

The Birth of a Turkey Hunter

By: David McNeal

Dan Sessions is an OBYGN surgeon at the Irwin Army Community Hospital at Fort Riley, Kansas. He hails from Utah and Washington State; currently resides with his lovely wife and four beautiful daughters in Manhattan, Kansas. Dan was up until the morning of the 18th of April 2011 an avid deer and elk hunter; he still is but now he has one more addiction to add to his repertoire, spring turkey hunting and turkey fever.



Dan Sessions and his first Kansas turkey an eastern gobbler.

On that morning he took his first ever wild Kansas turkey an eighteen pound eastern long beard. The bird carried a 9 and 3/8 inch beard and 3/4 inch spurs. It also sported a full mature fan making him at least a three year old. It was quite a prize for a first time out.

The adventure started when I met Dan fishing for rainbow trout at Cameron Springs about the first week in April; we struck up a conversation and I discovered that he was an all around outdoors person with a deep love for both hunting and fishing. I gave him one of my cards www.huntforriley.com and told him that I was getting pretty excited about the upcoming spring turkey season. He told me that he had always wanted to try it but didn't know enough about it. Well we went our separate ways and it wasn't long before I received an email from him and the date for his first hunt was set.

I picked him up at his home around 8:00 a.m. and we headed for the northern part of post and an area that had looked extremely promising back in March when I scouted it. On the way over we stopped in the little rural community of Keats and signed in at one of the hunter check in stations located around the post boundaries. We arrived at our chosen spot around 8:30 a.m. and by 8:45 a.m. we were set up and ready to start calling. I did a few yelps and putts following by clucks and purrs but received no response. I decided to try cutting and in the distance I thought I heard a gobble; so I continued cutting and sure enough I heard the unmistakable sound of an excited gobbler; the game was ON.

I played the old purr and cluck with an occasional cut and every time I would cut the big bird sounded off closer than before. Finally I made a cut and there was no response and I knew he was close so I just shut down and stayed as still as I could. I could hear him moving above and behind me but didn't dare move my head to take a peek. Then I heard the loud report of Dan's Remington 870 wing master and I knew my young surgeon had nailed his first gobbler. The time was 9:30 a.m. An amazing forty-five minutes from my first call.

Dan relayed how the birds (there were more than one) had indeed come up behind him and how he thought to himself "I'm going to screw this up" because he would have to somehow turn around to have a shot in the right direction. To his fortunate surprise there was a large conifer tree blocking the birds view from his position and so he was able to make the move undetected it was then just a matter of patiently waiting for the big bird to come from behind the tree which he did and Dan was able to take his shot.

There is NOTHING like success and there were some happy smiles from the both of us but the thing that made my day was when my young soldier beaming said to me, "I'm hooked."

Another turkey hunter delivered!