number of birds going into the winter. There is still a lot of winter left, but I think they'll come out of it pretty well, especially with all the standing corn."

Harvest results from last fall's

hunt revealed a healthy flock with about a 50-50 mix of adult and juvenile birds.

Three new areas will be open to hunting in the southwest area of the state this spring and seven others have been expanded. There will also be a record 60,625 permits available for the spring hunt, up more than 12,000 from last year's total of 37,890.

For all you day dreamers out there, the largest turkey ever taken in Michigan was a 27.1 pound Tom, killed in 1990 in Menominee County.

Triple crown

Garden City's Dan Biegazaki accomplished what few hunters

ever achieve during the 1992 hunting season — a rare triple crown.

The 32-year old hunter shot a 14-pound turkey with a four-inch beard during the spring season then killed a 185-pound black bear on Sept. 11. He completed the "hat trick" on opening day of the firearms deer season when he dropped a 180-pound, six-point buck in a swamp in Mackinac County.

(Anglers and hunters are urged to report their success. Questions and comments are also encouraged. Send information to: Outdoors, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI, or call Bill Parker 6-10 p.m. Monday at 644-1101, ext. 241.)

OUTDOORS CALENDAR

DATES AND EVENTS

TIP-UP-TOWN

Tip-Up-Town U.S.A. ice fishing festival runs through Sunday on Houghton Lake.

HUNTERS SAFETY

The Wayne County Sportsman's Club and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources will offer a Michigan hunter safety certification course beginning at 8 a.m. Saturday and Sunday at the Wayne County Sportsman's Club in Romulus. The course will cover firearms history, use and safety, archery safety, hunter ethics, first aid, survival techniques, wildlife management, game care, wildlife identification and hunter/landowner relations. Course fee is \$5. Class size is limited, and advance registration is advised, 532-0285.

CARIBOU HUNTING

A caribou-hunting seminar will

be conducted by naturalist/outdoor educator Joe Derek beginning at 7 p.m. Monday at the Farmington Community School. Registration fee is \$6, and advance registration is required, 489-3333.

FLY TYING

The Challenge Chapter of Trout Unlimited is offering a class titled "The Challenge of Fly Tying" beginning at 7 p.m. Monday in Room F-101 at Seaholm High School in Birmingham. The class is designed for the beginner and those who already tie flies. Course fee is \$30, and advance registration is required, 433-8444.

AUDUBON TRIPS

A trip to Rouge Park in Detroit begins at 9 a.m. Saturday, 625-8630 or 645-2929.

A trip to the Canadian side of the Detroit River (Sarnia) to view waterfowl begins at 9 a.m. Friday, Feb. 6, 625-8630 or 645-2929.

CAMPER SHOW

The Silverdome Camper and RV Show will be held Jan. 27-31 at the Pontiac Silverdome.

DETROIT BOAT SHOW

The 1993 Detroit Boat Show, featuring the latest boats, accessories, services, electronics, fishing gear and more, runs Jan 30 through Feb. 7 at the Cobo Convention Center. Special attractions include "Nautical Village" — a historical look at the Michigan Lighthouse, fishing and boating seminars, state champion water skiers and offshore racers from the APBA Gold Cup Races. Show hours are noon to 10 p.m. Saturdays and Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday, and 3-10 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Admission is \$7 adults, children (younger than 12) will be admitted free. Senior citizens enter free on Monday.

BOATING COURSE

The Ann Arbor Power Squad-

ron will sponsor a seven week boating course beginning at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 3, at the Clague Intermediate School, 2616 Nixon Road, Ann Arbor, 662-9138, or 994-2300.

WILDLIFE ART EXPO

Northern Wildlife Art Expo, featuring the work of 50 wildlife artists, will be Feb. 5-7 at the Lansing Civic Arena. Admission is \$5 adult, \$3.50 senior citizen and children (younger than 12) will be admitted free. Weekend

BOAT SHOW

The Boat, Sport and Fishing Show will be held Feb. 17-21 at the Pontiac Silverdome.

SPORTS FISHING EXPO

The Greater Detroit Sportsfishing Expo will be held March 4-7 at the Palace of Auburn Hills.

WILDLIFE ART FESTIVAL

The Michigan Wildlife Art Festival will celebrate its 10th anni-

versary April 2-4 at the Southfield Pavilion.

DEADLINES

Application deadline for the spring wild turkey season is Feb. 1.

Rabbit season ends March 31. Fishing licenses expire March 31.

FISHING CLUB MEETINGS

The Four Seasons Fishing Club meets 7:30 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month at the Maplewood Center in Garden City, 477-3816.

Romeo B.A.S.S. Busters meet 7 p.m. the first Tuesday of each month at the Romeo Community Youth and Civic Center, 286-6469.

The Michigan Fly Fishing Club meets at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 10, and again Feb. 24, at the Livonia Clarenceville High School.

METROPARKS

PIONEER SKILLS

Participants will learn to make early American crafts such as dipped candles and rope in this nature program which begins at 1 p.m. Saturday at Indian Springs.

THIS BUD'S FOR YOU

Participants will learn to identify common trees without their leaves, in this program which begins at 1:30 p.m. Saturday at Kensington.

EATER VS EATEN

A program about the high stakes contests between predator and prey begins at 1 p.m. Sunday at Stony Creek.

See CALENDAR, 4B

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