

# Branching Out: Maryland's Forest Stewardship Educator

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Published four times a year and distributed to more than 5,000 forest landowners, resource professionals, and others interested in forest stewardship. For a free subscription or to send news items, dates, and comments, phone 301-432-2767 x301; fax 301-432-4089; e-mail [cmason@umd.edu](mailto:cmason@umd.edu); or mail to Branching Out, Maryland Cooperative Extension, 18330 Keedysville Road, Keedysville MD 21756-1104. The sponsoring agencies' programs are open to all citizens without regard to race, color, gender, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, marital or parental status, or national origin.

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## Talking Turkey: A Wildlife Success Story

The Maryland wild turkey reintroduction program is a success story worth gobbling about! But success did not come easily for this magnificent woodland creature. Early settlers of the 1630s found extensive forests and abundant wild turkey. However, increased demand for wood plus settlements expanding westward resulted in vast amounts of Maryland's forest being cleared during the 1700s and 1800s. This loss of habitat due to timber cutting along with unrestricted hunting took their toll on Maryland's wild turkey population. The turn of the 20th century found the wild turkey nearly extinct except for a few areas in the Western counties.

In response to this drastic population decline, Garrett County banned turkey hunting between 1920 and 1933. The State of Maryland began a program to release pen-raised turkeys in 1925 in hopes of reestablishing the population. The State released nearly 33,000 pen-raised birds between 1930 and 1971. However, this expensive program proved unsuccessful because, although various techniques were tried to encourage wild behaviors in the young, populations were not established in the wild. With the abandonment of the pen-raised program in 1971, the effort was refocused onto the trap and transplant method.



The trap and transplant program relied upon the rocket net, a device invented in the 1950s that uses explosives to propel metal projectiles attached to a net over the turkeys. This method allowed turkeys to be trapped in one area and transplanted to other areas of the state. While reintroduction efforts were successful in Frederick County, initial efforts in Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore were not. Therefore, the reintroduction effort was intensified with a total of 1,129 wild turkeys captured and relocated throughout the State between 1979 and 2001. The population now stands between 28,000 and 32,000 wild turkeys in Maryland with a self-sustaining population in every county.

Wild turkeys still face difficulties today. Predation is a serious threat as foxes, hawks, owls, coyotes, raccoons, feral dogs, and feral cats prey on young and adults. Raccoons, opossums, skunks, and snakes will eat eggs. Cool, wet weather can also increase mortality in the poults causing them to die from exposure. Disease and parasites usually do not have a major impact. Hunting, once a significant source of mortality when unrestricted, is now regulated through a spring and fall hunt. Because a large harvest of hens in the fall can result in a decline in the population, the fall hunt is now limited to Western Maryland. The spring hunt allows for the taking of gobblers throughout the State. As one male services many females, loss of gobblers has limited impact on the population. Poaching is yet another concern that can impact populations locally.

The greatest threat to Maryland's wild turkeys today is the loss of suitable habitat. Forest and grasslands are the key components of wild turkey habitat. Trees provide food in the form of nuts and berries, cover for daytime resting and nighttime roosting, while grasslands provide insects for the young and adults. Arrangement of habitat is important. An ideal site to support a turkey population consists of several thousand acres consisting of 30-60 percent mature hardwoods, with the rest divided into pasture or grasslands, old fields or brushland, and grain crops. Turkeys will drink from standing water, but they obtain most of their moisture through their food. Hens typically nest among bushes, vines and small trees providing a visual screen horizontally. They have also nested in fields, open woods, along forest roads, and power line right-of-ways. But these nest sites have a common factor: lots of well-developed standing vegetation or lateral cover at the nest site to obstruct them from view.

While adults and young alike eat insects, young poults feed primarily on insects their first few weeks of life. Broods require areas of herbaceous vegetation scattered within the forest allowing them to safely search for insects. The poults are hidden by the vegetation while hens watch for predators in the distance. Nearby trees provide shade from the sun, protection from rain, escape from predators, and roosting sites.

Acorns are the favored fall food, as are beechnuts, crabapples, pine seeds, cherries, grapes, grasses, buds, and leaves. Fall foods are important as young birds need to continue their growth, while both young and old birds need extra fat deposits in the fall to survive the winter. In the winter, food becomes more critical, increasing the birds' dependence upon mature mast-producing forests. Roost habitat is necessary year-round, particularly in the winter as it provides thermal protection and aids in keeping the bird warm. Roost habitat is typically a stand of mature trees and areas sheltered from the prevailing winds.

Whether you are a hunter or wildlife watcher, all forest landowners can work to improve wild turkey habitat on their land. Consider establishing food plots, thinning forests to improve acorn production, creating meadows, or other beneficial practices. Contact your local Department of Natural Resource forester or wildlife biologist to discuss turkey management on your property. Talk to your neighbors as well, because the birds do not know property boundaries. More information is available in *The Wild Turkey in Maryland*. For a copy, contact Bob Long, MD DNR 410-221-8838 or email [blong@dnr.state.md.us](mailto:blong@dnr.state.md.us), or view online at [www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife). Maryland Cooperative Extension also has online publications on [wild turkey management \(FS#606\)](#), [planting crops for wildlife \(FS#598\)](#), and other relevant topics that can be found at our website [www.naturalresources.umd.edu](http://www.naturalresources.umd.edu) under the publications section located in the upper right hand corner of the screen.

