

Safety in the Spring Woods



Nothing compares to the thrill of hearing a brushy bearded gobbler announcing his presence in the spring woods! Calling and maneuvering with this worthy opponent is a battle of wits, and every move can change the outcome of the hunt. Turkey hunters must communicate with the bird using mating calls to draw him into shotgun or bow range.

Because turkey hunting requires you to use calls, decoys, and complete camouflage, it is extremely important that you understand hunting safety rules.

Always be sure of your target before pulling the trigger or releasing the arrow! Once that energy has been released, it can never be taken back. Never shoot at a turkey that you have not fully identified to be a legal gobbler.

Remember that humans and turkeys sound very similar when walking through the woods. The only difference is that turkeys don't break sticks. Understand that an approaching sound may not be a turkey but rather another hunter drawn in by the same gobbler you are calling to.

Never wear the colors red, white, or blue because those are the colors of a wild turkey gobbler's head.

Never call and walk long distances at the same time. A hunter may mistake you for an approaching group of turkeys. The proper procedure is to walk a short distance, sit down, call, then wait for approximately 15 minutes before moving again. This serves two purposes:

If you indeed call another hunter into your area, you will see him or her approaching.

If a turkey is nonresponsive but coming to your location, you can spot him before he spots you!

If another turkey hunter moves into your area, sit still and do not wave or make any motion. Instead, say in a moderate voice, "I am over here." Never yell out because this may startle the hunter and cause an accident.

Knowing what is beyond your target is critical. When a gobbler is being vocal, you must never assume that you are the only one hunting him. Never think that just because you are on private land, another hunter has not already set up on the bird. You must hunt defensively.

Never take your gun off safety until you are ready to fire it. It is always a good practice to check and recheck your safety to make sure it is on throughout the hunt. If you are fortunate enough to successfully harvest a bird, always make sure that you put your gun back on safety before getting up from your location. The adrenaline rush from this type of hunting brings an instant reaction to move forward to get to the downed bird. But running forward with a loaded gun off safety is extremely dangerous.



Wild turkeys.
Artwork courtesy Texas Parks and Wildlife Department © 2013.

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