

VFC2023-0001 - Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife Turkey Project
AU2024-1023-007 - Nicole Meier
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Burlington, VT

Nicole Meier [00:00:00] I think I'm ready. I'm Nicole Meyer. I work for Vermont Fish and Wildlife. I don't know that I wanna tell the story of my first turkey because I think what's more exciting was what, I forgot your name, what you were saying earlier about those magic moments. And I've had so many of those magic moments in the woods and I didn't grow up hunting either. I didn't touch my first gun until after I graduated from college, and then I was luckily surrounded by so many wonderful hunting mentors like Wendy and like Brett and so many people who encouraged me, that I fell in love with hunting not only for those magic moments in the woods but also because of the community and the people who are part of this. You know, like I said, I grew up a non-hunter in a family who didn't have any guns and my mom was so perplexed about how I came to hunting. She said, "you know, Nicole, I thought you wanted to save Bambi and not kill it?" And I said "mom, killing Bamby is sometimes saving Bambie too." And now my mom is one of my very biggest cheerleaders around hunting, and she's constantly, "when are we gonna get that Thanksgiving turkey from you?" And I'm like, "oh, well," I am very selfish with, as many of us are, very selfish with the meat that we harvest. But I think one of most magical moments in the woods was, I was, one of my first turkey seasons here in Vermont. And I was hunting this patch of woods and we had been hunting all day and hadn't seen anything. And so I was feeling really frustrated about that, as many new hunters are frustrated when they've spent a lot of time and worked really hard to try to at least see something. But I had this moment where I just see this beautiful doe walking toward me. And I just was silent. And I put my gun down. And this doe keeps on just coming toward me, and I think, "my god, I have never been so close to a living deer before." And she just kept walking toward me, and she was really trying to figure out what I was. She knew I was there. She didn't quite know what I was, but she did this, we made eye contact. And it was like otherworldly to me. I had never made eye-contact with a wild animal like that. She probably came a good five feet in front of me. I felt like if I had reached out, I would have been able to touch her. And then she cocked her head like this and looked at me. And then the wind shifted and she smelled me and bolted and I just got chills all over my body that I was that close to this beautiful deer who was inspecting me and trying to figure me out and, what did she think I was? And it was just, that in and of itself was such an exhilarating experience. And then I walked out of the woods with my friend Jeff, who I was hunting with, and he said, "I'm so sorry we didn't get anything today, no action." I was like, "that was one of the most memorable experiences of my whole life." Even now, thinking about it, I just got goosebumps all over me. It was so cool. And that experience really got me hooked on turkey hunting, even though it didn't involve a turkey. Is that OK? I told that, I'm just like, OK, thank you. <applause>