

Gary Howey | Of The Outdoors

# When & How Much To Call

GARY HOWEY  
Hartington, Neb.

One of the most asked questions when it comes to spring turkey hunting is, "How much calling should I do?"

Over the years, I've hunted spring turkeys from Mississippi to Minnesota, going after three of the four species of turkeys, Merriam, Rio Grande and Eastern and learned mostly from my mistakes that over calling is one of the things that causes mature Toms to loose interest quicker than anything.

Jakes or immature birds seem to come running when they hear a hen call, whether it be a little calling or a lot.

To understand what I'm referring to, lets start from the beginning.

When opening day arrives, I try to get into the woods, early, well before daylight, allowing me to sneak in without being seen by the eagle eyed turkeys.

If I've scouted the area previously, I'll slide into the area the birds are in, set up and wait for the birds to wake up.



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**HOWEY**

If I haven't scouted an area previously and don't know the general area where the birds are roosting, I'll head for an elevated area, which allows my calls to ring out over the valleys, then hunker down below the ridge line and give a locator call which can be a barred owl call, crow call or a coyote call.

These calls when used just before dawn will startle the bird, causing the Tom to shock gobble from the roost, giving away his position.

When I know where the birds are roosting, before the sun comes up, if I have time before it get too light, I'll set out my decoys, find a hide and get ready to call.

At this point, you don't want to get in a hurry, let the bird make the first move. Once he gobbles, all you'll need to do is to let him know you're around, giving him a quiet tree putt, the sound a hen makes when she's still on the roost.

You don't want to get to loud as the sound the hen is making is one of a bird just waking up, so keep it low, the Tom will hear the soft call as turkeys have unbelievable hearing, with the ability to pick up even the slightest sound, with the ability to hear a call out to several hundred yards.

When the Tom hears the hen wake up, he'll gobble, letting her know that he's up and ready for action.

If he gobbles a lot back at you, talk back to him, but if he gobbles and then shuts up, do the same, don't over call, after a minute or so when he doesn't want to talk back at you, this is when I'll start to tease him with putts and purrs.

If the worse thing happens and he shuts up and won't talk, I'll give it 10 minutes calling every so often and if I don't hear from



PHOTO: GARY HOWEY

**Kyle Nickolite, formerly of Yankton, is pictured with his first Tom turkey that he called in by using tactics referenced by columnist Gary Howey.**

him, which generally means he has a big enough harem, not wanting to take on any more, I'll quietly slide out of the area, saving it for later after his hens have left him to nest or go off to feed by themselves, returning when he may be by himself.

If everything goes according to plan and he's talking back to me, I'll pull out my Roost'em slate, giving him a soft purr, waiting for him to respond. If he goes quiet on me, I'll pick up the volume a bit, teasing him, trying to get him excited.

Once the Tom is talking to you, it's time to get him on the ground, throwing the old "Fly Down Cackle" at him, which is the sound a bird makes when they leave the roost and fly to the ground.

This is a call that starts out with a soft putt, going to several loud putts then a loud cackle with the sound of the birds flapping it's wings, which can be made with a wing or by slapping your hand against you pants, and then going to a quieter putt as she hits the ground and starts to move off.

Once the Tom has heard her fly down, he'll follow her, making the same sound, gobbling once he hits the ground.

When he's on the ground, let him set the pace as far as how much to call. If he

hits you with a double gobble, get right back at him with a couple of purrs, as he gets more excited, do the same with your call, getting louder as he does.

Generally once he starts to gobble and seems to be getting closer, it's time for you to back off your calls as he's on his way, call sparingly, lowering your volume as he knows where you are and if you continue to call, his GPS type sense of hearing will lock in on your hide, where a blink of the eye or your slight movement will send him scurrying in the opposite direction.

If he gobbles and then shuts up, again, call sparingly, only enough to make him think the hen is still there.

One thing you won't want to do is give up too soon because he hasn't gobbled back at you, as Toms, especially older birds are known to come in quietly, not making a sound except for their drumming, which if you have excellent hearing, may give the birds location away.

It's always a good idea, to stay put for several minutes after you think a birds gone, to listen intently, while looking over the area as you'll find that every Tom is different in the way he approaches a hen.

The worse case scenario is when it sounds as if the Tom's gobbling is getting

farther away from you or he locks up, not cutting the distance, gobbling very little. This is the time when you may have to switch your tactics and start working on the boss hen in his harem as she's probably controlling where the birds are going, pulling the Tom away from you.

