

With May Comes The Wild Turkey Hunt

Day one of the Maine Spring Turkey Hunting Season was a washout as a drenching rain came all day. On the second day of the season, it was early morning, still dark outside as the hunters awoke for their first outing. They dressed in layers as the weather would be cold early and warmer later in the day. It was cold, damp and overcast as they awaited the arrival of legal hunting time in the field edge. They held off starting their turkey calls as the overcast skies kept things gloomy, dark and severely limited visibility.

As visibility improved, they began with a "Fly Down" call to let any nearby Toms know a hen was in the area. There were no gobblers in response. After waiting 15 minutes, a "Raspy Hen" call was tried, again no gobbles in response. And so on for another hour, different calls were tried with the same result. Then a series of turkey cuts were heard and a lone Tom approached sans strut or gobble. He approached to within a hundred yards before wandering away. No strut, no gobble and seemingly no interest. Day one, advantage turkeys.



Sunrise Over a Turkey Decoy Set



A Decoy Set Viewed From Hunter's Location

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Sportsmanship and Unsportsmanlike Conduct
- Annual Allagash Wilderness Canoe Trip

...TURKEY HUNT CONTINUED WEEK TWO

Despite hunting multiple locations and trying different tactics, the first week was earmarked by a lack of gobbles in response to various calls. Occasional hens were seen, but only one male turkey was evident. The second week brought more of the same, except for a couple of single gobbles being heard deep in the woods. Those turkeys did not come to the decoys nor toward the calls. The second week did result in the sighting of more hens coming to the decoys and responding to the calls.

This hunter surmises that the colder and wetter than normal conditions coupled with a prolonged rain storm with high winds on the weekend prior to the start of the season literally dampened the ardor of the male turkey population and hence the lack of their normally amorous response to calls and decoys used by the hunters.

In any event, despite the birds not cooperating, the outdoors experience was truly fun for all concerned.

“Ten minutes later A “Raspy Hen” call results in gobbles from three directions..”



...TURKEY HUNT CONTINUED WEEK THREE

Up at 3:00 AM and onsite by 4:00 AM, 31°F, slight breeze. Decoys out and set by 4:10 with legal hunting to start at 4:32 AM. Coyote howls in the distance and several Barred Owls hooting. Two ducks fly overhead. Geese are heard honking in the distance. At 4:20 a “Fly Down” call elicits a gobble response from the SW wood line. Ten minutes later A “Raspy Hen” call results in gobbles from three directions. While facing west across a corn field, gobbles come from the Southwest, West and Northwest wood line bordering the field. Promises to be a good day. At 4:50 AM a bird emerges from the NW corner of the field and proceeds to the decoys. The turkey turns and looks straight at the hunter. The hunter slips off the safety, aligns the shotgun bead on the turkey’s wattle and squeezes the trigger. Bang, nice turkey down. The hunter waits until 6:00 AM before retrieving the bird, but no more gobbles are heard and no other birds come in.

SPORTSMANSHIP AND UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT

I am a sportsman, Hunter, Fisherman, conservationist and Guide. In my tenure I have witnessed a lot of wonderful gestures by fellow hunters and a lot of odd behavior from the game we pursue. Call it deer being deer or in this particular case turkeys being turkeys. In all my years afield chasing turkeys I have never witnessed the behavior that took place on this particular hunt.

