

Harvest begins May 4; Youth Day is May 2

# Tips for a successful wild turkey season

**By Doug Kane**

Regional Wildlife Biologist

Hunting safely and respecting the rights of landowners should be among the cornerstones of behavior for those of us who hunt in Maine. Although hunting in autumn has been a long-standing tradition for many Mainers, hunting turkeys in the spring is relatively new for many hunters and non-hunters alike. In light of this, it's important for those of us who venture afield for spring turkeys to remember a few important points to ensure that we will return home safely following each hunt and we will have land to hunt on in the future.

Turkeys have excellent vision so full camouflage including hands and face is a must. Never wear the colors red, white, or blue as they resemble the color of a toms head and neck area (i.e. the target). Stalking turkeys is often unproductive because of the turkey's keen vision. In addition, this method can be dangerous because you



Photo by Carrie L. Johnson

may be moving in on another hunter. Remember, a tom that continues to gobble may be responding to the call of another hunter who you haven't located yet. Make your set up with your back against a tree that is at least as wide as your shoulders and call the tom to you. Make sure you can see at least 40-50 yards in a 180 degree arc in front of you so you can readily see an approaching tom or another hunter. Hunt defensively. If you see another hunter, speak out loud to them until they

acknowledge your presence. If you decide to use decoys, remember that these replicas may be mistaken for live birds by another hunter. So keep this mind when you decide the distance and direction of your decoy setup. If you decide to use a bow in pursuit of your tom, knowing proper shot placement and pinpoint accuracy are critical. Like with any hunting situation, always be absolutely sure of your target and what's beyond it within the range of your shot.

Good landowner relations are as important during the spring turkey season as they are during any time of the year. In fact, they may be more important in the spring because many Mainers aren't accustomed to thinking of May as hunting season. It's important to always seek landowner permission before venturing onto someone else's property. Although green fields and other agriculture areas are magnets for turkeys, remember that April-May is "mud season" in Maine, so walk rather than drive if you're going to leave a footprint behind.

## Deer harvest numbers down; management effort continues

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and 7,496 antlerless deer. The adult buck kill was a 16 percent decrease over the previous year while the antlerless kill was down 41 percent from 2007.

Yearlings were more scarce than normal in 2008. This is because as fawns in 2007 they suffered high losses over the 2007-08 winter. Yearlings normally make up a higher percentage

of the buck kill. In 2007, the statewide yearling harvest of bucks comprised 49 percent of the yearling and older buck harvest, while in 2008 it represented only 37 percent.

"The harsh winter of 2007-08 and its effects on Maine's deer herd will be felt for a long time," according to Kantar.

"The current winter of 2008-09 so far looks very similar to last year and will exert additional pressure on the

state's deer herd. If this winter results in conditions similar to last year, we will need to brace ourselves for a further decrease in any-deer permits as well as a reduced harvest in 2009. An any-deer permit reduction is needed in order to compensate for an expected high rate of winter mortality."

Wildlife biologists will be meeting in the next few weeks to determine the preliminary number of any deer permits that will be available for next year.