

Springtime brings excitement to turkey woods

THE WOMAN in the car next to me must have thought I had a serious problem.

And I did. My purrs were a little too clucky and my cackles sounded like a creaky old door. So I was doing the only sensible thing — practicing my turkey calls. It wasn't my fault the light turned red and I happened to be sitting in traffic in the middle of Birmingham when I let loose with a loud, excited cackle.

Judging from the bewildered scowl on her face, the woman wasn't a turkey hunter. She probably won't be too excited at all. Monday when the 1992 spring wild turkey season begins. Thousands of hunters are expected to take to the woods in pursuit of Michigan's wary Eastern wild turkey during the spring season, which ends May 24.

Having missed out on a permit last year, my anticipation of the 1992 turkey camp is running at an all-time high.

LIKE MOST birds, the wild turkey is a vocal creature. To the unknowing ear, the boisterous yelps, cackles and gobbles may seem like random noises, but each is actually a calculated, natural announcement, response or invitation depending on the situation.

The blossoming of spring marks the start of the mating season in the turkey woods. During the nesting season, eager Toms, or mature male turkeys, are vulnerable to the insistent calling of a receptive hen. This vulnerability is what the successful turkey hunter will exploit.

Although no turkey call or tactic is guaranteed, the hunter that learns to use the proper call at the proper time will increase his chances for success.

The ability to master a call and imitate the sounds of a breeding hen is an important aspect of the hunt, as is scouting, setting up for a clear shot and complete camouflage. But equally as important as mastering the call is knowing which call to use and when to use it.

CERTAINLY THERE is no easy answer as to the question of exactly which call to use in which situation as each situation in the turkey woods is unique. But there are a few things a hunter can remember about calling to enhance the chances for success.

Location calls, or predator calls, can be very effective in locating roosted birds either in the evening or before first light. In the spring, Toms are eager for love and are constantly on the lookout for a receptive hen. They're antsy while on the roost and sharp sound. An owl hoot, the cawing of a crow or the screeching of a hawk will often send a Tom into a tumultuous uproar.

Once you've located a roosted gobbler try to set up within 150 yards of him and begin with soft, quiet clucks to let him know a hen is near by. If he responds immediately, wait for him to fly down off the roost and lead him in with some occasional clucks and purrs.

WHEN YOU HAVEN'T located a roosted



Bill Parker

birds, but know there are turkey in the area, it's a good idea to begin calling with soft, quiet clucks. Clucks or soft yelps may be all that is needed if the Tom is close by.

On the other hand, if he is close and you let loose with loud, sharp yelps or cackles it may frighten the bird into the next county without you ever knowing he was there.

If you start out soft and get no response, increase the volume of the call or try a different call. If you receive a response, continue using that call.

When a gobbler sounds like he's getting closer, be patient. Sit tight for up to an hour or more and wait him out, even if he stops gobbling. Many times a Tom will come in silent for the final 50 to 80 yards so it may take him a while to come into view. Patience is the optimum tactic to employ in the turkey woods.

When a Tom gets hung up, or stops coming in, it sometimes helps to change location. Throwing a call behind you may entice the gobbler into thinking the hen is leaving and may renew his interest. If not, slowly and quietly back out of your position and change locations, either to the right or left; then begin calling with another call.

Again be patient and don't give up. Why leave one area in which you know there are birds to try somewhere else?

• BETSIE, PLATTE CLEANUP

The Benzie Area Steelheaders are looking for volunteers to help with the sixth annual dual river cleanup.

Both the Betzie and the Platte are world famous steelhead and salmon rivers, and both rivers get their share of abuse. We stretch on both rivers," said George Richey, river cleanup chairman for the Benzie Area Steelheaders. "The more volunteers that show up, the more portions of the two rivers that can be cleaned."

Volunteers should bring waders, rakes and hoes. A sharp knife also comes in handy to cut monofilament line from tree limbs. Drift boats and canoes will be on both rivers to help carry bags of trash downstream to dumpsters.

"What a great way to give something back to the rivers that produce so many fish and thrills for local and visiting fishermen alike," Richey said. "A day spent helping the Benzie Area Steelheaders on their annual river cleanup is a day well spent. The cleanup makes a tremendous amount of difference in the quality of both rivers, both in the water and along the banks."

Volunteers are asked to meet at the Homestead dam site on the Betzie River at 9 a.m. Saturday, May 16.

• TROTT TROUT KING

Rob Trott, host of the 'Great Lakes Outdoors' television program has been named National Trout King for 1992 and will be honored April 23-26 at the National Trout Festival in Kalkaska.

The National Trout Festival, now in its 36th year, is held in conjunction with the opening day of trout season (April 25) and is considered by many as the official arrival of spring in Michigan.

Along with chasing trout on the rivers and lakes in Kalkaska County, Trott and the National Trout Festival will be the parade marshal in the Grand Royale Parade through downtown Kalkaska.

