

Double Trouble for Tom

Father-Daughter team spells the end for big gobbler

By Dick Ellis

It took 11 year old Chloe Volkman a few minutes of her first-ever hunt to see what her Daddy, John Volkman, hasn't seen in decades of hunting the wild turkey in Wisconsin. With a new day dawning over Door County, Chloe, a recent graduate of a Hunter Education program participating in Wisconsin Learn to Hunt Turkey season for first-time hunters of any age, watched Good Friday as a few hens began to pitch off their evening roost and land in the field around her decoy.

And pitch off the roost. And pitch off the roost. And pitch off the roost. And....

"I have never seen anything like it," John Volkman said. "It was like watching a flock of geese come in until 35 hens were on the ground. You could hear them land as they hit the ground. Just a few at first... and then all around us. It was amazing. A few minutes later a bald eagle came across the field about six feet over the ground. It was obvious the hens had seen that before. They were scattering under the brush, running by our blind and flushing out of there. Basically, they flipped out."

A great beginning for Chloe, with a better ending yet to come in a story written over the next week and into the Wisconsin statewide youth turkey hunt held April 10 and 11. The middle chapter isn't too bad either.

After the eagle's failed attempt for the early-bird, meat-lovers breakfast, the hens slowly returned to the field. Such a large buffet of female companionship wouldn't be ignored for long, and very soon a Gobbler was voicing his "good mornings" from



Chloe Volkman teamed up with her Dad to tag this 24 pound gobbler during opening morning of the statewide Youth Turkey Hunt. John Volkman used both a mouth call and box call to bring Tom in while hunting in Door County. Chloe used a single shot 20-gauge Rossi to drop the bird in its tracks at 15 yards. (Photo by John Volkman)

behind the blind where the Volkmans held vigil. John had opened the blind windows for shooting lanes facing the decoy but had left the rear windows closed during set-up. The gobbler began drumming for his harem just 15 yards behind the blind and kept the show going for 15 minutes.

Volkman had bought his daughter a break-action, single-shot Rossi 20-gauge shotgun for her inaugural hunt, a small, light scattergun that included a safety and could be converted to either .22 or .243 caliber with a simple change to any of three barrels. With the gobbler losing interest

and making a grand departure from the stage, John talked Chloe into shifting to a position which allowed sliding the Rossi barrel out a window crack in the tent's back wall, taking aim and unleashing a load of number 5-shot at the departing Tom.

"The Tom saw the barrel slide out the back and was leaving fast when Chloe shot," John said. "The shot ended up taking two neck feathers off but he just stood there for a while bewildered. Then he walked off. We took a break and headed out in the afternoon to a different spot."

More vocal activity marked the early

afternoon hunt, with gobblers routinely answering Volkman's mouth and box calls. With no birds actually appearing after extended conversations, John let his daughter make the call whether or not they would change positions.

"She said 'stay', and five minutes later two Toms, two jakes and five hens came out," John said. The gobblers were displaying. The sun was at our backs. It was one of those cool moments. The jakes saw the decoy and came right in. I reminded Chloe that jakes were also legal and she said she wanted to try and take one."

She did. And as Volkman said, the highs and lows of hunting had been compacted all into one day. Culminating with a quick kill and the fastening of a harvest tag to a Jake's leg. The action resumed the following Saturday during day one of the statewide youth turkey hunt, a special season designed so that young hunters aged 10 to 15 with Hunter Ed certificates and proper mentoring can pursue Tom without competition from other hunters for one weekend prior to the regular, six-season splits hunts. Chloe herself helps bring the story to an end from here, including its "Big" finish.

"We got up at 4:30 Saturday in Door County at our house but we weren't going to hunt on our land," Chloe said. "My Dad had set the blind up the night before. After five minutes of calling two Toms came

down and began to gobble. Then another big Tom came in. We were only sitting for 10 minutes. I shot him at about 20 yards I think. Then the other two Toms came in and started to attack the decoy. My Dad was going to let them do that but it's one of those 'Real Decoys' and they took a big chunk out of it so Dad got up and scared them away."

The big gobbler would weigh in at a very large 24 pounds with one-inch spurs and a 10-1/2 inch beard. The hunt was over...except for two regular season tags that Chloe and her Old man holds for later in the year. Seemingly, that's the kind of double trouble that not very good news for the Toms of Wisconsin's northeast.

"I was excited and happy," Chloe said. "But I think my Dad was more excited than I was. He was also the one who worked the mouth and box calls. I'm not very good at it."

Not yet maybe. But she will be. And it looks like she's fast becoming a dead shot.

"At 25 yards, it's no problem at all for that Rossi single shot with the right load to put a gobbler right down," John said. "That bird was at about 15 yards. It was over and out."

The Wisconsin DNR Learn to Hunt Program is an educational opportunity designed to help inexperienced hunters, both youth and adults, have a high quality, safe and rewarding first-time hunting experience

under the guidance of qualified Hunter Education Instructors and hunting mentors, according to the DNR website. Participants receive both classroom and field instruction prior to an actual hunt. All participants are paired up one-on-one with a qualified mentor to provide the highest level of instruction and safety. Many of the learn-to-hunt events during waterfowl, upland game and big-game seasons are sponsored by local conservation clubs and organizations under the supervision of the DNR.

The Wisconsin Youth Turkey Hunt traditionally for young hunters ages 12-15 for the first time in 2010 also included hunters 10 and 11 years old thanks to the Mentored Hunting Programs adopted in Wisconsin last Fall. Youth who have completed Hunter Education programs are allowed to hunt during the special season while accompanied by an adult 18 years of age or older. The young hunters are allowed to hunt during the special season, this year April 10 and 11, in the Turkey Management Zone their permit is valid for, and may harvest a legal bearded turkey. A youth who does not successfully harvest a turkey during the special hunt may use their unfilled permit during the time period and in the zone for which the permit was issued.

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Wisconsin Hunter bags monster Tom



Sometimes, it just isn't that complicated. Ask Ken Dollevoet, who most likely tagged one of the largest gobblers ever taken during season one of Wisconsin six split turkey seasons.

Dollevoet said he just walked out on his property in Fremont and plunked down in a lawn chair among planted pines where he knew the turkeys roosted occasionally. He wore no camo. Just a "tilley hat, jeans and sneakers", as he put it. He carried a new call that he literally took out of the box when he went out to hunt.

"I sat down with crossed legs and just enjoyed being outdoors," he said. "After a little while I heard a gobble and I thought that I would give him a hen cluck. I took out the new slate call that I had just picked up at the deer classic in Madison and struck it. It sounded awful."

Thinking "so much for that bird",

Dollevoet was amazed when Tom gobbled back. The bird came in slowly and the hunter took the shot at about 30 yards. That spelled the end for a very long-lived bird. Long enough anyway, to unofficially weigh in at a humongous 32 pounds.

"I forgot a knife so I took it back to the house and weighed it, took a few pictures and field dressed it because I had to register it the next morning," he said. "I didn't know what I had until some buddies informed me that according to the NWTF (National Wild Turkey Federation) it could be one of the biggest turkeys ever. I knew he was big but I am not a die-hard turkey hunter. I just go out every year behind the house. I should have weighed him on an official scale. I sure didn't realize an old timer like me could have shot one of the largest Eastern Turkeys of all time." 