



Managing your property for turkey habitat can be fairly simple and extremely rewarding. You can essentially throw out a welcome mat for gobblers by developing wildlife openings in the forest, thinning timber in strategic locations, planting mast-producing trees, and practicing prescribed burns to spur the growth of turkey-friendly vegetation.

The restoration of wild turkey over the past 25 years is one of Minnesota's greatest conservation success stories. Once rare, today wild turkeys are becoming a common sight throughout central and even northern Minnesota. The birds, which usually travel in flocks, are often seen in wooded areas next to field openings.

Our wild turkey population is expanding north and west. The state has spring and fall hunting seasons, which have become very popular. Hunting is regulated to allow the wild turkey population to continue growing.

Private land management for Turkeys

Your land, a hunting haven for gobblers

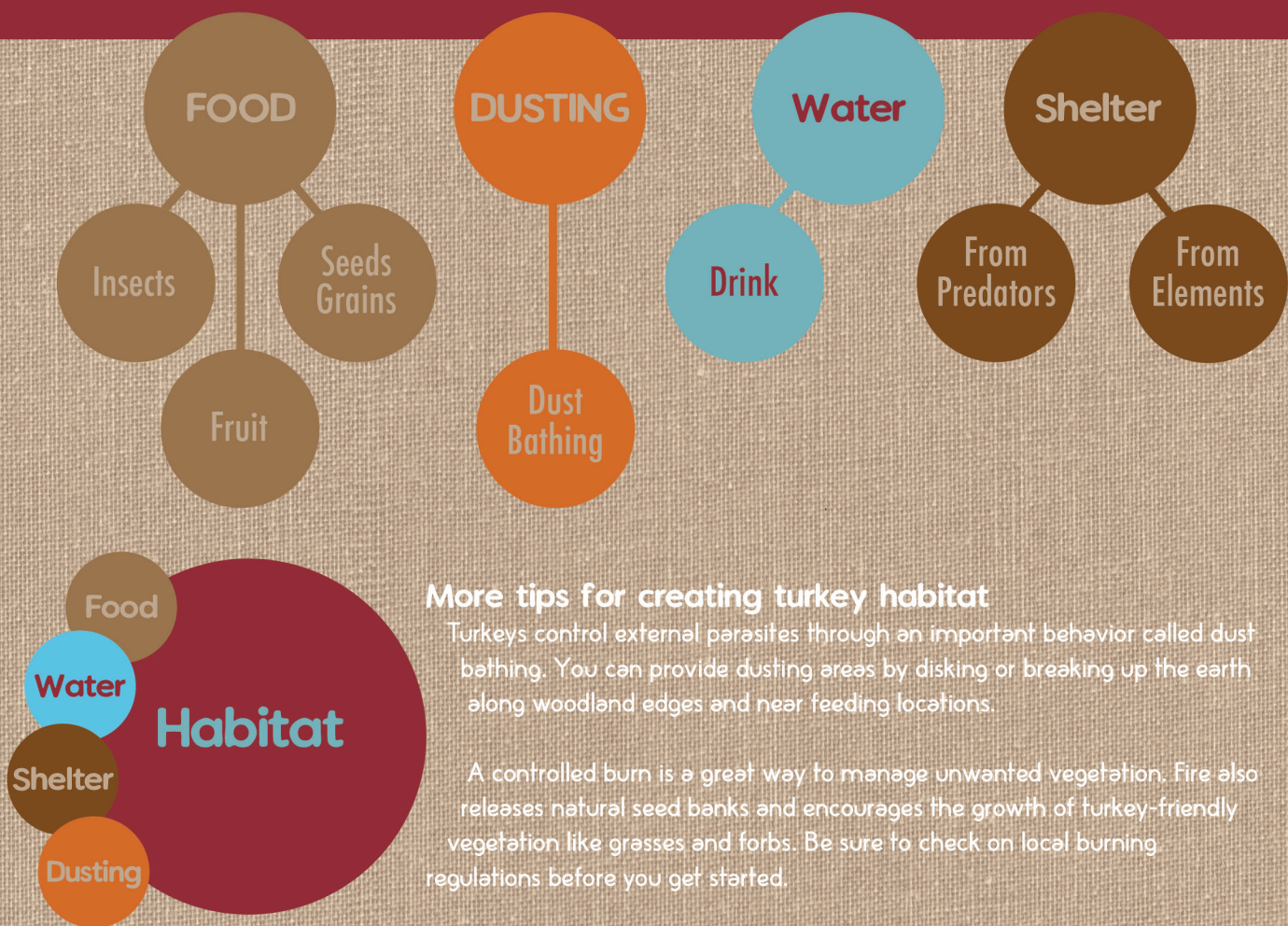
Photo by Emily Gutenkauf

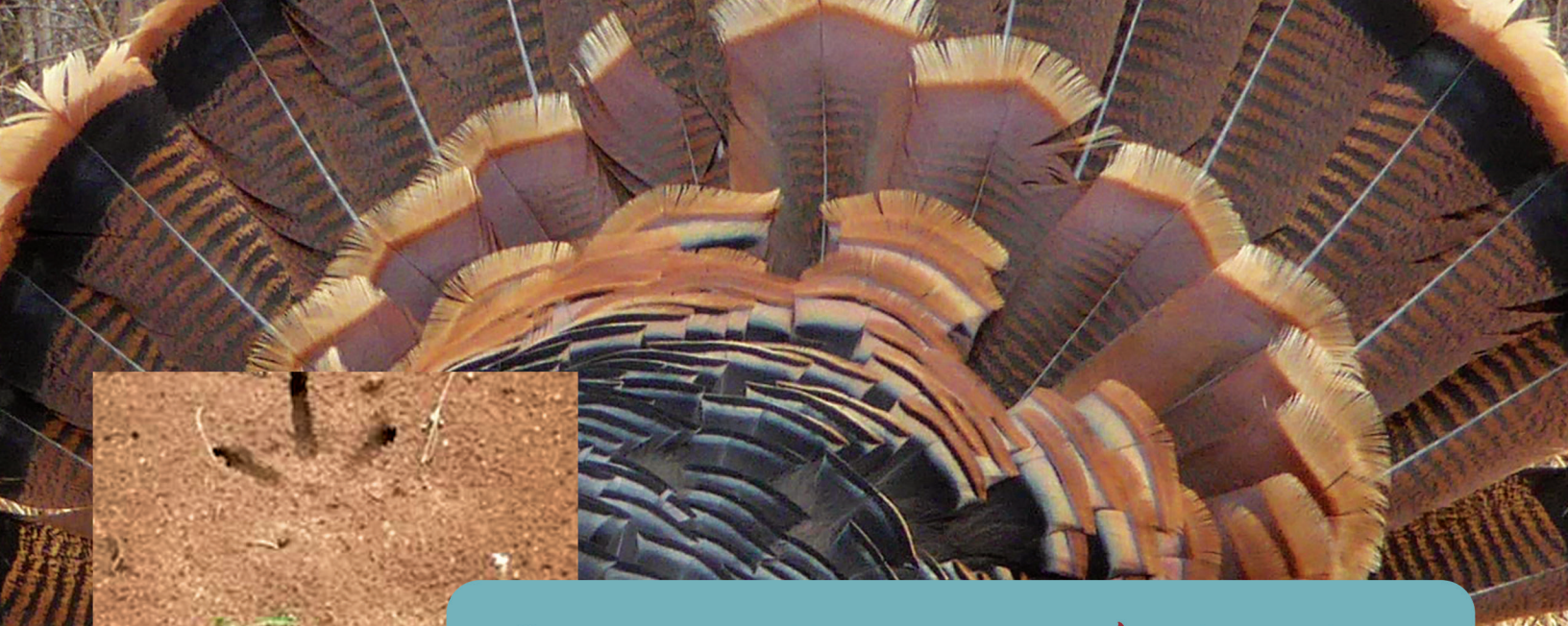


Photo by Wade Newton

What do turkeys need?

Turkeys like open wooded areas, brushy grasslands, and river bottoms. There are things you can do on your property to encourage turkey habitat development. Manage the areas at the edge of hardwoods. Remove undesirable trees. Randomly drop a few trees with a chainsaw to add cover. Encourage natural regeneration of understory vegetation. Allow native vegetation and briars to grow along fence rows and field edges. Hens are attracted to this type cover when searching for nest sites.





Saving, cutting, and planting trees

What trees should I cut, what should I keep?

If you have older, mature trees, keep them! Big multi-branched trees are wild turkeys' favorite roosting locations. Carefully plan the timber cutting to leave known roost areas. Also leave a surrounding buffer zone of cover near known roosting trees.

What are "Mast trees"?

