

Jim Casada Outdoors

March 2013 Newsletter

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My Spring Schedule

I try to remember to provide what small town newspapers usually call a "calendar of upcoming events" with most of my newsletters. Predictably, I'll be scarce on the ground, at least in a public sense, for the next couple of months.

However, providing a list of my travels will serve to prove, should anyone be in doubt on the matter, that I'm a hopelessly addicted turkey nut and that I test the limits of domestic tranquility each time turkey season rolls around.

Here what I have planned as of this writing.

March 2-5—Hunting Osceola turkeys in Florida with the folks from EOTech with OMM Outfitters (www.ommoutfitters.com) on a private ranch near Fort Myers.

March 13-16—In Lake Charles, Louisiana for the mid-year board meeting of the Southeastern Outdoor Press Association. I plan to get in a bit of fishing while there.

March 21-24—At Water Valley Lodge (www.watervalleylodge.com) in the Black Belt area of Alabama for the First Annual Black Belt Cast & Blast. This will bring a gathering of six outdoor communicators along with six folks from the product side of the outdoor industry for a mixture of turkey hunting, hog hunting, quail hunting, bass fishing, and crappie fishing. I'm slated to hunt turkeys (mostly) and quail.

This Month's Specials

Since turkey season lies just around the corner, it seems appropriate to offer turkey-related items as this month's specials.

Here are two offers, one a chance to get one of my books at a bargain price and the second geared towards folks interested not only in reading but in collectible turkey calls.

OFFER #1:

Jim Casada, *Innovative Turkey Hunting*.

This book features the turkey-hunting wisdom of Mark Drury and Brad Harris, two of the most noteworthy names in the sport in the last 20 years, along with a goodly sampling of my own insights.

April 1—Opening day of turkey season here in South Carolina, and if things go as I plan I'll be on my little piece of property well before daylight with a couple of sandwiches, a folding seat, a poke to put more mushrooms in should I find any, and hopes of spending most of the day in the woods.

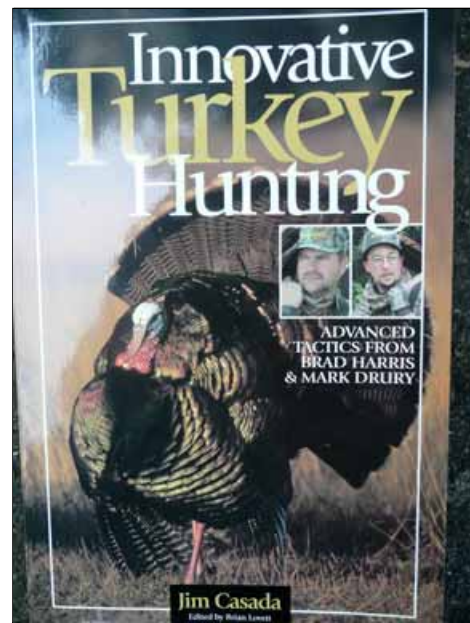
April 8-15—Hunting on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota with longtime native guide Lance Christensen and then with Whitetail Creek Outfitters (www.whitetailcreek.com) in Hulett, Wyoming (the Devils Tower area) with a side foray into Montana. All of this will be in the company of one the true greats of the sport and the quintessential "turkey gentleman," Earl Groves. It's a hunt I anticipate not only for the places will be but for the company.

April 21-25—Hunting in the Reydon, Oklahoma area at Double E Outdoors (www.doubleeoutdoors.com) with Linda Powell, a longtime friend who handles public relations for Mossberg. We will hunt both Oklahoma and Texas. It's a truly special hunt. As a gesture of gratitude to four guys she says have been especially helpful to or supportive of her during her years in the industry—Nick Sisley, Jim Zumbo, John Phillips, and me—she is calling this a mentor hunt. Rest assured that Linda is a pro in every sense of the word, and if I've helped her any over the years it's simply because she was smart enough to throw away the 99% of what I said which was chaff and readily select the 1 percent which possibly had some value.

Early May—I need to finalize arrangements for a trip to Simon Everitt's old stomping grounds in eastern N. C. along the Roanoke River with the Halifax County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and that will wrap up my season on turkeys.

