

With women coming into hunting in unprecedented numbers, new opportunities to educate these new hunters on hunting safety and techniques have grown as well. Recognizing the increased interest, NWTF staff piloted an Introduction to Turkey Hunting Women in the Outdoors event this spring, and it is a success story waiting to be told.

Here are the basics of the event that was not only educational and fun but contrib-

uted to the NWTF's mission of preserving our hunting heritage.

Turkey hunting basics

The day began with an overview of turkey hunting, presented using PowerPoint in a casual setting. Participants could freely ask questions and share from their previous experiences.

The hour-and-a-half presentation covered:

- the history of the wild turkey,
- the NWTF's role in turkey restoration,
- wild turkey behavior and biology,
- turkey language and calling techniques,
- gear essentials,
- hunting setups and strategy,
- hunting safety.

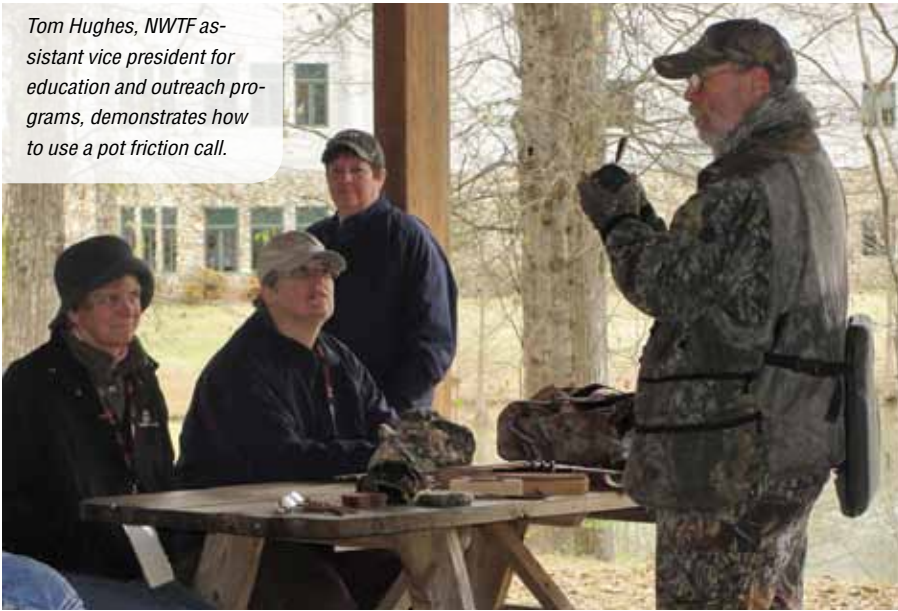
Turkey Country Graphic Artist Leeann Huston, of Edgefield, S.C., took the class before going on her first turkey hunt.

TURKEY HUNTING 101

Get women ready for the woods with a day of hands-on fun

**by Teresa Carroll,
Women in the Outdoors
national coordinator**

Tom Hughes, NWTF assistant vice president for education and outreach programs, demonstrates how to use a pot friction call.



three outdoor setups. They hunkered down against trees in the woods while a volunteer simulated the sounds and behaviors of a gobbler on the prowl. Each participant had an opportunity to practice calling using various turkey calls as they actually called in the “gobbler.” They received instruction on listening, setup, spotting the turkey and when to move. Some ladies bagged their bird, while others blew the simulated setup and sent the turkey running.

“You learned how to be still, move quietly, when it’s appropriate to shoot and when it’s not,” Huston said. “When the pretend turkey got within range, the guide would tell us to shoot.”

Even though it wasn’t an actual turkey hunt, these ladies experienced many aspects of what a real turkey hunt would be like.

“Even on the simulated hunt, when the turkey gobbled, it got my adrenalin going,” Huston said. “I had that same feeling on my first real turkey hunt.”

A few weeks after the Introduction to Turkey Hunting event, Huston experienced that first turkey hunt. She didn’t connect on a bird but heard the gobble of an actual wild turkey for the first time.

“The class helped me know what to expect on my first hunt,” Huston said. “I felt more prepared and enjoyed the hunt more, because I knew what was happening around me.”



Attendees participated in mock turkey hunts to learn calling strategies in a forest setting.

a turkey gun-ammunition combo patterned on a target and why a hunter’s distance from the bird matters.

Break for fun

Everyone came back together for time of food and fellowship. During the lunch break, many women took their chances at the “opossum toss” game, playing for

the grand prize — a turkey hunting package.

Then it was back to class. The group that learned about turkey hunting strategies before lunch had their time with the shotgun instructors, and vice versa.

“I knew some about turkey hunting, just from working at the NWTF,” Huston said. “But it was helpful to hear it again.”

Huston said that many of the participants in her class had hunted before, just not for turkeys.

Turkey calling and hunting tips

Then the participants put theory into practice. The 20 women were split into two groups for another 90-minute session, where they received more in-depth instruction on turkey calling, hunting techniques and shotgunning.

Instructors covered the types of calls used in turkey hunting, hunting strategies, how to set up on a turkey and scouting for turkeys.

“They even showed us how to pack a turkey vest with all the gear you need on a hunt,” Huston said. “I never knew a turkey vest had so many pockets.”

They also learned how to choose the right shotgun, ammunition and choke tube; how to pattern a shotgun; and how to care for and maintain a shotgun. This session ended with actual shotgun practice on the range.

Huston had never held a loaded gun before the class, but she was able to see firsthand how

A simulated turkey hunt

Huston’s favorite part of the day was the simulated turkey hunt.

The ladies were divided into three groups, and each rotated through

Go to www.turkeycountrymagazine.com for a printable turkey hunting checklist that was used at this event, as well as instruction for popular fundraising games, like the opossum toss.

