



Successful Turkey Hunting

Hunter Education Course

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WHETHER YOU are new to turkey hunting and want to gain many seasons' worth of knowledge and skills in one day or an experienced turkey hunter wanting to learn new skills and concepts to help you increase your chances of success in the turkey woods, this course is your ticket. Successful Turkey Hunting will make sure you really enjoy your next turkey hunting experience.

Even before you attend a class, you'll discover a lot about the wild turkey and turkey hunting by reviewing the online student guide. A printed copy is yours to keep at the end of the course and can be mailed ahead of time if you prefer it to the online guide. During the day in the "classroom," you'll learn orienteering skills to help you navigate the back country

in search of wary birds; scouting methods and hunting techniques, including the effective use of decoys; shot selection methods to increase your success rate, enhance your hunting experience, and keep you safe; proven distance estimation techniques to fine tune both your eye and your shotgun to consistently bag more birds; and calling techniques using most of the popular call types available today. You may even bring your own turkey gun (12- or 20-gauge) to class to learn how to maximize its effectiveness by practicing on the range. Ammunition is provided, and if you don't have a shotgun, one will be available for you to use.

Successful Turkey Hunting is a new voluntary, advanced, one-day hunter education training program. Prior to attending, you should complete the independent study part of this program

online or by using a printed copy of the student guide. The independent study part of the training should take about six to eight hours. To receive a training certificate recognized by other states (Delaware requires one to hunt turkeys) or provinces, you must pass an open-book, written exam at the conclusion of this class.

Instructors for the course are currently being trained. The Hunter-Trapper Education Division hopes the first classes will roll out this September and in April of 2012. Students will be able to register online through the Hunter Education Class Calendar under the Education tab on the Game Commission's website. Students without Internet access should call the Hunter-Trapper Education Division at 717-787-7015 (M-F; 8am-4pm) or their region office.

The course fee of \$15 includes a diaphragm call that is yours to take home as well as

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: The PGC is excited about its new advanced hunter education training opportunity. The range on SGL 211 was set up for training instructors-to-be at four field stations. Students are encouraged to bring their own 20- or 12-gauge shotguns to the course; class guns are available for those unable to bring their own. First, students head out into the woods to try their hand at estimating the distances of eight decoys in various settings. The exercise demonstrates how tricky it can be and brings to light how large a difference of opinion can be. In our class, the estimates for one decoy had a difference of opinion of more than 20 yards. Next, students use the range for a subtending exercise that helps them learn to estimate distance more proficiently. A group of students at 20 yards will see how much of this turkey decoy is covered by the bead of their shotgun when they mount and aim at the decoy. They mark a subtending card to reflect how much of the bird is covered at several yardages and profiles. In the turkey woods, they will be better able to estimate how far away a turkey is by how much of it is covered by the bead of their shotgun.





the ammo and targets used during the class. A printed copy of the 144-page Successful Turkey Hunting Student Manual includes information on turkey biology and behavior, scouting, sporting implements, safety, hunting techniques, field care and recipes, and is yours to keep!

This advanced hunter education opportunity fulfills an objective of the agency's Strategic Plan to provide advanced training courses. The National Wild Turkey Federation assisted in the development of this course by providing training DVDs, many conceptual ideas and much of the content for the student manual. Funding to support it comes from the Federal Assistance Program.

INSTRUCTOR TRAINING

I was fortunate to sit in on one of the first Successful Turkey Hunting instructor trainings. Though the weather wasn't exactly in our favor, the dedication of the instructors and their passion for passing on the tradition of turkey hunting stayed their course through the persistent pounding of the rain. I asked a few of them why they'd do it. A Hunter Ed instructor from Zelienople replied quickly with, "I want to be there for somebody else. Someone was there for me, to teach me about hunting, and I want to be able to be there for someone else."

A Hunter Ed instructor and Union County Deputy WCO, added, "If we prevent just one accident, it's worth it." A husband and wife instructor team from Sigel, agreed. They are passionate about



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: Students learn a little turkey biology to understand where the vital area is before doing some shotgun patterning. The goal is to have a minimum of 210 to 230 pellets in a 30-inch diameter circle. With a pattern in that range, four or five pellets should hit the area highlighted in red in the transparency of the turkey head and lead to a successful harvest. The course instructor points out that a turkey's head is roughly half the size of your fist. An instructor-to-be holds up one of his papers from the patterning exercise. Students learned how much a pattern changes with distance; for many, a difference of 10 yards meant a difference of 70 or more fewer pellets in the 30-inch diameter circle.

SUCCESSFUL TURKEY HUNTING students work with a variety of popular turkey calls. These instructors-in-training made clucks, purrs, yelps and more on push boxes, box calls, slate calls and a diaphragm call that they got to take home. They learned things like: the single-syllable cluck is how a turkey says, "Where are you" and that sometimes it's better to pin the lid of a box call down with your thumb and tap it to make the cluck sound, never use blackboard chalk on a box call because it will destroy the call

and never use blue carpenter's chalk because it is a safety hazard since it is the same color as a turkey's head. They also learned that turkeys hear four times better than we do and what to do if their calls get wet.



passing on the tradition of hunting and have been instructing hunter education for 25 years. Successful Turkey Hunting completes their hunter education repertoire.

The Successful Turkey Hunting course is full of great information and skill building training that will give any novice a great start and help seasoned turkey hunters be more successful next time

they're out there looking to bag a bird. Check the Hunter Education Class Calendar this fall and next spring for courses near you. □

RIGHT: A Successful Turkey Hunting instructor from Zelenople, blows a locator call that sounds like a crow. Many loud sounds will shock a tom into gobbling. BELOW: Using Repliscat, what hen turkey droppings look like is shown. Locator calls and turkey sign are part of the turkey hunting methods section of the course, along with decoys and decoy set-ups.

