

## Learning patterns

a key to tricking turkeys



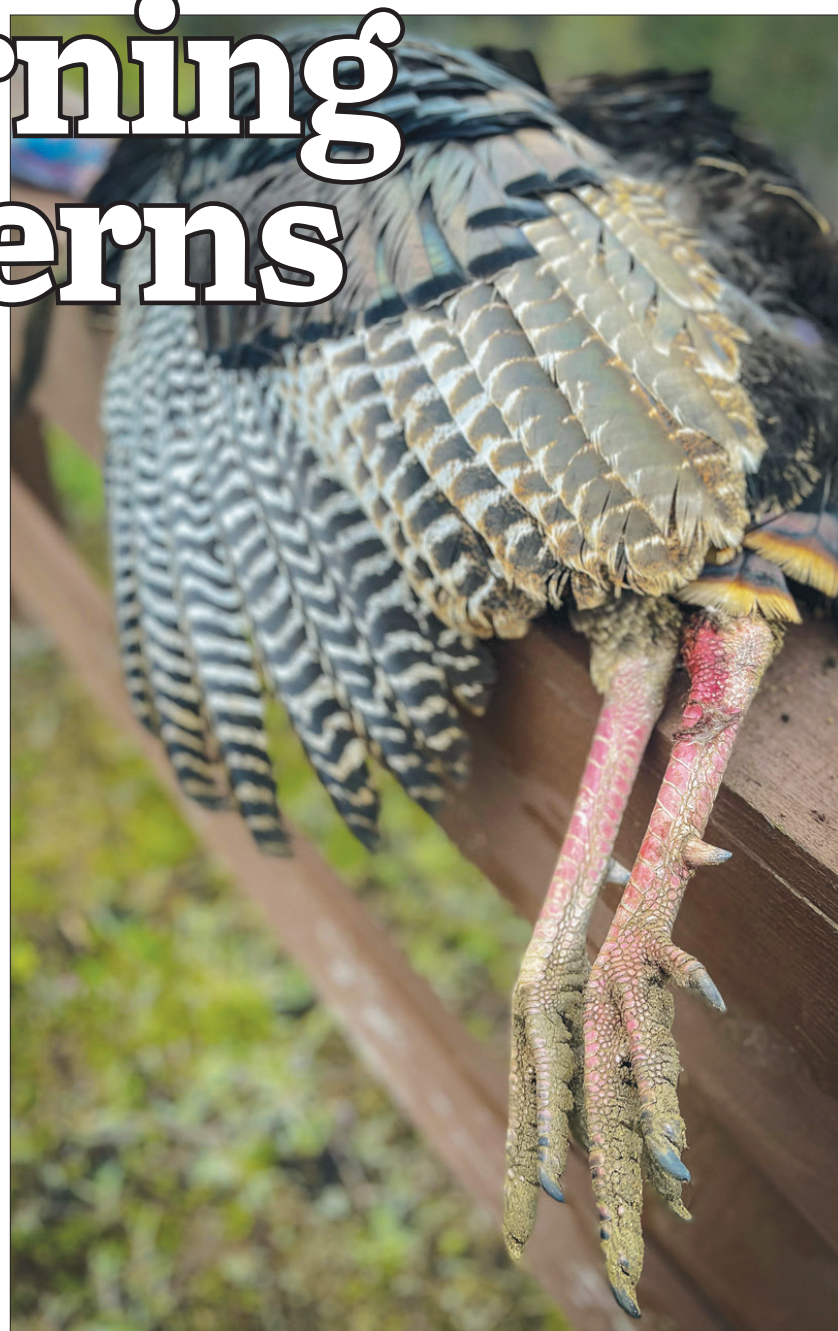
**BRAD TRUMBO**  
UPLAND PURSUITS

Spring is upon us, and with the return of hummingbirds and the onset of flower and fruit tree bloom comes the wild turkey breeding and hunting seasons. The thunderous gobble of a dashing mature tom (male) puffed up and strutting to impress the ladies induces heart-racing, palm-sweating, and immense anticipation for the fanatic turkey hunter.

A wild turkey's keen vision and hearing makes for a challenging hunt. Turkeys are notoriously difficult to call, and successful hunts often require years of practice to perfect call techniques and positioning for the bird's approach. Embracing and learning from failure is part of the game, but scouting flocks and identifying their patterns on patchwork landscapes gives the hunter an advantage, particularly when hunting the Rio Grande (Rio) turkeys of the Blue Mountains.

