

Make your own wing bone turkey call from a sandhill crane wing bone

(Or from a wild turkey wing bone)



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

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Save the memories of your hunt

Make your own wing bone turkey call from a sandhill crane (or wild turkey) wing bone. Enjoying the meat of your harvest is #1, but here is a neat way to utilize more of your legally harvested birds and to remember your hunt! Wild turkey wing bone calls were made and used by Native Americans hundreds of years ago.

There are lots of great and free videos on YouTube showing step by step processes for making your own wing bone turkey calls and how to operate them. Here was my adventure in this neat project.

Equipment needed

- Set of sandhill crane (or wild turkey) wing bones (humerus, radius and ulna) from your legally harvested bird
 - NOTE: I recommend using the bones from the same side and wing
- Dremel tool with cutting, sanding and etching tools
- Medium/large pot
- Dawn dish soap (a standard used by taxidermists for degreasing)
- Pipe cleaners
- Long piece of wire (the lower portion of a wire clothes hanger works perfectly)
- Small round file (Dremel and attachment tools can fill this need)
- A few cotton balls
- Gorilla glue (has a great expanding capability for a good seal), super glue and toothpicks
- Epoxy putty
- Sandpaper (600 grit and you may want a little coarser too)
- Imitation waxed sinew or deerskin to wrap call where you joined bones

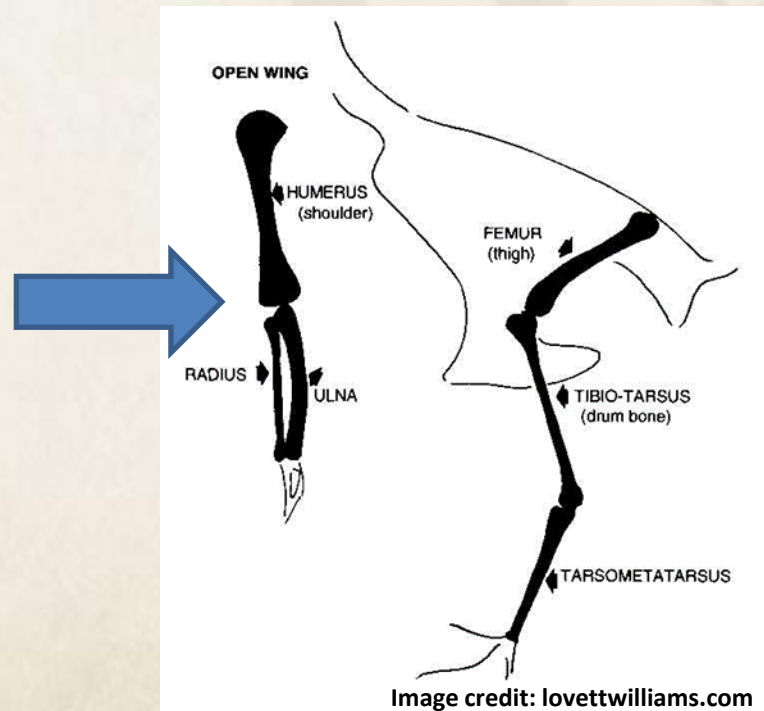
Equipment needed cont.

- Water and 3-5% hydrogen peroxide
NOTE: The hydrogen peroxide is only used to help whiten the bones a bit and may not be needed
- Ultra-fine black sharpie
- Newspaper or paper towels
- Leather strap (for lanyard)
- Rubber plumber's washer (for mouth stop)
- Sharp knife and cutting board
- Rubber or nitrile gloves
- Two curved nosed hemostats for pulling sinew tight on your wrap (needle nose pliers would work as well)
- Beeswax

Prepare your harvested sandhill crane or wild turkey wing



After harvesting your sandhill crane (or wild turkey), save the wing. Ensure the bones do not appear broken. You will be utilizing the humerus, ulna and radius bones (the three main bones in the wing).

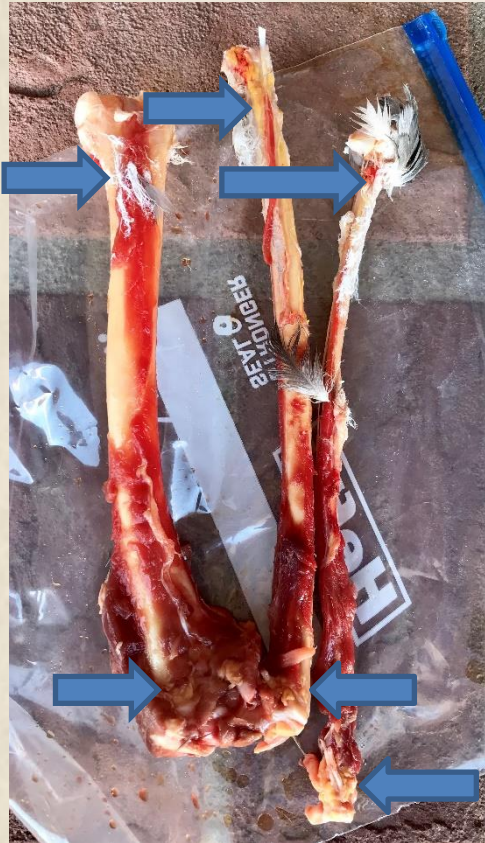


Remove the bones from the wing



Take your time and carefully use your sharp knife to remove the three main wing bones. As you take the bones from the wing, also begin to remove some of the flesh from the bones. I recommend using wing bones from the same side and the same wing. The radius will connect to the ulna and the ulna to the humerus. The radius, when cut below the joint on one end, will have a narrow and slanted opening, and this will be the mouthpiece.

