

WILDLIFE TRENDS

SOUTHEASTERN EDITION

March 2002

Volume 2, Issue 3

Managing Pines for Wild Turkeys

by Bryan Burhans



Actively managing your forest and managing for wild turkeys go hand-in-hand. Thinning timber can help improve the growth rates of your timber and increase the amount of grasses and forbs important to wild turkeys and other wildlife species. Thinning is especially important when managing pine stands. Photo by Jay Langston

To manage for the wild turkey, it is often useful to think like a wild turkey and look at life through their eyes – literally. After all, turkeys don't have a sense of smell like deer (thank goodness!), and they often don't seem to use hearing to detect danger. The wild turkey's first line of defense is sticking close with other birds and using their keen eyesight to detect danger.

Avoiding danger is always on top of the wild turkey's to-do list. A close second on their list is food. If you provide habitat with lots of food and keep it open so they can detect danger at long distances, then you are on your way to keeping wild turkeys on your land.

To optimize your land for wildlife, you can't simply sit back and let nature take its course – you must actively manage your land. As I travel and meet with landowners, active forest management is often lacking, especially smaller tracts. An actively managed forest that uses timber harvest, prescribed fire, herbicides, and managed wildlife openings will provide far better wildlife habitat than an unmanaged forest.

Prescribed Fire + Selective Herbicides = Success

Managing your pine forests, especially the understory, is critical if you want to manage for turkeys. The Southeast has a long growing season; this long growing season can often result in a thick understory unattractive to wild turkeys.

Prescribed fire is an effective tool to manage the forest understory. Historically, periodic, low-intensity fires kept hardwoods at bay and promoted the succession of pine to dominate the overstory. However, intensive fire suppression over the last 75+ years has dramatically changed our forests. The amount of hardwoods currently in the understory of many areas is staggering after such a long period of fire suppression. To manage these hardwoods, landowners can use prescribed fire to help control

In this Issue

- **Game Management**
Managing Pines for Wild Turkeys
by Bryan Burhans
- **Game Management**
Possum on the Half Shell
by Frank Boyd and Doug Hall
- **Game Management**
Hunting Rights and Lease Value
by Bill Baker and John Roboski
- **Game Management**
Food Plantings For Waterfowl
by Gary R. Hepp
- **Pond Management**
Pond Fertilizing Season is Just Around the Corner Isn't It?
by Kedrick Nutt

Visit us at
www.wildlifetrends.com

Call us at
1-800-441-6826