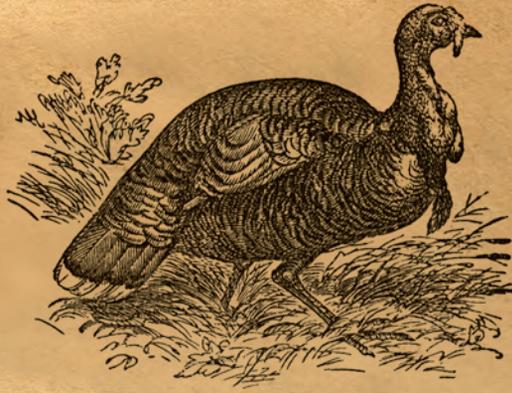


# JAKE'S JOURNAL



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY JAKE SIKORA



## Turkey hunting is in this boy's blood.

Jake Sikora

Friday, April 1st  
"Anticipation"

Tomorrow morning I'm going to go up on the ridge to scout for turkeys. The Wisconsin Youth Turkey hunting season opens next Saturday, April 9. It's only two days long. I hope I get a turkey. I went turkey hunting last fall, but that's another story. Anyway, this is the spring season, when turkeys gobble and display. It's cool when they display because they get all puffed up and fanned out. I've heard turkeys gobble, and I've seen them fanned out, but I've never seen both at the same time. Maybe that will happen this season, but for now I've got to get ready for the morning. I've got to get out my long johns, wool socks, a couple of shirts and my new camouflage coat. I haven't worn my new coat yet. My mom, Cindy, bought it for me. It was a pleasant surprise. I also need to get to bed early tonight because we have to get up really early in the morning, probably about 5:30 a.m. I hate having to go to bed before my little sister Pearl, but it's worth it. I'm excited!

Saturday, April 2nd  
"Scouting and Blind Building"

My dad, Greg, woke me up early this morning, "Jake, time to get up," he said. I hopped out of bed, got dressed and ran down the stairs, but I had to go back up because I forgot to put on my thick socks. I like to do outdoor stuff with my dad. He's been a sportsman since he was a kid, and he's been taking me hunting and fishing since I was old enough to walk, so I guess you could say it's in our blood.

When we arrived at the farm on the ridge where we plan to hunt, we closed the car doors quietly so we wouldn't wake the property owners, or their dogs. We also didn't want to scare the wildlife. My dad talked to the farmer last night, so he knows we're going to be scouting this morning. My dad also thanked him in advance for letting us hunt.

As we entered the field near the farm, we saw lots of sheep. A lamb baaed softly. Its mom bleated deeply, and my dad and I laughed quietly. Then we began crossing the field to get to the woods where we planned to build our blind. Before getting to the edge of the woods, we had to climb a small hill. We snuck carefully over the top because we were wor-



ried that we might scare any creatures that might be on the other side. When we reached the woods, we sat down to watch and listen, and waited for the sun to rise.

When it got light, we walked along the edge of the woods looking for a good place to build our blind. While we were walking, we heard a noise so we stopped. It was a doe and her fawn from last spring. We watched them eat acorns from the logging road for a while. Then the wind switched and they ran away, so we walked on. When we found a good spot, we began to gather dead sticks, weeds, branches and brush, and in a little while we had built a good place to hide. After that we went to a place close by where my dad had shot a turkey last season, and we rebuilt his old blind by adding some brush. Now we had a second blind. As we walked back to the farm, the sheep baaed once more and I wondered if they were trying to tell us something.

### Wednesday, April 6th "Close to Home"

Saturday is only three days away, so we're watching the weather forecast and it looks like rain. Tonight, after school, we set up a tent blind within walking distance of our house. This way, if it does rain, we can still go hunting. We have seen turkeys in the area, and are planning to hunt, rain or shine, but we're crossing our fingers and hoping for good weather on "Opening Morning."

### Saturday, April 9th "Opening Day"

On Friday night, I got everything set out and ready for the morning. I was really excited and it was hard to get to sleep. When Dad called me it was around 5:30 a.m. I got up and got dressed quickly. We had decided to hunt close to home in case it started raining, so we didn't have far to go. In a few minutes, we were in our blind

and about 15 minutes later, just as it was getting light, we heard a gobble. He gobbled for quite awhile, until we thought we heard him fly down from his roost. We were sure that he had landed in the field that we were hunting, but we couldn't see him because the brush was too thick on that side of our blind. My dad kept calling, but the tom was silent, and my dad said that he thought he was probably with some hens.

