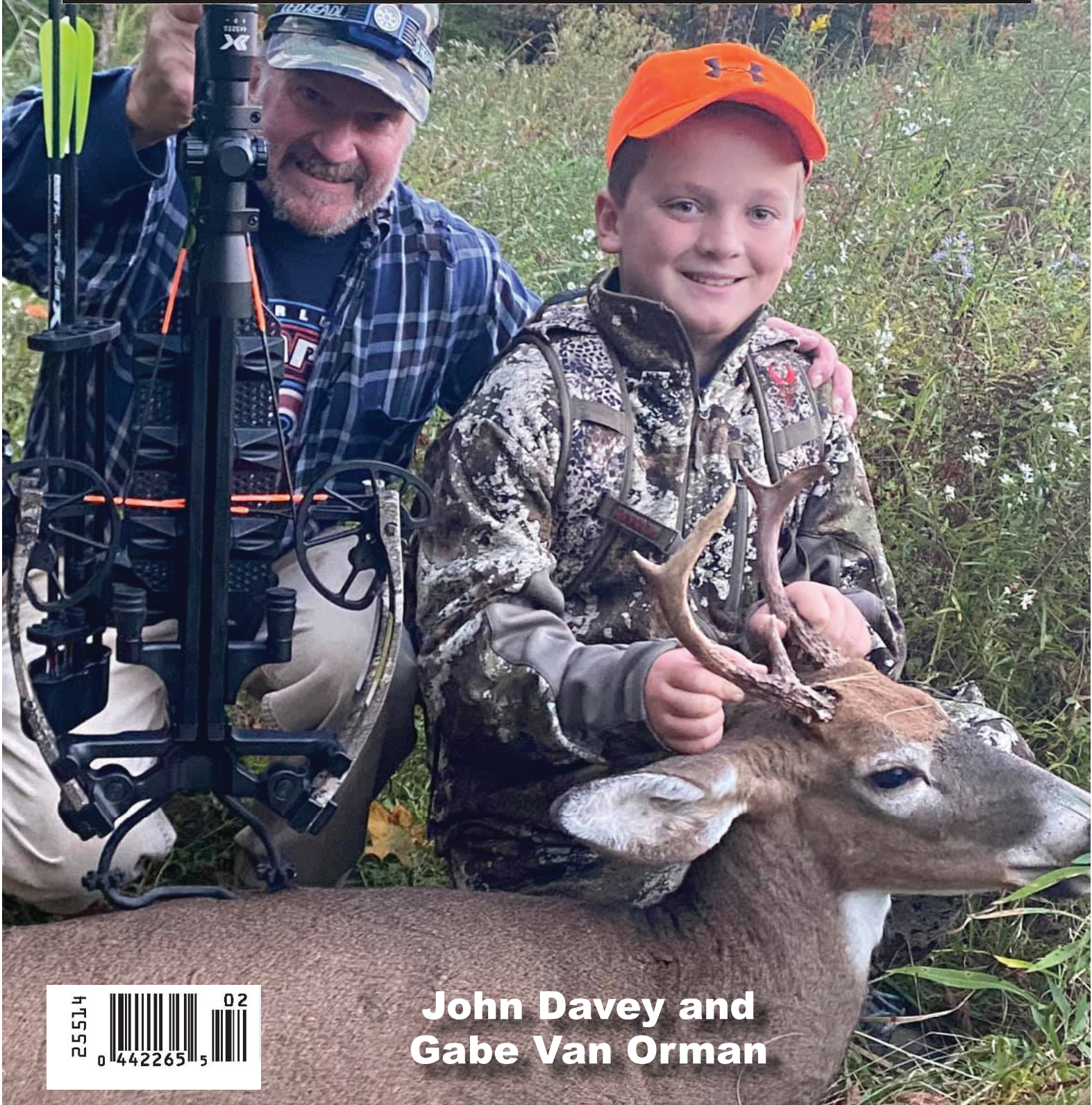


# Vermont Sporting Journal

Volume V, Issue 3 \* November 2020



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## Why I Trap

By Michael Jolley

In 2015 I went for my trappers certification, I was twelve years old. I've always had a love for the outdoors, and I knew it would be another way to be able to get out and enjoy the outdoors. I had no idea what I was going to learn about myself. I quickly figured out I had a real passion for the outdoors.

I have learned so much about wildlife behavior. For example, who knew trapping coyotes was so difficult? I have used trail cameras to watch the wildlife. In doing so I have learned what wildlife lives in particular areas. I learned quickly that the coyote is a very wary animal. It takes a skilled trapper to be able to outsmart a coyote.

Another reason I enjoy trapping is it helps the farmers out. The raccoons are a nuisance to the farmers' corn. They will climb the corn stocks and knock them over making it so that the machines can't pick it up.

Trapping is keeping the population in check of the furbearers of the Northeast. I recently had a nuisance call where a family of groundhogs had been digging into a mound septic system. I successfully took care of that nuisance call. Trapping helps control animal population by minimizing starving, reducing the spread of disease, and controlling habitat damage.

I'm still very new to trapping, but I encourage you to get out and start studying animal behavior. It's so cool to put a trail camera on a pinch point and be able to see what goes through there. I put out a trail camera a week ago, and I got a bobcat kitten on camera that pounced on a rodent.

Get outside, enjoy the outdoors, and spend time with family. While enjoying God's creations you can learn so much. Create good relations with local farmers, and see if you can place a trail camera to capture videos of wildlife. ■

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## Bats Are on the Move, with A Reputation to Improve

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Press Release

The onset of fall sends Vermont's bats into motion as they begin either migrating south or moving to regional underground hibernation sites for the winter.

Summer groups of bats that roost in buildings start to scatter in the fall, making it the perfect time to safely evict these uninvited guests from your attic, barn, or office building following the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's [Best Management Practices](#), available at [www.vt-fishandwildlife.com](http://www.vt-fishandwildlife.com).

Bat houses provide an alternative location for safely evicted bats to remain in your yard and continue eating huge quantities of insects that may be forest, agricultural, or human pests. However, bat houses do require some simple maintenance. Late fall or winter is the time to look up inside your bat house and make sure all the bats have left before cleaning out any abandoned wasp nests and planning any needed caulking or repainting.

You can also help bat conservation efforts by reporting large colonies of bats living in structures to the department's website. Locations with rare colonies of endangered little brown bats are eligible for free bat houses from Vermont Fish and Wildlife.

"Fall also means Halloween, and scary images of bats, but this presents an opportunity to bring positive attention to bats," said Vermont Fish and Wildlife Small Mammals Biologist Alyssa Bennett. "We are excited to participate in Bat Week, which will take place October 24-31. Bat Week is an annual celebration to raise awareness about the vital ecological function of bats and to dispel many of the myths and misinformation about bats."

Bat Week activities will include a series of virtual demonstrations and presentations to encourage people to protect bats in their own backyards and recognize the work of bat conservation worldwide. Anyone interested in learning more about Bat Week can visit: <https://batweek.org/> or email [Alyssa.Bennett@vermont.gov](mailto:Alyssa.Bennett@vermont.gov) for more information about what they can do right here in Vermont to promote bat conservation.

There are a lot of misconceptions



about the connection between the COVID-19 virus and bats. "The ongoing presence of the virus causing COVID-19 continues to pose a real concern regarding the potential for reverse zoonosis," said Bennett, "where infected humans can inadvertently transmit infectious diseases to animals. As always, we recommend keeping wildlife wild, by practicing good social distancing. If a bat needs to be captured within the living space, we ask that you wear gloves and a mask."

Although rarely detected in bats, rabies is a deadly disease and should be taken very seriously. If you are concerned that you have been in direct contact with a bat, call the Rabies Hotline at 800-4RABIES (1-800-472-2437).

For the most accurate and up-to-date information about COVID-19 and bats, Bennett suggests visiting the Bat Conservation International website: <https://www.batcon.org/bats-covid-19-updates/> "Bats are a very important part of our natural world and now, more than ever, they need our help," added Bennett. "Vermont is home to several species of threatened and endangered bat species that we are working to conserve and recover, and we hope Vermonters will support these efforts and come to enjoy seeing bats in their natural environment." ■



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## Fall Wildlife Foods are Less Abundant

*By Vermont Fish & Wildlife Press Release*

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. – Vermont Fish & Wildlife is reporting that several important fall foods for wildlife are less abundant this year.

“Fish & Wildlife staff routinely survey mast stands around the state in late September and early October, and this year they are finding that beechnut counts are very low, following 2019 when the numbers were some of the highest recorded since 1998,” said State Wildlife Biologist Forrest Hammond. “They also found little sign of deer, turkey and bear feeding in the beech stands.”

