

Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

'Fan'tastic Turkey Hunting

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

As Ben Loecker and I watched, we could see three Toms fanned out and proudly displaying for their harems. The birds were displaying about a half mile south of us in a harvested bean field, it wasn't the half-mile walk that I was thinking about; it was how to get Ben close enough for a shot without being spotted.

The terrain we had to cross included a lot of open ground, offering us, very little to hide our movement. Our only hope was that the low fence line along the east side of the field, that had a few trees and weeds along it, would give us some cover as we made the stalk.

I had met Ben (Hartington, Nebraska) a seventh grader at Hartington Cedar Catholic when I was one of the guides on a youth turkey hunt sponsored by the Nebraska Game & Parks at Ponca State Park. On that hunt, we were unable to tag a bird, and when the 2015 season opened, it was my chance to redeem myself.

The birds we were watching began to move to the southeast, into land that was close to a rural home, so we needed to do something and do it fast before our opportunity to work these birds walked away.

In past columns, I had mentioned using tail feathers, the "fan" from a Tom turkey used to attract a bird and since I had one in the truck, I grabbed it, a hen decoy and my turkey-hunting vest as Ben fed Winchester turkey loads into his twelve gauge.

We would need to make our way through the terraces before entering the fence line leading to the field the birds were using. As we made our way towards the birds, we paused occasionally, glassing the field, allowing us to check on the birds and know which direction they were heading.

When turkey hunting, it's the hens you have to worry about as there's always one of them with their head up looking things over. The Toms are too busy strutting, trying to impress the ladies to worry about anything else, but once a hen gives a warning putt, all bets are off and the entire flock hoofs it towards cover.

We were fortunate ma-



PHOTO: GARY HOWEY

Ben Loecker of Hartington, Nebraska, with the Tom he and author took using the "Fan"tastic turkey hunting method.

neuver through the terraces without being seen and now we were faced with a dilemma, we would have to make our way across open ground, where the birds could see us.

Both Ben and I were dressed in camo, had face-masks and gloves, allowing us to blend in with the surrounding terrain. What worried me most was that our movement would be detected by the always-vigilant hens and the entire flock would disappear.

We decided to get as low as possible, hunkering down, and slowly move through the open areas from one clump of brush to the next locations where we hoped there would be enough cover for us to call

from.

I held the fan in front of my face, making us look like a "tall" Tom slowly working towards the flock. I hoped the uneven ground between the birds and us would conceal our lower bodies so we didn't look like a six-foot Tom and that turkeys couldn't judge the height from a distance.

Peering through the feathers, I guided Ben down the fence line in the general direction of the Toms. Once we made our way to an area with cover, we'd set up, with Ben out in front while I sat behind him, using my box and diaphragm call to try and draw the birds closer, as I did my best with the tail feathers to imitate a strutting Tom.

The Toms looked our way, gobbled, refusing to leave their hens in order to fight off an intruding Tom, which meant, once again, we would have to do the sneak, across open ground. The "fan"tastic stalk had worked so far, so we attempted it again, this time it would be through an area more open than before and much closer to the birds.

Once again, we hunker down as I held the fan in my face, as we meandered towards the flock, slowly, but surely, closing ground on the birds.

If we could make it another 120 yards, without spooking the birds we would be home free, as the weedy fence line would shelter us,

giving us a place to set out our hen decoy and call.

We were approximately twenty yards from the corner post, when a Tom, who had noticed the tall intruding Tom getting close, came over to investigate.

In full display, he made about four steps into the open and as he turned in our direction, he realized he had made the biggest mistake of his soon to be short life, came out of strut and started to beat feet in the direction of the creek.

Ben's 12 gauge came up, decking the big bird before he had time to reach cover. He laid there, his brilliant gold and brown colors glistening in the sunlight while Ben and I celebrated the end to a successful hunt.

In just two short hours we had spotted the birds, made a half-mile stalk and were putting Ben's tag on a twenty-two pound Tom with a ten inch beard and spurs over an inch long, not a bad morning hunt.

We learned several things on this hunt, one was, using a fan to get close to turkeys works and turkeys can't judge height.

The next time you are out turkey hunting give this "fan"tastic turkey hunting method a shot, it just might help you fill your tag.

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 the MIDCO Sports Network Thursday at 5:30 pm and Sunday at 10:00 am. He and Simon Fuller Co-Host the Outdoor Adventures radio program on Classic Hits 106.3, ESPN Sports Radio 1570 in Southeastern South Dakota and Northeast Nebraska. In Northwest Iowa, it airs on KCHE 92.1 FM. If you are looking for more outdoor information, check out www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

OUTDOORS DIGEST

Archery, Shooting Events Available For Women In June

LINCOLN, Neb. – Women interested in learning all aspects of archery shooting are invited to participate in a series of classes this summer at Platte River State Park.

The Beyond Becoming and Outdoors-Woman (BOW) program will host classes each Wednesday in June from 6-8:30 p.m. at the Roger C. Sykes Outdoor Heritage Education Complex. The cost is \$5 per class. A park entry permit is required.

The class schedule: June 3 – Introduction to Archery; June 10 – Shopping for Women's Bows; June 17 – Tuning Your Bow; June 24 – Fun with Archery.

Bows will be provided to participants who do not bring their own equipment. Participants may register for any or all of the classes.

Women will have an additional opportunity to explore shooting sports June 6 with the Beyond BOW Ladies Afternoon at the Range from 1-5 p.m. at the Weeping Water Gun Club. There, women can learn how to shoot and increase their knowledge of rifles, handguns, shotguns and bows in a fun, friendly environment. The cost is \$25. Equipment will be provided to participants who do not bring their own, but those who bring their own must provide their ammunition.

