

Spring 2006 Turkey Hunt

by Ed Glenn

The stories have become legend about the old man in an elk hunting party becoming exhausted by noon and is left in camp to tend the fire and cook supper in a dutch oven or two. Sure enough, a herd thunders through camp and the old campender is the only one of the group to bag a bull.

If it can happen in elk camp (and sometimes in deer camp) why not in turkey camp?

Turkey season in Oregon opened Saturday, April 15. Corey set up camp at Tamerack Springs on Friday in time to do a bit of scouting. By Monday, he'd bagged a 10" long beard, his 8th in 5 years.



Corey stands on an open ridge near the Southwestern arc of the Blue Mountains that reach from North central Oregon Northeast into Idaho and Washington. Our camp and hunting area is over the ridge in the back ground.

My son-in-law, Forrest, works swing shift with Wednesday and Thursday off and I chaired a City Council meeting Tuesday evening. Our plan was to join Corey in time for a Wednesday morning hunt. Just before day light, Corey led us down a mile and a half trek on a closed logging road to his secret "honey hole" and started with a lonesome yelp. Within minutes he called in a lost hen, yelping and clucking all the way. She passed by within 20 yards without making us, and close behind were a pair of jakes. But they crossed a swampy meadow on the far side, a bit out of range.

The ol' Tom and his harem just below the rim wouldn't budge so we went on to the next set up.

Just off the road, down a steep timbered draw, the gobblers answered as if there were a dozen. I settled in

behind a downfall at the base of big pine while Forrest and Corey found cover a bit farther down the draw. As Corey called, the gobblers answered in chorus and I was on the ready. Corey talks great turkey on a copper surface pot call I made for him a year ago and Forrest does a neat purr on a barrel mounted box. I left my calls in the rig.

Shortly the gobblers elected one to investigate the calling hen they took Corey to be and he appeared on the far side working warily our way. I was on him at about 70 yards as he strutted back and forth flashing his 7 or 8" beard. But the next 20 or 30 yards was not to be.

Forrest made a gentle purr and what sounded like a whole flock of gobblers answered, so close to my back, I expected to be mounted any minute. My old arthritic knees had me locked in my look at the draw ahead. I knew I couldn't turn on these newcomers soon enough to take a careful aim and only hoped either Corey or Forrest could. "My" gobbler hung up and then BLAM, Forrest had a jake flopping on the ground not 20 yards off my back side.

We stopped on the way back to camp and tested the timber a time or two with no answer. At camp we broke out the lunch makin's. Camp was truly a bright spot, even in the



Forrest with his bird taken just after sun up on the first day of his two-day weekend. Corey, who we relied upon for most of the calling, stands in the back

timber around Tamerack Springs. Corey's snow-white camper trailer amid three bright red pickup trucks made it clear that man was in the forest.

Corey found a package of hot dogs, Forrest fired up a camp stove and I did my part by cutting a pan of brownies my wife had baked the night before. With a plate of lunch in one hand and cold beverage of choice in the other, Corey and I settled in to camp chairs around the fire ring while Forrest dressed his bird on the tailgate of his pickup. Food down, I drug out an aromatic cedar sided box call I'd been working on and asked Corey to give me some tips on making it work. I make box calls with one side longer than the other so each side has a little different tone.

I scratched and Corey critiqued, then he'd demonstrate and explain and we passed the box back a forth while Forrest butchered. Corey liked the short side of the box, but the long side sounded to me more like the hen we'd heard that very morning. We debated the issue as we yelped and purred and putted the time away.

Fifteen or twenty minutes of turkey calling practice and Corey finally said, "Ed, I think you've got it now."

Just then, Forrest waved and pointed and scratched his throat as he made a barely perceptible growl – the sign of a gobbler.

"Just across the road, about a hundred yards," he whispered. I grabbed and loaded my brother's Russian-made over and under, Corey seized his pot and striker and we crouched down not 20 yards from those big bright red



It's just a simple little box call, not even finished. The only contest it will win is with the turkey. I didn't see that spot of blood until I looked at the photo. Won't you guess it will always be there?

pickups. His first yelp series was instantly answered, closer this time.

We crawled another 10 yards and on my hunches, I raised the barrel to the ready. Corey called once more and I saw the tom circle behind a thicket of three-foot tall pines. I swung to the clear and Corey's purr brought the bird to my bead, head up looking right at camp.

At 40 yards with only a 2.75" load of No. 4, the guys agreed it was a good shot. He's big for a jake, called to within 60 yards of camp with some box call practice around the fire ring while having lunch.

While this old man was not left alone in camp, he was tuckered out from the morning hunt, happy to be tagged out and headed home by noon.



With a little practice calling around the camp fire, it just might be that one could call a nice big jake right in among a group of big bright red pickup trucks.