Hammond said that wild apples and berries are also less abundant than last year, but that in most areas of the state biologists report that acorns are more abundant than most other fall wildlife foods. He noted that wild turkeys, deer, bear, and grouse are concentrating their feeding more in oak stands this year. ■

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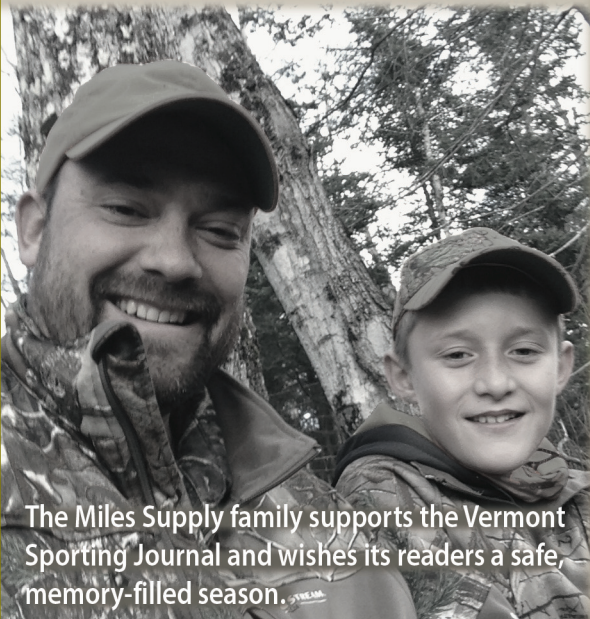


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## Youth Hunt

By *Mikeljon Mascitti and Little Mikeljon Mascitti*



My wife, Emily & I like to shoot, hunt & spend time in the great outdoors. Luckily for us, our 7 year old son likes to do everything that we do. We have taken him hunting with us every fall since he was born, the first 3 or so of those years Emily backpacked him most of the time. He has sat in blinds with us countless times & learned to shoot at the ripe age of 4.

This spring, due to the pandemic we found ourselves with some extra time on our hands so we decided to make a point to spend some of that time doing an online hunters safety course with him. (We strongly encourage a hands-on course as well & plan to have him take one in the near future) We weren't sure if he was old enough or mature enough to deer hunt yet but in the last several weeks he really showed us that he was more than capable & equally interested in doing so but we were both on the fence & decided we would take it day by day before we made the decision to youth hunt this year or wait? We didn't want to rush him into anything that could easily wait another 2-3 years & certainly didn't want him to not be mature enough to handle anything that might ruin a chance at a lifelong passion if he had a bad experience.

I've been fortunate enough to mentor many kids over the years when it comes to hunting & 10-11 years old seems to be a popular age to start.

I'm terribly guilty of attempting to pave the way for my son vs. letting him navigate the bumps in the road that life hands us. I'm not sure if it's because I was older before I became a parent or because I work too much & don't get the chance to do as much with him as I'd like to? We always seem to over pack, over think & over prepare for every adventure he goes on & lately I've been learning that this is setting him up for some unrealistic expectations so I'm working hard to curb this habit so I decided to take a very laid back approach to this first youth hunt of his.

We didn't have game cams out, we didn't have high expectations or hopes of getting a big buck even if it took every waking minute to try. We figured that we'd just play it by ear and spend some parts of each day in the blind & take a few short walks in some small patches of woods. Leading up to youth weekend some friends invited our boy to a monster truck show in northern NH & when given the choice, he definitively chose monster trucks over hunting!

And surprisingly, I was ok with this so we rolled with it and

made a plan to get our gear out Saturday evening and enjoy one day of youth hunting on Sunday.

I spent most of Saturday sighting in some rifles & muzzle loaders for the upcoming seasons of our own & was enjoying a rare day off from work. As most days off do, it flew by & the next thing we know, our son was home at 4:30 pm & was just waking up from a long car ride nap. The first thing he said to me was "Dad, can we go sit in the blind?" We were not prepared & our gear was still tucked away in totes but I couldn't pass up a chance for him to feel like a big deal with his first ever hunt having a tag if his own so I quickly finished up what I was doing to go tell his mother of our newly formed plan. She was halfway through preparing some meals & was in no place to switch gears to join us but she quickly got him some snacks & dressed him warm for an evening sit.



Once we made it out to our blind I began to remember the joy & excitement my young nephew, niece & friend's children had on their first hunts & how refreshing it is to not worry about every movement, every snack wrapper noise, or cough. We were out there enjoying nature's beauty & we were together. Soon after I was regretting the fact that Emily was not there to share this first & apparently she was too because she text me asking if she could still join us at the late hour? My son was more than happy to run home & grab her while I "watched for deer".

Upon their return we got set up, went over some scenarios & quizzed him on some safe shooting lanes. I had previously marked out some spots to show me where 95 yards was, which

I considered to be his maximum distance to shoot with his experience & lighter powered rifle. Before long we spotted one, lone deer off in the distance, well beyond his range but it gave us a great opportunity to glass it, set up his rest & watch him & his reactions to see if he truly would be ok after taking an animal.

He was very eager to see if this young die would head our way or disappear into the tall grass? As daylight was getting short, the deer headed the way we'd hoped & made its way to our food plot. Once it jumped the fence it was facing us at 90 yards, he instinctively knew that he had to wait for it to turn broadside & when it did, he exclaimed that he had the perfect shot. I asked him where he was aiming & if he was shaking?

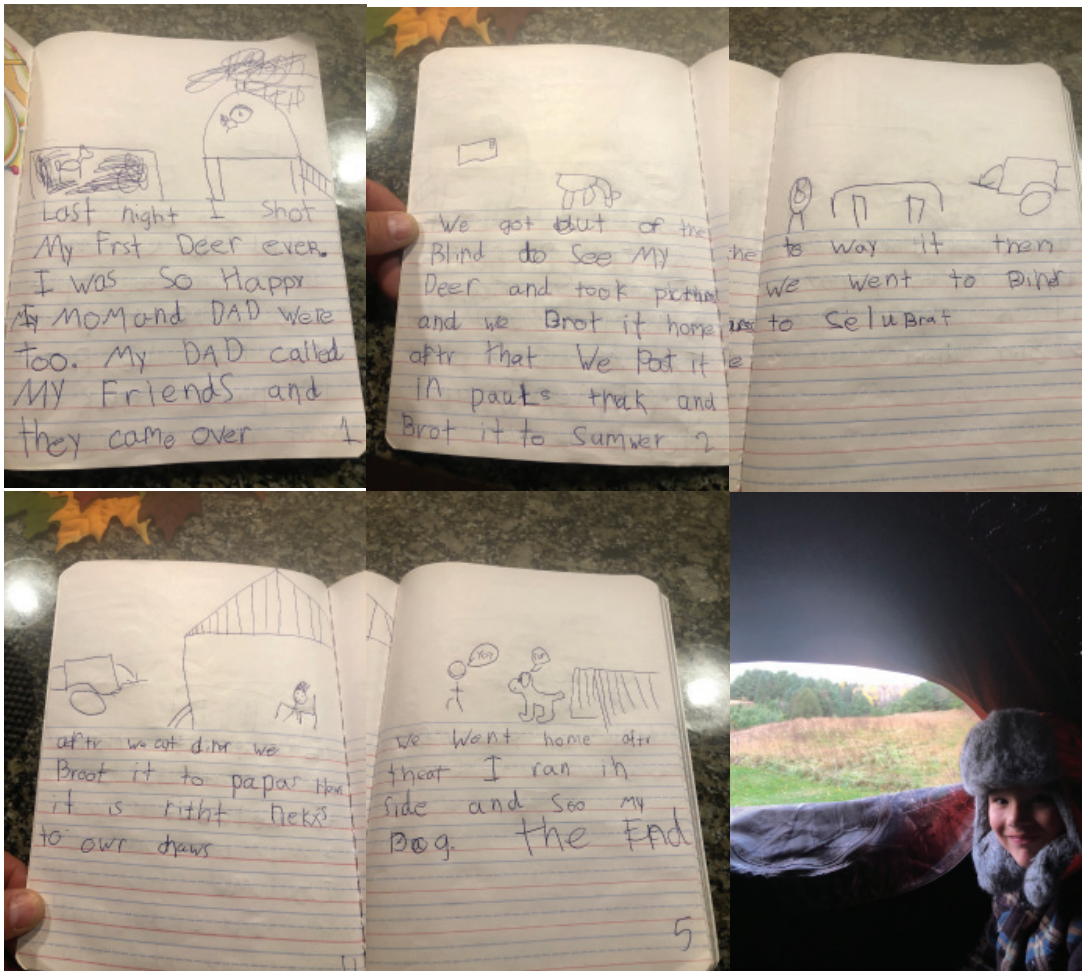
He calmly replied that he was behind the shoulder & was very steady. When I gave him the go ahead, he clicked off the safety & squeezes the trigger!

Emily instantly claimed that he'd hit it good & the deer ran 60 yards towards us before collapsing in our sight. He shouted out with joy as my wife & I sat there in disbelief at how amazing our young boy did! We were filled with joy & pride.

We unloaded his rifle & made our way over to see his deer & pose for pics. He called his grandparents & some older friends to invite them to celebrate the occasion with us! I showed him how to place his tag & he insisted on helping drag the deer to our house where we could dress it

in the light of our back yard. A longtime family friend showed him how to properly dress the animal because his dad is kind of a hack in this area. He used a knife that one of his grandfathers had made custom for him. We took the time to make every detail special & memorable. In the next few days I realized what we needed to go right & all that can go wrong to not get a chance at a deer so I'm even more great full for his success & he is quite proud of the fact that he is providing some healthy meat for our family.

