

TURKEYS IN THE ADIRONDACKS

June 4, 2002

I grew up enjoying the outdoor sports of hunting, fishing, and trapping. Without realizing it at first it was events associated with it I enjoyed as much as taking the quarry. Now that I am older, I relish the phenomenon accompanying all my outdoor recreation activities.

Turkey hunting, which I took up very late in life, provides a prime example; the spring hunts in particular.

Only males or gobblers may be harvested in the spring season and then only from one half hour before sunrise until noon. The premise is that the hens will be setting the eggs in the cool of morning and the likelihood of killing one by mistake is diminished.

Ideally, a likely roosting area is located. One gets within earshot before the gobblers leave the roost and entices them with an artificial hen call within gunshot range. To do this one has to be in position well before daylight and sit as motionless and quiet as possible.

Sitting quietly in the predawn hours one has plenty of time to contemplate and experience nature and wildlife as few others do. The spring woods unravel slowly with the sounds of all the wildlife celebrating the end of their most adverse season. The arrival of warmer weather and the promise of abundant food is expressed in tones anyone could recognize.

Songbirds are usually the first to urge the start of the new day, followed and accompanied by owls and nighthawks signaling the end of theirs. A chorus of coyotes may be next to add their voices to the cacophony of voices proclaiming their presence and force to be reckoned with.

In the midst of all this, you may or may not hear the one sound you are specifically hoping to hear - the gobble of the boss Tom inviting all potential mates to come hither and all young upstart juveniles or rivals to back off. Those of us who have heard it and wondered to ourselves how hard he is going to be to pick, soon learn different.

One of the many things crossing my mind as I sat one morning absorbing the many sounds of nature, was my views 20 years ago on the possibility of being able to have a turkey hunting experience here in the Adirondacks. I assure you, they would have been most negative and it has taught me I am far from the expert I once considered myself on wildlife in general.

Even though I have learned much about the various species of fish and game, I would never have known otherwise by spending years in the outdoors. I do not believe any one person will ever know it all.

Changes in weather patterns seem to be the most important factor in the redistribution of species. When this is allied with modern wildlife management practices, public education and acceptance of the programs overall, I have witnessed many changes in wildlife behavior

I turned over in my mind some of the species in my lifetime that illustrate my point as I welcomed the wonders of the new day along with the wildlife. A few I recalled were fisher, marten, coyotes, skunks, possums, turkey vultures, turkeys, bear and moose.

A new specie was added to my list this past week. It is a Baltimore oriole male at our bird feeder. They were very common around my boyhood home in Phoenix, New York, but I was surprised to see one here this far north. We are doing our best to make him welcome with a special feeder and slices of orange, which he enjoys.

Bluebirds also are a species that have been helped immeasurably by humans who provided housing lost when the birds' habitat was altered. They are just one more species that comes to mind and I am sure you have others you can think of. If you have and you are aware of any newcomers, please welcome them as we do. You will help insure your place in Heaven as we are all God's creatures as the saying goes.

P.S. That reminds me, someone long ago borrowed my autographed copy of *Lumberjack Skypilot* by the Rev. Rank Reed. Please look through your bookcase and if you have it, I would be most grateful and forgiving for its return.