

OUTDOORSUPDATE

OF THE OUTDOORS:

Spring Turkey Hunting In SE Nebraska

BY GARY HOWEY
Hartington, Neb.

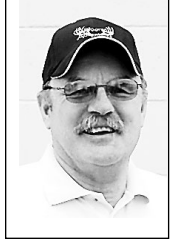
It was early morning as we relaxed on the deck at Big Blue Ranch & Lodge near Burchard, Neb.

We'd just come outside to relax and enjoy a cup of coffee when the gobbling of a turkey disturbed the morning silence.

Nothing unusual, since we'd been at the lodge for a couple of days and whenever we'd been on the deck we not only heard turkeys, but also coyotes, prairie chickens and Canada geese announcing their presence.

It was both Larry and my second hunt of the spring turkey season; Larry had tagged one bird in Northeast Iowa while I had put down two birds in Northeastern Nebraska.

We were in S.E. Nebraska as we'd been invited down to film and hunt the 2,000 acres owned by Scott and Billie Kay Bodie.



Gary Howey

I'd met them last fall while hunting in the Nebraska Governor's Pheasant Hunt, which was headquartered out of Beatrice, Neb.

Southeastern Nebraska is a beautiful place as not only is there an abundance of game in the area; there are numerous ponds and small lakes dotting the countryside.

The property we were hunting had several lakes, one, located just below the lodge was 25 acres and was stocked with bass, crappie, bluegill and pike.

When we arrived shortly after lunch, we met with Scott who directed us into the lodge and gave us a brief description of the land we'd be hunting and the birds that called the area home met us.

According to a wildlife biologist Scott had talked to, the birds in the area were 5-way hybrids with Eastern, Rio Grande, Merriam, Hybrids as well as some of the Bonze tame birds.

Larry and I quickly unloaded our gear, changed into our hunting camo and followed Scott to the area he thought we should begin our hunt.

The area we'd be hunting consists of rolling hills, open pastures with draws lined with oaks and cedar trees.

As we always do, we approached the area quietly, cautiously moving through the area, while carefully glassing each open area before proceeding.

Once we were assured that a Tom wasn't in the open area, we called softly from areas just inside the tree line.

After using this approach several times to no avail, we headed up hill towards a cluster of trees that we thought would give us a vantage point over the next open pasture.

Since Larry was shooting, I manned the camera, following slightly behind and off to his right side.

We were about to reach the shelter of the trees when I spotted the tell tale blue,

South Dakota, Neb.
Turkey Season Info

If you want to give spring turkey hunting a shot, there's still plenty of time to do some turkey hunting as both South Dakota and Nebraska have lengthy seasons.

Because of the huge number of birds, hunters have the opportunity to harvest several birds during the turkey season.

Listed below is the information on the South Dakota and Nebraska 2010 Spring Turkey Seasons.

South Dakota

April 10-May 23 for all units except those listed below

April 10-30 for Davison/Hanson (08A), Clay (19A), Lincoln (44A), Union (62A)

May 1-23 for Davison/Hanson (08B), Clay (19B), Lincoln (44B), Union (62B)

April 10-May 16 for Custer State Park
Information on purchasing South Dakota on-line permits is available at www.sdgfp.info

Nebraska

Statewide Shotgun Season
April 17-May 31 with three permits per hunter

Statewide Archery Season
March 25-May 31
Information on purchasing Nebraska on-line permits is available at www.ngpc.state.ne.us

white and red coloration of two Tom turkeys as they worked their way towards the sound of our last call.

Instantly, we dropped to the ground, hoping the birds hadn't seen us as we quickly crawled towards the shelter of the trees.

Larry was hugging one side of the tree while I was on the other side as the two Toms slowly came to Larry's Roost'em, call.

Both birds peaked from behind the Buck Brush out in front of us with only their brightly colored heads showing above the foliage.

Larry took aim at the right one and fired, flipping the bird backwards and tumbling it over.

We'd been in the field less than forty minutes and had one bird in the bag.

At this rate, what were we going to do the next couple of days?

Once the bird was tagged and put on ice, we headed towards for an area where a trail made it's way through the trees.

Not knowing what was below us, we decided to set up on the knob just above the trail and call.

We alternated the calling until I heard a faint gobble from the other side of the tree line, at which time I took over the calling while Larry manned the camera.

Within 15 minutes, I swore I heard a Tom drumming, but since my hearing isn't the best, I didn't alert Larry until the bird's fan appeared on the edge of the trees directly in front of us.

Like many other spring Toms that we've hunted, the bird took his time coming in silently.

As the Tom strutted and turned, I slowly brought my shotgun up, resting it on my knees facing the bird.



PHOTO: TEAM OUTDOORSMEN ADVENTURES
Team Outdoorsmen Adventures member Larry Myhre (Sioux City, Iowa) with the Tom he took while hunting with the folks at Big Blue Ranch & Lodge.