This is when aggressive hen calling takes over, get loud, cutting hard and fast, which makes the boss hen think that she's being mocked, criticized or called out for a fight.

I don't know how many times I've had a Tom lock up on me and start to follow the hen off when I've got on the call hard, almost covering up the Tom's gobble trying to make the hen mad enough to come over and fight.

I do remember the first time I did this, out of pure frustration, just doing it because I was fed up with the whole deal, after doing my best to call in a Tom that had been working towards us, finally giving up when a boisterous hen had called him away.

I had filled my tag earlier and was calling for Team Outdoorsmen Adventures Member Larry Myhre, Sioux City, IA. where he was set up in front of me.

With my loud calling, I'd gotten the hens attention, making her mad enough to come over to see where this loud mouth hen was at, to show her who was boss.

Each time she would yelp at me, I'd yelp back, only a bit louder, she'd get louder and come closer. We went back and forth, I was using my slate call until it got squeaky, then switch to my mouth diaphragm call while I would roughed up the slate call, then back to the slate.

It took me over ten minutes to bring her in as we were set up slightly down hill from her and she didn't want to come down hill, hoping to bring the challenging hen up to her.

As she got closer, I could hear the Tom gobbling behind her, getting closer and closer, finally the hen tired of it, shut up and wondered off, leaving the Tom behind.

A few clucks and purrs later and the Tom poked his head over the rise enough for Larry to put an end to this charade.

Remember, during the spring turkey season, it may take longer than you might think to bring that Tom into range, causing you to switch tactics, but, if you let the bird set the pace, telling you his mood by his calling or silence, while not getting to anxious and waiting it out, your success rate will go up, making your spring turkey hunt more exciting and more successful.

*Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a former tournament angler, fishing and hunting guide. Howey is the Producer/Host of the award winning Outdoorsmen Adventures television series which can be seen on Fox affiliates throughout the upper Midwest. He and Simon Fuller are the hosts of the Outdoor Adventures radio program on Classic Hits 106.3 and ESPN Sports Radio 1570. If you're looking for more outdoor information, it can be found at [www.outdoorsmenadventures.com](http://www.outdoorsmenadventures.com).*

## OUTDOORS DIGEST

### S.D. Youth Wins 2013 Federal Junior Duck Stamp Competition

SHEPARDSTOWN, W.Va. — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced Friday that a canvasback duck was selected to appear on the 2013-2014 Federal Junior Duck Stamp. The design for the new stamp, painted by 6-year-old Madison Grimm of Burbank, S.D., was chosen by a panel of judges at the national Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest, held at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, W. Va.

The oil painting, which won the South Dakota State Junior Duck Stamp Contest, was judged the winner among Best-of-Show entries from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Proceeds from sales of the \$5 Junior Duck Stamp support environmental education.

Peter Coulter, 17, of Washington, Mo., won second place with an acrylic painting depicting a pair of snow geese. Third place went to Drake Schlosser, 17, of Rubicon, Wis., for his acrylic rendition of a common goldeneye. The 2013 Federal Junior Duck Stamp Conservation Message Contest winner was 13-year-old Nick Kolkmeier from Union, Ky., with his entry: "Nature is our history, conservation is our future."

The Junior Duck Stamp Contest winner will receive \$5,000. The second place winner will receive \$3,000, the third-place winner will receive \$2,000 and the Conservation Message winner will receive \$500.

### S.D. Elk Seasons Finalized

WINNER — The South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Commission has finalized several elk-hunting seasons for 2013.

Archery elk hunters will have 92 "any elk" and 15 "antlerless elk" licenses available for the season. The 2013 Archery Elk Season will run from Sept. 1-30.

The Black Hills Firearms Elk Hunting Season will run from Oct. 1-31 for the "any" elk license holders. Antlerless elk seasons will run from Oct. 16-31 and Dec. 1-15. Black Hills Firearms Elk hunters will have 620 licenses available, comprised of 445 "any" and 175 "antlerless" licenses.

The Prairie Elk Season will have 45 "any" elk and 51 "antlerless" elk licenses available, which is four less than 2012. Other changes from 2012 are:

- Boyd County, Nebraska will no longer be part of Unit 30.
- The season dates for Unit 30A will run from Sept. 1-Dec. 31.

