

Illinoisans in Kansas

A letter from a fellow turkey enthusiast

Hello David,

I'm the fireman from southern Illinois that you were kind enough to speak with on the cell phone before this spring's turkey season began.

You offered to take me hunting if things hadn't timed out right for me to hunt with my Fort Riley stationed son, who was away training at Campbell; on a tight timeline to hit the DOD card holder portion of the season. Well... I thought you might enjoy the follow up story.



Caleb, my son finished his training at Fort Campbell on Friday April the 16th, and got back to Kansas sometime Saturday. He had to work Monday so I didn't try to make it out then; since he was required to be with me for the DOD only portion of the season. There just weren't enough days that we would be able to hunt together to justify timing the trip then. He did manage a four day pass the following weekend, and with the open portion of the season opening Wednesday, April the 21st, I scheduled enough time off work to drive out on Thursday and hunt until the following Wednesday. That way I could hunt without him, but we would still have several days to hunt together. As an added bonus, my 71 year old father, one of my brothers, and a good friend of ours also made the trip out, separate from my trip but overlapping by only one day.

I had an Illinois tag that started on Thursday April the 22nd and went to the following Wednesday. I planned to hunt Thursday morning here at home, then leave for Kansas by lunchtime, make it out there by 8:p.m. or so, get a good night's sleep and be ready to hunt with Caleb Friday morning, bright and early. If I tagged out in Kansas, I might still make it back in time to finish my Illinois tag too. Good plan, but fortunately things turned out even better.

As luck would have it, my Thursday morning Illinois hunt ended up good, albeit short. I started on one property; heard a few gobblers before daylight but not where I could get to them.

After checking things over good, I moved to property #2; pulled into the field road, got out and climbed the small hill which put me in a perfect spot to glass two big fields that usually are good turkey country. Bingo two jakes and one long tom all the way at the south end 400 plus yards out and unaware of me. I know this story is already getting long, so I'll shorten up the next half hour of "Showtime".

The big tom gobbled and strutted all the way to dead at 32 yards, with me not having to move my setup one inch. No deke, the bird just liked the sound of my call that morning I guess. He was a big bird; I should have weighed him but didn't. The beard was 11 plus inches; spurs measured 1 ½ inches. LUCKY ME! It is only 7:25 a.m.

After dressing the bird; finished loading the truck, and by 9:50 a.m. I'm on my way to Fort Riley; way ahead of schedule, and looking forward to a great trip with family and friends.

You may remember it rained a bunch out there that Thursday, the 22nd. After driving 465 miles door to door, I got to Sapp's and gassed up at 5:00 p.m. Caleb (my son) was going to supper with his good friends the Mead's at the Buffalo Wild Wings, in Manhattan. I was invited; it sounded good, but I came to Kansas to hunt turkeys; so I drove the twenty miles to Unit 1, checked in and hit Q. Gun loaded at 6:10 p.m. and I'm hunting in Kansas.

I headed east trying to find birds. Bad overcast, some drizzle, and lots of creeks and gullies flowing with the heavy rainfall earlier in the day. I found a flock with a strutter that would gobble to the call, but of course wouldn't leave the 12-15 hens as they worked in to roost; so I did the sneak up and shoot the tom thing. A creek over my waist gave the avenue to get right to the flock; a tricky to negotiate fast furious creek bottom but at least it wasn't too cold. This was creek or gully crossing number 6 for the evening; every one of them over my boots. I nailed a Kansas long beard within ten minutes of a sunset that couldn't be seen for all the black winded clouds.

A long beard in Illinois, a long drive, a long beard in Kansas; I don't know how much more fortunate I could have been. What a day!

My dad got his first ever turkey on Friday at midday, a nice two year old long beard. He is now hooked. I worked with Caleb all day. He killed a 21 pound bird with an old straggly beard and long spurs Friday a half hour or so before sunset. We worked that one for two hours; calling him in to 84 yards and moved on, then we circled; called him to 77 yards and then he went the other way again. Then I called aggressively and he turned and ran right into our lap. Caleb got his biggest bird ever on a gorgeous day, and I got to help make it happen. Thank God for kids and dads.

My brother got a long beard and a Jake; our friend Mike got a long beard, and I killed a Jake Sunday about noon. All of us got one long beard, and two of us got second birds, both jakes. Not bad at all. I returned home both happy and tired. The following Saturday I shot a second Illinois bird (22 pounds) on a second tag; with the fattest beard I've ever harvested.

David, I've enjoyed reading everything on your site; keep it up.

I Hope this hasn't been too many words for you or pictures. Call or email me anytime and thank you again.