

“Going for the Gould’s” turkey

Just Hunting

by Steve Brewer

Kansas to hunt Rio, and to be with old friends I have made over many years hunting and staying with them, I will again hunt Kansas. Although it will be a scaled back hunt, not the usual five-state Western hunt, it is far better than staying home.

Next, I leave for Mexico, to hunt the biggest of the turkeys, the Gould’s. I have tried to get that hunt together since 2006; it finally fell in place last weekend. After returning from Mexico, I fish St. George Island waterways in Florida. This year is probably my “Grand Tour”, as the miles and years have taken their toll on my body. I have applied for a moose hunt in Maine, my 35th straight year. If I finally get drawn, my plans are to take that hunt.

Now to try and help my hunting friends, closer to home. As you have been reading, we are learning about turkeys life, their habits, their moods, and their travel. I asked you a few weeks ago, please cut these transition periods out, they are very useful.

Again, we are in Zone 2, and have moved into transition period number 3, April 19th through May 3rd. This period is similar to the peak of the rut for whitetail deer, which is the best time to hunt. Afternoon hunting, where allowed, is best at this time. Hens are setting, and gobblers are lonesome, making this the best time to call. The few hens that are still available, leave the gobblers quick. Gobblers spend longer times in the tree, on



the roost with intense gobbling, waiting for hens to show up before flying down. Caution, caution, never call to gobblers on the roost. Remember in real nature, the hen goes to the gobbler, he will just sit on his limb, waiting for the hen to show up.

Next week, we will leave the transition period, with instructions on how to hunt them. Till season actually comes in, be safe and enjoy some pay-lake fishing. I know for a fact Ray’s Hog Holler is open, good people, great fishing.

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I was taught growing up, in coal country, ‘good things come to those that wait.’ Probably not true anymore, with people always in a rush. But I still live with the same code, ‘good things happen to those who wait.’ I would not have given a dime chance for my turkey hunts to fall in place, but I never gave up hope, and now it looks like everything has worked out. In a few days, I leave for

They fiddled, they harped, and they picked and sang for almost a week to a rattlesnake

by the late Nora McIntosh Helton
from her book, “Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow”

Many instances are remembered in our lives, from childhood throughout our adult lives.

Seeing the bob-cat pictured in The Estill County Tribune, years ago, brought back memories of many times of hearing my mother and daddy tell of encounters with bob cats. We called them wild-cats, and that they were.

I’ve heard my dad tell of one night they forgot to close the hen house and was reminded when the chickens began to squall. He grabbed his gun and lantern and opened the door to go out to see about them and the old wild cat was just passing the door. He let go of the hen he had, or somehow she got loose and came running and flopping right into the house. But, of course, the cat got gone . . . and fast. The hen house wasn’t forgotten to be closed many times for they knew if it wasn’t shut at night the cats and ‘possums would have chicken that night.

Daddy was a hunter of different wild game, birds and animals. He would take my brother Hester and me with him sometimes. I remember going with him close to Thanksgiving one time, the dog treed something up such a tall tree that we never did find what it was. I would hold the lantern, standing real still while Daddy would prowl very slowly around out from the tree, trying to see its eyes shining from the light of the lantern. But, we did not get that one. It started to snow while we were looking for the ‘coon’ and we headed out for home, for we were out Buckner Ridge off what is called Buzzard Roost Point. And, that is quite a ways on foot and in snow. There were many coon hunts and all of them didn’t turn out like this one. But many times we came in with a coon and a possum. Sometimes we would get as many at two or three possums.

Many poisonous snakes were killed during the

days of childhood here in Estill County. There were quite a few good-sized ones, and there was one huge one; a rattler they decided, after days of waiting and watching for it to come out of a crack under a big rock.

Mom and Dad were working in the cornfield when we lived at the Sonny Abney place, and the dog treed under this big rock. They knew it was a snake of some kind because of the dog’s actions. They gouged and poked with long poles but couldn’t get the snake to come out. So, while Mom watched, my Dad went for a neighbor, Jack Smyth. From that neighbor went the message for more of the men of the neighborhood to come help. I don’t really know just all the things they did to get the snake to come out. But they came from all over the place, bringing their music pieces to play for the snake (it has been said that music will cause a rattler to crawl toward it, or maybe to get away from it) so as to get it to come out. It did move, but farther on into the crack and to where the men could see down through a hole or another crack enough that it was just about the biggest rattler they had ever happened upon.

Well, they fiddled, they harped, and they picked the five-string banjo and sang for almost a week, stopping up the hole where it had gone in at. Every morning, some of them were there to check on it, and it was always there where they left it. They finally decided that it couldn’t get turned around in the crack it had gone in.

