

Prospects for Michigan turkey hunters look good

If you're one of the 60,000-plus spring turkey hunters who received a permit last week, turkey fever will set in anytime. And for good reason. With an estimated statewide population of nearly 100,000 birds, the outlook for the upcoming season is outstanding.

Last year's winter turkey count turned up 92,348 birds across the state. The 1998 winter count is not quite complete, but with the mild winter we've experienced across the state cou-

OUTDOOR INSIGHTS



BILL PARKER

pled with the lack of a fall hunting season last year, expectations are running high that this year's pre-hunt population will exceed the record count of 93,751 recorded in 1996.

"The birds appear to be in pretty good condition," said acting DNR upland gamebird specialist Dave Luukkonen. "The birds in the north are fairly susceptible to harsh winters, but that doesn't seem to be a problem this year. The winter has been so mild that the birds aren't as concentrated as in the past so they're probably not very stressed at all."

That spells good news for hunters.

Spring turkey hunters took a record 15,666 gobblers last spring and Luukkonen expects

that number to increase this year.

"We have an expanding turkey population across the state," said Luukkonen. "I expect this will be another banner hunting season."

The DNR received a record number of 105,885 applicants for the 51,515 permits that were available. Hunters who did not receive a permit for the regular season, which runs April 20-May 18, can still get in on the action by participating in the experimental late hunt period, which runs May 19-31. Hunters who choose to participate in this experimental season can hunt in any spring wild turkey unit in the state with the exception of state land in Zone 3 - the southern part of the Lower Peninsula. Although this experimental

hunt period falls after the prime breeding and gobbling stage, hunters who didn't receive a permit for the regular season should definitely give the experimental hunt a try. By the time the late hunt period comes around, hunters are rapidly losing interest in those gobbling toms. Many gobblers are still fired up and getting lonely. They can be very susceptible to a seductive call from a strategically placed hunter.

According to Luukkonen, the DNR will resume the fall hunt this year in areas with exploding turkey populations. Some of the areas with higher concentrations of birds include Area J north of Gaylord, Area W in Iosella and Midland counties and pockets in Area K - the western central side

of the state.

If you're new to turkey hunting, think about attending a spring wild turkey workshop. Several workshops are put on across the state each spring by members of the Wild Turkey Federation and other turkey hunting groups. These workshops provide valuable information for beginner and experienced hunters.

The Huron Valley Chapter of the Wild Turkey Federation is holding a workshop on March 19 in Romulus, call Ken Humphrey at (734) 421-2693 for details. The Bluewater Chapter is holding a workshop on March 21 in Almont, call Bill Bovins at (810) 798-3677 for details. The Flint River Chapter is holding a workshop on April 4 in Davison, call

Jim Miller at (810) 736-6733 for details.

Above all, get out and scout the area you intend to hunt before the season rolls along. Be safe and remember to let me know if you or a hunting companion experience the thrill of bagging a Michigan gobbler this spring.

(Anglers and hunters are urged to report your success. Questions and comments are also encouraged. Send information to: **Outdoors**, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Fax information to (248) 644-1314, and e-mail to bparker@oc.homecomm.net or call Bill Parker evenings at (248) 901-2573.)

OUTDOOR CALENDAR

ACTIVITIES

WHAT'S IN DAVE'S PACK
Dave Hahn, a veteran backpacker, alpine skier and outdoor photographer and an Eagle Scout will present a clinic on backcountry mountaineering and everyday backpacking necessities during this program, which begins

at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 19, at REI in Northville, Call (248) 347-2100 for more information.

SPRING WALK
Bill Graig will lead a spring walk beginning at noon on Saturday, March 21, at the William P. Holiday Nature Preserve in Westland. Participants should meet at the parking lot at Newburgh Road, north of Warren.

Call (313) 622-8547 for more information.

LIFE LINKS
Learn about some of the fascinating connections between plants and animals and their habitats during this program, which begins at 1 p.m. Saturday, March 28, at U-M Dearborn. Call (313) 693-6338 for more information.

LAND NAVIGATION
The School of Outdoor Leadership, Adventure and Recreation (SOLAR) presents a class on land navigation on Saturday, March 28, at the Waterloo Recreation Area. Call Linda Burke at (248) 471-9185 for information.

CLASSES

HUNTER EDUCATION
Wayne County Sportmen's Club will hold several hunter education classes in the upcoming months at its clubhouse and grounds in Romulus. These classes will be taught by certified instructors. Students must be present for both days of their respective class. All equipment will be provided. Classes will be offered March 28-29, Aug. 29-30, Oct. 3-4, Oct. 17-18 and Nov. 7-8. Cost is \$10.60 and includes lunch both days. To pre-register call (313) 532-0285.

YOUTH FLY FISHING
The Michigan Fly Fishing Club will hold a Youth Fly Fishing School, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, April 4, at the Walled Lake Outdoor Education Center. The school is open to youths age seven to 15 accompanied by a parent or adult guardian. Admission is \$5 and includes pizza, donuts, pop and hot chocolate. Call Dale Ross (734) 420-2293 or Tony Yuhua (248) 478-7461 for a register and for information.

Balt Presentation), Ernest Schweibert (River's Edge), and Trey Combs (Fly Fishing for Steelhead). Show hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Adult admission is \$8 and children 12 and under will be admitted free. Call (810) 486-4967 for information.

