Over the last few seasons, there has been a new trend of turkey hunters trying to squeeze into the first few weeks of the season. Most say they are trying to get in as early as possible to hunt before the turkeys have been “messed with” and hunt while there are still some “dumb ones” out there. However, our veteran turkey hunters know a lot of people are missing out on some great turkey hunting.

Many times prospective clients ask “what’s the best time to hunt turkeys at Westervelt?” There are two answers, when you have time to go is the first answer and personal preference is the second. Some hunters prefer to hunt the early spring and some prefer later in the spring. Seasoned turkey hunters usually enjoy the later spring hunting at Westervelt Lodge for the following reasons. First they are not rolling the dice on the “arrival of spring”. As any experienced turkey hunter knows that spring weather can arrive late, when it does turkeys may be a little behind responding and gobbling is usually not as intense. It can also be cold, rainy, windy, and of course early in the season there is no leaf cover in the woods. This makes it really hard for a hunter to hide and the turkeys in our hardwood bottoms can see about as far as they are willing to travel. Also, typically the gobblers are roosted with several hens this time of the year so he doesn’t have to do much gobbling or range very far looking for hens. Even if a gobbler doesn’t have enough hens roosted with him to satisfy his needs, at this time there is not a lot of competition for hens so he doesn’t have to be in a big hurry to commit. We all know what happens then, the gobbler sits in in his comfort zone and gobbles until a hen shows up or he sees a real one 100 plus yards across a bottom and moves along following her.

So let’s fast forward to mid-April. Spring weathers patterns have settled in a bit and the woods are now in full foliage. Most of the time, it means no more rainy windy mornings in the low 30’s. What does this mean for longbeards at Westervelt Lodge? They no longer have 10 or 12 hens roosted them every night. Most hens that have been successful in building and keeping a nest are incubating eggs. Now the fun starts! Longbeards have to actually gobble and go looking for available hens. They can’t just sit on a limb and gobble all morning while the hens gather around the tree. It’s a race to find and breed any hen that can be seen or heard. The fewer number of available hens and full foliage forces the gobblers to increase their gobbling intensity, daily ranging area and they are more inclined to “go looking” for a hen or hunter yelping. They can’t afford to stay back 100 yards or so and wait for the hen to appear and they can no longer see 100 yards thru the woods and cannot risk another gobbler slipping in and taking their hen away. During the late season, he has to move around more due to the foliage and if you can see a gobbler, most of the time he is in shotgun range.

This past spring our last group of hunters at Westervelt Lodge enjoyed 100% success at pulling the trigger on a longbeard. The number of gobbling turkeys heard and overall gobbling intensity increased over the last two weeks of the season, as it typically does. We encourage our turkey hunters to take advantage of the intense late spring hunting at Westervelt Lodge. For many successful experienced hunters, that is the best time to go!