Scouting for *mizise* (wild turkey) on public lands in the deep forest of Bayfield County, WI
Brief history of wild turkeys in Wisconsin

- Ranged primarily across the southern 1/2 of Wisconsin prior to European arrival
- Population extirpated by the early 1900s
- Restoration started with release of turkeys in Vernon County in 1976
- Additional releases in the northern counties through 2006
- Northern population has been doing well, despite doubts
Scouting

- Part of the process of preparing for the hunt and studying all of the information that is available:
  - **Preparation at home** - looking at maps, aerial photos, hunting apps, landownership, reading about the target species, internet resources, etc.
  - **Preparation in the field** - driving roads, visiting sites, and looking for sign (tracks, feathers, scratches, scat, roosts, etc.)

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**Is the site accessible?**
**Are turkeys present?**
**What are their behavioral patterns?**
Using Aerial Imagery

- Easy to access
- Use basic aerial photo interpretation to ID different features:
  - Young forest stands
  - Plantations
  - Mature forest
  - Edge habitat
  - Water/Riparian areas
  - Roads/Trails
  - Ridgelines
  - Draws/Ravines

Use a variety of resources: Hunting apps (OnX, HuntStand, etc.), Internet Browser Maps (Google, Bing, etc.), County GIS (different years, LiDAR, ownership), DNR maps
• Obvious features: different habitat types, mixed age forest stands, pine plantation, good access via roads and trails, wildlife openings, etc.

• The only critical component missing is a water source, but there are some wooded ponds just to the south, and a seasonal stream/spring to the north.
- LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) can reveal features that cannot always be seen from aerial photos.
Mizise scouting – habitat/landscape considerations

• Prefer areas with 30-70% forest cover (hard to find on public lands in northern Bayfield County)

• Different habitat for different needs:
  • Roosting habitat: large trees with horizontal limbs (oaks, mature conifers)
  • Foraging habitat: mast species (oaks)
  • Nesting cover: dense brush, fallen trees, near forest edge

• Edge habitat (open-forest, conifers-hardwoods, road-forest, ROW-forest)

• Reliable food source (acorns/mast, forest edges and roadsides usually have a lot of insects in the spring)

• Topography can be important – roosting on ridgelines/hilltops

• Water sources (springs, ponds, creeks, etc.)
Selecting a place to set-up

Pay attention to features of the landscape:
• Roads, hiking trails, game trails
• Density of understory brush, downfallen trees, etc.
• Forest floor: noisy oak leaves, pine needles, moss, broken branches

Large trees (width of shoulders)
Line of sight (at least 50 yards)
Angle of sun (ability to see, shadows)
Away from roads/ATV trails/hiking trails
My first northwoods turkey - 2019