

Hillsdale Wildlife Area News



Area News- Spring 2013

2013 Spring Turkey Outlook

Spring turkey hunting for the Hillsdale Wildlife Area and surrounding areas looks good for 2013. Turkey numbers in the area remain strong. With the number of broods seen on the area this summer, it was evident that the turkeys experienced some early nest success. Some hens were seen without any young, likely due to consecutive days of high summer heat, drought, haying, and predation. This combination of factors may have resulted in some hens nesting late or not nesting at all.

Best hunting success will likely come early in the season, and near the end of the season. Success is good the first few days because the birds haven't been pressured and bird numbers are higher. Hunting pressure on the public areas makes hunting more difficult as the season progresses. However, late in the season, when most the hens begin nesting, gobblers may become more responsive to calls, and hunter success improves. The hunting pressure should slow down a little in late May when most hunters have either harvested their birds or have started fishing. Late May can be a good time to harvest a bird on public hunting areas.

Projects on Hillsdale

Lack of summer and winter moisture and high heat the last two years has changed the landscape on Hillsdale Wildlife Area. The reservoir is over 5 feet below conservation pool and all the wetlands have been semi-dry for the last two years. Hunting and boating in these areas has been tough if not nonexistent. Long-term drought can be very tough on both plants and animals. As hunters and managers, it is hard to stay positive during a drought, but there is an upside. The pros of drought will never outweigh the cons but one positive thing about the drought is the opportunity it creates to improve the areas that are normally wet. All wetlands need dry periods to help reset the system. As managers we can use this to help expose the natural seed source that is available in the soil as well as remove unwanted vegetation. KDWPT has used this drought period to fix dikes on Browns and Big Bull Wetlands. We have replaced a water control structure that had been ruined by beaver activity, and we have also mowed approximately 72 acres of willows, green ash, and cottonwood trees that were invading the wetlands. The drought also gave us the chance to seed approximately 65 acres of Japanese millet and buckwheat on the refuge area. Plans for the future will be to use the drought to our advantage, and get more habitat/food in place for when rain does come (Staying positive). These management efforts should help us to hold migratory birds longer next fall and winter.

Hillsdale Wildlife Area also completed a National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) Hunting Heritage Superfund project this winter. The NWTf matched funds with KDWPt to help remove trees in areas that were being overtaken by Eastern red cedars and sericea lespedeza. The objective of this project was to remove all the woody vegetation to help native warm season grasses become established once again. The grasses will help provide good winter and nesting habitat for ground nesting birds such as turkeys and quail. All cedars have been removed, and KDWPt is looking forward to attacking other invasive plants that are present. The final step is to get the native grasses established in the area and maintain them with prescribed burns. NWTf has been instrumental in helping us complete habitat improvement projects on the wildlife area. Other projects this spring include converting cool season grasses such as smooth brome to native warm season grasses on approximately 25 acres, prescribed burns on multiple acres if weather permits, and planting food plots with corn, sunflowers, and sorghum. These areas should also create good wildlife habitat, and hunting opportunity.

Hunters Reminded of New Public Lands Regulations:

Last June, the Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission approved new regulations relating to hunting on public lands. Designed to provide hunters with equal opportunities on limited public lands, the following regulations have been put in place:

- Baiting is illegal on public lands. Bait is considered any grain, fruit, vegetable, nut, hay, salt, sorghum, feed, or other food or mineral capable of attracting wildlife. Liquid scents and sprays are not considered bait.
- Only two portable blinds or tree stands are allowed per hunter on public lands.
- Portable blinds and tree stands must be marked with owner's name and address or KDWPt number. Portable blinds may not be left unattended overnight on public lands.
- Decoys may not be left unattended overnight on public lands.
- Commercial guides must have a permit to guide on public lands. The permits are free and must be specific to the land where guiding takes place.

If you would like more information about Hillsdale Wildlife Area

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