When the bird first appeared, I'd switched from my slate call and was softly purring on my mouth diaphragm call, as it required no movement.

The Tom ignored our two hen decoys, coming around their left side towards the tree that I was backed up against.

As the bird came closer, I hoped that Larry had gotten the bird on film and as it came around a small bush, I gave a warning putt, causing the Tom to extend it's neck and head.

My twelve gauge barked, putting the bird down for the count and the three and one half inch Winchester Extended Range 5 shot loads accounted for yet another Nebraska Tom this season.

As I tagged my third bird of the season, I admired the bird's 9-inch beard and seven eighth-inch spurs and gladly lugged the heavy mature Tom back to the pickup. What an excellent hunt, as we'd only

been at Big Blue Ranch & Lodge www.bigblueranch.com for about two hours and taken our two birds.

With the two remaining days on this trip, we took advantage of the excellent habitat on the ranch, filming wildlife and catching dozens of bass, crappie and bluegill from the pond below the lodge.

Turkey numbers in Nebraska and many other upper Midwestern states have exploded with numerous permits available to the hunter that want to get out and experience one of the truly great outdoor experiences, spring turkey hunting.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a syndicated outdoor columnist and the producer/host of the award winning Outdoorsmen Adventures television series. For more information on the outdoors, go to www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

Blind Missouri Teen Bags Big Bird In First Turkey Hunt

BY BRENT FRAZEE

(c) 2010, The Kansas City Star

ELMO, Mo. — When Charlie Wilks went turkey hunting one Saturday, he didn't get to see the big gobbler that strutted across a field and put on a show in front of him.

Wilks, 14, has been blind since age 6, when a brain tumor took away his sight. But that didn't keep him from shooting a trophy bird on his first turkey hunt.

Against all odds — and with a lot of help from a couple of mentors who went to great lengths to organize the special hunt — he accomplished the seemingly impossible.

"Even though I'm blind, I don't let it hold me back," said Wilks, who lives in Emporia, Kan., and was hunting on his grandfather's land in northwest Missouri. "I don't look at myself as any different than anyone else."

"Sometimes, I need some help. But I can do a lot of things that people wouldn't think I can."

Saturday was an example. As he sat in a blind flanked by Jack Moore, president and CEO of the National Youth Hunting Association, and Chris Parrish, world-champion turkey caller, Charlie heard the two suddenly speak in excited whispers.

"There's a hen in the decoys," Moore whispered. "Get ready. That's like having live bait out there."

"This is the peak of mating season. There have to be some gobblers not far away."

No sooner had Moore said that than he looked up to see two big gobblers sneaking out of the woods toward the decoy.

"Get your gun up," Moore whispered.

Sitting directly behind Charlie, Moore helped the boy line up the shotgun. When the big gobbler stopped for a second, the mentor instructed Charlie to take the safety



BRENT FRAZEE/KANSAS CITY STAR/MCT
Charlie Wilks, 14, right, who is blind, gets guidance from Jack Moore on a hunt for wild turkey in Missouri on April 10. Wilks was able to bag a 24-pound turkey.

off and shoot. "Did I get him?" Charlie asked in anticipation.

"You sure did," Moore said as he gave the boy a big hug.

Soon, Charlie was feeling the smooth feathers and the bristly beard of a 24-pound turkey — and was already talking about the pictures he would be posting on his Facebook page.

"I'm excited," Charlie said. "I was hoping I would be able to shoot a big bird and I did."

ESPN 360 did a feature on some of the things Charlie can do. He was a defensive lineman on Emporia High School's freshman football team and did well despite not being able to see.

Charlie's teammates told him "go" when the ball was snapped and helped direct him. "He even had a quarterback sack," said his proud mom, Jennifer Cunningham. "How he knew who had the ball and where he was, I don't know. But he tackled him."

But hunting?

Many would worry about the safety issue. Others would say it would be nearly impossible to hit a target you can't see.

But Charlie allayed those concerns. He started by attending a hunter safety course and passed with ease. Then he talked his grandfather, Al Reynolds, a former Chiefs lineman, into taking him deer hunting on their land in northwest Missouri.

The boy shot a big buck with the help of his grandpa and then took another deer on

his second trip.

When it came to turkey hunting, Reynolds professed to needing some help. That's when he called Moore, who runs an organization dedicated to giving youths hunting opportunities.

Moore jumped at the chance to help, as did Parrish, who is a multiple world-champion turkey caller.

Moore did some scouting on the farm and worked with the boy on hunting safety and target practice. Which brings us to that Saturday, the opener of the two-day youth turkey season.

Accompanied by a cameraman for the "Knight & Hale's Ultimate Hunting" television show, which airs on The Outdoor Channel, they headed into the woods.

