



The Parting Shot

by Thom Jorgensen

A few years ago we had one open bunk in hog camp and we posted it online as first-come-first-served. The first person to respond was from Grand Rapids, Michigan, and he snatched up the bunk immediately. Since we were basically neighbors I offered him the copilot seat in my car for the 14 hour ride. This is how I met Dan Fiske.

We enjoyed a great hunt together and were fast friends by the return trip. I probably talked too much about the MLA and the events I was enjoying around the state, but that's what I do sometimes. Next thing I knew all of his posts were about carving selfbows and I was bumping into him at events around the state. Fast forward to the fall and we shared a camp up in Grayling and hunted whitetails together.

For all the talking I'd done about longbows and hogs, Dan had just about as much to say about turkeys. This guy was really into his turkey hunting and one early spring morning last year I looked at my phone and saw a picture of his dead bird. He had drawn first week, and if I recall correctly, I think he had his tag filled within an hour or two of first light. I sent him a congrats and we exchanged a little banter. Long story short, with his own season cut so terribly short by success, he offered to put me in his blind on the first day of unit 234 and to show me how to call birds.

I arrived at what seemed an unbecoming hour for hunting anything without horns and we set off to set up at the edge of some woods and a field. Within a few minutes of arriving we had my oversized two-men-plus-a-longbow blind setup, some decoys out, and were sitting quietly listening for the first gobble at dawn.

It was a great morning for my first time turkey hunting, weather was slightly cool and a little overcast, the distant gobbles and clucks were clear to hear, although none of the birds would come quite close enough to see. I watched Dan expertly work the different calls and listened to see how the birds would respond. It goes without saying that I learned a ton about turkeys and turkey hunting!

As great as this morning sit was, it was only scheduled to be just that. At 10am we both had to break out and get to work so it was going to be only a short course in turkey hunting. A few minutes before we needed to break down the setup to leave I asked Dan if I could do some calling and get some pointers/critiquing. He was happy to oblige as we hadn't heard a bird in some time and had we had nothing to lose.

I tried several of his slates, and then I pulled out the one I'd been practicing on the week or two before. I clucked and cut and purred. I tried his gobble call, I even tried the box call which had previously perplexed me. I tore up such an awful racket that when it was time to go there was no reason to worry about spooking anything. With that I opened up the blind and stepped out to see a nice tom at 60 yards starring straight back at me. We locked eyes and I was beat.

Of course something else happened in that moment, probably what Dan had planned all along. There was a spark. That first encounter with my longbow in my hand, looking at the game I was pursuing. I went instantly from feeling defeated to feeling challenged, and challenged by a very worthy creature!

I have no idea how many hours I've wasted thinking about turkeys since that moment. I don't know how much sleep I've lost thinking about my next chance to hunt them. I can't count the number of times I've mentally changed up which bow and arrow setup I'll go with for them this year. I'll never know the man I could have been if Dan hadn't introduced me to this bird! And all that aside, I still feel the need to say "Thank you Dan."

Turkey season 2014 is now around the corner, and like some of you I'll be playing hooky on opening day. I'll be hunting with a longbow again



this year and if I'm successful I'll be submitting for a game award. I'd like to invite you to do the same.

