



Farming The Wild Turkey

Novel Thanksgiving Idea Suggested By The Bird Experts

THE newest idea, appropriate to Thanksgiving, is that wild turkeys should be farmed—that is to say, bred regularly under conditions of semi-domestication. Ornithological experts say that it is entirely feasible, and in the adoption of such a plan lies the hope for the preservation of the greatest game bird from final extinction.

The wild turkey, of course, is a species entirely distinct from the tame bird with the white-meat breast. One reason why its preservation is important is that it is needed to contribute from time to time its hardy blood and much-prized game flavor to the domesticated variety by interbreeding. The comparatively dark meat of the breast of many of the tame turkeys that come to market nowadays at the Thanksgiving season is attributable to such matings, which are eagerly sought by the knowing producer of feathered stock.

The wild turkey is so notoriously shy that most people would be inclined to suppose it incapable of domestication. Such an inference, however, according to the expert, is a mistaken one. As a matter of fact, the bird is not by nature much afraid of man, but rather tame and sociable, so far as human beings are concerned. In Massachusetts during early colonial days there were great numbers of wild turkeys, and frequently they made themselves at home in the close neighborhood of the dwellings of settlers.

To-day the species is entirely extinct in New England, and in other parts of the country the fowl is extremely wild and hard to shoot—not, however, because of a natural shyness of disposition, but simply for the reason that it has been hunted and trapped so persistently. If wild turkeys were bred and reared on farms—a matter of no great difficulty to accomplish, say the experts—they would be docile enough, and, with proper protection, would multiply rapidly.

The fact that wild turkeys have maintained their foothold to some extent in long-settled parts of their old territory—as, for example, in Virginia and Maryland—appears to indicate that it would be entirely practicable to restock portions of their former ranges. But, inasmuch as the country anciently occupied by them is now for the most part populated by human beings, it is necessary, in order to accomplish the object suggested, that their multiplication shall be encouraged under conditions of at least partial domestication—that is to say, by farming the birds for pleasure and profit.

It is believed that, if proper protection were given to such enterprises by the law, sporting club and wealthy individuals owning or leasing large tracts would gladly go into the business of breeding wild turkeys—not for market of course, but for the pleasure derivable from such an enterprise. At the present time not a few such organizations and proprietors of great private estates maintain similar preserves for the quail or "bobwhite," holding field trials in competition, to test the ability of dogs to find and point the birds. These field trials are in reality dog races, and no shooting of the quail is allowed.

Where wild turkeys are concerned, however, there is no reason why such extensive preserves, covering in some instances many thousands of acres, should not afford admirable sport under suitable restrictions. There is no form of outdoor amusement more delightful than turkey hunting. But, if farmers could be persuaded to take up the idea, and to breed the birds, they might sell shooting privileges to sportsmen at a rate which would put much more money into their pockets than they could gain by sending the fowls to market.

If the business were suitably managed farms of 500 to 1,000 acres would yield a larger revenue from wild turkeys than from poultry, sportsmen being usually willing to pay several times more for the fun of shooting birds than the latter would fetch as marketable game. For such purposes, of course, it would be neither necessary nor desirable that the fowls should be too tame. On the other hand, experience has shown that wild turkeys are not disposed to go far away from an accustomed source of food supply.

The wild turkey is prolific, and takes kindly to civilization. Like its tame congener, it is a great consumer of injurious insects, particularly grasshoppers, and as such would be useful to the farmer. The female lays from 15 to 20 eggs for a "clutch," but raises only one brood in a year. Foxes, hawks and owls are deadly enemies, but it would be the business of the farmer to protect the birds from these foes, as he does in the case of his farm-yard poultry. As for human poachers, adequate laws for protection against them would have to be passed; but the sportsmen, if once they became interested in the matter, could be relied upon to exert in this direction a powerful influence, which has never yet failed of success in affairs of the kind.

It seems difficult to realize that less than 100 years ago wild turkeys were so abundant that they often sold for six cents apiece, a very large one, weighing 25 or 30 pounds, occasionally fetching as much as 25 cents. To-day a large specimen, gobbler preferred, is worth \$5. The species has been wiped out, not by sportsmen, but by poachers, who kill the birds on the roosts, trap them in pens, or lie in ambush for them, attracting them within easy shooting distance by imitating the call of the hen or the young "poult."

On Fisher's Island, in Long Island sound, a most interesting experiment has already been made in



BACK FROM THE HUNT

the rearing of turkeys under semi-domestication—though in this case the species dealt with is the tame one. On this island, which is the most successful turkey farm in the world, the birds are permitted to run wild, and are not even furnished with any shelter, other than they can find among the trees and scrub. But plenty of corn is thrown about where they can get it.

In this artificial wilderness, as it might be called, which covers an area of about 4,000 acres, the turkeys get as close to nature as possible. Indeed, the whole idea of their management is to let them alone, interfering with them as little as possible. In the winter time their heads often freeze under their wings when they are at roost. But the exposure does them no harm; on the contrary, it renders them exceedingly vigorous, and they attain huge size, the gobblers sometimes weighing as much as 50 pounds when sent to market.

Every spring a few wild gobblers, trapped for the purpose in Virginia or the Carolinas, are introduced into the flocks on Fisher's Island, to contribute fresh blood. This is esteemed a matter of the utmost importance. Our tame turkeys are notoriously difficult birds to rear, under ordinary circumstances, being delicate and liable to epidemics—on which account many farmers have given up trying to raise them. The reason why is simply that there has been too much in-breeding, and the stock has lost its hardiness.