Remove ends of wing bones



Blue arrows represent approximate areas to cut the leg bones.



Remove the ends of your wing bones, just below the joints, using your Dremel tool. Make sure not to cut too much of the bone away. You can always remove more when you piece the bones together. After removing the ends, this should expose the bone marrow and you can remove this with a piece of long wire or pipe cleaners. The larger bone will have a webbing of bone inside that can be removed with a round file or a router tool on your Dremel.

Remove the flesh



Remove more of the flesh from the bones in this next step. You can easily cut and gently scrape away meat using a sharp knife on a cutting board. Make sure to cut away from yourself. Take your time and be careful.

While removing the flesh, bring a pot of water to a slow boil. Ensure your pot is big enough for the length of bones you have.

Place bones in boiling water with a little bit of dish soap



Photo credit: Storm Usrey

Place your wing bones in a pot of boiling water. You can add a little Dawn dish soap to aid in degreasing. I would not boil them very long. My initial boil lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. I then removed the bones and scraped them a little more to remove the remaining tissue and fat.

Bones are almost prepped



After removing the last of the flesh on my initial boil, I get a fresh pot of water to boil. I place the bones back into a second boil (with a little dish soap) to aid in removing oil or grease from the bones. After the second boil, approximately 10-15 minutes, I remove the bones to rinse, wipe down and dry.

After drying, you can use your Dremel and router tool to take out the bone webbing from the center of the humerus or larger wing bone if you have not done so yet.

Bones are finished boiling and can be whitened if desired



Photo credit: Storm Usrey

Based on your preference, once the bones have finished boiling, you can put them in some store-bought hydrogen peroxide (3-5%) for about a day. Just keep an eye on them. This should whiten them up a bit. You just don't want to overdo it.

Personally, after boiling in water with Dawn dish soap, I rinse them and let them air dry. I like to keep them a little more natural color.

Cut (if needed) and lightly sand to fit



Photo credit: Storm Usrey

You may need to sand a little where the bones fit together. I find putting the mouth stop on at this stage is easiest, before the bones are glued since it may be easier to slide it on from the backside of the radius versus the front.

I used some beveled rubber sink washers as my mouth stop. I just needed to drill the hole out a bit on the washer for a perfect fit.

Add a little cotton when joining bones



Tear little pieces off a cotton ball or cotton pad and gently insert with your knife tip where the bones join. You don't need much. This will aid in keeping the bones together before you glue with either super glue or Gorilla glue. I used Gorilla glue because of its expanding qualities. The cotton helps get the shape you want before gluing.

Glue pieces together and let dry



Once you have the pieces glued together, I would let them dry for a day before moving onto your next step. While it's drying, you may need to spread out excess glue with a wooden toothpick, especially if you use Gorilla glue. You may need to do this a few times in the first hour.

The Gorilla glue will also keep airflow from escaping where the joints are glued and this is essential for the operation of the call.

Use some epoxy putty



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

The epoxy putty I utilized sets within 20 minutes and cures within hours. It is also waterproof, can be sanded and painted and helps to strengthen the area where the bones are joined. After drying, you can sand it down for a better and more even appearance before wrapping your calls. I used a Dremel tool and a piece of fine sandpaper for this.

NOTE: I did not take a photo of the finished product before I wrapped them.

Wrap your calls at the joints

Common Whipping Knot



Photo credits: Storm Usrey



You can wrap your calls with leather strips, string or waxed imitation sinew. I chose to utilize the imitation sinew using the common whipping knot. After pulling both ends to tighten your knot, you will trim off the ends. You will then add super glue to the ends, and if you like, a line across the knot to aid in keeping the string together. Using two hemostats worked perfectly for tightening the knots. Get them tight.

Paint or decorate



Using a Dremel tool to make your design can really personalize your calls. Once your design is finished, use an ultra-fine sharpie to add color and then sand with 600 grit sandpaper. Once thoroughly dry, I put a little beeswax over the artwork for added protection. Have fun and be creative to customize your calls.

All finished



Photo credit: Storm Usrey

Wild turkey wing bone call



Here is a wild turkey wing bone call I made a few years back from an Osceola turkey. My good friend John Montjoy helped me in wrapping and gluing the call. Notice how much shorter the wing bones are compared to a sandhill crane, which creates a different sound. Feel free to add a strip of leather or cord to make a lanyard for your call.

THANK YOU!



Please enjoy nature responsibly and introduce someone new to hunting in the future!