

I have been hunting with my Dad, uncles and cousins as long as I can remember. I am very lucky and thankful that they have always taken me along on deer, duck, dove, squirrel, quail and even rabbit hunts. At first I would just tag along but by the time I was 8 yrs old I had harvested each by myself. Every spring my Uncle Don would Turkey hunt and always tell me all about it. My Uncle Don has harvested more turkeys than anyone I know. He says that he thinks the wild turkey is the most challenging game animal in North America. I always loved to hear his stories about the turkeys he harvested each year. I especially enjoyed hearing how smart gobblers are and how keen their eyesight is. Finally after several years hearing Uncle Don's stories he gave me one of his old box calls and told me he thought I was ready to accompany him and try to harvest my own turkey. My first spring hunting turkeys the turkeys didn't always cooperate but we had some close encounters that just didn't pan out. But I enjoyed every second and learned so much. The next spring I was ready and again made several hunts, I learned exactly how difficult turkey hunting can be. Unlike other game I did not have immediate success. I actually hunted turkeys for 4 yrs before I finally got my shot. This past year my turkey finally came in. I was with my Uncle Don just like most of my other hunts. But this time we had a 3 young Jakes that came right to our hen decoy with just a little encouragement from a mouth call. Uncle Don helped me pick the biggest of the 3. They were all busy putting their heads up and down feeding. Once in range Uncle Don told me to take it off of safety and to fire when I was ready. The biggest of the 3 dropped immediately and I took a huge breath of relief. I had finally taken my first turkey. After catching my breath and high fives from Uncle Don I rushed out the blind to retrieve my trophy. Uncle Don had my youth tag ready and I proudly attached it to my turkey's leg. Uncle Don then provided me with Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries Turkey Validation phone number so I could validate my turkey over the phone. I learned the state uses tagging and validation information to help set future bag limits and season dates. Then the only thing left to do was clean and process my turkey. Breasting a turkey was just like breasting a duck, but much bigger. Once I got home I soaked the breast in buttermilk, cut it in strips, battered and fried it. My mom and sisters made a honey mustard dipping sauce and everyone loved my fried turkey strips. One of my sisters even said "this is better than Canes chicken". I have a tremendous respect for wild turkeys as well as the patience and determination needed to harvest one. Fried turkey strips dipped in honey mustard is pretty good too!

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