

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.

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, 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 filmed from the other side as the two



Gary Howey

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

S.D., 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.sdgifp.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

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.

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

heavy mature Tom back to the pickup.

What an excellent hunt, as we'd only been at Big Blue Ranch & Lodge www.bigblue-ranch.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.

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