It is a memory that I will cherish forever & he has already claimed it was the best day of his young life. I think we have another sportsman in the house! ■



## My 2019 Season

by Brian Bristow

I live and hunt exclusively on my own property in Williamstown, VT. In 2002 my wife and I built a house on the back side of the family farm. At that time, the family property was comprised of mature softwoods and a 12-acre hay field. As an avid hunter, I was acutely aware that the hunting on the family property could be enhanced with some habitat management.

From 2002 to 2014, I aggressively tried to make the family property better for all types of hunting. I started with planting half of the 12-acre field with chicory and clover, then we selectively logged the property. We also had the loggers build access roads and a tail system. The plan worked and deer began to fill the field every night. Passionately, I hunted the field for years with utter failure and frustration. The only real success was during youth season where two of my kids harvested their first deer.

Why was hunting the 12-acre field was such a failure? First, its 12 acres and deer have a way of coming out where you are not and then they usually proceed to walk briskly right out into the middle of the field. The field

is visible from the road and it is very close to another residence with limited shooting lanes. Finally, deer in Vermont have a habit of going nocturnal with the slightest amount of pressure. My stand location often resulted in me blowing deer out of the field on the way out. If you have ever hunted a field, you also know that judging distance on deer in an open field with the light going down, is very challenging. We did harvest a few 1.5 year old deer and a couple does between 2002 and 2014 however, by the end of 2014, I vowed to make a major change that included not hunting the field as hard and letting the field grow back to its natural wild state. This change resulted in putting less pressure on the deer and lowered the fawn mortality rate. We also started to see an increase in turkey, bear, fur bearing critters like bobcats, porcupines, racoons, and partridge.

I dedicated myself to improve the wildlife habitat even more and started working on a new food plot just inside the tree line. I systemically removed trees and hinge cut others to the tune of 16 cords of firewood that I donated to a local family. These cuts accomplished two things: first it created funnels and pinch points and secondly, it opened the canopy and allowed light to reach the forest floor for the first time in many years.

Last year, I hunted the

first few days of the 2019 early bear season and realized that I was pressuring the deer, so I stopped hunting bear and waited for October to come. The week before the 2019 bow season opener, a beautiful 5 pointer took a few nibbles from the garden and then bedded down on my lawn enjoying the morning sunshine. During that time, a large bear left us a smelly present on the back lawn.

Opening morning of the 2019 bow season started very slow with no deer sightings and breakfast was calling my name by 9:00am. At 3:00 a beautiful doe came out by herself and I shot her perfectly behind the shoulder and she expired five yards away.

History has taught me that after one deer is harvested, that the rest of the local herd goes nocturnal and become very skittish. Two weeks after harvesting the doe, I had the first sighting of movement during day light hours. With 10x binoculars I could see a deer in the bushes about 75 yards away and it had horns. Up to this point in my Vermont hunting career, my best deer was a five pointer with a rifle and a four pointer with the bow. This deer in the bushes had eight points and I recognized him from the trail cam pictures. The eight pointer stood perfectly still as the sun began to set and with almost no legal light remaining, he started to move along the trail that parallels the far bank and as he got to the split in the trail that would bring him into bow range, he stopped, looked around and stood still again. It seemed like an eternity, the light was going away fast, and with a classic flick of the tail and an indignant nod of the head, he turned and walked directly away from me and up the hill and out of sight!



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The next morning, I made an extra effort to mark the spot where he was standing previously, cleared some overhanging limbs and used a range finder to get the distance to the trail junction; it was 55 yards, further than I was comfortable shooting. I spent the next few days practicing at exactly 55 yards and when my groups tighten up enough to be dangerous of getting a robin hood, I was ready to try again. Three days later, I was back on stand and ready for the big eight to show himself again. That afternoon, with more than 30 minutes to sunset, I saw movement on the same trail and this time he did not wait for sunset and walked to the same junction and stood there broadside at 55 yards. My hope was that he would come my way and get closer this time but, that is not what happened. He stood there broadside looking at me and then looking back up the hill and that is when I decided that it was now or never. I settled my sights on the vitals and tried to focus on a specific spot as the bow effortlessly let loose in a perfectly settled release. There was still plenty of daylight left in the day and normally I would wait an hour to start tracking however, this time I decided to use the light to aide in the recovery or at least find out exactly what happened. I walked quietly to the shot location and there was no sign there other than hoof prints where he turned and ran away. Now, at almost sunset, the decision was to back out or tiptoe in the bush and look for more sign in the light. Two steps up the hill and into the thick berries, there was my broadhead and about 3" of broken arrow and no sign of the lighted knock. Still no blood but, two more steps and there it was, the obvious blood trail! Again, the decision was to go deeper or back out. I decided again to take a few more steps along the blood trail and, to my surprise, he was right there

dead, no more than 25 yards from the shot location. The arrow entered a little high but behind the shoulder and since he was standing uphill, the arrow came out lower and took out both lungs as well as other damage. As dark settled in, the best deer of my bow hunting career was hanging in the garage tipping the scales at 156 pounds.

Soon thereafter, my mind started to think about rifle season, reports of other nice archery deer started to come in and by the time of opening morning of rifle season, every buck captured on my camera, had already been harvested by the neighbors.

Rifle season was very uneventful with only a small doe and a spike horn passing through, most of the activity was at night and no good bucks were caught on camera. On the very last day of late bear season, I decided to hit the stand early, not necessarily to hunt bear, just to enjoy a beautiful chilly afternoon of sitting out in the woods. To my absolute surprise, at 3:00, one hour after arriving in the stand, a bear appeared and was walking right down the deer trail. A quick look confirmed that it was by itself and was of shooter size. Not really planning to hunt a bear, I had brought my .243 youth model savage, with a little hesitation, I decided that the .243 would do the trick and I settled the crosshairs on the bears vitals, squeezed the trigger, and that's when my heart sank, as the only noise heard was a loud "CLICK" – DAMN it's a Misfire!!!!!!! Now what? First, I made sure it was pointed in a safe direction, checked on the bears location, tried to reload and the two shells wedged together creating a solid jam that took effort to clear. By the time my rifle was cleared and reloaded, the bear was turning the corner and was broadside at 18 yards.

This time I settled the cross hairs on his heart and finally, the gun barked, and the bear stood straight up on his hind legs and was clearly hit hard.

The cell phone rang, text messages came in, and family gathered around house in anticipation. Heart racing and very excited, I patiently waited a full hour to start the recovery process. At the shot location there was no blood, just a few footprints but, we had snow and tracks were all I needed to get started. I soon realized that the .243 did not exit the far side and there was no blood trail. I slowly followed the faint tracks into the woods where the snow was more like crusty ice. A few more careful steps with even less sign to follow, I focused on scanning the area and not walking any further. Using the 10x Bino's again, I could see about 40 yards away, a black object under a blowdown. Two more side steps and I could see that it was him, expired, and he was no more than 50 yards away from the stand. The boar weighed 151 pounds and was estimated at 6 years old.

I filled the last tag in my pocket, a muzzleloader doe tag, with a big lone doe who walked down the same trail as the bear, and I shot her in the exact same spot as the bear and she expired in the exact same spot as the doe from bow season.

2019 was an amazing hunting season that was the culmination of making a long-term plan, sticking to the plan, as well as, many years of hard knocks, intense physical labor, habitat improvement, monetary investments, and a significant paradigm change. Most importantly, this would have never happened without a very supportive and loving wife. ■

## Small Game Equals BIG Fun

by Brett Ladeau



I grew up primarily a deer hunter but have always spent a day or two per season bird hunting or chasing other small game but never took it too seriously. I typically spend most of my fall focused

on deer from mid-September through mid-December and small game hunt a day or two the last two weekends of December or spend a few mornings chasing birds with my bird dog in October.

Most of my small game hunting has been focused on grouse or pheasant with my dog, even on my December hunts. I've always enjoyed the allure of having a bird dog, but I am not a great dog trainer or bird hunter. There is no doubt in my mind that my bird dog is a much better bird hunter than I am. I just haven't been able to put her on enough birds to make it a habit for either of us. The days we have been able to find birds she does a terrific job and I have been able to get grouse and pheasant with her. We have yet to team up on a woodcock but that is also on my bucket list. Unfortunately, my bird dog is down and out after knee surgery, so I have not been able to get her out yet this year.

I've been bow hunting for deer since mid-September but have been struggling to find deer that want to move during daylight, but I have noticed an abundance of gray squirrel every time I am out. I've never spent much time

chasing squirrel and had never eaten it. My lack of deer sightings has had me down and not extra motivated, so I decided I needed a change of pace and have recently given the "Bushytails" some of my attention and man it is FUN.

