outdoors

#### Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

# Silence Not Good When Turkey Hunting

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

Hoping to beat the wind that the weatherman indicated would not come up until after 9 a.m. and to set up in the dark, we arrived in the field at 5:15 a.m., forty-five minutes before legal shooting time.



**HOWEY** 

scouted the area both in the evening and in the morning and had a good idea the birds

head after hitting the ground. Our

only problem would be the birds were roosting in the adjacent landowner's land, an area we did not have permission to hunt.

They were hard to pattern as one day they would pitch out of the trees with the hens dragging them off to the west, the next to the north or the west so we needed to set up in an area where our decoys were seen no matter which direction the birds flew down.

Since the wind was, suppose to pick up until after 9:00, we would put the decoys out on the tallest knob just southwest of their roosting areas.

Making our way up a steep incline, burden down with several decoys, a blind, seat cushions, shotgun, vest, ammo and camera gear in the pitch dark is an experience in itself, one requiring several stops before reaching the top to readjust our gear and to catch our

Arriving at the "Summit", it looked as if the weatherman may have missed it once again, as the blind we were attempting to lay out was being whipped around by the so

called "non existing" wind.
As the suns brilliant orange head appeared on the horizon, the calls of rooster pheasants, Canada geese and crows echoed through the valley, which should have awaken any gobblers roosting nearby.

Nothing, not a sound, when even the wind dies down and all is quiet; this is when silence is not golden to a turkey hunter. There was no response, so I broke out my owl call and let go with my finest rendition of the barred owls "Who Cooks for You, Who Cooks for you All." Again not a whisper, a cluck, purr or gobble, perhaps they had not heard it because or the wind, which once again had picked up, so I reared back, took a deep breath and hit it harder, once again noth-

I glanced at my cameraman seeing if he had heard anything I had not, but there was nothing, not a sound.

Then it happened, a gobble from the west and then another from the south, it seemed as they were finally



Hunters are at a disadvantage when Toms do not gobble and come in silently. This Tom gobbled once and then went silent. Columnist Gary Howey had to have patience, waiting over an hour before the bird

the change up, to use the three

I responded with a few gentle clucks, putts and purrs, which immediately bought a response from a jealous hen in the tree near the gobbling Tom. She was upset and letting me know it. If I did not get on her, it was game over where she would pitch down on the opposite side of the trees and drag the Tom off to the west.

Just as the sun rose, another Tom gobbled behind us then several down below the dam, things were looking up!

The hen and I bantered back and forth for several minutes until she tired of the game pitched off to the north and drug the Tom off with her.

Since there were other Toms in the area, and there was not a whole lot of gobbling going on, I would need to try a new tactic in order to drag them away from the hens.

It was time to hit them with

ting him know he had best

the ravine where she was

lashing.

about to give him a tongue-

She lit a few yards in front of the Tom proceeded to give him a sever tongue-lashing, lethead in her direction or else. The Tom, still in full strut took off on a dead run in her direction. When he paused, she would take off again, causing him, still in full strut to waddle after her, never coming out of strut, as he pursued her across the pasture, over the road and on into the next field.

That's all a part of turkey hunting, something that happens all too often. I worked my calls again, with the sounds echoing across the valley, there was no response, the valley had gone silent, not something, a turkey hunter hopes to hear as the sound of silence means the hunter will have to set there and wait.

When you hear a gobble from time to time, you have hope and know the general direction the bird will be coming

If he gobbles everytime, you call, he is on his way and you just wait patiently for him to make an appearance. Some may gobble then hold up, waiting for the hen to come to them, this is when you may have to do some coaxing, calling every couple of minutes just to let him know the hen is still around.

When it seems as if he has lost interest, you may need to call away from him, facing your call in the opposite direction letting him think the hen is moving away. If he is hot, he will generally try to follow her, stopping from time to time to gobble, letting her know he is still interested.

However, when the woods go silent, and it seems as if there is not a turkey within miles, it can drive you crazy. You start to think that perhaps, you should relocate and try to locate a hot bird.

