



LAND LEADER[®]



Pocket Ranch

Presented By Land and Wildlife

Our Country's Heroes

By: Walter Hatchet | Mayfield Place

In preparing for Red Hills Wounded Warrior Group Inc. Seventh Annual Turkey Hunt, I am always thinking of new properties that have an abundance of turkeys and wildlife where we can carry our wounded warrior participants. I thought of Mayfield Place, which is a new listing Jon Kohler and I have, 675 acres, located in southwest Grady County, Georgia, just 30 minutes northwest of Tallahassee. Jon and I know the owners very well, Emory Mayfield and his wife Kathy. I gave Emory a call about the possibility, and he was on board for providing an exceptional hunt for one of our country's heroes.

The first opportunity I had to go out and listen was the Friday morning before the hunt, [due to adverse weather earlier in the week.] It was pretty windy that morning, but shortly after daylight, I began to hear one gobbler next to one of the beautiful small lakes located on the property. I tried to get as close as possible without spooking the bird...trying to obtain an exact location for the following morning hunt. Later that same day, my son-in-law Brett Bryan and I went back to set up a ground blind in the immediate area where I heard him gobbling.

When I surveyed the setup, I found the perfect location - a small quarter-acre grass field that had a couple of roads intersecting between some pretty hardwoods, on the edge of the lake and a small field of long leaf pines that had recently been control-burned. Brett and I felt this was the perfect spot as we saw several hens feeding in and out of the long leaf pines while setting up the blind. The vet, Ryan Barlow, had very limited mobility due to a leg injury, so I wanted to set up a small ground blind and brush the blind in real good to where we would be camouflaged and he would be comfortable for what may turn out to be a long morning's hunt. I thought if Ryan and I would be patient the next morning, this old gobbler was using this small field as a strut zone area, and I would be able to call it in for Ryan.







Friends of Red Hills Wounded Warrior Group, Eric and Rob Cohen, allowed Red Hills to utilize their lodge at Pecan Ridge for the weekend festivities. That night after dinner, I told Ryan we needed to be departing the lodge at 4:45 a.m. as we were about 20 minutes from Mayfield Place. We needed to arrive at the blind real early because I wasn't positive where the old gobbler may be roosting (always better to be early than late).

All of our wounded warrior participants were very excited the next morning for the hunts. The weather was clear and cool, beautiful after having a couple of dreary days. Brett was carrying another wounded warrior at Mayfield Place, and we had an electric golf cart that would drop us off as close to the blind as possible due to Ryan's injury. As the sun rose that morning, I felt privileged to be sitting with this hero and thanking God both for the beauty He created and for men and women who sacrifice so much to keep our country free. I began to hear some gobblers off in the distance, but not the gobbler I felt should be close by that Ryan and I were after. After making a few calls periodically up until about 7:50 a.m., I indicated to Ryan that this gobbler had to be close by (hopefully); that the gobbler was just being quiet, and we were going to need to be patient.

At 8 a.m., we finally heard him gobble; but he was on the other side of the lake, which WAS NOT GOOD! I began calling to him, and he was very receptive to my calls; but due to being on the other side of the lake, it did not seem like he had moved at all for 30 minutes. Due to Ryan's limited mobility, I told him we needed to sit tight, be quiet,

and not call for 10 minutes or so to try and make the gobbler think this old hen had just walked off. After that time, 10-15 minutes, I called and cut a couple of times...no answer. Called again...no answer. I told Ryan he had either walked off and left, or he is coming to find out where the old hen is at. Sure enough, in a couple of minutes, he gobbled, and he was on our side of the lake! He had crossed an old grown-up road on the upper end of the lake. We were now in business...get ready. I made a couple more excited yelps, and he answered immediately...even closer. We knew it was "game-on."

Couple more minutes went by and sure enough we saw him coming along a road on the edge of the hardwoods and into the field full strut. When he saw the decoys, one jake, one hen, he slowed up, I think not knowing how large the jake was. Slowly but surely, he began moving out into the field one step at a time. I began snapping a few photos and told Ryan just to hold off...he's just going to get closer. As the gobbler moved in to about 40 steps, he was moving into the bright sunlight and was showing his beautiful colors. At this time, Ryan couldn't wait any longer, and he pulled the trigger, and was able to cleanly harvest the bird. We both celebrated. What a beautiful morning and bird God had given us!