They aren't as easy as I thought they'd be and have presented a nice challenge, while still giving me enough opportunity to keep my interest. They are sneaky little buggers, and hardly sit still long enough for you to get a shot. My favorite technique, so far, is to still hunt, which is my preferred deer hunting method too. Once I put eyes on a squirrel, I take a seat and wait them out. More times than not they come close enough to present a shot. I have a friend in Virginia that has a squirrel dog and he spends many hours training and hunting with his dog down there. While that seems like a lot fun, the older I get the more irresponsible I want to be, so training and working with another dog doesn't really interest me at this point but I do think it would be fun with someone else. Another technique I have used with some success is sitting on an oak or beach ridge and waiting for the me to show up but that hasn't proven to be as effective as still hunting for me. I usually give them 10 to 15 minutes to show themselves while sitting and if they don't show, I move slowly from one spot to the next. They are a bit skittish so moving slowly and quietly is essential and is terrific practice for

still hunting deer too. In fact, I was able to sneak up on several bedded deer looking for squirrel. I didn't get close enough for a bow shot, thank goodness, or I would have regretted squirrel hunting and not carrying my bow.

Squirrel are often overlooked by many experienced and novice hunters alike, but I can see how they would be a perfect introduction to new hunters, especially on abundant years. They are truly everywhere this year and someone just getting into hunting, and even an old experienced hunter like myself, would enjoy multiple opportunities during a hunt. I have hunted them with my new over and under 20 gauge, but I know a lot of people hunt them with a .22, which might even be more challenging, since they never sit still for very long. I may step up to the .22 challenge at some point but for now I am really enjoying my 20 gauge. I load it with a light load and light recoil, which makes the multiple shot opportunities easy on the shoulder and ears. I also have a new .410 that might be a perfect gun for squirrel too. I have shot one with my bow, but with the expense of arrows, broadheads, lighted nocks, and all that, I've been reluctant to continue that habit. The .22 or a sub-gauge shotgun seem to be the perfect choice for squirrel and that's what I would suggest to someone that is just getting started.

With squirrel, my equipment checklist has been pretty short, I typically pack a pair of binoculars, plenty of ammo, a knife, my license, and I wear camo clothing, knee high rubber boots, and I have been using my blaze



orange upland game vest. I just tried fried squirrel for the first time today and I give it two thumbs up. I think I will try a pot-pie next. With as much fun as I've had, I will be spending more time chasing these tasty little guys for the rest of fall and future falls to come.

If you don't already have a recipe for squirrel, I am attaching this one I found on the internet. Hope you get out and enjoy a little squirrel hunting this fall. ■

## Squirrel Pot Pie

If you or someone you know hunts squirrel, this recipe will become a go-to when cooking up the results.

*Prep Time 1 hour*

*Cook Time 1 hour*

*Total Time 2 hours*

*Servings 4*

*Calories 362kcal*

*Author Stacey Lyn*

### Ingredients

- 1 1/2 pounds squirrel meat
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons oil plus more as needed
- 1 large onion
- 3 stalks celery
- 2 carrots
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 5 cloves garlic
- 2 cups beef broth
- 2 cups Guinness beer
- 1 can 16-ounce chopped tomatoes
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 handful about 1/4 cup flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 1 1/2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- 1 pie crust for a 9-inch pie
- 1 large egg optional



### Instructions

1. Heat an oven to 400°F. Cut the squirrel meat into 1/2-inch pieces. Put them in a medium bowl, sprinkle with the flour, and toss to coat evenly and thoroughly.
2. In a large Dutch oven or other heavy-bottomed pot, heat the oil over medium-high heat until it's almost smoking (you want to use a pot with sides to keep splattering to a minimum). Working in batches, brown the meat on all sides until lightly browned and allow it to drain on a paper towel. Add more oil to the pan as you need it for optimal browning.
3. While the meat browns, peel and finely chop the onion, peel and finely chop the carrot, and finely chop the celery.
4. When the meat is all browned and out of the pot, add the chopped vegetables to the pot, sprinkle with the salt, and cook, stirring occasionally, until they're translucent and soft, about 5 minutes. While they
5. Meanwhile, chop the rosemary, thyme, and parsley. Once the mixture is boiling, add the herbs and the pepper. Reduce the heat to maintain a steady simmer. Cook, uncovered, until the mixture thickens, about 1 hour.
6. Pour the squirrel mixture into a 9-inch pie dish and allow to cool completely. Gently place the pie shell over the mixture, pinching the edges to seal. Crack the egg into a small bowl and beat with 1 tablespoon water. Brush the egg and water mixture over the pie crust to enhance browning. Cut three 1/2-inch vents at the center of the crust. Transfer the pie into the oven and bake until the crust is baked through and browned and the filling is bubbling at the edges and at the vents, 30 to 40 minutes. ■

## Lighting Up Dem Knocks

By Ken Jones

A beautiful October afternoon graces the farm country of New York's southern deer hunting zone. I've been part of a group that leases some land to deer hunt in this area for around five years now and every year it takes me back to where Vermont used to be before the herd reduction of the late seventies and early eighties. Lots of working dairy farms provide multiple food sources and enable the habitat to hold an abundance of deer.

While walking in this particular evening with my climber on my back and running a little behind, as I rounded the edge of the rolling field I spotted three bucks with their heads down feeding already in the field I was to hunt on. I quickly slipped into the timber unnoticed and shed the tree stand. I crept into a cluster of trees near the edge and knocked an arrow. The trio fed right up to me and stepped into the timber with me at a mere twenty yards. One by one, fawn, fawn, the next one had to be the mature doe. I drew early and when the third deer stepped in, I couldn't believe it was another tiny deer!!! If she was mom (she was a little bigger), she was surely passing on some tiny deer genes. I gave them a little nudge but didn't blow them out so I could continue with my plan.

The time spent with that trio gave me no time for my climber so I hopped into a fixed set we had close by. I wasn't in the stand more than an hour when a single doe appeared coming off a ridge top headed to the green fields. She caught me a little off guard and kinda picked me out for a second. Standing frozen and not staring hard at her, she settled down and continued along. I eased around and grabbed my

bow from the hangar and after sizing her up I was still not quite sure if I wanted her or not so I drew and followed her into a perfect lane and she stopped. I settled the pin behind her shoulder and squeezed the release. At that exact moment, she decided to start walking again and something about the flight of that arrow just wasn't right and I watched my nocturnal flasher zip through her but not exactly where I'd like it. In fact, I knew it was paunch. She spun around and headed back up the hill, got above me in the timber still in sight and stopped and stood there for what seemed like an eternity. Then she slowly walked off. Making a mental note of her route, I eased out and brought gear to the truck and waited an hour before going back to look for sign.

After physically and mentally thrashing myself at the truck for an hour, I headed in to look for the proverbial needle in a haystack. Now it being pitch dark I had an idea. I'd deploy the arrow with the lighted knock and use it to help find some sign. I brought it with me and activated the knock when I got back to the stand. I climbed up on the stand and set the arrow I'm the seat with the nock flashing. Using the flashing knock as a reference point I was able to put myself in the deer's place and after an hour or so, I hit paydirt. A blood trail!!!

Now, I wish I could tell you this story has a happy ending but, after hands and knees looking, at 10 pm I decided to call it a night and come back in the morning. Spent the night at camp and got back on the trail at first light. After getting my daylight bearings I remembered a small pond not far from the last sign. I went down there and



*The author with a fine NY southern zone archery doe*

found what was left of my doe. The coyotes had taken her. The risk of waiting overnight. I will say my percentage of recover is pretty decent. I've recovered more than I've left than the coyotes have but that doesn't ease the pain of losing one. If you've never lost one as a bowhunter and you're avid enough, you will. And I can tell you first hand, it never gets easier.

Now, had it not been for the use of the lighted knock, this story may not have gotten as far as it did.

Leaving a lighted knock at the hit sight can help you keep your bearings in the dark when things change drastically. They can be seen from quite a distance and give quick reference as to where you are and where your animal may have gone.

It's not a bad tool for finding your way out either. A quiver full of them and you can set them up in a sapling and mark a trail. When you get concentrating on the ground and a blood trail, even a hundred yards or less in the dark and especially on flat ground. It's easy to get turned around. I once dragged a deer in a circle for 45 minutes. When I came back to the gut pile I knew I was messed up!! Had to slow down and back track the blood trail out.

There have been and still are several brands and styles to choose from.

The first time I shot one through a deer, it was the type that you backed the knock out of the shaft a bit. Then when you shot, it seated the knock and turned it on. Well, it went through the deer but didn't remain lit when it stuck in the ground. Seems the arrow hit a rock or something causing the knock to back out and shut off.

There were some really good ones that utilized a magnet mounted on your bow riser that turned the knock on when it passed the magnet and you just held it to the magnet to shut it off. Now we have models with little switches built into the knock. Some use a pocket knife to shut off and I've recently found a model that has a button right on the side of the knock. When you knock the arrow, it reads the knock. Shooting or removing from the string turns it on. Then, you push it back against the string and

push the button while you remove it and the knock goes out.

