

PRIME TURKEY TIME

■ Northeast Oregon is a great place to get started hunting wild turkeys when the season begins on April 15



Gary Lewis/Contributed Photo

A young male turkey skulks along a tree line.

They were little more than six brown dots on a green landscape 800 yards away.

With the box call, I made quiet hen sounds while Jim watched with his binocular.

"They're listening."

One of turkeys stretched out his neck and gobbled. Then the turkeys started to move, high on the ridge. I doubted they would cross the wide open field between us this late in the morning.

We heard a hen on the ridge at the same level as the gobblers. If they ran into her, they'd probably hang up, but it was worth a try.

We jumped in the truck and motored a half-mile up the hill. Jim hid the truck and I walked down through the trees, set up the decoy and leaned back against a tree.

A little hen talk prompted the hen to start clucking again. Way out in the distance a gobbler answered. There had been six gobblers. There was one hen between us. This could work.

On the box call, I tried to mimic the sounds the hen made.



ON THE TRAIL

GARY LEWIS

Soon the hen was quiet.

Rather than raise the volume, I called whisper-soft.

Fifteen minutes, five shiny toms came into view.

The grass was too tall to look at beards. As soon as the first bright red head cleared a fallen tree, I put the bead on it and squeezed the trigger.

It was 9:10 a.m. With that lonely hen's help, I'd worked the flock for an hour and 20 minutes.

At first it seemed like the hen was my competitor for the toms' attentions, but because there were more gobblers than females, her charms helped lure them into my trap.

If I had to guess, the boss gobbler got the girl. There's no doubt his wingman got to be guest of honor at my table.

The Good Old Days of Turkey Hunting

There has never been a better time to become a

turkey hunter. Since the first introductions in the 1960s, turkeys — Rio Grandes and Merriams — have filled in prime habitat in every county in our state.

It isn't difficult for a greenhorn to get started.

Start with a shotgun — preferably a 12-gauge or a 20. There are special chokes and camo patterns, but those can come later.

As to the care and feeding of the shotgun, No. 4s, 5s and 6s are good for turkeys. Pattern the gun with the selected load out to 40 yards. Start at 10 yards and work back to 50 yards, with a target about the size of a silver dollar.

Somewhere about 40 yards, the pattern will open up. The load ceases to be effective when there are less than six pellets in a turkey's neck and head.

Many people don't try turkey hunting because they don't know how to call. But the turkey has a brain the size of a pea. It doesn't take a genius to learn to call them. Watch a video or listen to turkeys talking, then mimic those sounds. Call softly, the

Turkey Hunting

SEASON

Open statewide from April 15 through May 31.

DAILY BAG LIMIT

One male turkey, or a turkey with visible beard

SEASONAL LIMIT

Three. It is illegal to have more than three spring turkey tags

YOUTH HUNT

The spring statewide youth hunt, for hunters 17 and younger, is today, April 10, and Sunday, April 11. Each youth hunter must be accompanied by an adult 21 or older, who is not allowed to hunt. The season bag limit is one male turkey or a turkey with a visible beard.



Gary Lewis/Contributed Photo

Mimicking the sounds of a hen provoked a reassuring gobbler, close along the shoulder of the ridge. Whisper-quiet calls brought five gobblers into range.

skin. A facemask and gloves complete the costume.

There have been days when I have sat with my back to the same tree for four hours. A camo cushion helps. But this gets to the hardest part of turkey hunting — where do you put the cushion?

Top Turkey Units in NE Oregon

Four of the top 15 Oregon turkey units are in Northeast Oregon: Northside, Sled Springs, Heppner and Mt. Emily.

Other good bets in Northeast Oregon include the Murderer's Creek, Fossil, Sumpter, Wenaha and Keating units. Access can be easier because of the large

amount of public land in the Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla national forests.

Spring finds turkeys in the foothills, primarily on the south-facing slopes, but they begin to work their way up to higher elevations as the snow melts. According to the harvest statistics, it takes about 2 1/2 days for the average hunter to tie a tag on a turkey. The season is long — April 15 to May 31 statewide — and there is a lot of time to make the statistics work in a hunter's favor.

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Gary Lewis/Contributed Photo

Oregon's turkey season runs April 15 through May 31. The daily bag limit is one male or one turkey with a beard.

Introduction to air guns: part 2

As we continue our quest into air guns today let's talk about what model to get. There are three popular types of air guns. Let's cover those and try to decide which one would best meet your needs. They are broken into the three groups depending on their power source.

CO₂

CO₂'s derive their power from a CO₂ canister that you insert into the gun. The bad deal with CO₂'s is that as the pressure drops, so do your pellets/BB's.



BASE CAMP

TOM CLAYCOMB

Most CO₂'s only spit out pellets at 600 to 800 feet per second (fps), so they're not really a viable option for hunting. I assume so as to conserve power, most of them are .177s. So why even buy a CO₂? Well, they do serve two purposes that I can think of.

- If you want to run pests out of your garden such as deer but don't want to kill them, CO₂ BB guns are great for that. Plus, as far as I know,

most all of them are semi-autos so you can scatter a whole herd of deer.

- If you have small children who you are wanting to get into hunting/shooting they are the best choice. It takes someone strong to work a break barrel and PCPs are expensive.

Sig Sauer makes CO₂'s that mimic their real firearms which makes them great for training (smart idea). I teach a lot of air gun 101 seminars. I was conducting one last year in Reno at the SCI convention.



Ron Spomer Outdoors/Contributed Photo

With a good air gun you'll be surprised at the groups that you can get.

See **Air Guns**/Page 3B