

A TOUGH TURKEY Season

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #210 —

Every spring, I start the turkey season full of optimism; somehow suppressing the realities of chasing turkeys in previous years. We have "eastern" turkeys in Missouri, and please don't be offended if I call these the "real" turkeys; a hunter can get lucky on these bids, but "easterns" are almost never easy!

Going in, we knew it was a late spring, with colder than normal temperatures and the vegetation was just waking up from the long winter. Everyone thought the hens would still be with the toms and yes, they were!

Typically I don't try to roost a bird; just never seem to have the time. Instead, I like to park at the south end of a favorite farm and walk in early, listening for gobblers to go after.



My second gobbler, 24-1/4#, 10" beard, 1-1/4 and 7/8" spurs – taken 14 days after the first.

On opening morning, it was very cold and windy as I walked in, with my shotgun and a portable heater. The plan was to walk a half mile to a deer blind, hoping to have heard a gobbler before getting there – no luck and I was cold. The blind was quite comfortable, with three windows open and the heater on, but I heard nothing, though called regularly.

After a couple hours, I decided to leave the blind and walk farther into the farm, but when opening the back door, there were several turkeys in a small clover field, through the woods – 150 yards or so to the east. Back into the blind I went and continued to call in that direction, but they didn't



Opening day gobbler, 26#, 11-1/2" beard and 1-1/4" spurs.

budge. Frustrated, I decided to sneak them and climbed out of the blind undetected, then slipped into a ditch that headed in their direction. At 47 yards I ran out of cover and a big tom ran out of luck.

Tagged out for week one, I guided for four days, with no success – always seeing or hearing gobblers, but nothing would respond to a call or decoy. Regularly I had seen gobblers at the end of a large field,

"...a big tom ran out of luck."

always exiting in the northwest corner. I decided to set up there the next morning with my back against a tree, and a small camouflage net out front — then just wait, without a decoy or calling. One tom, two jakes and five hens walked into the field, fed for 30 minutes then walked out – just as I expected. Again at 47 yards, turkey #2 bit the dust.



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Four legs, two beards, two empty shells and my old Winchester Model 12 is a simple picture; but there was a lot of hard work between those two pulls of the trigger. Two gobblers is the season limit, and I don't get two every year.