

It Ain't Over Till It's Over, Late Season Turkey Hunting Success

Recently, a new trend in turkey hunting has emerged: hunters are trying to squeeze all their hunts into the early weeks of the season. Most say they want to get in as early as possible in order to get turkeys who haven't been "messed with" or hunt while there are still a few "dumb ones" left. However, veteran turkey hunters know this approach will lead to missing out on some great turkey hunting later in the season.

Many prospective clients ask, "What is the best time to hunt turkeys at Westervelt?" There are two answers: the first is "when you have the time" and the second is "personal preference." While each hunter has his own reason for choosing early or late spring, seasoned turkey hunters know booking their hunt at Westervelt Lodge later in the spring allows for some ideal hunting conditions. As any hunter knows, spring can arrive late, and when it does, the turkeys are affected and gobbling is not usually as intense. Early in the season, it can also be cold, rainy and windy making both turkey and hunter more uncomfortable. There is also no leaf cover in the woods early on, making it difficult for hunters to hide from their quarry; a turkey can see about as far as he is willing to travel. During the cooler season, gobblers also tend to be roosted with several hens and do not gobble as much or range very far from the roost. There is little competition for hens during this time, so the gobbler is not in a hurry to commit; he can sit in his comfort zone and wait for a hen to come in view.

Fast-forward to mid-April. Spring weather patterns have settled in a bit and the woods are in full foliage. Typically, this means no more rainy, windy mornings in the low 30s. What does this mean for longbeards at Westervelt Lodge? They no longer have 10-12 hens roosted with them. Most hens that have been successful maintaining a nest are incubating eggs. Longbeards actually have to gobble and actively look for hens. It's a race to find and breed any hen that can be seen or heard. The lower number of available hens and full foliage cover forces gobblers to increase gobbling intensity and daily ranging area; they are much more inclined to "go looking" for a hen or hunter yelping. They cannot sit back and survey the area because they can no longer see 100 yards and won't risk another gobbler sneaking in under the leaf cover and stealing their hen away. During the late season, a gobbler has to move around more, and if you see him, most likely he will be 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 gobblers heard and the 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 exciting late spring hunting at Westervelt Lodge. For many experience hunters, it is the best time to go!