One of the cons of lighted knocks that I've noticed is in low light, deer will see them coming and attempt to get out of the way. I've had three deer react to them and fortunately I've gotten them all. One, a plump little four point buck. Leaned and ducked so hard the arrow hit him in the ribs but he had changed the angle so, it went upwards and spined him. Another doe I could see the arrow headed under her and she tried to get out of there but got herself in the hind leg, falling on the arrow and puncturing vitals. Sometimes it's better to be lucky than good I guess.

One last note. I strongly urge crossbow hunters to use these knocks. It's now getting more legal to hunt with crossbows and I have friends

that have been hunting with them for years with injuries. Crossbows are so fast and most are scoped so it's hard to tell where exactly a bolt hits. The famous quote from these guys," I heard it hit but I don't know where". Crossbows are an archery tool and require practice just like a vertical bow. Train yourself to stay in the scope and look for that lighted knock.

Personally, I will never bow hunt again without a lighted knock on my arrow or bolt. The pros far outweigh the cons. If you haven't used any, try it. They come in a wide variety of colors for those who may be red blue color blind etc.

Hope everyone is having a tremendous fall huntin season. Remember, be safe, have fun and shoot em up!!!!

## Photo Album



*More "Bushytail" for a Change of Pace or Small Game Equals BIG Fun*

*(from pages 9 & 10)*



*Lake Trout caught by Jeffrey Sanford*



*Dylan Libby bagged his first career deer yesterday October 25th. Nice little 4 point weighing 110 pounds. He sure was pleased as he worked hard all through bow with several close encounters.*

## My First Turkey

By Linda Papineau



Linda with her prize fresh, free range turkey.

What a year this has been! To celebrate my 66th birthday I decided to purchase my lifetime VT licenses. Being the conservative I am, when I saw the price for all the licenses were one price; bow, fishing, rifle, muzzleloader, trapping, bear, deer, turkey - well why not get them all?

I hunted back when I was 15 till my early 20's and then got married, started a family and that was the end of my deer hunting. I loved being in the woods and my family are all big hunters, so it seemed natural to go back to my roots. My original plan was to rifle hunt for deer this upcoming November season.

As I prepared for the season, bought the proper clothes and a small tripod seat - I diligently read all the new fish and wildlife rules and viewed the upcoming dates for


deer season. It was at that point I saw there was fall turkey hunting in October. I have never hunted for turkeys, in fact do not remember ever shooting a shotgun! I asked my older brothers if they would practice with me and take me turkey hunting. My oldest brother set up targets and four shots later, I was hitting "killing" turkey shots - I was ready to go.

Saturday morning - turkey season had arrived, off we went! We set up in a corn field with two decoys, my brother called, and we were answered with small chirping sounds and deep gurgling sounds! Turkeys were nearby! We waited and waited - nothing came into the corn field. Come to find out another hunter had entered from a different side and scared them away. Oh well, no problem! We rode around and saw some turkeys but unable to make any shots.

Sunday morning - 5:30 as I wait in the dark for my oldest brother to pick me up - it was cold 34 degrees - Brrr! We headed to a different spot - a point

where the left and right side of corn fields met. Walking in, setting up and waiting. Our two decoys were all set to go. We heard 3 or 4 turkeys behind us drop down to the ground from their night roosting spot! I was so excited, they seemed so close. Box and reed calls were made - by this time it was about 7:45 or so. My brother wondered were those turkeys had gone, we expected them to come around the point. So, he peeked - motioned for me and I quietly snuck over to where he was, he said "shoot" - all I saw was a little of the neck and head and bang! I had bagged my first turkey at 8:15 am! It was exhilarating - I do not even remember hearing the shot or feeling the kick of the shotgun! We went over the bank and there laid my first turkey.

My first turkey hunt was successful, and I was able to spend an amazing weekend with my oldest brother! After reporting and cleaning, I cooked it that day and we ate it for supper! Free range, fresh Vermont turkey! It does not get better than this! ■




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## Tree Stand Safety Tips for Hunters

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Press Release

Tree stands get hunters out of sight and smell of wary deer, but they can also get hunters into trouble. Here are some tips from Vermont Fish and Wildlife to help stay safe and get the most out of your tree stand hunting experience:

- **Choose a live, straight tree**, and avoid ash that may be in decline due to emerald ash borers.
- **Buy smart.** Only use stands certified by the [Treestand Manufacturers Association \(TMA\)](#).
- **Inspect them each time you use them.**
- **Know the rules.** On state lands, it is illegal to place nails or other hardware into trees or to build permanent structures. On private lands, you must have landowner permission to erect a tree stand, cut or remove trees or other plants, or to cut limbs. All stands, including ground blinds, must be marked with the owner's name and address.
- **Always wear a full-body safety harness, even for climbing.** Most falls occur going up and down the tree and getting in and out of the stand.
- **Don't go too high.** The higher you go, the vital zone on a deer decreases, while the likelihood of a serious injury increases.
- **Never carry firearms or bows up and down trees.** Always use a haul line to raise and lower all gear. Make sure your firearm is unloaded.
- **Familiarize yourself with your gear before you go.** The morning of opening day is a poor time to put your safety belt on for the first time.
- **Be careful with long-term placement.** Exposure can damage straps, ropes and attachment cords. Also, the stand's stability can be compromised over time, as the tree grows.



“Hunter education instructors want you to be safe this coming season,” said Nicole Meier, Information and Education Specialist for Fish and Wildlife. “Falls from tree stands are a major cause of death and serious injury to deer hunters, but they are preventable by always wearing a full-body harness and staying connected to the tree.”

Learn more about *Tree Stand Safety* here: <https://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/TreeStandSafety.pdf> ■

## United We Must Stand

By Mike Covey

First off, I want to say that I hope you are all enjoying this season of harvest. There is nothing like these crisp sunrises, soft rainy days, and still sunsets to get the mind right and the blood pumping. I'll cop to having a decent season started with a bear, a deer, and a turkey yesterday evening completing my "poor man's grand slam" for Vermont. I may never get a moose tag, but I will keep trying, and I have to extend congratulations to all the successful moose hunters from this recently ended season. With everything in season it doesn't matter if you are drawn to the duck blind, some upland bird hunting, the bow stand, the trapline, or the song of a hound pack, or a hearty beagle; October is a wonderful time because there's something for everyone to be excited about. Its no wonder that I often find myself humming one Christmas tune two months early every year, "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year."

By the time you read this, I suspect both the early muzzleloader season and the election will have passed. I hope you all voted, if you weren't registered, I hope you went and registered at the polls. If you didn't vote, get set up to do so before the next election. The sporting community comprises almost 1/4 of Vermont's citizens. Imagine what we could do if we all simply voted, and voted for those legislators who would support what we do, who would look to the science rather than listening to the emotional appeals from those who oppose regulated hunting and trapping. We have the potential to be the largest voting block in the state, and we are at a point where it should be a priority. When some legislators be-

gin ignoring the facts to promote an agenda, its time to replace them. It will be interesting to see how we do in this cycle.

On top of voting, I urge you to get involved with at least one outdoors organization here in Vermont that promotes or works to protect the things you love. Its always the same few people carrying the load in each of these organizations, so if you have any extra bandwidth, step up and get involved. Some folks don't have any spare time, and believe me I get that entirely, but you can still join and support that way, and these organizations work hard to make sure they inform their constituencies when important issues are afoot.

We, as a community, are facing a real threat from some very aggressive anti-hunting organizations, their lobbyists, and the legislators who support them. One of the leaders of an anti-hunting lobbying group recently wrote a very artfully crafted piece published by VT Digger. In it, he explained that he supports hunting very much... except the use of hounds for hunting bear. The problem is that the position statement from his own organization makes it clear the group is seeking to end a much broader segment of hunting than his editorial would lead you to believe, and now they have hired well-heeled Montpelier lobbyists to advance this agenda. What is their goal? The group openly opposes all hunting of predators, including coyotes and bears. It opposes trapping. It opposes the use of all electronic hunting aids, including game calls and trail cameras. It opposes all use of dogs for hunting, except for upland

game birds and waterfowl... for now. So what's left?

In the words of their position paper, they support deer hunting, grouse hunting and turkey hunting. They "don't oppose" (or at least not yet) waterfowl hunting and "some small game" hunting, provided of course, hunters do those activities in a way they agree with. The author tells a nice story about supporting the kind of hunting he deems responsible. But the fact is that what he and his lobbyists believe should be legal is a much narrower part of hunting than he would lead you to believe, if any at all. This is clarified further in comments on social media made in their organization's name by these anti-hunting activists.

These are social media quotes from the organization:

*"...people need to understand that animals are sentient."*

*"There are plenty of pro-kill pages where you won't find our members there posting things..."*

*"This is how the Fish and Wildlife Board do conservation. Let's eat the wildlife at an annual dinner. Disgusting. CALL TO ACTION: Write the Fish and Wildlife Board and tell them to stop this annual event now!"*

The statement that eating wild game is "disgusting" seems to be entirely at odds with the author's assertion that they support any hunting at all. If they "support" some types of hunting, does this mean that his organization would rather see the meat wasted?

