

RECREATION REPORT

ROADS CLOSED DUE TO HEAVY RAINFALL

PENDLETON — The Umatilla National Forest has temporarily closed two roads on the North Fork John Day Ranger District due to unsafe driving conditions caused by the recent rainfall and flooding rivers.

Forest Service Road 5326, between Heppner and Ukiah, has been closed due to mud, snow and saturated road conditions. The public is advised to take Highway 74 from Nye/Franklin Grade as an alternate route.

Road 54, off the Pearson Creek road about 14 miles outside of Pilot Rock, has been closed at the forest boundary due to water across the roadway and erosion damage. No alternate routes exist.

Other known flooding issues on the forest include the 32 road near the Bar M Ranch and Umatilla Forks Campground on the Walla Walla Ranger District. Water is crossing the road near the forest boundary. Additionally, many rivers on the Umatilla National Forest are near their bank levels and at risk of flooding. Forest officials advise the public to use caution when traveling on the Forest, as roads and trails could be impacted by washouts or obstructions (such as rocks or boulders).

FREE FISHING EVENT NEAR HERMISTON

HERMISTON — The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and local partners will host a free youth fishing event at the McNary Channel Ponds near Hermiston on Saturday, April 13.

To give kids 12 and younger the best opportunity to catch fish, the event is open for that age group only from 10 a.m. to noon. The ponds will be open for families to fish starting at noon.

The event is free and open to the public. Pre-registration is not required.

Loaner fishing rods, reels, tackle and bait will be available. Kids 11 years old and younger can fish for free, but youth 12-17 years of age will need to have a \$10 youth license. Licenses will not be sold on site.

To get to McNary Channel Ponds from Highway 370 in Umatilla, turn north onto Brownell Boulevard (just west of I-82). Proceed to West Third Street. Turn right on Third Street and proceed through the I-82 underpass. The ponds are north of Third Street between I-82 and McNary Dam.

General Spring Turkey Hunting Opens April 15



Tom Claycomb photo

To be a successful turkey hunter you'll need more than just a shotgun and shells.

GOBBLE GOBBLE

There are some rabid turkey hunters out there. And I'm not just talking about in the Deep South where they have large numbers of birds and have hunted them for generations. I'm also talking about out West.



BASE CAMP
TOM CLAYCOMB

The big numbers of turkeys is a huge success story due to the united efforts of the National Wild Turkey Federation and state fish and game departments. While we may not have the big numbers like I've seen down in the southern states, that doesn't mean that there is not enough to get excited about. Plus, down there you'll be hunting on farm ground. Out West we have the opportunity to hunt them in the mountains, which gives us a unique twist.

I think due to being able to hunt them up in the mountains it makes a turkey hunter get as excited as an elk hunter. I don't want to say it is the exact same but you are in the mountains, you set up decoys and try to call in a lovesick tom. You're up before daylight setting up close to a roost that you had to scout to find. There are a lot of similarities to elk hunting.

So how do you hunt them? I'd recommend having a jake decoy and a couple of hens. For calls I'm old school and still like the old box calls. I use a Quaker Boy Hurricane call.

A ton of turkey hunters like the popular slate plates and push-boxes. A 6-year-old can master a push box in minutes and be effective. You can also tape them to the forearm of your shotgun and operate them as you are leveling down on your gobbler. You also need to learn to use a reed.

SIGHTS

I've never used a scope or red dot sights while turkey hunting (I know, I know, I'm old school). But with the turkey loads that they have now that can reach out to 60-plus yards you need one. I just got a Riton Optics RT-R MOD 3 RMD red dot sight.

Ninety-nine percent of new turkey hunters think they just have to aim and shoot. It's a shotgun, right? Wrong!



National Wild Turkey Federation photo

A tom turkey

I've never measured one but let's say a turkey stands 3 feet tall and you're using some good turkey loads and a turkey choke. You need to aim at a body part just like if you were deer hunting.

DECOYS

They make some really cool realistic turkey decoys. The bad thing is they're expensive and heavy to carry. If you're hunting on the Boise River maybe you can use them but if you're running and gunning in the mountains then you need to use Montana Decoys. They're super lightweight. I like a lot of their offerings but check out their Spring Fling, Jake Purr-FECT, Miss PURR-FECT and Fanatic.

SHELLS & CHOKES

I wrote for Bass Pro Shop for 3½ years and once they had me test nearly all of the turkey loads out there. Hands down HEVI-SHOT is the best. And they have a new

Spring general turkey season

- Open statewide
- April 15-May 31 (youth hunt, for ages 17 and under, is April 13-14)
- Daily bag limit: one male turkey or turkey with a visible beard
- Tag sale deadline: Hunters can buy tags throughout the season. It is illegal to buy or possess more than three statewide turkey tags

offering they call the HEVI-XS Strut that I'm about to test. BUT ... you must use a proper choke. Check out Trulock chokes.

TARGETS

You need to sight in your shotgun just like doing your rifle since it has a tight choke. I use Birchwood Casey Turkey targets.

As you can see, to be successful you need some specific gear. To carry all of this gear you'll need a Scent Blocker's Thunder Chicken Turkey vest. It has more than 15 pockets to carry your calls, a back pouch you can

stuff decoys into (and use bungee cords to strap on more), a detachable pad to sit on while calling and an orange safety flag you can pull out on back. I'm not known as Mr. Safety but be careful, I think more turkey hunters get shot than in any other shooting sport.

And lastly, check out the Ameristep "Throw Down" blind. It's lightweight and compact. Have fun!



National Wild Turkey Federation photo

Wild turkeys have proliferated in much of Northeastern Oregon over the past few decades.