When a Tom will not gobble, a few things you can try are, to hang in there, calling from time to time, hoping a bird would hear you. You do not want to get too loud as you may spook a bird close by. Do not over call, as hens are not very vocal. I like to call every 5 minutes or so and then look the area over closely for some sign a bird is coming in, many times the only sound you will hear if the bird is close is the sound of its drumming, its inhaling and exhaling as it expands its chest and spreads its tail feathers. If you hear this, the bird is close, stop calling and wait for him to make

an appearance. ith the win and over an hour with no response, both my cameraman and I were thinking we needed to make a change. We made the decision to tough it for an additional fifteen minutes before heading to Bow Valley and Sudbeck's Service for breakfast where we would have to formulate a new plan.

The only bird I had seen was the Tom in the field to my right who was still attempting to catch up with his angry hen, when my cameraman, whispered. As I slowly turned, there in front of us was a Tom in full strut, one who had come in silently and was doing the dance in amongst our decoys.

With a Tom only sixteen yards out, my binoculars in

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my hands and my shotgun resting against my knee, I realized I had to make my move slowly, as the Toms sharp eyes would peg me if I tried to do anything too quickly.

Fortunate for us, the ground blind in front of us hid any excessive movement, giving me enough cover to pick up my shotgun and change position for the shot. I took aim while the Tom in full strut made a couple of trips around the decoys.

Once I had an indication from my cameraman that we had enough footage, I used my diaphragm call to give a warning putt, hoping to bring him out of strut where I would have a better shot as his head came up.

He was fixed on the decoy, showing no interested at all in my calling, I tried again, this time louder and after a few seconds he finally came out of the trance, brought his head up and I tipped him

He was a beautiful mature Tom, with 9-plus inches of thick beard, 1?" spurs weighing in at over 22 pounds. Not a bad bird for the first one of the Nebraska season, one, we had to work for but one to remember.

The bird had come in silently, not making a sound, we were not been able to see him before he walked into our decoys because when we put out our decoys out in the dark, we had misjudged the steepness of the hill, thinking there was level ground out in front of our decoys. When in fact, because of the steepness of the hill, the only time we would see the bird would be when he crested the rise and was in the decoys.

Toms, like everything else in the world are opportunists, doing just what they need to do to accomplish the mission, so why should they waste energy gobbling when they know where the hen is, saving needed energy for other things that may happen after they get to her.

It may take a lot of patience to set there in the cold when a Tom refuses to respond. Just because you are setting there and all is quiet, don't give up prematurely and if you do decide to make a move, take your time getting up as a Tom which has gone silent may be just be on his way, just over the hill.

Gary Howey, Hartington, *Neb.*, *is a former tournament* angier, fishing and nunting guide. He is the Producer/Host of the award winning Outdoorsmen Adventures television series, seen on Fox affiliates throughout the upper Midwest. In the Yankton area, it airs on local channels 2 & 98 Saturday at 6:30 pm and Sunday at 7:00 am as well as on MIDCO Sports Network Thursday at 5:30 pm and Sunday at 10:00 am. He and Simon Fuller are the hosts of the Outdoor Adventures radio program Monday-Saturday at 6:45 am on Classic Hits 106.3 and ESPN Sports Radio 1570. It you are looking for more outdoor information, check out www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

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### **OUTDOORS DIGEST**

#### **Cabela's To Honor 'Home**town Heroes' During Armed **Forces Appreciation Day** Event

MITCHELL — Cabela's stores nationwide will honor the contributions of those who serve our country and communities by offering employee pricing to all veterans, active duty military and reserves, law enforcement, firefighters, and EMS personnel from May 15-18. The Hometown Heroes event recognizes the service and sacrifice of those who protect and serve every day.

To participate in the Hometown Heroes event,

veterans, active duty military, reserves, law enforcement, fire and EMS personnel should present their service ID at check out at their local Cabela's store. Upon doing so, they will receive Cabela's employee discount on virtually everything in the store. Firearms and ammunition are included in the sale. Should you be interested in a gun or would like to inquire about a particular firearm please contact Curt at 605-996-0337 ext. 8285. Some restrictions apply; see store for complete details.
For more information, please contact Jen

Johnston, Retail Marketing Specialist at 605-996-0337 or visit www.cabelas.com/Mitchell. Cabela's is located off I-90 exit 332 in Mitchell.

#### Free Entrance, Free Fishing Mark S.D. State Parks' **Open House Weekend**

PIERRE — To kick off summer, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) is encouraging families to spend the weekend outside during the Parks' Open House Weekend and Free Fishing Weekend May 16-18.

