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RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

Think Safety for Turkeys

While managing forest habitat for wild turkeys, managers often unintentionally create an environment that can be potentially dangerous. Because turkeys spend most of their time on the ground – where most of the turkey predators live – managers must consider decisions that can potentially increase turkey-predator interaction and thus predation on turkeys. Below I've described three common practices that should be avoided to reduce turkey predator habitat and turkey-predator interaction, and provide a safer environment for turkeys.



1 Clearing logging debris from loading decks to plant food plots is a common practice. However, logging debris should not be pushed around the food plot in a way that restricts turkey access. Turkey access into and out of the food plot in the above photo is limited to two narrow gaps where turkeys could be ambushed by predators. Also, the piled debris provides den sites for turkey predators. The logging debris should be distributed throughout the adjacent timber stand or piled and burned to provide turkeys with unrestricted access.



2 Piles of logging debris such as the one in this photo can often be found throughout a forest landscape. Piling debris into windrows may be part of preparing a site for reforestation. Also, some landowners consider logging debris unsightly and will remove debris from a timber stand and push it into large piles. Whatever the reason for piling logging debris, the piles provide habitat and protection for many turkey predators. If piling logging debris is necessary, then burn the piles to eliminate predator habitat and provide a safer environment for turkeys.



3 Food plots are planted every fall to attract deer during deer season. Plots planted in crops that grow tall, such as rye and wheat, or plots that are left fallow can provide suitable nest sites for turkeys. This can be a potential problem! Why? Food plots are areas of high wildlife activity. Many animals visit food plots to feed on the crops planted, while many animals visit food plots to prey on the animals feeding on the crops. Disk or mow plots after deer season and prior to turkey nesting season to discourage turkey hens from nesting in them. An abundance of nesting habitat should be created throughout the property in non-food plot areas.