



Fall Firearm Turkey Hunt Begins Oct. 22

by Lee Keck

October 17 2020 7:02 AM



Luring a spring gobbler into shotgun range is, without a doubt, among the most challenging sports available to local hunters. And, this is exactly what many local turkey hunters are planning to accomplish next weekend during the season opener of the fall firearm turkey hunt.

Interestingly, the spring hunter has little more to work with than the occasional gobble from a lovesick bird and knowledge of the turkey's natural instinct to find a mate.

While technology has provided the modern gobbler chaser with such valuable aids as lifelike decoys and calls that make anyone sound like an expert, these wary birds, more often than not, leave most hunters returning home with an empty game bag.

In fact, only about one out of five Illinois turkey tags are filled each spring. Without a doubt, the local grocery store is the only sure place to obtain the featured item on your Thanksgiving Day menu.

Now, take away the occasional gobble and eliminate the bird's instinct to mate and you have instantly created the fall turkey hunting scenario. It's no wonder that far fewer turkey tags are sold for the fall season. You can't even call the sport challenging - it's downright tough!

Another fact in this equation is that other types of hunting opportunities are available at this time of year. This also limits the demand for fall turkey permits.

Many years, fall hunting success is actually slightly better than in the spring. Success rates are a few percentage points higher than the 20 percent average typically recorded during the annual spring hunt.

While some fall hunters would like to credit their success purely to hunting skills, it is more likely due to the fact that birds of either sex can be taken during the fall season. The spring hunt is limited to bearded birds or gobblers.

The 2020 Illinois fall shotgun turkey season begins Oct. 22 and continues through Oct. 30. The fall archery season, opening Oct. 1, continues through Jan. 15. The fall archery season closes during both segments of the firearm deer season. As with the spring season, fall turkey hunting is by permit only.

Since the fall season is open only in those parts of the state containing the densest turkey populations, virtually any open county should yield good hunting. Typically, Jo Daviess, Pike, Schuyler and Adams counties are among those yielding the greatest fall turkey harvests.

While some hunters feel fall turkey hunting lacks some of the excitement of hunting during the spring, the beauty of the season more than makes up for it. Fall colors are generally at their peak and the sights and sounds of autumn are everywhere.

And while success rates are generally higher in the fall, it still remains one of the most challenging game species Illinois hunters can pursue.