

Now is time for turkeys

Turkey hunters shouldn't have any trouble bagging their quarry this year, but that situation could be changing in the years to come, so the time to boast about putting a plump one in the middle of your Thanksgiving spread all by yourself is probably now.

"Turkey numbers are still strong, but in decline. We collect most of our turkey info in August, and I haven't got all of the data, but turkey production looks pretty poor based on the data I have so far," Wildlife Biologist Joe Sandrini reported.

The above average moisture the area enjoyed in spring and early summer is most likely responsible for the decrease in reproduction.

"Production was that way because of the wet, cool weather in June when they were hatching," Sandrini explained.

Fortunately, that downturn will have little to no impact on the success hunters enjoy this fall.

"Overall the numbers are still strong, and generally turkey hunting should be pretty good because we still have strong numbers on 2- and 3-year-old birds in the population," Sandrini said.

If reproduction doesn't pick up this year or next, however, the pickings could be slimmed considerably for hunters who try their luck in 2010 or 2011.

"Things are starting to decline a little bit, but overall the numbers are still good. If we end up getting poor reproduction the next two or three years, it's going to hurt though, and guys will start to notice it a little bit next year, and more so the year after," Sandrini noted.

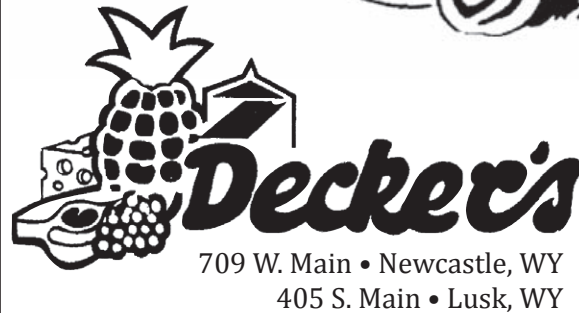
While it is easy to determine that cold and wet weather during the hatch will have a negative impact on reproduction, Game and Fish is trying to learn as much as it can about what kills turkeys after they are born, and they are asking hunters this year to help with that study.

"If anybody harvests a banded turkey or one with a radio pack, please let us know. They're part of an ongoing study we have on turkey mortality," Sandrini urged.

Hunter's Headquarters



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