First, let me back up and start at the beginning. I was up from Connecticut to Pine Grove Lodge for the Benoit Deer Tracking School. I was extremely excited for a weekend away to learn from some of the best Buck Trackers in the world. Lucky enough for me, I had a break in my busy guiding schedule to come up a couple days early to try and bag a Maine Turkey. I spoke with Bob and Andrea and in true fashion they didn't hesitate in saying "come on up early" I arrived on Wednesday and scouted for a Thursday hunt which proved tough with no gobblers. Bob and I were talking and he and I took a ride to a farm he knew about who supports the program. We met with the owner and he was happy to give permission. We parted ways and I quickly located a beautiful turkey for the next day's hunt. Now here's where the sportsmanship comes in. I arrived to the farm early, Zero Dark Thirty early. While getting my gear ready a truck of locals pulls in and asked if I was planning to hunt as they had roosted a bird the night before in the exact place I was planning on hunting. I said yes, but also said to them I can go somewhere else as they have been hunting this property for years and I was only hunting one more day. Being the true sportsman they were, they told me to go ahead and hunt as I was there first and they would find another spot. They
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SPRING TURKEY HUNT WEEK FOUR



Dave Rogers, an Army Veteran tagged a nice Turkey at 7:40 AM on May 26, 2023. The day started with no turkeys at the first hunting location. A shift to a different hunting site resulted in four turkeys, one Jake and three Hens coming to the decoys. An additional four Turkeys crossed the field and entered the woods where they joined a Tom that had been gobbling but which would not leave the wood line. Nevertheless, it was a great hunt and we are thankful to the farmers who gave us access.

SPORTSMANSHIP AND UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT (CONT)

asked if I minded if they hunt across the road and I quickly said go right ahead, thanking them for letting me hunt my planned location. You see there is an unwritten code of conduct among sportsman. And these gentlemen read the book. The takeaway here is if someone beats you to a spot, it's theirs for the day. The right thing to do is go and find another spot and let them have it. I truly appreciate those gentlemen and if they ever come across this article I want to say thank you.

Now on to the Unsportsmanlike Conduct. This was not from any other Hunter. This was from the Turkeys themselves. In my years of chasing turkeys in many different states, I have never witnessed what was about to happen. I set up on the edge of an island in a big planted corn field. I had placed a Jake and Hen decoy out as I usually do in fields with concentration on placing the Jake where I want to shoot the Gobbler. Field hunting is a different beast than woods hunting which I can cover in a different article if the Program invites me back to write. It was beginning to break light and the morning song birds were beginning to sing. A coyote howled in the distance which in turn triggered a Shock Gobble from the Tom who was roosted about 200 yards just off the field edge in front of me. "Right where I left him!" I said to myself with excitement. Then an-

other gobble, and another. He was singing his assembly song in the tree to tell any hens in the area he was there. Further down the field I heard the broken gobble of a Jake turkey.

For those of you who don't know, a Jake is an immature Tom turkey. A teenager if you will. Soon the whole wood line was lit up with turkeys gobbling. Probably the best situation I could be in.

It was now legal shooting hours. I slid a shell into the chamber, closed the slide and placed another into the tube. Ready to go I made my first tree calls. The gobbler honored me with 4 healthy gobbles and the Jake carried on as well. Knowing at that point the Tom had pinpointed me, I sat back to wait for the fly down. He pitched down just inside the wood line and made his way to the open field strutting and gobbling by himself. I made a few yelps and a cut and he quickly began coming my way, eyes locked on the decoys. Again perfect situation. Until... He was
(Continues on page 5)



*"Best regards
and hunt safe!"*

SPORTSMANSHIP AND UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT (CONT)

when a group of 3 Jakes began running about 90 yards away walking toward me toward the mature Tom at about as fast as I've ever seen turkeys run. Noticing the gang of teenagers approaching, he went into full strut in an attempt to intimidate them and to show his dominance. As soon as the Jakes made it to the Tom, an epic turkey fight ensued. Sitting there in absolute shock, not believing what I was seeing, I was a spectator to a 3 on 1 Wild Turkey Battle Royale. When it was over, the Jakes had bested the larger bird and he limped away in defeat. Now I have been turkey hunting a lot of years and have never seen or even heard of anything like this and I would say it was a once in a lifetime experience.