A few minutes later, a car stopped along the road and a man got out. He was scouting the property across the road. We weren't too happy about this because we didn't hear any gobbling after that and we figured that he probably scared away any birds that were in our area, but I guess if you're hunting near a road, that can happen. Suddenly, we heard a noise from behind us. It was hard for us to look in that direction, because my dad was sitting in a folding chair and I was sitting on his lap holding my gun. This made it almost impossible for us to turn around, but I managed to turn my head enough to see a jake and a hen not far from our blind. I was hoping that I would get lucky and they would come around to the front of the blind so I could get a shot but when we looked again they were gone. My dad called some more, but it was 8:30 and I had swimming lessons at 9:45, so we had to quit for the morning. I would have liked to have kept on hunting, but learning to swim is pretty important.

After swimming lessons the sky had cleared, so we decided to head to our blind on the ridge. It was about 3 p.m. and the sun was beating down on us. We were hot and tired and we almost fell asleep. My dad just about nodded off and we knew it was time to move when his diaphragm call fell out of his mouth. So we packed up and headed for another hunting spot, which was shaded from the hot sun. Once we were set up, we thought we'd stay a little while and if we didn't hear anything, we'd probably call it a day. Dad started calling and a turkey gobbled back. He was gobbling from the next ridge over and we knew that if he decided to come our way, it would take him a while to get to us. So Dad kept calling and every once in a while the turkey would answer with a gobble, but it didn't seem like he was getting any closer. I began to wonder if this was a barnyard turkey,



and I imagined him walking around in his pen gobbling to the sounds of my dad's call. When we checked the time, it was almost 5 p.m. which is closing time, so we headed for home. It was a fun and busy day and I was tired and hungry. Maybe tonight I won't mind going to bed before my little sister!

## Sunday, April 10th "The Conclusion"

On Sunday morning, we planned to get out early and hunt for awhile before church. Dad woke me a little later than we had planned, because he was waiting for a thunderstorm to pass. I dressed quickly because we were running a little late. We decided, with rain in the forecast, we would hunt near our house again this morning.

As we headed out the door and walked to our blind we had to move quickly because it was getting light out and we didn't want to be seen by any turkeys that might be on the roost. It was a quiet morning and as I walked with my head down, I was startled by the sudden blowing sounds of two deer that we had disturbed. When we got to the blind, it was quiet. Nothing was going on. Then there was a ruckus on a hillside not far away and we heard the whoosh of the gobbler's wings as he glided over our heads. We saw him land in the next field over, near the road and within a few hundred yards of our blind. Then he gobbled, so my dad called and he started to come toward us. I could hear my heart pounding in my chest as he got closer. My gun was ready.

What happened next, you won't believe. A car started coming down the road and, you guessed it, the same guy who was scouting the day before stopped in the same place and got out of his car. The gobbler immediately broke into a run and sped past our blind and up into the woods too fast and too far for a shot. I don't dare write what my dad said next, but let's just say it's a good thing that we were going to church in a little while!

After about a half hour of feeling pretty disappointed, my dad decided to call one more time before we headed home. As he called, we

looked across the field and out from around the corner of a small valley came three jakes and they were running faster than I ever thought turkeys could run! There was a small ditch that they had to cross to get to us and they were running in single file, so I thought I'd try to get the first one if they came in close enough.

When they entered the ditch we couldn't see them for a few seconds, but they came out running and the two birds in back had now caught up to the leader. When they got to within 70 yards they stopped suddenly and all three gobbled at the same time. Then they took off running again, heading straight for our blind. I had my gun ready and they were now in range. I had my eye on the biggest one but one of the smaller birds was right next to him and I was afraid that if I shot I might hit both birds, so I decided to hold off.

My patience paid off because a moment later the big one ran ahead and stopped. I had a clear shot now and I took it. He tumbled down the hill a little, but I had made a good clean shot. I unzipped the zipper on the blind and ran towards the flopping turkey. I went under a barbed wire fence with my dad close behind me. When we got to the bird my dad held it down so it wouldn't bruise and a moment later it was over. I filled out my turkey tag and, as I proudly carried my bird across the field, the guy who was scouting near us drove by. ❧

*Jake Sikora completed fourth grade at Stoddard Elementary School last spring. The school is in Stoddard, a small town located on the banks of the Mississippi River, about seven miles south of La Crosse. In addition to turkey hunting, Jake likes to hunt ducks and deer, go trout fishing, search for morels and hike. His father is his mentor. He says, "I wasn't very interested in writing before I started to write about something that I really love. I think more kids should write about their outdoor experiences."*