May 17-18—Southeastern Conclave of the Federation of Fly Fishers (www.southeastfff.org) will be holding its annual gathering at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, NC. If you are a lover of the long rod and whistling rod, this is a "must attend" event. I'll be one of the featured speakers and will have a booth. Hopefully I'll have a chance to talk with a bunch of you folks who live in that part of the world.

When all that is done with, it'll be time to catch up on writing, especially on my work on Archibald Rutledge (again, [let me know](#) if you want to be notified when my biography of him is completed), devote lots of time to gardening, and generally cool my heels a bit.



A 204-page paperback with a list price of \$20. I'm offering signed copies at \$12.50.

[Add to Cart](#)

Order online now by using the "Add to Cart" button above, or send a check to me c/o 1250 Yorkdale Drive, Rock Hill, SC 29730.

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OFFER #2:

You might call this one the Wayne Bailey special. I was privileged to work with Wayne on his final book, *Wayne's World: 60 Years of Hunting*.

Along with a copy of the book, which I will gladly sign and inscribe (I wrote the Introduction and prepared the bibliographical essay), you get a copy of one of the last wingbone calls Wayne made. It is signed. These calls are not things of beauty, but they were made to be functional, not fancy. George Denka, in his new book *2013 Turkey Call Collectors' Guide*, rates interest in the calls as "very high."

The book and turkey call, along with either a top-quality ball cap or inscribed coffee mug Wayne had made in connection with promoting the book, all for \$175. **Only two available** (I have one cap and one mug, but four calls and books).

Please call or e-mail only.

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Memories and Musings on March as I Once Knew It

During my boyhood, and for that matter much the same still holds true today, the month of March was a time of transition. Small game hunting seasons had come and gone; trout season opener, although actually only weeks away, seemed a distant, elusive dream; and I didn't have turkey season to look forward to the way I do today. I never saw a wild turkey, much less hunted them, until I was well into adulthood. Have things ever changed in that regard.

By the time you read these words I will likely be in Florida launching the rites of spring in the first of nine states I will hunt (others include, in the order of planned visits, Alabama, my native heath of South Carolina, South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, Oklahoma, Texas, and North Carolina). By the time it is all over in early May, I'll be worn to a frazzle, about as happy to see it all end as I was to see it start, and ready to live on memories for months to come.

In one sense though, my turkey season has already started. That came with the non-stop yelping and constant shaking and howdying which typify the National Wild Turkey Federation's annual convention in Nashville. I attended the whole shebang and was in the exhibit hall at Opryland virtually the whole time (the crush of people on Saturday got to be a bit much, and I fled for safety for a few hours). While in Nashville I met a surprising number of you who read these monthly scribblings, thanks to the fact that I had noted I'd be hanging out at Tom Kelly's booth on a somewhat regular basis. There were even some really special moments—posing for photos with some of you, a hearty hug from a female reader, a snapshot with a grandson, a box of chocolate-covered cherries from Bill Robinson, and a lovely call from Mark McPhail of Wise Old Owl Turkey Calls. Thanks to one and all who stopped to chat, said something gracious about this newsletter, bought a book, or simply acknowledged my existence.

Mind you, three days of listening, non-stop, to every type of yelp and gobble imaginable (a fair number of them mighty poor imitations of the real thing and virtually all of them far too loud), not to mention enough goose honking to make a hearing impaired Canada goose wish for total isolation, can fray one's nerves a bit. Or, to put matters another way, I've had enough of that sort of hoopla and hype to last me another year.

Meanwhile, back amidst the peace and serenity of a study where I'm surrounded by books and mementoes of decades of hunting and fishing, I find it soothing to look back on yesteryear. Earlier today I wrapped up a nostalgic piece on pocket knives for *South Carolina Wildlife* magazine, and just getting it down served to remind me of how much our world has changed. When I was a boy growing up in the 1950s any man who found himself without a pocket knife felt flat-out naked, and one of the consuming ambitions of youngsters, at least in North Carolina's Great Smokies where I grew up, was to own a pocket knife. A boy's first knife was a rite of passage second only to getting a gun, and often the manner in which he handled his first knife was a weighty factor in determining when he was ready to own a gun.

