

Hunters conclude heavy turkey harvest

SINNEMAHONING — Pennsylvania hunters have concluded a three-week statewide turkey season thought to have been one of the most successful on record, with a harvest figure that will probably exceed 30,000.

Game managers credit this year's turkey hunting success to over two decades of planning and development aimed at establishing sizeable turkey populations throughout the state's turkey range.

Although wild turkey population were at a low mark just a few decades ago, sound game management

practices, coupled with a long-range "trap and transfer" program, have produced record numbers of the prized game birds (over 100,000) in most of the mountainous sections of Pennsylvania.

Wild turkey populations throughout the United States started to decline in the 1700s and by the Nineteenth Century the birds had almost been eliminated in their original 39-state range. Nationally, the number of turkeys in 1942 was believed to have been only 20,000 to 30,000 birds, most of them in southeastern states and central Pennsylvania.

Game management

professionals responsible for the development of the Game Commission's "trap and transfer" program are elected that the wild turkey has made such a dramatic comeback - even faster than was estimated when the procedures were introduced in the mid-fifties.

Commenting on the wild turkey population, Game Commission Executive Director Glenn L. Bowers noted, "This certainly proves that the 'trap and transfer' method is working. We now have probably the largest wild turkey population ever - and it's even more significant when

professionals that we haven't stocked a farm-raised bird in the north-central counties for almost 20 years, and we haven't released a farm turkey in the southcentral area since the early 1970s.

"The flocks we're seeing today are the direct result of the 'trap and transfer' technique," he said.

Responding to these dramatic growth patterns, the Game Commission, during its October meeting in Erie, voted to discontinue production of farm-raised turkeys and convert the facility in Lycoming County to the production of ringneck pheasants. For several years, the Game Commission has been under increasing pressure to phase out the turkey farm and the stocking of farm-raised birds.

A number of years ago the Game Commission adopted a policy which prohibited the release of game farm turkeys in areas where populations of wild birds existed. The policy was developed when it became obvious that the mingling of pen-raised birds with purebred wild turkeys caused problems.

Commenting on the conversion, Game

Management Chief Dale Sheffer said, "We were at a point in time when the Game Commission recognized that we simple had too few areas in which to stock farm turkeys where they wouldn't be in conflict with wild birds."

According to Sheffer, "Stocking farm-raised turkeys was one of the least effective propagation programs ever undertaken by the Game Commission. The wild populations we now enjoy are not the result of stocking farm birds - and that's an indisputable fact."

For the most part, the Game Commission's action has been hailed as timely, even long overdue. On the other hand, the decision has met with resistance in some quarters where sportsmen contend the Game Commission promised a three to five-year "phaseout."

Addressing the possibility of future depressed populations resulting from disease and/or successive hard winters, Bowers explained, "If that situation arises, we can concentrate our efforts in trapping and transferring birds from unaffected areas to the depressed range. Just as we created whole new flocks in southern counties by

bringing in turkeys from the north, we can reverse that procedure by establishing new flocks in the north with birds from the south.

"We realize that populations can be depleted by severe winters, and we recognize that birds can fall victim to disease. However, we seriously doubt that Pennsylvania will ever again be in a position where we cannot quickly reintroduce wild birds into those areas threatened by either disease or winter mortality. It's highly improbable that either disease or severe weather would affect the entire state."

Bowers concluded, "The decision to cease production of farm turkeys has already been acclaimed by both the Pennsylvania and National Wild Turkey Federations and the state Wildlife Society. Viewed in its proper perspective, I'm sure Pennsylvania sportsmen will recognize the wisdom of the Game Commission's action. When the conversion of the game farm is complete, we'll be raising an additional 40,000 or more ringnecks annually. To the hunter, that's a far better return on his investment and will increase his enjoyment in the field."

Hallowell to Washington?

HARRISBURG — Is Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Penrose really the dark-horse candidate for a position as Ronald Reagan's U.S. Secretary of Agriculture?

In addition to the top job, there is a position as deputy secretary and five openings as assistant secretary of agriculture to be filled by the new administration.

At least three published reports said Hallowell had been approached by the Reagan transition team.

In none of the cases did the reports indicate Hallowell was adverse to the idea.

Hallowell did say Monday, when asked if he were going to be accepting a post in Washington, "I don't see it."

Nevertheless, Hallowell could offer reasonably good credentials for the USDA post.

He is a Republican. While his service as Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary is relatively short, he did serve a number of years as Pennsylvania Director of USDA's Farmers Home Administration. Although he recently gave up his partnership in his Bucks County

farm, he has a strong dairy farmer background.

Sources close to the Secretary confirm there is no doubt Hallowell's name is being talked about, if not for the top spot for one of the assistant secretary positions.

"I know he is under consideration," one source confirmed.

As far as the Northeast is concerned, Hallowell is the prime ag secretary with the correct party ties.

But, a number of people pointed out the Secretary has it nice in Pennsylvania and they say the Governor is not anxious to lose a cabinet member he can trust and work with.

Should Hallowell accept any Washington post, another can of worms would

be opened: who would be his replacement as Pennsylvania Secretary?

In a wide-open game of guessing and speculation names ranging from both current deputy secretaries in Pennsylvania; to hog farmer Reno Thomas, former ag committee chairman who lost his house seat in the latest election; to Robert H. Williams, editor of Pennsylvania Farmer magazine; to Lancaster County representative and farmer Noah Wenger; have been advanced.

Like all other political guessing games, the entire show may have to be taken with a grain of salt.

On the other hand, it costs the ringside king-makers nothing to speculate.—CH

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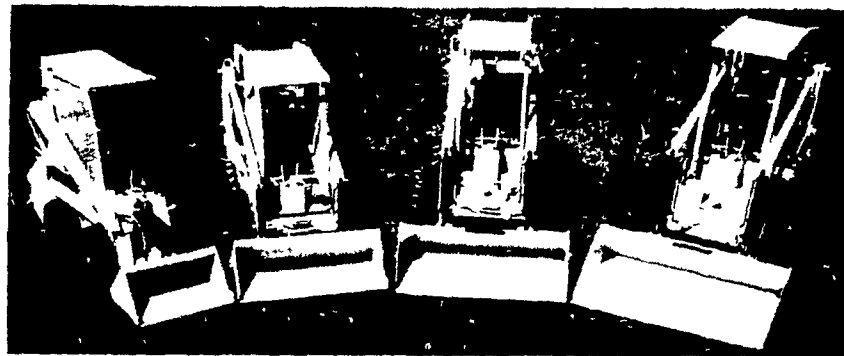
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