Parrish called up three jakes early in the day, and Charlie was able to pull the trigger but he missed.

"That's OK," Moore said. "We all miss." But later in the day, Charlie was able to fulfill his dream.

Moore and Parrish also presented the teenager with everything from a youth shotgun to a variety of calls to camouflaged clothing and boots — donated by sponsors such as Sportsmen's Warehouse, Knight & Hale, and Redhead.

At lunch, Charlie reached into the box and began practicing with each of the calls. "Prepare to be annoyed," he joked to his mom.

But the gifts were just the icing on the cake. Taking a turkey — against all odds — was what Charlie will be talking about for months.

"When he was walking out of the hospital after brain surgery, he was telling other kids, 'Don't give up,'" his mom said. "And that's how he has lived his life."

"He's a special kid."

OUTDOOR REPORT

Archery Center To Offer Women's Beginner Courses

The Easton Archery Center will offer a four-week beginners' course for women age 18 and up, beginning Monday, May 17.

Classes will run from 5:30-6:30 p.m. each Monday from May 17 to June 14, with May 31 off for Memorial Day. Archery equipment will be provided.

Class size is limited. For more information, contact the Easton Archery Center, 800 Archery Lane, or call 260-9279.

GFP Commission Proposed August Management Take For Canada Geese

PIERRE — In an effort to alleviate depredation concerns in eastern South Dakota, the Game, Fish and Parks Commission has proposed an August Management Take of resident Canada geese.

The Management Take would allow hunters in Brookings, Clark, Codington, Day, Deuel, Hamlin, Grant, Kingsbury, Lake, McCook, Marshall, Minnehaha, Moody and Roberts counties to shoot eight Canada geese a day from Aug. 14-22.

The Commission will take final action on the proposal at its May 6-7 meeting in Custer State Park at the Sylvan Lake Lodge.

Residents who would like to provide written comments on the proposals may do so up until 5 p.m. Wednesday, May 5. Comments may be mailed to Game, Fish and Parks Commission, 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, S.D., 57501, or e-mailed to wildinfo@state.sd.us. All comments must have the sender's full names and addresses in order to be included in the public record.

Comments may also be presented in person at the GFP Commission meeting during the public hearing at 2 p.m. MDT on Thursday, May 6.

GFP Proposal Would Give Dog Training Permit Control Back To Forest Service

PIERRE — A proposal to be considered by the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission would give the U.S. Forest Service control over permitting dog training from horseback on National Grasslands.

An existing state rule lets GFP allow up to 30 individuals to train dogs by horseback on the National Grasslands. The new proposal would let the government agency that holds land-management authority oversee those dog-training permits.

The GFP Commission will take final action on the measure at its May 6-7 meeting in Custer State Park at Sylvan Lake Lodge.

Sandhills Branding Featured In Issue Of NEBRASKALAND

LINCOLN, Neb. — Sandhills branding photos, natural history information about northern pike and long-billed curlews, a humorous look at "crick" fishing, and stories about Smith Falls State Park and an introduction to backyard birding are sure to keep NEBRASKALAND Magazine readers glued to the pages of the May issue, available now.

In "A Sandhills Branding," Lincoln resident Bill Hager shares his introduction to one of the oldest traditions in the Sandhills — cattle branding.

In "Tales of an Essex — the Unnatural History of the Northern Pike," associate editor Jeff Kurrus recounts some of the odd stories and lies that have been spread about the "waterwolf" throughout history and tells why anglers should respect and pursue this worthy adversary.

"Long-billed Curlew: Mysterious Shorebird of the Sandhills," describes some of the life history information that author Cory Gregory and other researchers have discovered about this unusual shorebird that nests in Nebraska grasslands.

In "Crick Fishin'," author Zane Dickinson takes a humorous look at the importance of protecting your secret fishing place at all costs.

NEBRASKALAND is published 10 times a year and available at Commission offices and newsstands across the state or by subscription. Subscribe by calling toll-free (800) NEB-LAND (632-5263) or at nebraskalandmagazine.com.

Elk, Bighorn Sheep Seasons Finalized

PIERRE — The number of licenses available this year for elk hunters in South Dakota has been trimmed by the state Game, Fish and Parks Commission, which also finalized the Archery, Black Hills and Prairie Elk hunting seasons.

The Archery Elk season will see a reduction in elk licenses from 114 "any elk" and 71 "antlerless elk" licenses in 2009, to 96 "any elk" and 49 "antlerless elk"

licenses this year. The Black Hills Elk season will have a reduction of available licenses from 605 "any elk" and 760 "antlerless elk" licenses in 2009 to 495 "any elk" and 570 "antlerless elk" licenses in 2010.

The Prairie Elk season will see an increase in available tags from 45 "any elk" and 86 "antlerless elk" in 2009 to 50 "any elk" and 86 "antlerless elk" this year.

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