Mast is the fruit of forest trees and shrubs, such as acorns and other nuts. Stands of hardwood trees that produce hard mast like oaks, hickories, and other nut-bearing trees are favored by turkeys. It takes years for many mast-tree species to produce, so if they are already present on your property, you will want to preserve them.

Planting for the future

Planting a variety of turkey-friendly trees or shrubs ensures a bright future. Your plantings can be intentional to diversify for a future habitat that is even better than what currently exists. Also, a diverse planting ensures food will be available to turkeys in all seasons.

Managing water sources

What trees should I cut, what should I keep?

Creeks, streams, ponds, and even drainage basins can provide water. Sand at the water's edge also provides grit and gravel necessary for the turkey's digestive needs. You can help manage the area by keep the edges around water cleared for easy access. Open clearings around water sources help visibility to see predators for hens and young poults.

Photo by Wade Newton



Forming a plan . . .

Conservation management plans

A management plan can help you get the most out of your property and maximize the potential benefits for a variety of game bird species. Your local SWCD can help you develop a property management plan.

For woodland properties, a Forest Stewardship Plan written by a certified plan writer, such as your local SWCD, the DNR or a private forest planner, qualifies landowners to apply for local or state tax-relief and incentive programs. To qualify for one of these programs, a landowner must generally have at least 20 qualifying acres of land.

The DNR's Forest Stewardship Program helps landowners finalize their own goals and prepare a voluntary management plan for their woodland. This Woodland Stewardship Plan, when written by a certified writer, is a non-binding, written document that lists your land's potential, what you want to accomplish, and specific actions you can take to accomplish those goals within a given time-frame.

Want to establish the perfect habitat for turkeys... especially big Toms?
Contact us to get started on a Forest Stewardship Plan

Photo by Emily Gutenkauf



Phone: 218-828-6197
Web: cswcd.org