

## Wisconsin's Turkey Commander: Better to give than receive

The origin of his nickname is unknown, but Loren Voss' willingness to help new hunters is recognized statewide.

To be "Turkey Commander" in any state is a weighty title, given the wiles of this fickle gamebird. To be "Wisconsin's Turkey Commander" — in a state that's a destination for traveling turkey hunters and ranks on the short list for the most birds harvested each year — is another thing entirely. But, make no mistake, Loren Voss is certainly "Wisconsin's Turkey Commander."

Voss, 71, a retired machine tool service man who lives in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, has harvested 138 turkeys in his 50 years of hunting in 20 states. Equally proud of his accomplishments in the family sphere, Voss doesn't hesitate to point out that he recently celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

Life for Voss, who was diagnosed with stage four lymphoma in 1992 and given only six months to live, isn't just about numbers. It's about passion, sharing and giving back. For instance, it took Voss eight years to draw a coveted bear tag in Wisconsin. When he finally received the tag in spring 2011, he decided to donate it to someone who had not experienced bear hunting.

Through the Child's Wish Campaign, Voss' tag went to a wheelchair-bound youth named John Hammond. After a long chase with hounds through Wisconsin's thick northwoods on Sept. 22, 2011, the dogs treed the bear, but Hammond's shooting stick had been left back at the truck. Voss crouched down and served as the brace, allowing Hammond to successfully harvest the 190-pound sow. Voss recalls this moment as one of his great hunting trophies.

For most Wisconsin hunters, spring turkey season begins with the season for which they've drawn a tag. (Spring turkey hunting in Wisconsin has six week-long seasons, beginning in mid-April and continuing through Memorial Day; there

are seven turkey hunting zones. Tags are valid for specific zone and season.)

For Wisconsin's Turkey Commander, turkey season begins with the preseason youth hunt. Voss takes special pride in the dozens of youths and adults he's mentored over the years. As with many veteran hunters, Voss enjoys imparting lessons as much or more than harvesting birds himself.

However, these lessons don't just stay in the blind. Voss travels to conservation venues across the state and Midwest to give turkey hunting seminars. Here, he covers topics like camouflage, blinds, decoys, calling and safety. Resourceful as he is seasoned, he also shares tips for using turkey pelts as decoys and making

calls from turkey wingbones.

While turkeys have been Voss' main quarry since giving up his bird dogs in the early 1990s, he has a wide-ranging hunting background. At any given point, the conversation can flow from dogs to ducks to big game such as moose, caribou, mule deer and elk.

When asked about the title "Wisconsin's Turkey Commander," Voss chuckles. He's proud of the title, but admits he's not exactly sure how it came to be.

"Probably one of my hunting buddies," he said. Voss sums up hunting and life this way: "Never worry about what happens tomorrow because then you lose today." — *John Motoviloff*



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