

The Unexpected Visitor

Walter was back at it again. After a successful spring turkey hunt in which he harvested his first turkey, Walter was now back out in the woods trying his luck for fall turkeys. Just as he did in May, he would attempt to harvest a fall turkey with his crossbow.

It was the weekend of October 15th that Walter and I decided to give it our best shot at getting us a turkey. We were going to be hunting my favorite hunting spots on the Yellowstone Lake State Public Hunting grounds.

Friday night we pulled into camp around 10 p.m. and hit the hay around 11:00 a.m. The 2-½ hour drive to camp was filled with hunting stories and strategy for the weekend hunt. Turkey wasn't the only game in town that was talked about. Walter had not yet had an opportunity to loose an arrow at a deer so far this season. I advised Walter to be ready for a deer as well as a turkey.

5:00 a.m. came quickly. We packed and headed out of camp to our hunting spots. Walter's set-up was going to be on a nice drainage ditch funnel just behind a pine tree buffer on a hardwood ridge surrounded by alfalfa, corn, and soybean fields.

As the sun rose about 7 a.m., Walter heard several turkeys fly down from their roosts. The ground cover was thick and Walter was not able to locate the grounded turkeys. The woods were once again quiet.

At about 8:15 a.m. a single hen flew in to Walter's set-up. The hen, only 17 yards away, followed the ditch leaving mere seconds for Walter to get a good shot. No shot was taken. Walter wasn't going to tag this turkey, as it walked harmlessly away. "Good enough for BBs but not for an arrow!" That's my coined quote that seems to get a lot of use when I hunt turkeys with a bow. The next bit of excitement came about an hour later, as a nice big gobbler crossed the drainage ditch funnel about 35 yards away. Just a bit to far for a shot. "Good enough for BBs but not for an arrow!"

About 10 a.m. Walter and I headed back to the truck for some snacks and soda and a bit of leg stretching. By 11:00 a.m. we were back on the stand. Noon came and went with the sound of nearby gunfire as hunters and their dogs worked the nearby fields for the noon opener of pheasant season.

About 1:00 p.m., 30 yards away, I noticed a small tree shaking. I was unable to see through the thick underbrush to see what was shaking the tree. Then it dawned on me that it might be a buck making a rub on the tree. I bleated with my mouth and within a minute a buck was moving in our direction. I got Walter's attention and signaled to him there was a buck approaching. Walter, sitting on the ground in a windfall saw the buck coming and got into position for the shot. I bleated a few more times to keep the unexpected visitor interested and coming. He was very cautious and slow to move. After fifteen minutes of motionless patient waiting for the perfect shot, the buck finally turned broadside at 18 yards. Walter was ready and fired the bolt! A perfect hit right behind the shoulder! The buck bolted back into the thick underbrush and pine trees. We waited 30 minutes, and then tracked the buck's very heavy blood trail to where he fell. It was a perfect shot taking out the left ventricle of the heart and passing completely through the deer. Walter was pretty excited as he checked out his biggest buck by bow. The 6-point buck had a broken tine from fighting and already was showing a swollen neck for the rut. He weighed approximately 160 pounds field dressed. After congratulating Walter on his fine shot and buck he said to me, "I guess you got to write another story!" You just never know what you might get fall turkey hunting.

Story written by Mark Seeley