The men, at least some of them, besides my Dad, Jimmie McIntosh, and Jack Smyth, were Troy Marcum, Vernon “Tab” Smyth, Berry Abney, Banks Tipton, and two of the McIntosh boys, my brothers, Floyd and Willie.

From what they could see, they could tell it was a rattler, also its rattling noise when they upset it with music or poking it with a stick. But their desire and attempts to get it out all together was to no avail. They



Another time, another place, not far away
George Puckett, Willie McIntosh and Wesley Walters
played music at the Rison Cave in the 1920’s.

couldn’t let it go, so they dynamited it, and pieces of snake were found as big as a man’s hand. That was all that was found of it. But quite a few pieces the size of a man’s hand were found. The men decided it was a male because of its beautiful coloring, for it is said the males are more beautiful than the females. (Well, so much for the rattlesnake.)

The Big Hunt

by Tracy Randall Patrick

Another Easter is on the way, and this one will likely pass without much egg hunting as in the previous year. Most of my egg hunts over the past 20 years have been at the home of my late mother-in-law, Imogene Burton, which always included a big meal, a few innings of kickball and then hunting the eggs. The kids hunted first and then the adults went back over the ground to see what was missed. Eventually, all the eggs were tallied and if a single egg was missing, everyone went back to the field looking for that lost stray cheep.

Some of my earliest memories of egg hunting were at Tipton Ridge before it became Furnace Junction, with my mother’s family and community. We hunted a couple of times in Reuben Tipton’s fields where the sage grass made a perfect hide-out. We once hunted in a field across from Gum Springs School where Allen Crowe may have lived at the time. All of us kids were put in a building while the eggs were hidden and then came rushing out, trying to pick up as many colored orbs as we could find. I remember like it was yesterday, seeing our dad, Tracy Patrick, smiling as he climbed up an oil pump for a bright orange egg on top of the steel pipe. He was always a “kid at heart,” and played the games as much as our mom would let him. In later years, we hunted behind the home of our grandparents, Floyd and Mary McIntosh, in another big sage brush field where they later raised strawberries and honeybees.

Most years after that, we hunted eggs in our cow pasture at Cressy and behind Ivory Hill Baptist Church. We hid the eggs over and over and eventually some were never found. Our dogs learned quickly to find the boiled eggs for a treat of their own. It didn’t seem to matter if the eggs lay hidden in the grass for months, the dogs still would eat them. Our lawn mowers found a lot in the summer as well, both at the church and at home. We’d be busy mowing and hit a patch of high grass which would cause an egg to explode with a stench or go whizzing through the air for 30 or 40 feet.

Most of the eggs were actually eggs back then, not like the candy and plastic ones they hide today. We had no problem eating the eggs we were hiding and hunting except when some wanted to keep hiding them over and over. A big lot of the fun with the eggs was coloring them using colored pills and vinegar and a wax pen to decorate them with. We started out with some nice looking eggs with about six primary colors and some half and half. But, by the time we had experimented awhile, many of the eggs became drab green.

One of the worst things that happened to us with eggs was when our brother-in-law brought us some turkey eggs from the farm where he worked. We ate the fresh eggs and hatched out turkeys with the eggs put under our “setting hens,” which produced more eggs. My late brother Charlie loved boiled turkey eggs, but the only worse smell than the boiled turkey eggs themselves was the gas he produced after he ate them.

Some time after Cheech and Chong produced

their “feels like, smells like, tastes like dog crap” routine, we had a big Easter egg hunt behind Ivory Hill. We had a lot of visitors at times with everyone really dressed up and the little girls wearing white hubcap shaped hats. One fellow was all dressed up and helping his kids look for eggs behind the church where community dogs, for whatever reason, often did their duty. Next to the wall lay a nearly perfectly shaped dog doo that looked so much like an egg, I almost picked it up. I was standing off a ways when this dude picked up the doo. He held it up, looked at it, felt of it; then smelled it, and I thought, “here we go!” But the smell aroused him and he flung it away and he started feverishly brushing off his hands.

Later years, I was an observer at various egg hunts, like at Mountain Crest and Ravenna Park, where parents and grandparents sort of ‘abandoned’ their young ones who were left carrying the basket while the adults went after the colored orbs with a frenzy. One young mother went off and left her toddler in the wee-ones field at Ravenna Park. He bent over to pick up an egg and his shorts fell down and he tumbled over the hill with his backside showing. I had a camera but didn’t have the heart to take a picture of the little fellow.

A few years ago, I was at a family egg hunt where a plump young mother left her basket-carrying child and went scurrying about the field grabbing all the eggs she could carry in her arms. I mentioned it to my brother-in-law and when he told her she wasn’t to do that, she flung the eggs in all directions, creating an orb rainbow. Oh, well!