Visitors to Kalkaska County during the National Trout Festival will be able to experience some of the best trout fishing in Michigan along with possibly winning a prize in the annual trout contest. There will also be a host of non-fishing activities for family members who prefer not to fish.

For more information call the Kalkaska Chamber of Commerce at (616) 258-9103.

(Anglers and turkey hunters are urged to report their success. Questions and comments are also encouraged. Send information to: Outdoors, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, Mi., 48009 or call Bill Parker Monday evenings, 6-10 p.m. at 644-1101, ext. 241.)

outdoor calendar

- IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS**
- April 18 — A hunters' safety class will be offered at the Detroit Sportsman's Congress. Call 739-2509 for more information.
 - April 18 — Youth archery instruction beginning 9 a.m. at the Homopus Metro Archery Club. The class is for archers age 16 and younger. Range fee is \$2 and participants must be accompanied by a parent or responsible adult over age 21. Call 941-9486 for more information.
 - April 19-25 — National Wildlife Week.
 - April 20 — Spring wild turkey season opens in designated areas of the state.
 - April 25 — Trout season opens statewide in designated trout streams and lakes.
 - April 25 — Walleye, sauger, pike and muskie season opens on inland lakes.
 - May 2-4 — A Youth Shoot will be held in the Detroit Archery Clubhouse in West Bloomfield. Competition is open to all archers under age 17. Shoots will begin 9 a.m., 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. Saturday and 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. Sunday. Registration fee is \$2 and advance registration is required. Call Todd Coe, 669-9571, for more information. Detroit Archers Clubhouse is on Drake, between Maple and Walnut Lake roads.
 - May 2 — River Crab Salmon Stakes, an open salmon fishing tournament held annually to raise money to benefit child abuse/neglect programs in Michigan, will be at Chuck Muer's River Crab Restaurant in St. Clair. Prizes including a trip for two to Hawaii, will be raffled off. Raffle entry tickets are \$10 each and available at Chuck Muer restaurants including: Charlie's Crab in Troy, Pals in West Bloomfield, Johnny Magnum's in Farmington Hills and Merriette's in Southfield or by calling 1-800-468-3727. The tickets may also be used as a \$10 credit on dinner for two at any Chuck Muer restaurant statewide.
 - May 5 — Romeo B.A.S.S. Flusters will hold its monthly meeting 7 p.m. at the Romeo Community Youth and Civic Center. New members are welcome. Call 286-6469 for more information.
 - May 7 — A six-week course on basic muzzleloading shotgun shooting begins 7 p.m. at the Western Wayne County Conservation Association. The course is open to the public and certificates of completion will be given to each participant. Call 533-0285 for more information.
 - May 23-24 — The eighth annual Wildlife Art Festival will be held in

- Clare. Call (517) 386-2442 for more information.
 - May 23 — Bass season opens statewide.
- METROPARKS**
- Frog Moon, a naturalist-led evening walk to a frog pond under the light of a full moon, begins 7:30 p.m. today at Stony Creek.
 - Full Moon Walk, a naturalist-led evening hike under the light of a full moon, begins 7:30 p.m. today at Kensington.
 - Slipping the Hogs, an opportunity for youngsters age 5 and younger to help feed the farm animals, begins 3 p.m. Saturday at the Kensington Farm Center.
 - Dance of the Timberdoodle, a program in which participants will explore the life of the American woodcock, begins 7:30 p.m. Saturday at Indian Springs. Participants should bring a blanket to sit on and a pair of binoculars.
 - National Wildlife Week Walk, a series of walks in which various aspects of the endangered species situation will be discussed, will be held Sunday, Monday, Tuesday (April 23) and Friday (April 24), beginning 2 p.m. each day at Kensington.
 - Kid's Spring Break Special, an introduction to astronomy for 10- to 12-year-olds, begins 1 p.m. Tuesday at Indian Springs.
 - Who Lives in the Woods, a puppet show for children ages 4-7, begins 1 p.m. Tuesday at Stony Creek.
 - Bird Banding, an opportunity for students ages 8-12 to help catch, mark and release spring birds, begins 10 a.m. Wednesday at Stony Creek.
 - Kid's Spring Break Special, a program in which 8- to 10-year-olds will learn about the inhabitants of a pond, begins 1 p.m. Wednesday at Indian Springs.

- Kid's Spring Break Special, a program for 10- to 12-year-olds in which participants will learn the pioneer skills of candle dipping, rope making and paper making, begins 1 p.m. Thursday, April 23, at Indian Springs.
- Frog Pond, a chance for children ages 6-12 to learn about the creatures in a spring pond, begins 1 p.m. Thursday at Stony Creek.
- Earth Day Anniversary Walk, a naturalist-led walk in which participants will learn how to play a part in saving the earth and why every day should be Earth Day, begins 3 p.m. Wednesday, April 23, at Kensington.
- Most Metropark programs are free, while some require a nominal charge. Advance registration is required. Call 1-800-47-PARKS for registration information.

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