Morning at the bowl

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Sunshine. Bright, warm sunshine crawls slowly up my leg. It is 28 degrees, November 14 and the sun is welcome even though it really doesn't give off a lot of warmth. Looking at it makes me feel as though my toes are warmer. I have severe peripheral neuropathy so my toes are seldom warm. I grin a bit and look toward the top of the bowl. The sun is just topping the rim.

The turkeys are already there. They come in the morning to snuffle and cluck among the red oak acorns. Truth told, I think they come to bother me. I don't like turkeys around when I am deer hunting. They are a distraction to both the deer and me. Then, I see Snip.

Snip is a black phase grey squirrel. He has a snip of pure white on the end of his tail. Hence the name. He has accepted me as part of his daily trials. Mostly, he ignores me, sometimes chatters at me briefly. I now accept him. As the resident hawk sails by, he has a short conniption.

I uncross my left leg stretch it out and cross my right. This serves two purposes. It allows the sun to hit my right toe and at the same time, helps restore circulation to my left leg. As part of that movement, I wipe my constantly running nose and push the damn glasses back up on my nose. This is the first year I have had to wear glasses to hunt and I do not like them one bit.

I look at the turkeys again. Now, there are a couple dozen on the edge of the bowl. The sun glints off their feathers and I have to admit they are pretty...and ugly, too. I settle for pretty ugly. The little bird in the pine tree by my shoulder ignores all of us.

I hunt the bowl often. There are better places to hunt but I like the bowl. The sides and top rim are solid hardwoods and I like to hunt in hardwoods. Once the leaves are gone, I like the visibility. Where I am, on the edge, there are a few scattered pines. From the rim to the bottom three gently sloping fingers descend, providing great access for the deer. The bottom is green with young growth. When it rains, a trickling stream meanders through. The cover there is thick

and the deer like to travel it and climb whichever finger suits them that day. I have killed many deer here. I have hunted it long enough to give the animals names and know the yardage to particular trees.

I have never seen a big buck at the bowl. Nearly half the deer I see are bucks but they are young, small racked and I really don't care to shoot one. Mostly I am doe hunting.

From my seat 14-feet up in the ash, I can scan the bowl. From time to time, I see deer walking the edge, they flit back and forth through the gaps in the trees.

Sometimes, they stop often enough to allow a shot. That is a mistake. It is 120-yards and I can make that shot. I don't try it much any more. I am not required to shoot a deer and if I just sit still and be patient, I'll have a closer shot.

Lot of time to think sitting in a treestand.

Pileated woodpeckers. I use to see them often, sometimes more often than I liked. They can be annoying. I welcome this one. I haven't heard one in a while. They let out an ear-splitting Kyukk..kyukk when they fly. Their pounding on dead, sometimes hollow trees can heard for a half-mile. They are big woodpeckers, nearly a foot tall, black with white markings and a brilliant red cockade. I'm glad to hear and then, see this one.

I hear him coming but can't see him. I have my hearing aids in and they amplify the crunch of the leaves. I know he is close, I just can't see him. Finally I spot him as he jumps a log. Chipmunks are creatures that drink far too much coffee. They are the epitome of hyper, hard to hit with an arrow, too. I have spent a few dollars trying.

I guess she came in by helicopter. I look up and she is just standing there, licking her nose and switching her tail. She is just past "big ole tree" that is 125-yards from my stand.

I take my time and slip the Knight muzzleloader off the hook. Lord, the game that gun has taken. I position the Steady-Rest against my hip and nestle the stock into my shoulder. I remember to slip the damn glasses off my nose and settle the crosshairs just behind her shoulder. I take a deep breath and let half of it out. The safety slips off, the crosshairs steady and the gun goes off. My sixth deer of the year is in the books. Tom Lynch will eat well.

My hunt is over for the morning but that doesn't mean I have to get down immediately. I will call Tom and he will meet me at the Fellowship House and take her. But for a few minutes, I just sit and let the sun climb my leg.

Compared to what a lot of people are doing this morning, this is a great way to spend some time. I don't consciously meditate but I do have a tendency to ruminate and look for chipmunks and peckerwoods.

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