The Blue Mountain foothills provide cover, shade, and nightly roosting trees while allowing safe access to the grain fields and grassy slopes along brushy creek bottoms. Spotting a flock can be easy in the mornings and afternoons. Rio often stick to routine preferred covers within a home range that averages between 370 and 1,360 acres, according to the National Wild Turkey Federation, and learning a flock's daily movement and whereabouts makes the right time and place two easy ingredients for success.

Just past five in the evening, a passel of toms and hens erupted in discordant gobbles



Brad Trumbo/Contributed Photo

Every last detail of a wild turkey is interesting and beautiful. This bird has modest spurs but a scar on his leg and intricately-laid feather patterns.

and yelps up the canyon ahead. Like clockwork, the birds were stirring for their evening routine. Timber concealed them, so I kept watch over the open ridgelines. Fire had swept through about five years prior, thinning the timber and leaving open slopes with biscuitroot in full bloom and blackberry thickets leafing out in the draws.

A gray hen decoy stood off to my right. Over my left shoulder, I spied a red head pop up above the ridgeline, hundreds of yards distant. It was a lone tom and gut instinct whispered that I would come to know this bird well before the evening ended.

In the span of about 10 minutes, the tom worked his way down to a logging road that followed the canyon bottom. It was then that I decided to strike up a conversation. A series of questionable, high-pitched yelps drifted from my box call, which I had rigged to work in a pinch after busting a key component. The calls sent the cadre of love-sick gobblers into panic mode but the tom I had spotted first simply kept quiet, flipped a U-turn, and started in my direction. Wow, "Quiet Tom" is actually coming, I thought, nearly out loud.

The logging road suddenly

became a turkey lek. Seven toms spewed from the timber onto the road, puffed up into full strut, sidled up to the ladies, and gobbled at every call. Hens began filing by and an old girl piped up with a unique rough voice like playing a güiro. The flock soon started my way, but Quiet Tom was ahead of them all. He had skirted the masses, popped out on the road below them, and spied my decoy.

His black, rope-like beard bounced against his chest as he closed the distance. Preparing for action, I shifted slightly, disengaged the safety on my black Stevens 12-gauge, and steadied the bead around the decoy. The brush pile I sat behind blocked me entirely from the end of the road. The only place a bird could get an eye on me was alongside the decoy, and by then it would be too late.

Quiet Tom reached 40 yards and pecked a few small gravels before committing to the decoy. A well-timed kissing sound caused him to stretch his neck out in curiosity. An eye-blink later, I stood to retrieve my first turkey of the year and gave thanks for the blessing of a stunning young tom.

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## Trout stocking continues in Northeastern Oregon

EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — Many ponds, lakes and rivers in Northeastern Oregon received a fresh stocking of rainbow trout this week, just in time for some of the nicest weather of the spring.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has recently stocked thousands of rainbow trout, including trophy fish, which are 15 inches or longer.

The majority of the trout released are "legals" — at least 8 inches long, and thus legal for anglers to keep.

The trout stocking schedule, which is subject to change:

### Week of May 16-20

- Kinney Lake, 2,500 legals, 250 trophy
- Honeymoon Pond, 500 legals, 50 trophy
- Phillips Reservoir, 3,000 legals, 750 trophy
- Wallowa Lake, 6,000 legals, 300 trophy
- Luger Pond, 450 legals, 100 trophy
- Teepee Pond, 500 legals, 50 trophy
- Taylor Green Pond, 200 legals, 100 trophy
- South Fork Burnt River, 1,000 legals

### May 30-June 3

- Balm Creek Reservoir, 2,000 legals
- Teepee Pond, 500 legals, 50 trophy
- Marr Pond, 1,000 legals, 250 trophy
- Morgan Lake, 1,250 legals
- Victor Pond, 500 legals, 50 trophy
- Honeymoon Pond, 500 legals, 50 trophy
- Wallowa Lake, 6,000 legals, 300 trophy
- Magone Lane, 1,000 legals, 1,000 trophy
- Weavers Pond, 1,000 legals, 50 trophy

Schedules and maps for trout stocking plans later in the year are available at <https://myodfw.com/fishing/species/trout/stocking-schedule>.

### Fishing conditions and forecasts

#### Morgan Lake

Opened for fishing on April 22.

#### Umatilla River

Summer steelhead fishing is closed until Sept. 1. The spring chinook season opened on April 15. There is a predicted run of approximately 3,000 spring chi-

nook returning to the river.