## **Managing Your Storm-Damaged Woodlands**

Maryland has its share of severe weather, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, nor'easters, snow, and ice

storms. Extreme weather events can take their toll on timber by bending, breaking, uprooting, wounding, and flooding trees. In the case of such an event, damage to timber needs to be assessed to determine the need for salvaging the timber while it still has value, making room for the new forest regeneration, and altering an existing management plan.

**\*Safety first!** Before entering a storm-damaged forest, always think safety first. Storms can leave behind unstable crowns and branches, twisted, bent and leaning trunks, and loose-hanging debris. Consider waiting until after a very windy day for loose material to fall, or inspect the woods when the wind speed is less than 5 mph. When you do enter the forest, **always wear a hardhat and watch for hanging branches!**

**You may want to start cutting damaged timber right away, but do so only if you are familiar with using a chainsaw and cutting storm-damaged timber.** Stressed timber can react in unexpected ways that are difficult to anticipate. Releasing stress by cutting can suddenly cause the tree to spring back and hit you, tip over onto you, or pop back up. Therefore, never work alone and have an escape route in case a speedy exit is needed. Damaged timber near power lines should be left to the utility companies to clean up.

**\*Assessing the damage.** You may need to pay a professional forester to determine the extent and severity of the damage. While the edge of a woodlot may appear to be heavily damaged, the interior of a closed stand may be relatively intact. An aerial photo can be a useful tool for noting the limits of the impacted area. Aerial photos are available from your [USDA Farm Service Agency](#), your local [Natural Resource Conservation Service](#), or the [U.S. Geological Survey](#) (1-888-ASK-USGS).

The forester should record such information as the tree species, size, type of damage, and quality of the trees impacted. Photographing the damage may come in handy for insurance or tax purposes. Damage may consist of bending, breaking, uprooting, wounds, and flooding. Storm damage often increases the risk for pests and diseases by weakening the defenses of trees. Therefore, every effort should be made to remove susceptible host trees. Trees with more than 75 percent crown loss, splits or fractures extending more than 25 percent down the trunk, will probably die and should be removed. Completely uprooted trees will quickly be attacked by insects, stain and fungi, though partially uprooted trees will last longer. Trees with major wounds require salvage. While short-term flooding may not be critical, prolonged flooding, particularly during the growing season, will injure and kill many flood-intolerant species.

**\*Do not be too quick to cut storm-damaged timber.** In some cases, timber buyers will approach landowners after a storm event and offer to cut storm damaged trees. This can result in the removal of storm damaged trees as well as other high quality trees that should not have been removed--a practice known as high-grading. Unless you have an accurate and independent appraisal by a professional forester, it is not recommended you sell any timber. Whatever is cut will affect the future of the forest for many years to come. The fact is that not all damaged timber requires salvage, nor is it economical. Some bent trees may straighten up, trees with less than 50 percent crown loss of branches and leaves or minor wounds can also recover, while trees with more damage require reevaluation in a few years,. Trees are highly resilient and the storm damage often looks worse than it is. The best approach may be to wait and see.

**\*Don't forget to cover your bases.** Having assessed your woodlands, you may decide to minimize your losses and conduct a salvage sale of your storm-damaged timber. Most landowners lack knowledge of how to market timber so it may be in their best interest to utilize the services of a consultant forester who will mark and tally the timber to be cut, solicit bids from loggers, and make sure the sale is carried out properly. Bear in mind that prices go down as the supply of logs increases. Your forester can give you a good handle on the local timber markets. Remember that additional trees may blow down given

time. A little patience may pay off. The new [extension bulletin #357 "Marketing Forest Products: Understanding the Sales Process"](#) can help landowners with the sale process. It is available from your local Maryland Cooperative Extension office for \$3.50. Information is available at [www.naturalresources.umd.edu](http://www.naturalresources.umd.edu).

## **New Publication Resources!**

\* **Forest Landowner Guide to Choosing and Evaluating a Natural Resource Based Enterprise (NRAES-151)**--\$19.95 plus s&h. If you are considering starting a new business to make the most of your land and are looking for some guidance, this is the book for you. This book helps landowners evaluate their resources, time, finances, and management techniques to develop a more successful business enterprise. Discussion of proper forest stewardship, step-by-step guide to business ideas, worksheets, assessing family goals, labor, management resources, site assessment, potential markets, plus enterprise budgets for eleven businesses. Available from NRAES at 607-255-7654 or [www.nraes.org](http://www.nraes.org).