Neither my father nor grandfather would have thought of leaving home without a pocket knife in their possession, and both of them owned a bunch. So did most everyone I knew. Whittling, carving, and shaping basic pieces of folk art with a knife were as common as pig tracks. Moreover, knives figured prominently in playground activities at school. Mumblety-peg was a popular game, and if a female teacher happened to ask if some boy in class had a pocket knife she could borrow, chances were every boy in class volunteered with the sort of enthusiasm which was singularly missing when the teacher asked questions of an academic nature. Today possession of a knife in the classroom will get you kicked out of school, in serious trouble with the authorities, and quite possibly lead to something like a lockdown or half a dozen cruisers stuffed with donut dunkers showing up on the premises.

How things have changed, and I'm too "sot" in my ways for anyone to even take the trouble to convince me that the changes in arenas such as this are for the better. I'd make an educated guess that not a teenager in 20 knows

what a whetstone is, never mind having the ability to use one. By way of contrast, a half century ago if you couldn't sharpen a knife blade to the point where it shaved the hair off your arm or sliced through a sheet of paper like it was soft butter, you were looked on with a mixture of pity and disdain.

I'll share one personal example which really makes my point. It's possible I've mentioned it before, because it made a big (and negative) impression on me, but if I have bear with me. Besides, the underlying lesson bears repeating.

A few years back when it came time for me to visit the local Social Security office and complete the requisite paperwork, I parked my truck and set out towards the door. There was a genial, decidedly overweight fellow in uniform standing there. He greeted me with a cheery "Good morning" then added: "You look like a fellow who would carry a pocket knife."

I thought that was a somewhat strange statement but took the fact that I had that appearance as a compliment. "As a matter of fact," I replied, "I've got two." That was not the response he wanted. I was told, in no uncertain terms, that I could not darken the doors of the building until I returned to my truck, divested myself of said knives, and entered the premises as a non-threatening sort. Mind you, when I got inside and was greeted by semi-organized chaos associated with screaming babies; all sorts of folks seeking SNAP assistance; or, like the lyrics of the old country song from Jerry Reed's "When You're Hot, You're Hot," people worried about "Who's gonna collect my welfare?"

To say it was dismaying would be a major understatement, but it was a first-rate example of what the welfare state hath wrought. No knives, but plenty of dollars going to folks who seemed to me eminently capable of doing a day's work and who were, judging by the vehicles in the parking lot and the array of cell phones, Bluetooths (should it be Blueteeeth?), and other stuff I don't even understand, doing pretty darn well sucking on the government teat. It was enough to frost a fellow's grits.

Accordingly, I'll turn to more pleasant thoughts about another aspect of life as I once knew it, this time closely associated with March. It is, incidentally, a lifestyle which seems to be on the fast track taken by the dodo, ivory-billed woodpecker, and passenger pigeon. I'm speaking of the game of marbles. If words and phrases such as law, dough rollers, steelies, fudging, lagging, knuckle down, and playing for keeps mean nothing to you, I'll simply suggest that one aspect of your childhood was filled with deprivation. All come from the game of marbles, and if you pause to think about it, some of the game's lingo—knuckle down, play for keeps, or all the marbles—have entered into the lexicon of everyday speech in America.

When March rolled around and mountain weather began to offer the first hints of spring (and it wasn't so cold or wet we couldn't head for the playground), marbles was the game of choice. The knees of pants went through a patch of rough treatment (you simply couldn't launch your law or put knuckles to the ground in suitable fashion without one knee on the ground), and the knuckles of your shooting hand took on an appearance reminiscent of those of an auto mechanic. Never mind the strictures of parents and teachers alike, most of us yielded to the terrible sin of play "keepsies," and that meant one day you might be flush with pockets bulging to full stretch with marbles and the next day down to your treasured law and too few marbles even to fill the center circle.

Of course those marbles served other purposes as well, such as the pieces for games of Chinese checkers. I don't remember a lot about that, but I do know that when it came to optimal ammunition for one's favorite slingshot, nothing quite matched marbles. The only downside was the inability to retrieve your ammo, although more than 50 years after the fact, when raising a garden at my Dad's a few years back, I tilled up enough marbles to make me realize a fair number of my wayward shots, usually launched at blue jays, came back to earth not far from where they had been released.

