



Swimming Turkey

One morning my daughter and her friend were canoeing across Little Tupper Lake in the Whitney Wilderness Area when they saw a large bird land in the water and start swimming. They paddled up to take a closer look and were surprised to see that it was a turkey. Fortunately they had a camera with them and were able to snap a couple of quick shots. I've never heard of a turkey swimming. Is this usual behavior? Or was the turkey forced into the water to escape some danger?

Donald Hughes
Albany, Albany County

What a remarkable photo. Your daughter and friend were very lucky to witness some behavior that is rarely seen. While wild turkeys can swim for short distances, it is not a preferred mode of travel. These large birds are "built" for walking and running on land. When in danger, running, rather than flying, is their preferred mode of escape. However, turkeys have powerful wings and are capable of rapid, short flights that range from several hundred yards to one mile in length.

The fact that your daughter saw the turkey land in the water confirms to me that this was likely a last resort move on

the turkey's part. Most likely the bird was unexpectedly flushed from its location near the shore by a predator or person, took flight to escape, "ran out of gas" half way across the lake and had no choice but to swim for it.

—Michael Schiavone, DEC Wildlife Biologist

Hunting Pin Update

We heard from some loyal Conservationist subscribers regarding our question about the Empire State Conservationist pin (August 2008), and from their responses we have deduced one possible explanation.

Roy Earley of Scotia (Schenectady

County), a collector of hunting license buttons, called in to say that many years ago a friend gave him a pin like the one pictured in the magazine. According to the friend, in the late teens the pin was a gift given for subscribing to the Conservationist.

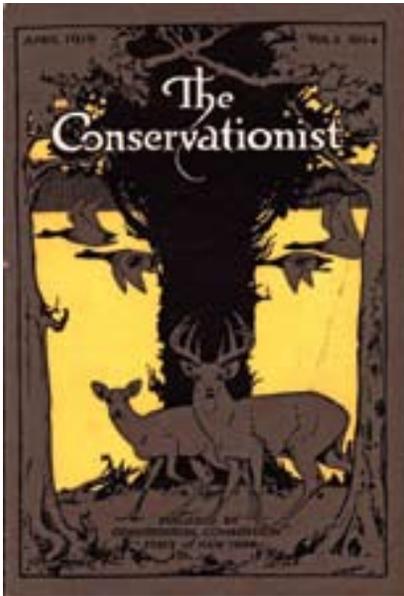
Timothy Albright of Altamont (Albany County) takes this knowledge a bit farther. He doesn't have a pin, but he has a pledge card (shown) he believes went with the pin. On the back of the card it reads, in part:

"That, in a great democracy of free people, the protection of wild life and the preservation of all other natural resources, which underlie national prosperity and happiness, must depend finally, as does the stability of the government itself, upon the support and willing service of every citizen.

I therefore declare my adherence to these principles, and have enrolled myself as an active Conservationist of the Empire State."

The front of the pledge card includes the same artwork as the pin, and the artist signed his name Charles Livingston Bull. A similar piece of artwork graced the covers of the first-run Conservationists (shown), which were digest-sized and published from 1917-1921. The cover is also signed by Charles Livingston Bull





and is strikingly similar to the one on the pin; though, in it, the deer are facing toward the viewer.

The sum of this evidence leads us to believe that the pin, the membership card and the magazine were all related.

They are truly remarkable finds —many thanks go to Roy, Timothy and all who wrote in to offer their explanations.

We also thought it would be fitting to relay this update in this issue, the centennial of the sale of the first hunting licenses in New York, in 1908.

—Dave Nelson, Editor



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REVIEW by Patrick P. Martin

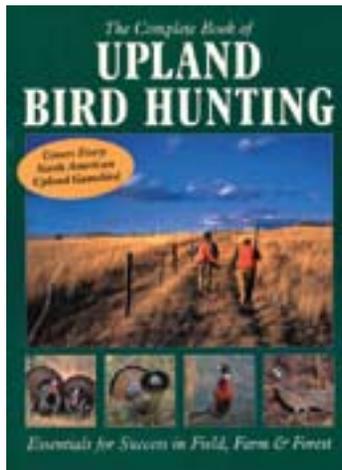
The Complete Book of Upland Bird Hunting

Edited by Tom Carpenter
192 pages, \$17.95 soft cover
Shady Oak Press

I started reading this book during ruffed grouse hunting season in New York. I am telling you this for two reasons: 1) I like upland bird hunting; and 2) I consider the ruffed grouse to be the king of upland birds. That means: 1) I know a bit about bird hunting; and 2) I am opinionated.

Thirteen different authors contributed to the book. These authors are “hunters who write, not writers who do a little bit of hunting.” The book covers 17 species of upland game birds. Actually, there are only 16 species because I don’t count the wild turkey as an upland game bird. I am suspicious of any upland bird hunting that involves calling the bird back to the hunter. You can call ruffed grouse until the sun comes up—they do not answer and they do not come to you. You have to “hunt” grouse. That’s one of the qualities that I admire about the bird.

The book devotes one chapter to each bird, except, of course, for the wild turkey. It takes two chapters to cover all the fussing and gewgaws involved in turkey hunting. The chapters are roughly organized into sections covering a hunting story, natural history/biology, habitat, shotguns and loads, the lore and tradition of hunting that particular bird, and hunting with bird dogs. Fortunately, the authors are suitably restrained when writing about dogs and there isn’t any maudlin prose.



Since I know about ruffed grouse and woodcock hunting, I evaluated the quality of the information in the book based on the chapters about those two birds. The authors did a good job and so I trust their information about the birds I have never hunted.

What makes this book more than a “How To” book on bird hunting is the writing on the lore and tradition that are an integral part of any bird hunting. You can feel the history that developed around each bird. The chapter on bobwhite quail contains this quote by the outdoor writer Robert Ruark, “I never knew a

man that hunted quail who didn’t come out of it a little politer by comparison.”

You will not become an upland bird hunter by reading this book. You need to put miles on your boots, break through thick tangles of cover, and be startled every time a bird bursts into flight when you least expect it. The exception, of course, is when you are lying comatose on the forest floor, covered head to foot in camouflage, inanelly making turkey-like sounds, and waiting for a turkey to come to you.

This book makes you think that someday, just maybe, you might want to try hunting one of the “other” upland game birds.

Patrick Martin is the head of the Special Licenses Unit in DEC's Central Office and is a former Regional Director of The Ruffed Grouse Society.