Wild Turkey Field Technician

Salary: $15/hr

Schedule: 40 hrs/week

Housing provided, fully furnished apartment above check station at Cedar Creek WMA. Housing includes shared bathroom, fully furnished kitchen, laundry, office space. Housing is shared with other two technicians.

Work vehicles provided, personal vehicle not required but will obviously make free time more convenient for you.

Work is performed on Cedar Creek and BF Grant WMA's roughly 20 minutes from Eatonton, GA and roughly 50 minutes from Macon, GA.

Opening is only for the summer portion of the season, from May to end of July.

To apply: email a resume and cover letter to kjk37870@uga.edu

Turkey Lab Field Season

Trapping (Late December – Mid March)

The first few months of the season are spent trapping turkeys. In order to find them, we set up bait sites using cracked corn and trail cameras at clearings in the forest. Once we have them on camera, we set up rocket nets to catch them. We then fit them with leg bands and GPS units so that we can track them throughout the year. This part of the year isn't hard but it is long. We may end up waiting multiple days from dusk to dawn with one person in a hunting blind to detonate the rockets and one person waiting in a truck on standby. Make sure to bring snacks, warm clothes, and something to pass the time!

Camera Surveys (March + July)

We conduct a mark/recapture camera survey in March to help gauge survival rates. We place 85 cameras up across the WMAs that need to be checked once per week. The survey runs for a month. Start and end dates are flexible although cameras must come down before the hunting season starts in early April. In July, we conduct a poult survey. The process is the same although we only hang 30 or so cameras.

ARU's (March – July)

We set up acoustic recoding units (ARUs) in trees throughout various sites across the WMAs to monitor gobbling activity. We use climbing stands to hang microphones roughly 40 ft up although the units themselves are only 10-12 ft up. Units have to be up and running by March 1 and need to be checked every 4-6 weeks.

Tracking (February – End)

Tracking involves keeping up with all turkeys from last year that survived as well as newly captured individuals. We are able to remotely download data off of their GPS units as long as we're within range (roughly 500m depending on topography). We use a combination of telemetry to locate individual turkeys along with whip and yagi antennas to receive and download signals from the GPS units. Basically, this means driving/hiking around until you get close enough to get a download. If the turkeys make large movements or decide to settle down in hard to reach places, we can also call in a helicopter flight to help cover more ground. We then use the GPS data to help monitor their activity throughout the year.

Schedule Changes (March + July)

We change the settings and schedules on the GPS units to help conserve battery. In March we ramp up schedules on units from previous years to collect more in depth data during the breeding season and then scale back all units in June and July to save as much battery as possible. The process itself is pretty much the exact same as tracking.

Nesting (April – July

Location and activity data from females lets us figure out which ones are nesting. This involves a laying period where a female will lay >1 egg per day for about 7 days, followed by an incubation period where she will not leave the nest (except to feed). While she is incubating, we keep up with her daily. Most nests fail. Once a nest fails/hatches, we need to go in, collect eggs/eggshells for genetic analysis, and determine why the nest failed if necessary.

If a nest hatches, we also keep up with the hen and her poults for up to 28 days while she broods. In order to do so, we perform a brood check every 3 days. Normally, aren't able to get close enough to them to see how the poults are doing. To get around this, we go in very early in the morning (4:30) and use her location data to get an idea of where they've roosted. We get in a position to be able to see them as they're waking up. Usually we don't actually see the poults. Instead, we look to see if they've roosted on the ground or in trees and listen for chirps.

Vegetation surveys (May-End)

We conduct vegetation surveys to get an idea of the characteristics that influence nest and brood success (canopy cover, hardwood and pine density, local community makeup, etc.). We conduct surveys for all our nests whether, they fail or hatch, and a random point for comparison. If a nest hatches, we also conduct surveys on one day use point per day and one roost point every 3 days (and associated random points). That means that for every 3 days a brood survives, we have 3 day use points, 1 roost point, and the 4 associated random points for (8 total).

Calendar:

Our busiest time of the year is May through the first half of June. By this time there will be some nests that are still incubating and need to be kept up with and others that have hatched (which means brood checks and veg surveys). We'll also see some hens that had previously failed nests initiate a second or third nest.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Trapping	X	X	X				
Tracking		X	X	X	X	X	X
ARU		X	X	X	X	X	
Cam Survey			X				X
S. Change			X			X	X
Nesting				X	X	X	X
Brooding					X	X	X
Veg survey					X	X	X