\* **Marketing Forest Products: Understanding the Sales Process (EB#367)**--\$3.50. The marketing of forest products is a misunderstood and occasional activity for most forest landowners. This publication plainly explains through a six-step process how to utilize a professional forester and logger to sell timber in a manner that will assure profitability and sound forest stewardship. It also explains how to avoid some of the common pitfalls experienced by forest landowners when selling timber and how it can be a positive impact for wildlife habitat, forest improvement, and other landowner objectives. For a copy, contact your local Extension office or log onto our website at [www.naturalresources.umd.edu](http://www.naturalresources.umd.edu) (go to "publications" in the upper right hand corner of the screen).

\* **Positive Impact Forestry. A Sustainable Approach to Managing Woodlands.** Thom J McEvoy. \$25.00. Available at [www.islandpress.com](http://www.islandpress.com)/1-800-828-1302.

## **Make a Difference. Get Involved with Other Forest Landowners Today!**

Maryland's forest ownership is becoming increasingly fragmented, with over 130,000 private landowners, 75 percent owning less than 10 acres. Many forest landowners may view their property as a separate entity, unconnected to their neighbors. They are unaware that they may have shared concerns with other forest landowners. Moreover, public resources are increasingly limited. The best way to learn about being a good steward of your forest property is from other forest landowners with mutual interests. Maryland currently has three counties where forest landowners are meeting to consider developing an education-based forest landowner group. Who do you contact? Baltimore County, contact Lucy Wright at 410-239-2224/[VHCWright@aol.com](mailto:VHCWright@aol.com). Frederick County, contact Marge Barra at 717-624-3899/[MARGEBARRA@aol.com](mailto:MARGEBARRA@aol.com). Harford County, contact Charles Day at 410-457-4246/[cedayiii@juno.com](mailto:cedayiii@juno.com).

## **MFA Awards**

The Maryland Forests Association (MFA) presented several awards at their annual meeting on October 8-9. The MFA Logger of the Year was awarded to Curtis E. Clark & Sons Logging of Everett, PA, owned and operated by three brothers, Master Loggers Jerry, Todd, and Vincent Clark, sons of the former Curtis E. Clark. The brothers were nominated for their outstanding work on harvest operations on the Green Ridge State Forest over the past 30 years.

John and Jean Blake of Myersville, MD, were honored by the MFA with the Lifetime of Service to

Forestry Award, which is the first time this award has been presented in the 28-year history of the association. MFA President Kirk Rodgers stated, "John and Jean have been a shining example of stewardship and commitment to improving forests and forestry in Maryland for many years." He went on to detail John's extensive lifetime service to MFA, county and state forestry boards. Congratulations to the Blakes for receiving this lifetime achievement and for their unflinching commitment to Maryland's forests. Learn more at MFA's website, [www.mdforests.org](http://www.mdforests.org).

## **FLEP Funding Approved!**

The [Forest Landowner Enhancement Program \(FLEP\)](#) provides the Maryland Forest Service with funding for forest landowner technical, cost-share, and educational assistance. Provided by the USDA Forest Service, the funding of FLEP was recently eliminated. Thanks to the efforts of private forest landowners and other organizations, FLEP funding of \$5 million has been allocated nationally. The future of FLEP is unsure. Contact your [state forester](#) for information on available FLEP funding.

## **Forest Visualization Software**

This software allows you to see a forest based on forest inventory data. You can then simulate the visual impact of different forest management practices. The software and sample data sets can be downloaded and run on most computers. This is a work in progress by Penn State to make existing software developed by the USDA Forest Service more user-friendly by professionals as well as landowners. To learn more, go to the website: <http://rnrext.cas.psu.edu/FVS/Default.htm>.

## **Upcoming 2005 Stewardship Events**

- \* **June 10-11. MFA Loggers/Forestry Field Days**, Garrett County Fairgrounds, McHenry, MD. Events include commercial exhibitors of mill and logging equipment, educational displays, forestry demonstrations, chainsaw carvers. Great Fun! A family event! So come young and old! For information, contact MFA at 301-895-5369 or e mail [mdforests@hereintown.net](mailto:mdforests@hereintown.net).
- \* **Delmarva Forestry Seminar**. Contact Dot Abbott-Donnelly at DE Coop. Ext., 302-730-4000/[dotad@udel.edu](mailto:dotad@udel.edu).
- \* **3rd Annual Landowners Woods & Wildlife Conference**. All-day conference for forest landowners of large and small acreages. January 22--Manassas, Va; February 5--Charlottesville, VA. Contact the Madison County, VA Extension office 540-948-6881 or email [adowning@vt.edu](mailto:adowning@vt.edu).
- \* **Feb.1-May 20. Forestry Correspondence Course**, Spring semester. Sponsored by Maryland Cooperative Extension. Fee for this noncredit course is \$150 and includes text, readings, appendices. Register now! Contact Nancy Stewart at 410-827-8056, ext. 140/[nstewar1@umd.edu](mailto:nstewar1@umd.edu).

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