

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.



Gary
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I had scouted the area both in the evening and in the morning and had a good idea as where the birds would 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 breath.

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 of the wind, which once again had picked up, so I reared back, took a deep breath and hit it harder, once again nothing.

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



OUTDOORSMEN PRODUCTIONS PHOTO
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 made an appearance.

waking up.

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

the change up, to use the three 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 going on.

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.

May 17 Is Free Fishing And Park Entry Day In Nebraska

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 anyone can explore outdoor opportunities at any Nebraska 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. Visit OutdoorNebraska.org for more details and a list of other activities.

National Ice Fishing Tourney Headed To Mitchell

MITCHELL (AP) —Lake Mitchell has landed a big one — a national ice fishing tournament next winter. Mitchell Parks and Recreation Director Dusty Rodiek told The Daily Republic that the Feb. 1, 2015, tournament will be hosted by the North 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. The tournament will be open to anyone, but 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 outweigh the cost.

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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 interest 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 over.

He was a beautiful mature Tom, with 9-plus inches of thick beard, 1 2" 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 angler, fishing and hunting 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. If you are looking for more outdoor information, check out www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

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