

Local Turkey Hunt Proving Challenging

by Lee Keck

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To say that every year offers a new and unexpected challenge to local turkey hunters would definitely be true.

As an example, compare this spring with last year's. During the opening week of the 2020 spring turkey season, weather conditions had been springlike for more than a month. This year, we are still waiting for springlike weather to arrive and stay here.

While many wild turkey hens had been nesting for several weeks in 2020, I'm not too sure they've even began seeking out a suitable nesting site for 2020 quite yet.

At this point in 2021, the wintering flocks had separated and scattered throughout their normal range. This year, many of the wintering flocks are just now beginning to disperse.

That has been the case thus far for many turkey hunters in Illinois' North Zone. Colder and wetter than normal weather conditions has greatly slowed the progress of the normal wild turkey reproductive efforts.

This has caused many of the birds to remain in larger-than-normal flocks. In fact, some of the flocks contain a half-dozen or more mature gobblers. This is making hunters search harder for their Thanksgiving dinners.

Carlinville resident Randy Link and I spent much of the first three days of the North Zone season peering out tiny windows of our oversize blind. Though the blind would be considered roomy for most hunters, our large-scale chairs, hunting bags and abundant supply of food items filled the camouflage dwelling to near capacity.

Here in Macoupin County, Link and I had been on a relatively long success roll until last year. The only turkey dinner we each enjoyed in 2020 came originated in a local grocery store.

While this year brought no better success, a trip to the grocery store is still in the plans before Thanksgiving arrives.

When it comes to hunting, I always follow a strict routine. In my opinion, this routine has proven to be the reason for success. If anything changes, I run the chance of an unsuccessful hunt.

For instance, during my annual Pike County deer hunt a long-established routine. It begins during my drive to Pike County. I always stop at the same service station, purchase the same snacks and arrive at our club house the same time.

Any variation to this effort can prove detrimental to my hunting success. This same unwavering routine comes into play during the annual turkey hunt.

We arrive at our designated parking spot at the same time, set up in our blind at the same time and dine on the same famous chocolate chip muffins provided fresh each day by Carlinville resident Lois White.

Whether we get a turkey or not, doesn't really matter.