Soon after, the bandit teenage turkeys turned their attention to my Jake decoy, running over and beating on it until they had pulled it from its stake and it was laying over on the ground. At this point, I was flabbergasted at the behavior and after their chasing my Tom away, I decided to take the lead Jake, being he was the ring leader of the assault. I typically do not harvest Jakes as a rule, however, in this case I believed the population on this particular piece of property would not suffer and they may no longer attack any other turkeys.

One clean shot and the ring leader was on the ground. He will absolutely make for wonderful table fare and led to the most memorable turkey hunt of my life. This day was a lesson in the great sportsmanship we should always show to our fellow hunters, and the unsportsmanlike conduct animals can show to each other. I hope that good Karma comes back to the 2 gentlemen who deferred the field to me as they deserve it. And I hope that big Tom survives to gobble another day after the beating he took from the younger birds. I hope to come back next season and enjoy the wonderful Turkey Hunting Maine has to offer. The author, Sal Renzuella is a Sky Paramedic First Responder.

DEXTER VFW HOLDS OPEN HOUSE

The
Carter
Dulac
Post 4298
held an
open
house on



Saturday May 20, 2023. Pine Grove Programs (PGP) participated with a booth and registered some new Veterans. PGP hopes to expand participation of VFW members in our events.

2023 ALLAGASH WILDERNESS CANOE TRIP

When an event is planned months in advance, one cannot be sure of the weather



“Lots of gear off loaded at the launch site.”

during the event. This year’s Annual Allagash Wilderness Canoe Trip was earmarked by below seasonal temperatures and daily rain and windy conditions. Despite the wind, rain and cold, our intrepid canoers made the best of the tough conditions and had a memorable trip. Participants included Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans.

They put in at Indian Stream that first day June 6, 2023 and due to high winds and rain, they only made it to Thoreau



campsite where they camped for two days due to inclement weather and continuing high winds.

On Thursday, June 8, 2023 they were able to continue their trip. They stopped en-route to visit the remains of the Eagle Lake and West Branch Railroad that operated 1927 to 1933. Used to haul pulpwood from Eagle Lake to Umbazooksus Lake, the railroad hauled 6,500 cords of pulpwood in an average week. The obsolete locomotives were abandoned in place.



After viewing the abandoned locomotive, they trekked the 3,000 feet through the woods to view the steam engine that operated The Eagle Lake Tramway. In fall of 1902, engineer Fred Dow constructed the steam powered tramway to move logs from Eagle Lake to Chamberlain Lake. The logs were loaded onto steel trucks that were pulled on top of the tramway 3,000 feet where they were offloaded. The empty trucks returned underneath the tramway

2023 ALLAGASH WILDERNESS CANOE TRIP (CONT)

back to get more logs. The tramway used a continuous 6,000 foot long cable.



They continued on to their next campsite which was at Scofield Cove. The following morning, Friday June 9, 2023, they made their way to Churchill Dam and portaged around the Chase Rapids. They proceeded to and camped next at the Grey Brook Campsite.

On Saturday, June 10, 2023, they continued to Michaud Farm Campsite. Enroute, part of the party stopped at Cunliffe Depot to view remains of the Lombard Log Haulers. Invented in Waterville, Maine, these



haulers were the first tracked vehicles ever invented.

On Saturday morning, they awoke to fairly clear skies and experienced a few showers enroute to Michaud Farm. For the most part, the day allowed them to take off their jackets and to enjoy the river under the best weather conditions encountered all week. Due to the weather delay earlier in



the week, Saturday was the group's last day on the waterway. As a result, they missed portaging around the treacherous 40

foot high Allagash Falls and making their way to the end of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway at East Twin Brook and the continuation into the town of Allagash proper where the trip normally ends.