Furthermore, this call to action was leveled at a game dinner sponsored



in joint by the Fish and Wildlife Department and Lake Champlain International. The Fish and Wildlife Board had no involvement or say in the matter, and their statement shows a lack of understanding of the Board's role and powers. The funds raised by this event were to benefit the lake and our Vermont conservation camps, goals anyone who cares about our citizens and our wildlife should support. Instead there were calls to boycott the venue in retaliation.

More recently, they have been leveling attacks at the Fish and Wildlife Department and the hunting community over deer hunting. Their tagline in this is that hunters are poorly educated and unethical, so deer are being wounded, and that the Department should not have provided for remote learning during the Covid pandemic. The sporting community and the Fish and Wildlife Department are being portrayed as the bad guys by an animal rights movement that has lost all semblance of civility at this point.

Sadly, far too often lately I see hunters parroting their words, and it often feels like sour grapes. When hunters gripe about each other because they think that "bow hunting isn't as good as rifle" (or vice-versa), hunting with dogs or trail cameras is somehow "cheating", "trapping is cruel", or any other number of other subjective misperceptions; consider this:

Those who oppose hunting oppose all of it. You can't mollify them by saying things you think will portray your segment of the sport as somehow noble while throwing others under the bus. At this point they have suggested that the Department should be closing some of their lands to hunting to provide a place where "non-hunters can feel safe hiking". They are playing

the victim card on this, while fully ignoring the fact that hunters, trappers, anglers, and shooters paid for all of those lands.

We all judge things every day, I'm convinced that it's an unfortunate effect of the human condition, but if you find yourself thinking you should tear down another hunter because they shot a smaller deer than you would have, or they didn't go in to the woods as deeply as you would have, or any of a million other criticisms of lawful harvests that are not really impactful, but somehow make oneself feel superlative; remember -you don't know their comfort level, experience, or personal struggles. It is also important to remember that we have a common enemy who wishes to do away with the entire outdoor lifestyle. All of it.

#### **We're all in this together.**

The hunting community in Vermont supports our wildlife like no other segment of society. I don't say this to criticize those who don't hunt, but to raise awareness. The hunting, fishing, and trapping community provides more than 70% of the Department's annual funding.

Wildlife restoration, threatened and endangered species work, habitat acquisition and enhancement, law enforcement, administration, research, even office supplies and electricity all funded more than 70% by the very community these anti-hunting organizations want to tear down. This is achieved through license fees, federal excise taxes on sporting equipment which return to the state in the form of Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson funds, voluntary contributions, and more. Only about 25% of the Department's budget comes from the general fund, and keep in mind

that in a state where well over 20% of the population participates in this outdoor lifestyle, the sporting community is providing a good chunk of those general funds as well.

This doesn't even touch on other contributions such as the nearly \$10,000 donation made by the Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Vermont Trappers Association, Vermont Bearhounds Association, and National Wild Turkey Federation last year to the Stowe Land Trust. This collective donation was made to contribute to the purchase of a critical piece of connective habitat in the Worcester range which was then donated and added to the Putnam State Forest. This land will now be available to our wildlife and ALL Vermonters for perpetuity, but the anti-hunters (who have spent the money to hire three lobbyists) never reached out to contribute, but rather criticized the land trust for donating the land to the public instead of posting it.

Tradition and culture are important, so is practicality. These anti-hunting organizations don't contribute... they don't build. They simply seek to marginalize and villainize the Vermonters that arguably do the most for our wildlife. The flowery prose in this gentleman's letter sought to persuade folks to support his agenda. He sets a hypnotic, wistful tone, but it ultimately rings hollow. These folks can keep their false statements about the intentions of their organizations, they've already shown their true colors. Meanwhile it makes sense for us to support each other for the ways we all contribute, and for the rest of Vermont to keep thanking the sporting community and the Fish and Wildlife Department for all we do to protect our wildlife. ■

## Trapline

By Randy Barrows

Well finally the months we have been waiting a year for has arrived. If you are a seasoned trapper or new to the sport the month of November is like Christmas day.

My traps are all organized and ready to go. My truck and four-wheeler have been serviced and are up to the task. My permission to trap properties has been solidified and all I have to do is wait until October 24<sup>th</sup> and the fun will begin.

The good news for me is I am recently semi-retired so time is on my side. Back when I was a young duffer, I could go day and night. Up early to check traps, work all day and then burn the midnight oil putting up fur. Over the years the older you get the slower you get. I used to travel many miles and cover a lot of territory and in the last few years I traveled little put out a lot less traps. Bottom line is I still trapped and had fun doing it.

Last year time was not on my side as work was crazy busy. My wife and I recently purchased a pretty good chunk of land so I decided I would trap the back forty. My game cameras had showed plenty of critters roaming around, and not the type I wanted around. So, I weekend trapped, canine sets early and caught a few fox and coyotes. Pretty sure I saved a few deer, rabbits and ruffed grouse. All stress free!!!!!!

I nuisance trap all year and in lieu of payment for my services I try to barter with folks. I will rid them of their skunks and get permission to trap during fur season. I have gained access through bartering and have scored

some good land to trap. Be cautioned that this is not always the case, they want their skunks gone but hate trappers. Go figure. I have turned down jobs because of this craziness.

Even though the season starts October 24<sup>th</sup>, please bear in mind the fur is not always in prime yet. Many folks think that cold weather makes the fur prime up fast. While partially true the amount of daylight is the big factor. A few years back I set out 54 traps the first day with the help of my partner Logan. On the first check we got few animals and upon skinning them we found them all to be blue.

The term blue means exactly as the name definition is. Upon skinning and fleshing the hide will actually have a blue hue to it when finished. Unfortunately, this fur is useless in the fur trade. It can be used as a hanger but that is basically it.

The next day we went and tripped most of the traps. Two weeks later we reset and in that short time the fur had primed up. Being the scavenger type of person, I am I will ride around now and pluck a few roadkill up and skin them to see if they have primed up yet. Once they show primness, I will then set my line. Work smarter not harder sound familiar?

For first time trappers you have to devote enough time to tend your traps every 24 hours. This is governed by state law, not by one's choice. It is important to have a friend or buddy to go with you so God forbid you get sick or injured your traps can be checked or tripped so they are not ac-

tive. The penalties are quite severe for this offense.

Another huge issue is you have to have permission to trap any land other than your own. It's a very easy process to get through. A simple knock on the door and a polite attitude will get you and take your time to explain what traps you will be using, even do a show and tell. Share the harvest if the folks would like. Be cautioned that you will run into some folks who will make you feel pretty not special. Thank them for their time and move on.

Also keep trap of your catches. Vermont Fish and Wildlife now require you to report the number of trap nights and number of critters caught, and what county you got them from. I have kept a notebook for years and love to flip thru it and remember the good old days.

This time of year, I always like to give thanks to my parents who brought me up to love the outdoors. The nights at deer camp were the best, along with duck hunting, partridge hunting, rabbit hunting, basically if it was in season, we hunted them. I also give thanks to my current family who support everything I do outdoors, from late night meetings to traveling out of state to hunt to know this is my passion and support me all the way. I enjoy the many outings we do as a family and they understand that as soon as rabbit hunting ends and the ice goes out, I will be home more often, usually they wish the seasons were longer as I get cranky after turkey season ends.

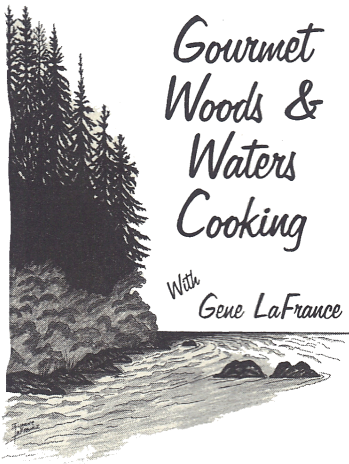
So, I hope your traps are full this fall and you totally enjoy your time outside, Make it fun and not a job. Good luck to all in your time afield.

For me, it's time for a heat pack on a stiff neck. Why you ask? Well I

worked outdoors all day and kept getting constantly interrupted. I could tell a cold front was coming because there was a never-ending string of geese headed south. I have this deficiency in my system that makes me upon hearing a flock of geese above

to stop what I am doing and watch and listen until I can no longer hear or see them. I leave a window open at night so I can hear the night flyers. Mother nature at her best.

Have a great fall. ■



The most difficult challenges that I face in writing this column is to create a new recipe each month that is relatively easy to prepare and is nutritious. I enjoy good food, but I don't like the idea of being handicapped with a recipe that calls for exotic herbs and wines. That would require the mindset of a rocket scientist to create the entree successfully. All my recipes are surely nutritious, and relatively easy to prepare. Every once in awhile I come up with a recipe that is truly a gourmet delight that may just knock your sox off!! I feel that this is such a recipe.

Use a sharp filet knife to deftly shave a whole turkey breast away from the bird's breast bone and other skeleton bones. Remove any skin and fat that might be on the breast meat. You now have a good size chunk of turkey breast meat to work with. If I elect to bone out one breast, I usually do both of them, and cut off the legs at the top of the thigh joint. I freeze these pieces for future use. I then cut off the wing, neck, and break the rest of the carcass up into small pieces. The aforementioned pieces then go into a large cooking vessel to be the base for an outstanding turkey soup!