A number of varieties of the tame turkey have been developed by breeding, the principal ones being the Bronze, the Buff, the Slate, and the White, the Black and the Narragansett. The White was originally an albino. But all of these are derived from a single species, which is of Mexican origin. There is only one other known species, which is native to Yucatan and Guatemala. It is called the "ocellated turkey," owing to the fact that its tail is ornamented with eyes like that of the peacock. It is one of the most beautiful of birds, its feathers blazing with metallic reflections of gold, green, blue and bronze.

The Thankful Heart

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.—Ephesians v:20.

The thankful spirit is the true and sure source of a happy life. There are plenty of things to be thankful for, and it is wise to make an effort to find them. They are never far away. They are under our control. We are their masters. God made us that way. We may be in touch with very disagreeable people, but if we do not like disagreeable feelings we need not have them. There are many good things to think of with reference to such people. Be a missionary to them. Think how nice it would be if such a person had a sweet disposition and let your own radiate its virtues.

We can rejoice and be glad no matter where we are. Paul and Silas sang hymns while in jail. Why not? It was bad enough to be in jail. God was good to them. He revealed to them facts of eternal life. These were good things to think about, and why should they not enjoy them? To sing was a reasonable thing to do. God had given them something against the day of trouble and they used it. Why should not we? What is the use of being miserable when we can just as well be happy? God is near us in the joys and comforts of life as well as in our trials and temptations. We have good reasons to be thankful under all conditions of life. The sun always shines no matter about the clouds. Daylight is a good thing, but the best thing is, God created us in his

image and after his likeness. There is a divine element in our nature that enables us to think God's thoughts in the facts of nature as well as in the words of Scriptures.

The natural world is a product of thought developed and governed by a system of divine laws that are always in force. God has planned and made laws by which we live, breathe, walk, see, hear, think, talk and learn the meaning of things. How our Heavenly Father has planned the universe for man's comfort and how thankful and happy man should be!

Mark the difference between the accomplished Christian gentleman and man in his uncivilized state and then be thankful for the Gospel and what the discovery of the laws of nature has done for you. Open your mind to see how God planned the laws of steam and electricity in keeping with man's capacity to utilize these forces and thus bring joy and comfort to human hearts. Go through your house, look and think as you go. You will see things of art and culture everywhere—books, magazines, newspapers, pictures, and conveniences, and works of art bearing the marks of the divine in man, which means you who look. When in the city you may look around and notice the buildings, and works of man, and remember that the people who have done all these wonderful things are members of your family. God is their father and he has given them a task you could not do. They are doing the work and you are getting the benefit of it. God has given every person a religious nature. It is a source of great comfort and joy. Are you weary? "I will give you rest." "Let not your heart be troubled." "My peace I leave with you." These are God's promises. They should mean much to us. Are you poor and homeless? Turn your thoughts on the Saviour's promises and picture to yourself the golden city; locate your mansion, receive your old friends, tell them to come in. Thankful? How can one help but be thankful? The Christian's spirit is the thankful, happy spirit. Every person should have it. It is the conquering spirit. It never meets defeat. No matter where one is or how sad the conditions of life, the hopes of heaven are always bright. The Christian, happy spirit always has something worth while to do. The wickedness of the world is round us. Throw a dash of Gospel sunlight along the pathway of the sin-suffering friend. A light in the darkness is what he needs. Smile on him. Let him see your gladness when he would expect to see sorrow.

The thankful spirit brings gladness in all conditions of life. There are beautiful characters among the needy as well as in elegant homes on the boulevards. If the rich can afford to adorn their homes and beautify them and pay the price I will enjoy their beauty and render thanks. There is a difference in men's natural attainments. They are God-made and are needed for the improvement and comfort of mankind. Without them there could be no schools, no true progress, and what would we do without the conveniences made possible through the labor of others. They are necessary to the comforts of our homes and in every department of the work of life. God help you to look and see reasons to be thankful every day of your life.—Rev. J. B. MacGuffin.

For the Thanksgiving Dinner

The delicate flavor of the pumpkin is developed only by a long and gentle application of heat, so when preparing it for pies always stew it for three or four hours, then mix it with the other ingredients.

To each cupful of pulp add two well beaten eggs, half a cupful of sugar, a tablespoonful of cornstarch, dissolved in a cupful of cream, half a teaspoonful each of ginger and cinnamon and a teaspoonful of lemon extract; add a large tablespoonful of melted butter and fill the paste full with this mixture. Bake brown in a moderate oven.

Although the observance of Thanksgiving is particularly a northern custom, the following recipe for Virginia pudding is given in the Housekeeper as appropriate to the occasion.

Turn one pound of stoned raisins, one pound of dried currants, one-fourth of a pound of citron sliced thin into a large mixing bowl and dredge well with flour. Add half a pound of fresh suet chopped small, then mix the whole thoroughly. In another bowl cream one-half pound of butter with an equal weight of sugar; add to this mixture the yolks of six eggs beaten smooth and one pint of rich, sweet milk.

Whip the whites of the eggs very stiff, then add them alternately with one and a quarter pounds of sifted flour to the mixture. Then stir into it the juice and grated rind of one lemon, one teaspoonful each of cinnamon and cloves, one-half teaspoonful of mace, one grated nutmeg and one-half teaspoonful of soda dissolved in a little cold water. Lastly, add the fruit, stirring and beating vigorously until the whole is thoroughly mixed.

Pour into a well floured pudding bag, allowing plenty of room for swelling, drop into a roopty pot of boiling water and boil continuously for five hours. Serve hot with a sauce made as follows: Cream together one cupful of white sugar and a lump of butter the size of an egg. When smooth and white, beat in the grated rind of a lemon and the whipped white of an egg.

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