

WHEN IT COMES TO SURVIVAL THE TURKEY REIGNS SUPREME

6/10/97

To make a long story short, I have 12 hours before deadline as I set down to write this column and no idea what the topic will be until now.

Two options come to mind and both are recent experiences that I will relate sooner or later. One is on buying a new car, the other on turkey hunting. I will go with the turkey hunting for two reasons, which I will give later.

I killed one turkey years ago that an experienced hunting friend had called in for me. He (the turkey, not the friend) was a hawk old bird that I am convinced would never have come in for me. Since then I have wanted to get one bird on my own. I was sure this would be the year.

The spring season is the month of May from daylight until noon. Bearded gobblers only may be taken. The premise is that hens will be on the nest until it warms up later in the day. The hunter uses a call that imitates the hen to lure the gobbler close enough to be taken with a shotgun.

I located a roosting area of one old tom and on opening morning I was staked out within calling distance of where I thought he would be at half-past four.

When daylight finally came I started calling. I was back home at half-past seven empty handed. Several more attempts achieved the same results.

One evening just before dark I heard a turkey answer a crow call from his roost. I told the wife to get the pot ready; tomorrow would be the day.

At half-past four the next morning I tiptoed along an old log road in the direction of his roost. Laying my pack down carefully, it was just breaking day as I started to get my gear out to set up my ambush. Suddenly, he rocketed out of a tree over my head and started out for parts unknown. I was back home at half-past six.

And so the story goes for several more days. I had plenty of close encounters and exchanged chatter with at least eight or nine different birds. In the end, they all faded away.

The last week of the season I gave in and called old ranger buddy Eric Mynter, owner of Mynter's Turkey Farm. "Come on down Allen, we can get one for sure," he told me. To clinch the deal, he called in a turkey-calling expert to call for us.

Oh there were turkeys there all right, and they I were happy to let us know it, but other than one old tame hen, we never saw them.

One reason I chose this topic was that since Gary Lee and I both have to resort to frozen butterballs for our turkey, I am not really stealing his thunder. The second is any anti-hunters will not be offended, but should, in fact, be happy about our failure.

I have close to 58 years of hunting experience to my credit and am here to tell you the word "turkey" should never be used as a synonym for stupid. Lucky, maybe.

I declare the turkey supreme.