Lay your turkey breast on a cutting board with the breast meat side facing the board. Use a sharp knife to cut the breast meat into

## Fried Turkey Fingers

### INGREDIENTS

- Breast meat of a wild turkey
- BISQUICK or AUNT JEMIMA pancake mix
- Peanut oil
- Milk
- Duck Sauce

slices about a half inch to three quarters of an inch thick. Make your cuts PARALLEL to the grain of the breast meat, that is running LENGTHWISE. Then cut each slice of the breast into strips or "fingers" a half inch to three quarters of an inch wide. Cut these fingers into strips about four inches long.

Pour enough peanut oil into your frying pan so the oil covers half the thickness of your turkey fingers. I insist you use peanut oil because it will withstand higher temperatures than vegetable or olive oil without scorching or burning. I use the HOLLYWOOD brand of peanut oil because it is fortified with vitamin E, which is an antioxidant. Peanut oil also adds a subtle pleasant flavor to any entree fried in it.

Set your electric frying pan at 375 degrees F. Make a batter from pancake mix. I use BISQUICK or AUNT JEMIMA brand mix, but any pancake mix should do. Pour enough mix into a bowl and make up enough batter to cover all your turkey fingers. Add some milk to the pancake mix and blend thoroughly. You want to mix just enough milk into your pancake mix so your batter is not as thick as pancake batter, but just thick enough so it will give your turkey fingers a generous coating of batter. Your batter should have the consistency of a thick gravy, more or less. Do not make the batter too thick, for it will overpower your turkey fingers. Drop ALL

your turkey fingers into the bowl of batter and coat ALL of them with batter.

When your frying pan reaches 375 degrees F. using a fork, spear one end of each finger, lift the finger out of the batter for several seconds to allow excess batter to run off, and then ease each finger into the hot peanut oil. Allow space in your frying pan so the fingers do not touch each other when cooking. WORK QUICKLY!!

After you have placed as many fingers in your frying pan as it will hold, watch their frying progress carefully. A minute or two after placing the fingers in the oil, CAREFULLY run a spatula against the bottom of the frying pan and UNDER each of the fingers to make sure the batter is not sticking to the bottom of the pan. When the batter becomes golden brown, turn them over and finish frying them. Your turkey fingers will cook through in a matter of minutes on each side. Remove the fingers from the peanut oil and allow them to drain on several layers of paper towels. Continue to fry the rest of your fingers.

I have not mentioned portions in the column, as only you will know how many folks you are serving. Serve your fried turkey fingers garnished with duck sauce or you may elect to pour a generous amount of duck sauce onto each plate, then push a finger into the sauce before taking a bite. I usually serve the fingers with mashed potato and turkey gravy, along with a vegetable.

I have never seen this entree served on any restaurant's menu anywhere in the world, and I have travelled from Alaska to England! The closest you will come to this recipe will be in a Chinese restaurant, however you can be guaranteed they are not using wild turkey breast meat for their breast meat. Enjoy!! ■

## Governor Scott's Veto of S.169 Stands

*Governor Scott's veto of the S.169, the mandatory waiting period to be able to take possession of firearms from a FFL, was not overturned by the*

*legislature. A required additional visit at a gun show or gun shop at this time?*

## Vermont State House: The People's House?

As many folks know, the Vermont Legislature departed the state house on March 13th, and from then onward, operated almost exclusively by Zoom hearings until the Final Gavel on September the 25th. The use of Zoom was supposed to be an emergency response to the restrictions to COVID-19. The goal was use Zoom only to enact legislation for dealing governmental hurdles created by COVID-19 and essential operational budgets.

Zoom should not have been to circumvent viable public participation. But that's exactly what happened.

Zoom hearings were often late, Zoom images froze, audio was garbled, and legislators from rural areas had Zoom access problems. The interests of Vermonters,

particularly in rural areas, was not well served by Zoom,

Zoom operations were embraced by legislators who prefer to avoid having to be present in the "People's House," that is the Vermont State House. They could participate from home, or anywhere else, and they did not even have to be in Vermont. The state house was closed. Many legislators no longer post their home telephone number nor address on the legislative web site.

Our legislators are already prepared to continue the same methods, evade not having contact with those whom they represent. They can avoid unwanted interaction with us.

How exactly do they represent us without positive or negative feedback?

## Our Vermont Legislators Voted Themselves a Big Increase!

One piece of legislation they quickly enacted was a bill that gave the legislators raises in the near future.

While far too many Vermonters were suffering serious economic loss during the COVID-19 restrictions, our legislators voted themselves a raise. The legislators whom voted for this raise have tried to evade acknowledging their raise by calling it something else. Regardless of how they try to label this action, when they increased the money they are paid for what they do in the legislature, it is a raise. A quite impressive raise in this case accomplished

by linking their compensation to the state employee union contract.

Legislators are not bargaining unit employees. They are elected officials. This a vast difference in status.

Does this sound right to you?

You can listen to H.961 at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sxeqv4aPwtM>

H.961 starts at 54:00 (54 minutes) and the roll call vote starts at 1:18 (1 hour, 18 minutes into the video)

## Magazine Ban Case in SCOV

The Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs joined with several other groups to file a legal challenge to the firearm magazine ban on S.55, now Act 94, one week after the law went into effect in April 2018.

The law has illogical conflicts and restricts magazine owners from buying, selling or trading magazines that are the legal standard throughout the vast majority of states in the USA.

The case is currently before the Supreme Court of Vermont (SCOV).

Shouldn't Vermonters have the right to the same firearm magazines as other Americans?

It is the right and duty of citizens to vote. Please vote and encourage others to vote. ■

## Vermont Fish & Wildlife Participates in Eastern Woodcock Migration Research Cooperative

survival during migration.

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has joined the Eastern Woodcock Migration Research Cooperative, an international research collaboration developed to better understand the migratory ecology of the American woodcock along the Eastern Seaboard through the use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technology.

A total of 18 woodcock were captured and outfitted with GPS units in three locations across Vermont in September with field work led by PhD students from the University of Maine with support from members of Vermont Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, The Vermont Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, and Audubon Vermont.

Directed by the University of Maine, this study is designed to provide precise and timely GPS data to track the seasonal movement and habitat selection of American woodcock during pre-migration periods in the Northeast and southern Canadian provinces, southerly migration paths and stopovers, wintering periods in Southeastern states, and reverse migration routes to northern breeding grounds. The goals of the program include identifying when woodcock initiate migration, migrational stopover sites, duration of migration for individuals, and

“This is a very important step to better understand woodcock in Vermont,” said Migratory Game Bird Biologist David Sausville. “Our involvement is a critical piece in understanding their behavior and population distribution across the entire eastern management region. Wildlife biologists have observed a slow decline in woodcock numbers during the past four decades in the Northeast. We know very little about their migration patterns and habitat utilization relative to spring breeding and pre-migration periods in the fall.”

“The information obtained from this study will answer questions about

habitat use during various seasons and life stages, as well as migration mortality that will help us to fine tune our hunting season dates and work with habitat management partners to provide critical habitat needs during all stages of the woodcock lifespan here in Vermont.”

Vermont Fish and Wildlife purchased five GPS units, with funding from state and federally matched funds. Vermont cooperative partners providing additional financial contributions for the remaining units came from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Wildlife Management Institute, and Vermont Chapter of the Nature Conservancy.



*VTF&W photo by Chris Ingram:*

*Vermont Fish and Wildlife, along with state and federal conservation partners captured and outfitted 18 American woodcock with GPS tracking units as part of the Eastern Woodcock Migration Research Cooperative study to better understand woodcock habitat selection and migration patterns across the Eastern Seaboard.*

“We look forward to learning valuable information obtained from these 18 individuals and we plan to return with another round of deployments next year as we continue to refine and improve our woodcock management and habitat programs,” added Sausville.

For information on becoming a Vermont cooperative partner, email David Sausville at [david.sausville@vermont.gov](mailto:david.sausville@vermont.gov)

To learn more about the Eastern Woodcock Migration Research Cooperative, visit [www.woodcockmigration.org](http://www.woodcockmigration.org) and click on the “Migration” tab to follow Vermont’s study birds as they migrate to southern wintering grounds.

# Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department Calendar 2021

Conserving Fish, Wildlife, Plants and Their Habitats for the People of Vermont



Vermont Fish and Wildlife's colorful 2021 calendar is now available.

The calendar is filled with stunning photos of Vermont wildlife, including white-tailed deer, moose, a bald eagle, gray tree frog, spruce grouse, swallowtail butterfly, pumpkinseed, peregrine falcon, woodcock, bobcat, and scenic Lake Willoughby. It includes photos by many well-known Vermont photographers including Roger Irwin, Tony Smith, Tyler Pockette, Daniel Berna, Kurt Budliger, Ian Clark, Chris Ingram, and Josh Blouin.