- The season dates for Unit 11B will run from Sept. 1 through the Friday before the third Saturday in October (2013 season dates are Sept. 1-Oct. 18)

- Unit 11D was added with season dates of Sept. 1-Dec. 31.

### Nonresident Waterfowl License Numbers, Tundra Swan Season Finalized

WINNER — The South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Commission has finalized the number of licenses available for nonresident waterfowl hunters for the 2013 season, with no changes from 2012.

The maximum number of nonresident waterfowl licenses to be issued by a lottery system is 4,000 special nonresident waterfowl licenses, 2,000 early fall Canada goose temporary nonresident licenses, 2,000 fall three-day temporary nonresident licenses, and 10,000 spring snow goose temporary nonresident licenses.

South Dakota's waterfowl season dates will not be set until the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides the federal framework for the 2013 seasons in late July.

The Commission also finalized the 2013 Special Goose Season for Bennett County. Like 2012, 800 resident three-tag and 25 nonresident two-tag licenses will be available. The Special Goose Season will run from Oct. 19-Dec 22.

The 2013 Tundra Swan Season was finalized and will run from Sept. 28 through the end of the light goose hunting season; 1,100 resident and 200 nonresident single tag licenses will be available.

### Mahoney SP To Host Disc Golf Tournament

LINCOLN, Neb. — The Midwest Regional Cass County Championship of the World Disc Golf Tournament will be held May 5 at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park.

Check-in is at 8:30 a.m., a players' meeting at 9:30 a.m., and the first of two rounds of competition begins at 10 a.m. There will be a cash prize in the professional division.

Register at [shopoutdoornebraska.ne.gov/Events](http://shopoutdoornebraska.ne.gov/Events). Call 402-944-2523 for more information. A park entry permit is required.

# Boaters, Anglers And Hunters Urged To Beware Of Cold Water

OMAHA, Neb. — With the ice now off most local area rivers and lakes boaters, anglers, and hunters need to take extra precautions when around water during this time of year. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is the largest federal provider of outdoor recreation opportunities, cautions outdoor recreationists to protect themselves against cold water immersion and hypothermia.

The water does not have to be extremely cold to create problems or possibly death if you are immersed in it. It just has to be cooler than your body temperature so the most effective precaution against drowning is to wear your life jacket. Everyone should make an effort to become familiar with techniques of surviving in cold water. The best way to reduce cold water immersion while boating is to prevent falling overboard or capsizing. Do not overload your boat and avoid heavy wave conditions. Accidents can happen quickly, so always ensure that everyone, including you, is wearing a Coast Guard approved life jacket. Also remember that it is

very difficult and sometimes impossible to put a life jacket on after falling in the water.

People mistakenly think if they can swim they don't need to wear a life jacket. When the water is cold sudden immersion can cause shock, involuntary gasping, and deep hyperventilation. This is followed by cold incapacitation.

In a short amount of time, as the muscles and nerves in the limbs get cold, a person will lose the ability to self rescue or even swim. People have died because of the initial effects of cold water immersion and they were within swimming distance of safety.

It is important for you to know that your body will lose heat 25 times faster in water than in air of the same temperature and that factor can be increased substantially with movement like swimming if you are not wearing thermal protection. The best choice in flotation equipment while around cold water is a float coat and pants or a one-piece survival suit. If you find yourself in cold water, in addition to having proper flotation equipment, there are some things you

can do to delay the onset of hypothermia. Using the Heat Escape Lessening Position will help conserve body heat.

If you are alone drawing your legs up close to your chest and wrapping your arms around them in a tuck position will help conserve body heat. If you are in a group huddling together as close as possible will also help conserve body heat.

Here are three things you should be aware of if you find yourself in cold water.

1. You must keep your airway clear or run the risk of drowning.

The gasp reflex caused by cold shock will pass in about one minute. During that time don't panic and focus on getting your breathing under control. Wearing a life jacket during this phase is critical to keep you afloat so you can concentrate on getting your breathing under control.

2. Focus on self rescue. If that is not possible then be aware that you will become incapacitated and unable to swim. Wearing a life jacket will allow you to keep your head above water and your airway clear while waiting for rescue.

3. Delay hypothermia. Even in

icy water without proper thermal protection, it could take approximately one hour before you become unconscious due to hypothermia. If you understand the signs of hypothermia, the techniques to delay it including self rescue, and how to effectively call for help increase your chances of survival.




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