

Early autumn & still turkeys

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It was just about as perfect as you could ask for. The nights were cooling, on their way to frosty and the days warmed up to high sixties and maybe a seventy thrown in for good measure. My doe was skinned, quartered and on ice. Well mostly she was. The tenderloins and a piece of back strap had gone the way all good deer meat should go -- supper.

Wade and Jim were still working the woods, waiting for a deer to stumble by. So far, all they had seen were turkeys. The lawn buzzards were about in abundance. I spent my time reading, enjoying the weather and taking pictures that would drive Wade and Jim mad.

From the tent, I could have easily killed two deer. One came to drink on the lakeshore and the other acted as though he wanted to borrow my tent for a while. The one at the lake was a good one. The other was a curious baby. While meandering around in the pines, I watched a better than average buck make a scrape. I saw a butterfly I could not identify but I did take its' picture.

I fished some and caught a few and when it got suitably warm; I bathed in the cold lake water and dried in the sun. I remember how good I felt during those days. I did not hurt anywhere and I was sleeping well. Since my ticket was punched, the cooling doe made four for me, I did all the cooking and I applied myself with vigor. We ate well.

Only the turkeys disturbed things. You cannot sleep with the tree rats yelping, putting, and generally ruining the harmony of the woods. This was before we had a fall turkey season, you understand. As far as I know, there is and was no law against throwing ricks at them. I wish I could pitch accurately. I have no idea why I didn't take their picture. I guess I didn't want to waste film. Remember, this was before Tennessee had a turkey under every shrub and on every porch.

I do not hate turkeys. In fact, in some ways I like them. I like them fried and covered with cheese and jalapenos so you can't taste them.

However, they have attended the same school as squirrels. They have learned to be a disruption when you are trying to kill a deer or read a book. See a deer coming your way, first thing you know, a band of turkeys is between you and birds and there is no way that deer is coming any closer. You think impure thoughts.

Another example. I'm sitting in my woodland recliner-three logs properly arranged, sleeping bag over them with a fourth at the right hand to hold my book, my camera and maybe a tall, adult beverage.

One hundred yards down the lake, a buck comes tiptoeing to drink from the lake. He looks in all directions and licks his nose to taste the wind. He both sees and smells me. He stops and gives me a good looking over. He decides he is safe and the camera clicking doesn't bother him. I get a few shots and he comes closer. He comes close enough for a bowshot and he is a shooter. This is in the days before digital and I am shooting slides. I have two shots left on the roll. I wait as he approaches, anticipating the fantastic shot.

There are 11 of them, all hens. They come yelping and putting and purring and scratching and flapping their wings, generally acting like women and the buck heads for Knoxville or somewhere with no turkeys.

That is just one example. I have many. Anyway, it was a great couple of days. Jim finally killed a deer and we had a fine trip. I left feeling rested and ready for three weeks in the Midwest.

I don't know why I thought of that today. I am actually busy catching bass but I'll tell you about that later. Right now it is time to throw the old buzzbait a while. Turkey season ends the 15th. Y'all go kill some.

Turkey hunters falling behind -- Come guys and gals. As of this past Monday, Wilson County turkey hunters had killed a total of 569 turkeys. That is two percent below last year's total of

583. The season closes Sunday, May 15 so let's get with it. I had two gobblers and five hens in the yard Monday.

FEEDBACK -- Email John L. Sloan at: