

Wild Turkey Habitat Evaluation Worksheet 2

This habitat evaluation worksheet is organized around several key habitat components that are required by wild turkeys. It assumes that these habitat components — nesting, brood-rearing and roosting — are available on the property and provides a process for rating each of them based on specific criteria. This worksheet also provides a process for rating the availability of additional resources that wild turkeys require — food, water and accessibility to habitats that provide escape and thermal cover. Some of the criteria identified, such as insect availability within brood-rearing habitat, will require that the habitat evaluation be conducted during the spring and summer months.

HABITAT COMPONENTS

Nesting habitat (20 points maximum)

1. Vegetation density at the ground-level (5 points maximum)

Assess the amount of cover at the ground-level to 36 inches in height.

Bare ground or very sparse cover (0 points) _____

Moderate cover: 25% to 50% ground cover (2 points) _____

Higher levels of cover: 50% to 75% ground cover (5 points) _____

Thick cover: 75% to 100% ground cover (2 points) _____

2. Vegetation height (10 points maximum)

Vegetation height of 12 to 18 inches (5 points) _____

Ideal nesting cover heights of 18 to 36 inches (10 points) _____

Vegetation height of more than 36 inches (0 points) _____

3. Proximity to edge (5 points maximum)

Score based on proximity to open grassy cover less than 36 inches in height.

Quality nesting cover is located within or adjacent to a field edge or is a managed woodland with greater than 40% herbaceous cover (5 points) _____

Available nesting cover is not located near — within 30 feet of — or adjacent to a field edge, or is a woodland with greater than 60% woody cover (0 points) _____

Quality rating for nesting habitat

Brood-rearing habitat (40 points maximum)

1. Insect availability within brood-rearing habitat: presence of insects for poults (10 points maximum)

No insects observed (0 points) _____

Some insects but not widespread (2 points) _____

Adequate insect availability, insects observed within two paces (5 points) _____

Abundant insect availability, insects observed during each step (10 points) _____

2. Vegetative diversity within brood-rearing habitat: mix of grasses, forbs and shrubs (15 points maximum)

Pastures and fields are primarily composed of cool-season grasses and legumes with little shrubby cover (5 points) _____

Pastures and fields are composed of a monoculture of cool-season grasses such as tall fescue with no shrubby cover available (0 points) _____

Pastures and fields are primarily composed of forbs and mixtures of native grasses that include shorter-statured grasses, such as little bluestem and side oats grama, as opposed to switchgrass and Indiangrass (15 points) _____

3. Degree of open space within brood-rearing habitat: openings of vegetation at ground-level for easy movement of poults (15 points maximum)

One to two year disturbance regimen is conducted to maintain early plant successional communities with open ground cover (15 points) _____

Four or more years since a disturbance, or little or no management has been implemented to maintain early stages of plant succession (0 points) _____

Quality rating for brood-rearing habitat

Roosting habitat (5 points maximum)

Presence of large mature trees suitable for roosting across the area (5 points) _____

Large mature trees are not present on the area (0 points) _____

Quality rating for roosting habitat

AVAILABILITY OF IMPORTANT RESOURCES ON THE PROPERTY

This section of the worksheet provides a process for evaluating important resources that wild turkeys require, including food and water, and vegetation that they avoid, including thick, brushy stands. Each can be rated on a scale of 0 to 5 points.

Food resources (15 points maximum)

Hard mast availability: presence of oak trees and other mast-producing species (0 to 5 points) _____

Diversity of food sources: variety of seeds, soft mast (i.e., fruit) or agricultural crops (0 to 5 points) _____

Foods are available during each season: consistent food supply throughout the year (0 to 5 points) _____

Quality rating for food resources

Water sources (5 points maximum)

Present (5 points) _____

Absent (0 points) _____

Quality rating for water sources

Shrub cover (5 points maximum)

Evaluate the density of shrubs for usable turkey space (not including hardwood trees less than 15 feet tall)

More than 50% of the stand/property is comprised of woody cover greater than 36 inches tall (0 points) _____

Less than 25% of the stand/property is comprised of vegetation taller than 36 inches in height (5 points) _____

Quality rating for shrub cover

Overall habitat component and important resource availability rating

Sum the ratings of the habitat components and availability of important resources.

Nesting habitat + Brood-rearing habitat + Roosting habitat + Food resources + Water sources + Shrub cover

Excellent: 70 to 80 points | **Good:** 45 to 69 points | **Poor:** 0 to 44 points