“Sandbar Wildlife Management Area in Milton was the state’s first Wildlife

Management Area (WMA) in 1920,” said Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter. “100 years later Vermont has 100 WMAs protecting more than 130,000 acres of lands and waters that provide critical habitat for native plants and animals as well as opportunities for wildlife-based recreation.”

“As we move into a new decade, we invite you to join our efforts to conserve and protect Vermont’s precious natural resources through the purchase of a [Vermont Habitat Stamp](#). For more information about wildlife and projects throughout Vermont,

visit our website, [www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com), and in the meantime, be sure to get out to explore and enjoy Vermont for yourself.”

The calendar includes hunting, fishing and trapping season dates for each month, along with beautiful photography, and it makes the perfect gift for any outdoor recreationist.

The calendar is available for \$15 from Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department with a printable free-shipping [order form](#) on their website [www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com). ■

# Vermont Hunters Contribute to Ruffed Grouse Research

*Vermont Fish & Wildlife Press Release*

The ruffed grouse is an iconic game bird of Vermont that is widely recognized and enjoyed by hunters and non-hunters alike, but wildlife biologists are concerned that grouse populations across the Northeast have declined over the past 30 years.

This trend has prompted ruffed grouse research on potential causes, including emerging disease threats and habitat loss. Recently, the mosquito-borne West Nile virus was implicated as a significant contributor to population declines in Pennsylvania, and research is underway to help biologists better understand the potential impact of this virus on grouse populations across their range, including here in Vermont.

Beginning in the fall of 2019 and continuing this year, volunteer hunters are collecting blood samples from the grouse they harvest in Vermont for inclusion in the multi-state West Nile virus research being conducted by the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study at the University of Georgia.

The goal of this research is to estimate regional population-level patterns in West Nile virus infection rates in grouse and to inform the implementation of effective conservation strategies for the species.

“Hunters collected 30 usable grouse blood samples from 11 Vermont

counties in 2019,” said State Wildlife Biologist Chris Bernier with Vermont Fish and Wildlife. “Preliminary results indicate a 16.7 percent positivity rate in the sampled grouse with flavivirus (the family of viruses that includes West Nile virus) antibodies



detected in samples from Addison, Caledonia, Chittenden, Essex, and Windsor counties.” Bernier emphasized that these results are not an indication of human risk for West Nile Virus.

Surveillance conducted by the Vermont Department of Health and the

Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets indicated a relatively mild year for West Nile virus in 2019 with no reported cases of West Nile virus in humans or other animals, and with the virus being detected in only five of the 3,217 mosquito pools

tested throughout the state.” A mosquito pool is a group of up to 50 mosquitoes of the same species in the same location.

“Although the detection of West Nile virus antibodies in Vermont grouse wasn’t entirely unexpected given the virus’ known occurrence in the state, what remains to be seen is how this positivity rate compares with other states, how it varies from year to year, and what factors influence it,” added Bernier. “Vermont’s continued participation in this research will help answer these questions by increasing the number and geographic distribution of the samples hunters provide.”

For additional information on [West Nile virus in Vermont](#), visit the Vermont Department of Health website (<https://www.healthvermont.gov/disease-control/mosquito-borne-diseases>)

To learn more about ruffed grouse: contact State Wildlife Biologist Chris Bernier at (802) 777-0823 or [chris.bernier@vermont.gov](mailto:chris.bernier@vermont.gov). ■

# Vermont's Regular Deer Season Starts Saturday, Nov. 14

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Press Release



experience with fewer, but often larger, deer.”

Vermont hunting licenses include a buck tag for this season and a late season bear tag (for Nov. 14-22), cost \$28 for residents and \$102 for nonresidents. Hunters under 18 years of age get a break at \$8 for residents and \$25 for nonresidents.

Licenses are available on Fish and Wildlife's website and from license agents statewide.

Fish and Wildlife urges hunters to wear a fluorescent orange hat and vest to help maintain Vermont's very good hunting season safety record.

A [2020 Vermont Deer Hunting Guide](#) can be downloaded from the department's website at [www.vtfishand-wildlife.com](http://www.vtfishand-wildlife.com). The guide includes a map of the Wildlife Management Units (WMUs), season dates, regulations, and other helpful information.

Hunters are gearing up for the start of Vermont's traditionally popular 16-day regular deer season that begins Saturday, November 14 and ends Sunday, November 29.

A hunter may take one legal buck during this season. The definition of a legal buck depends on the Wildlife Management Unit (WMU). A [map of the WMUs](#) is on pages 22 and 23 of the 2020 VERMONT HUNTING & TRAPPING GUIDE available from license agents statewide.

In WMUs C, D1, D2, E1, E2, G, I, L, M, P, and Q a legal buck is any deer with at least one antler three inches or more in length.

In WMUs A, B, F1, F2, H, J1, J2, K, N, and O a legal buck is any deer with at least one antler with two or more antler points one inch in length or longer.

“The greatest numbers of deer continue to be in the southwestern and northwestern regions of the state,” said Vermont Fish and Wildlife's deer biologist Nick Fortin. “The Green Mountains and Northeast Kingdom offer more of a big woods



Hunters who get a deer on November 14 or 15 can help Vermont's deer management program by reporting their deer at one of the biological check stations listed below that will

be staffed from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., unless the store closes earlier:

- **Buck Stop Mini Mart** *Bennington*
- **Jericho General Store** *Jericho*
- **The Village Market & Deli Bakersfield**
- **Singleton's Store** *Cavendish*
- **Keith's Country Store** *Pittsford*
- **R&L Archery** *Barre*
- **Guilford Country Store** *Guilford* (Saturday only)

Biologists are collecting middle incisor teeth from deer to help estimate population size, growth rate, health, and mortality rates, and to evaluate regional differences in ages of bucks. Each tooth will be cross-sectioned to accurately determine the deer's age, and the results will be posted on the Fish and Wildlife website next spring.

Hunters who do not go to a biological reporting station are also asked to provide a tooth from their deer. Obtain a tooth envelope from your regular reporting agent. Remove one of the middle incisor teeth, being careful to include the root. Place the tooth in the envelope and give it to the reporting agent.

Hunters are reminded to follow all guidelines and restrictions currently in place for mitigating and preventing the spread of COVID-19 at this time. This includes quarantine and travel restrictions for out of state hunters who wish

to hunt in Vermont as well as wearing face masks and practicing proper social distancing for successful hunters checking in deer at big game reporting stations. ■



# ROAST WILD TURKEY

by Eugene J. LaFrance

If my memory serves me correctly, Benjamin Franklin, the man of “flying-kite-in-thunderstorm-with-key-attached” fame, lobbied unsuccessfully to have the American wild turkey be recognized as the national bird of the United States of America. Franklin’s choice of bird had a great deal of merit. Unfortunately, his efforts failed. Though the bald eagle is truly a beautiful and majestic bird of prey in appearance, what we really have as the feathered symbol of our country, is a bird of prey that is little more than a buzzard dressed up in formal evening attire. Considering what is normally on an eagle’s menu, I would venture to say a large piece of truck tire casing would cook up and taste better than an eagle!

The native American wild turkey is a bird of totally different feather. I am convinced our wild turkey is tastier than the domestically raised bird that traditionally graces our dinner tables at Thanksgiving. Fortunately for us today, thanks to modern game management efforts and successful restocking programs, wild turkeys are now found throughout their former ranges. The birds may be there, but harvesting a wild turkey requires a good deal of hunting expertise, or a lot of plain dumb luck. I don’t have the expertise, so I enter the woods severely handicapped in my efforts to put a wild turkey in our oven. But,

I have been in the right place, at the right time, on occasion, and have

In no way do I wish to dissuade you from using your family’s traditional stuffing mix.



If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it!

Roasting a wild turkey is simplicity itself, whether you wrap the bird in aluminum foil, seal the bird in an oven cooking bag, or use the open pan method of cooking the bird. I use an oven cooking bag, for this roasting aid helps retain the bird’s natural moisture. The open pan method of roasting a turkey is probably the most traditional way of cooking this bird. This method lends itself easily to basting the bird frequently with equal part of butter or margarine and dry white wine. A wild turkey is naturally lean and basting liquids help to keep the bird from drying out. I do not sprinkle salt and pepper on my bird, but you may elect to do so. I’m suppose to be on a salt-free diet!

been lucky enough to bring home the turkey.

Whichever roasting method you may elect to use, preheat the oven to 325 degrees F and allow about twenty-four minutes of cooking time per pound of bird. By using a low temperature setting, your bird is not likely to dry out as much.

When contemplating roasting a wild turkey, don’t let the word “wild” frighten you into a state of culinary shock. Go about cooking the bird just as you would its domestic cousin. On some gobblers you will find a mass of spongy protein on their breasts, a reserve source of nutrients the bird utilizes in place of his eating during the mating season. Though nutritious, this material is too watery for cooking, and I would recommend it be removed when dressing your bird.

Serve your turkey on preheated plates, along with accompaniments that would traditionally be offered with a domestic bird. Don’t forget the cranberry sauce! Enjoy! ■

I like to keep my stuffing simple. I do not lean toward traditional stuffing seasoning. More often than not, I’ll rely on “Stove Top” stuffing mix.