During the annual three-day event, anglers can fish without a license anywhere in the state, and entrance fees are waived for all visitors to South Dakota's state parks and recreation areas. Camping fees still apply. Fishing regulations and

Open House Weekend coincides with National Kids to Parks Day and special events are planned for parks across the state in an effort to get kids outside to discover the history, nature and adventure right around the corner or just across town Attend one of these events to be held on Sat-

urday, May 17.

• 125th Birthday Card Hunt Kickoff, Newton Hills State Park near Canton. Info: 605.987.2263 Nature Hike, Good Earth State Park near Sioux Falls, 9 a.m. CT. Info: 605.987.2263
 Kids Fishing Derby, Lake Louise Recreation Area near Miller, 9 a.m. to noon CT. Info:

 Step Outside, Newton Hills State Park near Canton, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. CT. Pre-registration required: 605.987.2263 or NewtonHills@state.sd.us

www.yankton.net

Kids to Parks Day, Richmond Lake Recreation Area near Aberdeen, 10 a.m. CT. Info:

 Kites and Castles, North Point Recreation Area near Pickstown, 10 a.m. to noon CT. Info: 605.487.7046

 Family Fishing, Palisades State Park near Garretson, 2 p.m. CT. Info: 605.594.3824 Disc Golf Demonstration and Instruction. Hartford Beach State Park near Milbank, 2-4 p.m. CT. Info: 605-882-5205

 Kids to Parks Day, Mina Lake Recreation Area near Aberdeen, 3 p.m. CT. Info: 605.626.3488 . Dust off the Dutch Ovens. Chief White Crane

 South Dakota Birthday Bash, Big Sioux Recreation Area near Brandon, 7 p.m. ČT. Info: 605.582.7243 Custer State Park will also be hosting a number of family activities both Saturday and Sunday, including cookouts, nature hikes, free hayrack rides, a fishing derby, nature programs and demonstrations. A full schedule of events can be

found at www.custerstatepark.com. Camping reservations at South Dakota State Parks can be made 24 hours a day. Make reserva-tions online at www.campsd.com or by calling 1-

#### May 17 Is Free Fishing And Park Entry Day In Ne-

LINCOLN, Neb. — Free Fishing and Park Entry Day in Nebraska is May 17. Enjoy a Saturday of fishing or state park activities without having to purchase a fishing or park entry permit. Free Fishing and Park Entry Day means any-one can explore outdoor opportunities at any Ne-

braska state park, state recreation area or state historical park. Anglers must observe all fishing regulations. Camping, lodging and all other user fees still apply at state park areas.

Family fishing clinics will take place at Platte River and Fort Robinson state parks, and Fremont, Alexandria, Fort Kearny, Two Rivers, Buffalo Bill Ranch and Bridgeport state recreation areas /isit OutdoorNebraska.org for more details and a list of other activities.

Roost'em slate calls along with my diaphragm call; I hoped to convince the Tom that there were several hens just across the fence line that had a party Stroking my slate call softly, I produced a subtle purr, a few

putts followed by a couple of clucks, waited a few minutes, picked up call number two, changed the rhythm a bit and then waited five minutes or so before doing the same thing

with call number three. It must have worked as a

few minutes later; a Tom in full strut appeared on the face of the dam, gobbled and slowly worked his way towards us, making his way up the hill in the direction of our decoys. It looked good, until his boss hen, who was heading east on the north side of the ravine noticed he was wondering away.

She let him know she was not happy and receiving no response, took wing, flew across

#### TROPHY SPOTLIGHT



Chad McCorkell of Yankton shot a bearded tom (20 pounds, 9 inch) May 7 in Gregory County.

## **National Ice Fishing Tour-**

American Ice Fishing Circuit.

The tournament will be one of several qualifying tournaments held by the circuit. Two-person teams of anglers will attempt to qualify for the organization's national championship

there is a \$200 entry fee per team.

The city will pay \$1,000 to host the tournament, plus \$100 for each team that enters. Rodiek says the economic benefits for Mitchell will far out-

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# ney Headed To Mitchell

MITCHELL (AP) — Lake Mitchell has landed a big one — a national ice fishing tournament next

Mitchell Parks and Recreation Director Dusty Rodiek told The Daily Republic that the Feb. 1, 2015, tournament will be hosted by the North

The tournament will be open to anyone, but

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