Add to those memories things like the first mess of poke sallet (if you haven't eaten it, see the recipe below), Grandma Minnie insisting that a big spoonful of sulphur and molasses was just the ticket for shedding the last vestiges of cabin fever and greeting greening-up time with a spring in my step, drinking the obligatory cup of sassafras tea for the same purpose, and eager anticipation of the arrival of trout season and you have a pretty good handle on what early spring was like in my boyhood. It was simple, involved the outdoors and closeness to

the earth, required little expenditure (25 cents for a bag of 50 marbles could take a real toll on my meager budget), and was filled with good times. Other than sliced fingers from inept whittling, there was no danger from knives, in school or otherwise. It was an era of simpler days and simpler ways, and somehow I have to believe that shooting slingshots and marbles had it all over sending text messages and playing computer games.

But then what do I know? I'm just an aging hillbilly, a son of the Smokies who retains boyish enthusiasm in an old man's body. Still, with every day that passes I realize just how blessed I was and have been in so many ways. I grew up poor but never realized it until I went off to college and actually was around people who had \$5 or even \$10 bills in their billfold. We didn't have television but I had books and unrestricted opportunities to read (well, almost—there was the time Mom caught me delving into *Peyton Place*—pretty mild stuff by today's standards but rest assured there was hell to pay then). I knew infinitely more about the natural world and life's cycle than 99 percent of today's youngsters, thanks to spending endless hours in the fields and woods. I knew intimately where Sunday's chicken or backbones-and-ribs came from as well thanks to slaughtering chickens and butchering hogs being integral parts of my growing up. I had parents, grandparents, and neighbors who cared and friends who shared my interests. In short, I had an idyllic childhood.

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RECIPES

I'm going to start with an old-time early spring dish from the Appalachians and then turn to soups. March, with its unpredictable weather, has always seemed to me a great time for soup, and it also a good time to make use of some of that game—ground venison, game birds, waterfowl, or the like, you stored away over the course of the past hunting season. Think gumbo for duck or goose, pilaus (or purlieus as they call them around here) for small game, soups with leftover doves or the carcass and pickings from a whole turkey or pheasants, and what have you. But let's first offer an old-time mountain dish seen as a true herald of spring, a spring tonic, and which is just enough of a purgative to, in Grandma Minnie's words, "clean out your system."

POKE SALLET

Poke sprouts need to be picked when they are six inches or less in height. Finding them is easy enough, since the dead bushes from the previous year leave all the evidence you need. Also, pokeweed is incredibly hardy, coming back year after year, and it grows widely and prolifically. Once you have the tender shoots, thanks to the fact they actually carry too much Vitamin A, you need to clean the sprouts and bring them to a rolling boil for 10 minutes or so. Then drain, cover with cold water, and repeat the process. Drain yet again and the third time you are in the eatin' mode. If you don't mind the cholesterol, add a slice or two of streaked meat at this juncture, or maybe some bacon drippings. Serve with sliced boiled eggs, bacon bits, or crumbled fatback which has been fried to a crisp atop the "sallet." Talk about fine!

TURKEY AND WILD RICE SOUP

6 tablespoons margarine or butter
 ½ cup chopped onion
 1 cup chopped celery
 ½ cup chopped carrots
 ½ cup sliced fresh mushrooms
 6 tablespoons all-purpose flour
 Salt and pepper to taste
 2 (10-ounce) cans chicken broth
 4 cups milk
 2 cups cooked wild rice
 2 cups cubed cooked turkey (you can substitute meat pulled from the carcass of a baked or roasted turkey)

Melt the margarine in a large pan and sauté the onion, celery, carrots, and mushrooms until tender-crisp. Stir in the flour, salt, and pepper and mix well. Add the chicken broth and milk and cook, stirring, until thickened. Add the wild rice and turkey. Adjust seasonings and simmer until heated through.

