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McKenzie High student wins 14th annual Big Gobbler Photo Contest

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (May 18, 2026) – Before sunrise on the second day of Alabama’s 2026 wild turkey season, Weston Lowery was already deep in the Butler County woods — locked in on one gobbler and determined not to leave without him.

Hours later, that patience turned into a hunt to remember and a photo that captured the attention of turkey hunters across the state.

Lowery, a freshman at McKenzie High School, harvested an impressive tom sporting 1-inch spurs and an 11½-inch beard, earning him the top spot in the 14th annual [Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association \(ALBBAA\)](#) Big Gobbler Photo Contest.

“I was chasing him all morning,” Lowery said. “I was out there about 5 in the morning and finally got him about 10:30.”

The pursuit actually began the day before, when Lowery scouted nearly 250 acres in Butler County — combining family land with adjacent leased hunting property. He spotted the mature tom on opening day and returned the next morning determined to seal the deal.

The bird spent much of the morning trailing a flock of hens, but Lowery never gave up. Instead, he stayed patient, worked his calls and waited for the perfect opportunity.

Then came the moment every turkey hunter dreams about. “I was getting ready to leave and the next thing I know, he’s 10 yards behind me,” Lowery said. “I don’t know why he didn’t see me.”

In an instant, Lowery got into position and dropped the gobbler with his Remington 12-gauge shotgun, capping off an unforgettable Alabama spring hunt.

The winning photo (shown below), submitted by his mother to the 2026 Big Gobbler Photo Contest, quickly became a fan favorite, earning more than 2,200 online votes, more than double the total of the next closest entry.



As this year's grand prize winner, Lowery takes home an outdoor prize package that includes a \$100 gift card, Thermacell mosquito repellent, a gun-cleaning kit and a copy of [*Black Belt Bounty*](#), a celebrated coffee table book showcasing the rich hunting, fishing and outdoor traditions of Alabama's Black Belt region. He also receives a Buckmasters prize pack featuring a hat, Buck knife and a one-year subscription to Buckmasters Magazine.

The contest showcased hunters of all ages and the unforgettable memories made during Alabama turkey season. Finishing second was 8-year-old Fischer Blake Evans of Barbour County with a photo celebrating his first turkey harvest, while 8-year-old Manning Adams earned third place with a youth weekend entry from Lowndes County.

The 14th annual Big Gobbler Photo Contest drew dozens of entries and thousands of votes, once again highlighting the passion, tradition and excitement surrounding Alabama's legendary spring turkey woods.

“We are grateful for everyone who entered this year’s contest and for everyone who cast online votes,” said ALBBAA director Pam Swanner. “It’s true that hunters flock to the Black Belt from all over the country to enjoy our abundant hunting opportunities, and the contest helps our organization fulfill its mission to educate the public about all of the incredible natural resources found in Alabama’s 23-county Black Belt region.”

“It’s especially gratifying to know that a teenager won this year’s contest,” Swanner added, “because young hunters will become the conservation leaders in the future.”

The Black Belt includes the following 23 counties: Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Crenshaw, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Monroe, Montgomery, Perry, Pickens, Pike, Russell, Sumter, Tuscaloosa and Wilcox.

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***The Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association** is committed to promoting and enhancing outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities in the Black Belt in a manner that provides economic and ecological benefits to the region and its citizens. For information, go to www.alabamablackbeltadventures.org.*