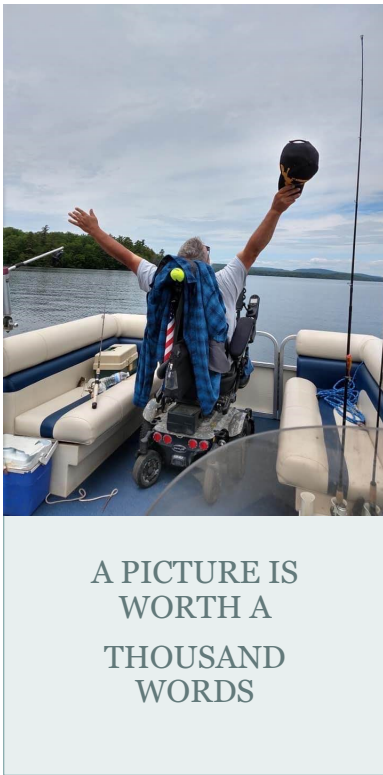
FLY FISHING SCHOOL

Wyatt Howe conducted a Fly-Fishing School for six Veterans on May 30, 2023. After learning casting techniques, they got to try out their newly acquired skills catching Trout that were stocked in the Pine Grove Lodge Pond. One of the Veterans fished with a fly rod that his kids had given him forty years ago and which he had never used (see photo below). One participant sent a note saying:

“Sorry for the delay, but I am finally getting around to saying “thank you” for providing Veterans (including me) with the May 30th Fly Fishing Lesson.

Nice day and I enjoyed getting to see your lodge and certainly meeting Wyatt. You’ve got a great facility. I enjoyed learning the details of fly fishing and getting a little time fly casting. Wyatt is patient and extremely knowledgeable Great guide. Again, thanks for what you do to give back. It gives me a great reason to continue to have faith in people despite all the wacky-ness going on as of late. Wonderful day!”





A PICTURE IS
WORTH A
THOUSAND
WORDS

AD HOC EVENTS

Do you belong to a group that has Veteran or First Responders as members. Pine Grove Programs is willing to accommodate small groups on a ad hoc basis for a customized event when requested. It may provide you with a chance for your members to get away on a retreat from the rigors of daily life and to experience the naturally therapeutic benefits of the Maine outdoors. It can be a simple day of fishing, or just a boat ride, kayaking or an outdoor woods seminar. If you have a group that would like to plan an event contact Paul our Outreach Coordinator at paul@pinegroveprograms.org.

Upcoming 2023 Schedule of Events

Dexter VFW Fishing Event July 2023*

Lobster Feed – July 15, 2023 **

Patriot Ride—August 5, 2023

Golf Tournament—September 17, 2023 **

Black Bear Hunt—Aug28—Sept 30, 2023

Freiburg Fair – October **

Bow Deer Hunt—October *

Upland Game Bird Hunt—October 18-19, 2023

Deer Hunt—November *

Coyote Night Hunt - January—March 2024*

* Date To Be Determined

** Fund Raising Event

Note: This list is not all inclusive as events may be deleted or added and tailored to specific individual or group needs that develop during the year.



Bob & Jeff at Maine Sportsman Show

**Veteran of the
Year Nominations**

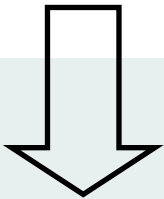
Each year Pine Grove Programs gives an award for Veteran of the Year. If you have a Veteran you want to nominate, please contact Andrea Howe.

andrea@pinegroveprograms.org

NOTES FROM THE OUTREACH COORDINATOR

One Veteran whom I took out turkey hunting took pictures of the beautiful sunrise he watched at the start of the hunting day. He sent the picture to his wife for her to share in the moment. While no turkeys made their presence known, the Veteran thanked me for what a great day he had and commented on what a beautiful sunrise he had the opportunity to experience. His response to this day was in concert with our program goal to use the naturally therapeutic benefits of the Maine outdoors to heal the soul, unload emotional burdens and bring wonder to their experience. It is so much more than harvesting an animal; it is the totality of the experience, the comradery, the shared experience and the appreciation for what God has given us in nature.

Note Mailing Address Change



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PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