WILDLIFE ART FESTIVAL
The 16th annual Michigan Wildlife Art Festival, sponsored by the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation will take place March 27-29 at the Southfield Pavilion. The show features the Midwest's largest juried show of wildlife and environmental art; 60 nationally acclaimed artists; thousands of affordable paintings, prints, photos, carvings, etchings, sculptures, stained glass pieces, batiks, scratchboards and more; exhibits by Michigan's leading conservation organizations, seminars on Michigan wildlife topics, a celebrity clay painting contest and more. Show hours are 4-9 p.m. March 27, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. March 28, and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. March 29. Admission is \$6 and children under 12 will be admitted free.

STEELHEADERS
Huron Valley Steelheaders will hold its Spring Show 9 a.m.-6 p.m. on Sunday, March 29, at the Southgate Civic Center. Redford's Bob Mitchell will be a guest speaker and will give a presentation on salmon trolling and Great Lakes fishing beginning at 9:30 a.m.

SEASON/DATES

RABBIT
Rabbit season runs through March 31 statewide.

PIKE
Pike season ends March 15 on inland lakes statewide.

SMELT
Smelt netting season runs March 1-May 31 south of M-72 and April 1-May 31 north of M-72.

TOURNAMENTS

SALMON STAKES
The 20th annual River Crab Salmon Stakes benefit fishing tournament will be held Saturday, May 2, in St. Clair. Proceeds from the tournament will be used to support the Blue Water Mental Health Clinic and other programs across the state that serve troubled children, adults and their families. Raffle tickets are \$10 each and enters the holder into a raffle and the fishing tournament. Raffle prizes include a four night cruise for two adults and two children in Cape Canaveral, Florida; use of a private suite at a Tiger baseball game; a weekend for two in Chicago; gift certificates, and a charter fishing trip. Tickets are also redeemable for \$10 off dinner for two or Sunday brunch at any Chuck Muer restaurant. Anglers can win \$250 cash for the heaviest total catch in one boat as well as \$250 for the largest fish in each of four categories - king salmon, steelhead, brown trout and coho salmon. Tickets are available at Charlie's Crab in Troy, Muer's Seafood Tavern in West Bloom-

SEMINARS

BEAR SEMINAR
The Michigan Big Game Hunter's Association presents Karl Hosford, retired chief of the DNR's wildlife division, who will give a seminar on bear hunting, beginning at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 19, at the Gander Mountain store in Taylor.

SHOWS

FLY FISHING
The Michigan Fly Fishing Club presents the Midwest Fly Fishing Expo on Sunday, March 15, at the Southfield Civic Center. Featured speakers include Jason Berger (Reading the Water and

field, Moriwethers in Southfield, Big Fish in Dearborn, Big Fish Too in Madison Heights, and Gandy Dancer in Ann Arbor or by calling the River Crab at 1-800-468-3727.

COUNTY PARKS

COUNTY PARK REQUIREMENTS
Advanced registration is required for all nature programs at Oakland County Parks. Call (810) 626-6473 to register or for more information.

STATE PARKS

STATE PARK REQUIREMENTS
Maybury State Park, Proud Lake Recreation Area, Bald Mountain Recreation Area, Highland Recreation Area and Island Lake Recreation Area offer nature interpretive programs throughout the year. A state park motor vehicle permit is required for entry into all state parks and state recreation areas. For registration and additional information on the programs at Maybury call (810) 349-8390. For programs at Bald Mountain call (810) 693-6767. For programs at Proud Lake and Highland call (810) 685-2433. For programs at Island Lake call (810) 229-7067.

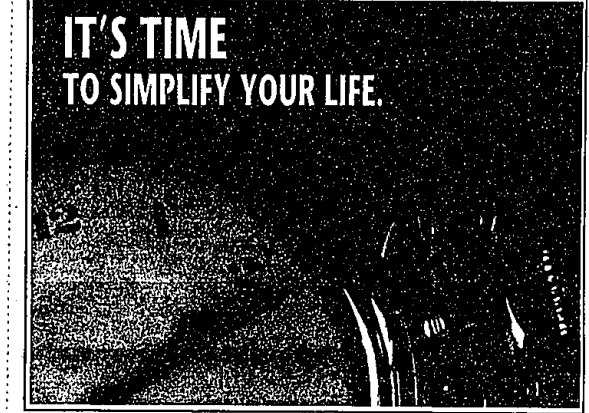
METROPARKS

METROPARK REQUIREMENTS
Most Metropark programs are free while some require a nominal fee. Advanced registration and a motor vehicle permit are required for all programs. Call the respective parks, toll free: Stony Creek, 1-800-477-7766; Indian Springs, 1-800-477-3192; Kensington, 1-800-477-3178.

MAPLE SUGARING
Learn how maple sap is transformed into sweet maple syrup during this program, which is held every Saturday and Sunday in March at Indian Springs. Call the park at (248) 626-7280 for specific times.

WORLD WILDLIFE
Learn the ins and outs of world travel and nature study including passports, health, safety information, sources and other topics, during this program, which begins at 2 p.m. Sunday at Kensington.

1998 PERMITS
The 1998 Huron-Clinton Metroparks annual vehicle entry permits and boat launching permits are on sale at all Metropark offices. Vehicle entry permits are \$15 (\$8 for senior citizens). The annual boat launching permits are \$18 (\$9 for senior citizens). Call 1-800-477-PARKS for more information.



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