A total of 802 spring chinook have been counted at TMFD so far this run year, with 530 over the past week. Fishing has been slow up to date, but there have been anglers out trying to take advantage of the early bright fish and the fish are starting to show up in the past week.

The flows in the Umatilla came up significantly in the past week from recent rain, but flows should start to drop and this is when anglers should really concentrate their efforts as the increase in flows tends to move fish into the system. Anglers should start to find success as the clarity of the river improves and the river starts to drop.

The Umatilla River is considered from the Highway 730 bridge and upstream, the section below that is considered the Columbia River and is currently closed. Most anglers use egg set up with a slinky weigh bounced off the bottom or a some have found success with spinners with water temperatures being relatively cold. Trout fishing on the Umatilla River and its tributaries opens May 22. Bass and other warmwater species remain open all year.

#### Wallowa River

Steelhead fishing closed until Sept. 1. Fishing for trout and whitefish can be good in the spring. Fishing conditions will be best when flows are lower, and fishing may be more difficult when the weather warms and the river rises.

#### Wallowa County ponds

Fish in Kinney Lake that overwintered will be available to shore anglers and anglers in nonmotorized boats (motors are not allowed on Kinney Lake). Kinney Lake and ponds throughout the county will be stocked with rainbow trout over the next couple months.

#### Wallowa Lake

Fishing has been good for rainbow trout near the south end of the lake. Anglers have had success using both flies and lures. Anglers can have good success wading out from shore and casting lures or flies near where fish are rising. Boat anglers will have better access to more of the lake and may find fish near areas where the

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## Get outside for a whistle pig hunt



**TOM CLAYCOMB**  
BASE CAMP

I don't want this to be a Dr. Phil article but have you ever sat down and thought about why you enjoy getting out hunting, fishing, backpacking and mushroom hunting? There's something rewarding about getting outdoors, living off the land and feeding your family. But it's also a good excuse to get out and enjoy God's creation.

But then I think another factor is that we live in a high-speed world. I know I do. For the last 2-1/2 years I fly out three weeks and am home a week. On top of that I have to get in 325 articles a year — just picked up 46 more articles in January — and conduct 40 to 60 seminars per year. And I'm not the only one that lives a high-speed life.

I think a big reason we like to get out is to clear our heads of all of the worldly bull. When you're

outside we don't worry about psycho bosses, 401k's, America's current situation or whatever other stresses you're currently enduring. When you get outdoors you can escape from it all and live a simple life.

But even then, if you're a writer, the world tries to invade your quiet time. I remember once I'd been running gunning non-stop for a few months and came home and took my daughter backpacking. Just me and her. One day I thought uh-oh, I've got to get to filming, I had 19 items to test on this trip. I made a commitment on that trip that I was going to get in control of things. Sure, if a company(s) sponsors you then you have to perform, but to me getting outdoors is something pure. Some of the best memories of my life are when my family hunted or fished. I want to keep things simple like that and not commercialized.

So with the above said, I just got back home from a whistle pig hunt out in the ranch country in southeast Oregon. I'd just got

home from a three-week trip and it was nice to get out with not a care in the world. I'm on Pro-staff with Umarex airguns. They've labeled 2022 as The Year of The Airgun and are hitting it hard. We were planning a TV show on airgun hunting for whistle pigs. Things didn't come together but hunting whistle pigs on a regular basis in the spring is a big deal for me so I took off for a couple of days this week.

If you can get away for a few days or can only slip out for an afternoon, there's nothing more relaxing than an airgun whistle pig hunt. Just by the very nature of airguns you expect it to be a kicked back fun hunt.

It's also a great hunt to take your kids on. They don't have to be quiet, or sit still for hours and you won't be encountering frigid weather. You'll have some great daddy/daughter talks. It's the ultimate daddy/kids hunt and hunting with airguns adds the icing to the cake. Plus, airguns are quiet so you don't even need to wear hearing protection.



Tom Claycomb/Contributed Photo

There were hundreds of white-face ibis out on the prairies during a recent whistle pig hunt in Southeastern Oregon.

If your little girl doesn't want to kill anything, no biggee. There are a ton of cool airgun targets on the market now. Spinners, shooting galleries and so forth. Or if you're on a tight budget take a bagful of tin cans and plastic bottles filled with water. I still like shooting them, don't you?

I went on this hunt by myself

and had a great time even though the hunting was tough. There just weren't many whistle pigs on this ranch, which is not the norm. Usually there are thousands upon thousands. The plague must have swept through this year, which happens periodically in colonies.

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