BARLEY VENISON SOUP

1 cup fine barley, rinsed and drained
 1 small onion
 4 cups beef broth
 3 cups frozen mixed vegetables, thawed
 1 can (46-ounce) tomato juice
 3 or 4 cups leftover venison stew or browned venison burger
 1 teaspoon sugar
 Salt and pepper to taste

Bring broth to a boil and add washed barley, chopped onion and frozen vegetables. Cook on low about 40 minutes until barley and veggies are done. Add tomato juice, venison, and seasonings. Simmer until piping hot.

Great served with cornbread.

BLACK BEAN SOUP

2 cups black beans, cleaned, rinsed and soaked
 6 cups cold water
 2 cups chicken broth
 1 medium onion, chopped
 1 garlic clove, minced
 2 tablespoons margarine
 2 bay leaves
 2 tablespoons parsley
 1 ham hock
 1-2 cups venison kielbasa or smoked venison sausage, finely chopped
 Salt and pepper to taste

Soak beans, then drain. Fill Dutch oven with ham hock, beans, water and broth. Cook on low until beans are tender. Sauté garlic, onion, and parsley in margarine and add to soup along with other ingredients. Continue cooking over low heat until beans are soft (about three hours). Add small amount of water if the soup becomes too thick. Remove bay leaves and hock, chopping ham from the latter into small pieces. Garnish with shredded cheddar cheese, sour cream, and chopped onion.

DUCK SOUP

1 large or two small ducks, cut into small pieces
 6-8 cups water
 3 ribs of celery with leaves, chopped
 1 large carrot, shredded
 1 large onion, diced
 1 teaspoon salt
 Black pepper to taste
 6 chicken bouillon cubes
 2-3 ounces thin noodles

Place all ingredients except noodles in a large kettle. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for two to three hours. Skim if necessary and add more water if soup becomes too thick. Meat may be removed from bones, chopped and added back to the soup at this point. Or let everyone debone as they eat. Add noodles and cook

until pasta is done. Serve with crusty bread for dipping.

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Recent Reading

Enough of you have indicated that you appreciate my sharing what's been on my reading list in recent weeks for me to continue offering this overview. My tastes range fairly widely, but believe it or not there is a pattern (or patterns) to my reading. Favorite arenas for me include crime and adventure fiction, autobiographies and biographies, most anything dealing with the outdoors, certain types of history (the Smokies and southern Appalachia, the literature of sport, the British Empire, exploration, etc.), and living close to nature. Those books marked with an asterisk (*) are ones I think others might find enjoyable.

1. George Denka, Jr., *2013 Turkey Call Collectors' Guide: Calls, Call Makers, and More*. Just out, this book is a detailed listing of collectible turkey calls (by makers) with information on pricing and collector interest. A valuable reference tool for anyone interested in this area of the collectibles of sport. I have signed copies in stock for sale.
2. Tom Kelly, *Point of View*. The latest book from the unofficial poet laureate of turkey hunting. As always, he's fascinating, and I almost put an asterisk with this one despite the narrow subject coverage. Tom uses such wonderful analogies and has such a way with words that he's pretty much irresistible. I have signed copies of the book in stock for sale.
3. Edwin C. Kent, *The Isle of Long Ago: Sporting Days*. An obscure book which was printed in a limited edition in 1933. There are chapters on grouse, woodcock, salmon fish, quail, and other subjects.
4. Charles Lanman, *Letters for the Alleghany Mountains*. This is a book dating back to 1849 which describes the author's travels in western North Carolina, north Georgia, and the mountains of Virginia. Since some of the ground he trod is terrain with which I'm intimately familiar, it has real appeal to me.
5. Herb McClure, *Native Turkeys and a Georgia Mountain Hunter*. This one doesn't carry an asterisk solely because of its narrow subject area, but if you are a turkey hunter, don't miss it. I have the book in stock for sale.
6. *Jim Sterba, *Nature Wars*. An intriguing look at the unintentional consequences of man's intrusion into the natural world and all sorts of problems—urban deer, resurgent beavers, citified turkeys, and much more. The author makes the valid point that there are more people living in close proximity to wild animals than at any time in human history.
7. *Robert M. Utley, *A Life Wild and Perilous: Mountain Men and the Paths to the Pacific*. This is a carefully researched overview of the short window of time in which the mountain men, fascinating characters one and all, opened the way for America to fulfill its "manifest destiny" of settling the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

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