

It started with one simple goal: complete another World Slam with my bow by taking an Ocellated Turkey. (And yes, it's *Ocellated* turkey not "oscillating." Although after watching them strut, "oscillating" doesn't seem that far off.)

There were 12 hunters in camp with El Halcón in Campeche, Mexico, the only place in the world where you can hunt this incredible bird. The outfitter has access to more than 100,000 acres of jungle, with scattered agricultural fields planted by the local Mennonite community. Most of the fields are sorghum, with some corn and sunflowers mixed in.

The sorghum fields became the deciding factor. Some were untouched, some had only the grain heads cut off, leaving the stalks standing, and a few had been completely harvested and baled. Those cleaned-off fields were heaven for a bowhunter. Unfortunately... I didn't always get to hunt those.

The hunt consisted of five days and ten different setups. None of us hunted the same location twice. They simply have an incredible amount of country and an unbelievable turkey population.

After ten hunts, I only had two setups where I never saw a mature tom. Had I been carrying a shotgun instead of a bow, I'd have been tagged out by Day Three. But bowhunting has a funny way of reminding you who's really in charge.

**Strike One... Courtesy of Sorghum**

The very first morning, a mature tom strutted into 20 yards.

He did everything an Ocellated turkey is famous for throwing his head back, puffing up those iridescent feathers, drumming, and strutting like he owned Mexico. He finally laid down beside the decoy.

**I came to full draw.**

**Settled the pin.**

**Released.**

**My arrow made perfect contact...**

**...with a sorghum stalk.**

**Apparently that stalk had dreams too.**

**The arrow skimmed under the turkey, clipped a few feathers, and the only thing I harvested that morning was my confidence.**

**The One Yard Gobbler**

**My guide, Manuel, was outstanding.**

**His calling strategy was a little different than mine. Instead of mouth calling, he used a boom box loaded with recordings of a mature gobbler drumming and gobbling. He called about every two minutes which was more often than I would have but it's hard to argue with success because those birds absolutely responded.**

**That evening a tom flew more than 200 yards across a harvested field and landed less than ten yards from the blind...**

**...behind me.**

**For the next hour and ten minutes, he gobbled every twenty seconds while standing about one yard behind the blind.**

**One yard!!!!**

**Close enough to hear him breathing.**

**Too close to shoot.**

**I was beginning to think he had read the bowhunting rule book.**

**Almost... Again!**

**The next morning we watched more than fifteen birds feeding over a hundred yards away.**

**Eventually one mature tom couldn't stand Manuel's calling anymore and came marching in.**

**Twenty yards.**

**Perfect range.**

**Wrong side of the blind.**

**He studied the decoy, slipped into the woods, and Manuel was convinced he'd circle around into my shooting lane.**

**He never came back.**

**Apparently this turkey had somewhere more important to be.**

### **Last Chance**

**By the final morning nearly everyone else in camp had filled their tags. Even a couple of the hunters' wives had connected.**

**I was beginning to wonder if the turkeys had started a support group just for me.**

**We also made one adjustment.**

**Most of the week we'd been using a larger decoy that looked more like an Eastern turkey. It brought birds close, but many seemed hesitant to fully commit. So we switched to a smaller decoy that looked much more like an Ocellated turkey.**

**At 6:20 a.m., my final opportunity appeared.**

**A beautiful tom stepped out only twenty yards away.**

**Instead of walking straight to the decoy, he eased through the standing sorghum, using the stalks like a sniper moving through cover. Finally he stepped into one open lane I'd already picked out.**

**I drew.**

**Held.**

**Waited.**

**He stopped.**

**Perfect.**

**I settled my 30-yard pin, squeezed the release, and watched the bright red Lumenok streak toward him.**

**Manuel and I both watched the arrow fly.**

**Then we both watched it slide... just underneath him.**

**Another handful of feathers.**

**No turkey.**

**No excuses.**

**I simply shot low.**

**That's bowhunting.**

**Was It Worth It?**

**Absolutely.**

**I would recommend hunting with El Halcón to anyone. The country is incredible, the birds are plentiful, and Manuel was an outstanding guide. I had opportunities nearly every day.**

**My only regret was that I didn't capitalize on them.**

**It's been a long time since I've completely missed an animal with my bow, and I can promise you that sick feeling in your stomach never gets any easier. If you've bowhunted long enough, you've experienced it.**

**If you haven't...**

**...keep hunting.**

**Your turn is coming.**

**As I sit on the plane headed home, I realize something.**

**I've been blessed beyond measure.**

**By God's grace I've now taken 64 turkeys with my bow, hunted incredible places around the world, and experienced adventures most people only dream about. I thank Him for every success and every failure because both have taught me something.**

**This trip wasn't a failure.**

**It was another adventure, another lesson in humility, and another reminder that sometimes the memories are worth just as much as the trophy.**

**Besides...**

**That Ocellated turkey still owes me one.**

**And I fully intend to collect!**

**I thank God every day for the life that he has given me.**