Women must be at least 18 years of age for the shooting events.

Custer State Park Gains National Acclaim

PIERRE – Custer State Park has long been considered one of South Dakota's most cherished locations, along with Mount Rushmore and the Badlands. It is more than just state pride, however, that makes this park special.

The rest of the world has taken notice as well, especially within the last few years. Custer State Park has been mentioned in several "must see" lists in recent years, making its mark on both the national and worldwide scene.

"Those of us who live in South Dakota have always had a special pride in Custer State Park," says Matt Snyder, superintendent of Custer State Park. "We're glad that it's finally getting recognized on a larger scale. We've had visitors from all over the country and even the world, and it's nice that these mentions reflect that."

Custer State Park earned global attention when it appeared in a list of the top 10 wildlife viewing destinations in the world compiled by Fox News. Custer accompanied such extraordinary locations as Namibia, the Galapagos Islands and Alaska. The park's abundance of bison, burros, prairie dogs, big horn sheep, pronghorns, elk and turkeys secured it a top spot.

In a Reader's Choice contest put on by USA Today and 10Best, Custer State Park won a coveted spot on the "Best State Park" list. Voters chose Custer for its famous buffalo herd and wildlife sightings, framed with the rugged beauty of the Black Hills.

Snyder said the park is well prepared for the extra attention. Crews broke ground in April for the construction of a state-of-the-art visitor center to better serve the park's growing number of visitors, which already reaches approximately 1.8 million annually.

"The new exhibits, along with a world-class film experience, will answer visitor's questions and inspire them to explore the park on a deeper level," said Snyder. "The visitor center will further define Custer as one of the premier park destinations in the nation. We're looking forward to introducing visitors to our little slice of South Dakota heaven."

S.D. State Parks Host Weekend Events

PIERRE – To celebrate summer, South Dakota State Parks are hosting events May 29-30. From a Dutch oven cooking demonstration to learning about the water cycle, families of all ages and sizes can learn and have fun.

Friday, May 29
* "Our River," Good Earth State Park at Blood Run, Sioux Falls. 7 P.M. CT. Info: 605.987.2263

Saturday, May 30
* "Mr. Drip's Trip," Newton Hills State Park, Canton. 1 p.m. CT. Info: 605.987.2263

* Satisfy Your Sweet Tooth, Chief White Crane Recreation Area, Yankton.

7 p.m. CT. Info: 605.668.2985

* Bird Watching Basics Walk in the Park, Oahe Downstream Recreation Area, Fort Pierre. 9 a.m. CT. Info: 605.223.7722

* Good Earth Challenge, Good Earth State Park at Blood Run, Sioux Falls. 11 a.m. CT. Info: 605.987.2263

* Monarchs, Good Earth State Park at Blood Run, Sioux Falls. 9 a.m. CT. Info: 605.987.2263

All events are free with a park entrance license. For more information on activities in South Dakota state parks, visit gfp.sd.gov, contact the individual park office or call 605.773.3391.

Braggin' Board



PHOTO FROM T.J.'S MINIMART

Larry Trimble caught this 9-pound, 10-ounce Northern Pike.



PHOTO FROM T.J.'S MINIMART

Ashley Olivier, Jennifer Olivier and Mitch Eide caught these Black Crappies.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Ashle Lais shot this 16-pound, double bearded turkey in Gregory County on May 3.

Full-Time Occupational Therapist

Spearfish Regional Hospital has an excellent opportunity for an Occupational Therapist to join our team providing care and treatment to clients of all age groups with developmental deficits, physical injury or illness, or psychological disability with primary focus on pediatrics. Travel in the surrounding area will be required to serve clients as needed. If this job interests you, go to www.regionalhealth.com for more information and apply online. We offer excellent benefits and competitive pay. It's a great place to work and beautiful place to live!

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VOLUNTEER TRAINING!

Volunteer Training for the World Archery Youth Championships will be held May 28, 29, and 30th. The training times will be split into groups based upon job description. Plan on attending one session for each job you have registered for. During the training, the volunteer will learn more about what the job entails, who they will report to, and tips on cultural diversity.

May 28th, 2015

5:00–5:45pm–Group 1
5:45–6:30pm–Group 2
6:30–7:15pm–Group 3
7:15–8:15pm–Group 4

Group 1

A'viands Beverage Station
A'viands Cabin Food Baskets
A'viands Clear Tables/Trash
A'viands Constants Station
A'viands Linen & Service wares

May 29th, 2015

1:30–2:15pm–Group 1
2:15–3:00pm–Group 2
3:00–3:45pm–Group 3
3:45–4:45pm–Group 4

Group 2

Bow Storage
Field Access Control
All Bus Stop Greeters
All Information Desk Locations
Volunteer Central Assistants
Volunteer Floaters

May 30th, 2015

10:30–11:15 a.m. – Group 1
11:15am–12:00pm–Group 2
12:00–12:45pm–Group 3
12:45–1:45pm–Group 4

Group 3

Concession Stand
All Water Stations
Raffle Ticket Sellers
A'viands VIP Landing Assistant

Group 4

All Archery Field Set-Up Crews

The training will be held at the NFAA Easton Yankton Archery Center, 800 Archery Lane, Yankton, SD. If you are unable to attend the training, please contact Kacey Eggers by phone at 605-260-9279 or by email at keggers@neyac.org.

Scan me!



Sign up online:
Yankton2015WAYC.org
(Click the Registration tab)

Sign up in person:
NFAA Easton Yankton Archery Center
M-F 9AM-3PM SAT 10AM-3PM SUN 12PM-3PM

Questions? Contact us at: ☎ 605-260-9279 ☑ volunteer@neyac.org

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