

# NEWS RELEASE

## Kaibab National Forest

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### **State wildlife managers trap turkeys on Kaibab NF**

FREDONIA, Ariz. – Wildlife managers with the Arizona Game and Fish Department have begun a two-year study to better understand the survival of wild turkeys in northern Arizona.

Known as Merriam’s turkeys, the birds are common throughout the West and provide a popular recreational hunt in Arizona during the spring and the fall.

State wildlife managers undertook the study to better understand what proportion of the hen population is harvested each fall.

The fall harvest is primarily made up of hen and juvenile turkeys. If harvest exceeds a certain threshold, harvest could impact the population. In addition, the study will provide information on seasonal survival rates.

“Turkeys normally lay 12 eggs in the spring, but we found that each hen this fall had around two to five poults. By mid-winter less than one poult per hen had survived,” said Region 2 Game Specialist Tom McCall. “We’re trying to find out how the fall harvest and the winter conditions contribute to this mortality.”

Hen turkeys can live up to seven years in the wild, McCall said, but typically survive no more than three years. Their survival is affected by precipitation, winter severity, forage availability, and predators, such as coyotes, bobcats, and mountain lions, as well as hunting and other natural causes.

During the last three months, wildlife managers trapped 96 turkeys in Game Units 8 and 12A West, on the Williams Ranger District and the North Kaibab Ranger District of the Kaibab National Forest.

With volunteers from the National Wild Turkey Federation and the U.S. Forest Service, wildlife managers trapped 44 turkeys near Williams, Ariz., and 52 turkeys on the Kaibab Plateau, using rocket-propelled nets at various bait sites.

It was the first time since 1996 that turkeys have been trapped in these areas.

Fifty female turkeys received radio transmitters, attached to their backs using a harness system, and aluminum leg bands.

All the birds were released shortly after capture, except for nine turkeys that were transplanted to the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument on the Arizona Strip in Unit 13B.

The results of the study will be used to help formulate fall hunt recommendations.

For more information, please contact Arizona Game and Fish Department Public Information Officer Shelly Shepherd at (928) 214-1241 or Kaibab National Forest Public Affairs Specialist Patrick Lair at (928) 643-8172.

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