

Future Conservationist



I thought your readers might enjoy this photo of my one-year-old son Hunter helping to plant some trees. I love taking him on new outdoor adventures.

Matthew R. Nichols
Long Island City, Queens County

Thanks for letting us share in Hunter's adventure. It's never too soon to introduce youth to the world around them. And given the time of year, what a great way to celebrate Arbor Day.

—Jenna Kerwin, Staff Writer

A Life of Dedication

I was pleased to see the *Conservationist* is now online. Van, my dad, would also have been very pleased to see that, given the fact that he worked for the magazine years ago.

Van was a commercial and fine artist. In the '30s, he worked with design and typography, which led him to employment as an art director with *Time* and *Fortune* magazines. After WWII, he was the art director for several science and medical periodicals, as well as some well-known science fiction magazines. It was then that he began his association with *Conservationist*, which was his greatest and most enduring joy.

Van was an outdoorsman at heart, and the Roosevelt conservation ethic ran strong in the family. Despite the city business, we mainly lived in the area around Hudson, Claverack and Woodstock—family stomping grounds for hundreds of years. The ethos of the *Conservationist* was a perfect fit in that way, too. I recall an extended family feel with much of the staff, several of whom became Van's close friends.

It is partly through the perspective of decades of environmental awareness that the importance of the magazine as early eco media becomes apparent. I am pleased to see you still integrate the perspectives of sportsmen with those of ecologists and natural scientists. Van would be very pleased to see that too.

W. I. Van der Poel
Missoula, Montana



I was unfortunate to have missed the opportunity to meet your dad, having started with DEC a year after his passing. But I imagine you must be the master of understatement, as I pored over a few back issues and found that your dad was the magazine's art director from 1948 until sometime in the early '70s. That's some tenure! I enjoyed looking through the back issues and wondering what it must have been like to produce the magazine in those times.

It is because of the hard work of those like your father that we continue to enjoy a reputation and a loyalty among our readers that is the envy of the industry.

—Dave Nelson, Editor

How Many Trees Could a Woodchuck Climb...

I took this photo the other day. I think it's proof that woodchucks can certainly climb trees!

Matthew Morris
Stephentown, Rensselaer County

You captured a sight that not many people get to see. While it is a common misconception that woodchucks cannot climb trees, these members of the squirrel family will indeed climb shrubs and trees in order to find food and to escape danger. Occasionally, you might even see them just lounging around in the branches. Thanks so much for sharing this great photo. (For similar photos, check out the February 1991 and 1993 issues of Conservationist.)

—Eileen Stegemann, Assistant Editor



Young Hunters



My son Patrick and I participated in the Youth Turkey Hunt weekend with successful results. I called the gobbler in to Pat who connected with the large bird—23 pounds, with a 12-inch beard and 1-inch spurs. It was a fantastic (and tasty) father-son experience.

Paul Bruenn
Putnam County

I thought you might like to see a picture of my son with the turkey he got. It was 22 lbs. and had a 9-inch beard and 1-inch spurs.

David A. Campochiaro Sr.
Princeton, Schenectady County



It's always great to hear of adult hunters mentoring younger generations to continue family sporting traditions. Thanks for sharing these great photos; both turkeys are respectable prizes for young hunters!

—Dave Nelson, Editor

Correction

In February 2010 Conservationist, the photo of the submerged shipwreck Forward, found on pages 8 and 9 of Diving into History, mistakenly lists the photographer as Charles Vandrei. The photo was actually taken by Bob Benway of Bateaux Below, Inc.



Write to us

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Ask the Biologist

Q: Enclosed is a photo of a wild turkey who is a frequent visitor to our backyard. I thought it was a young gobbler, but a friend says it's a bearded hen. I thought I'd consult your wildlife experts. If it's a hen, are bearded ones common? Would it be legal to shoot such a bird during turkey season? Surely it would be hard for a hunter to tell it was a hen. I do note that this one travels with hens, while gobblers are in a separate group.

John H. Northrup
Baldwinsville

A: What a great photo; thanks very much for sending it. It is indeed a bearded hen. The figure varies among local populations of turkeys, but in general 5-10% of hens have beards. A hen's beard tends to be thinner than that of a jake or a tom and usually has a kink (that's a great view of a kinked beard in your photo). You can also identify a hen by the drab-colored head, lack of spurs on the legs, and relatively smaller size, although that can be tough to do without a gobbler around for reference. Hens also have buff-tipped (light to chocolate brown) breast feathers, while males have black-tipped breast feathers.



In the spring it may be difficult to tell a bearded hen apart from a male. For this reason, the hunting regulations allow for the harvest of a bearded bird during the spring (as opposed to males only). This way, hunters won't be in violation of the law if they take a bearded hen they thought was a gobbler. Very few bearded hens are harvested in the spring, so the impact to the population is negligible.

—Mike Schiavone, DEC Turkey Project Leader/Wildlife biologist