

# Jim Casada Outdoors

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### April 2014 Newsletter

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### Jim's Schedule

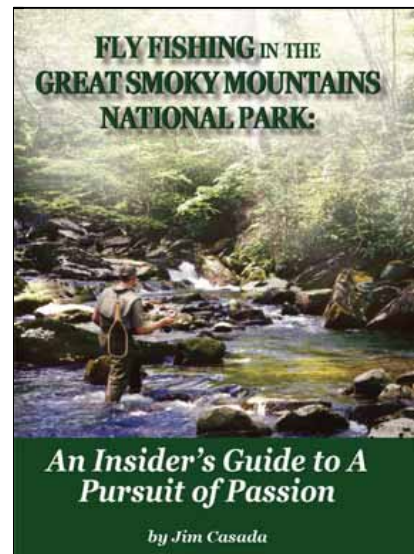
While most of my travel for the next few weeks will be of a personal nature connected with chasing longbeards, attending a board meeting of the Southeastern Outdoor Press Association and the like, I do want to bring one public appearance to the attention of you gracious folks.

I'll be in Bristol, Tenn., April 25-27, taking part in an event styled Thunder Valley Fly & Wine. This is an event for fly fishermen, held in the area of the country which features two of the finest tailwater trout streams in America, the Holston and Watauga. This event is sponsored by the Bristol International Speedway's Children's Charity and is designed to raise funds for the outreach program.

I'll be delivering the "address" at the opening banquet and auction on Friday night. For me, that means sharing some fishing tales, looking back with longing on a marvelously misspent youth as an angler, and reflecting on some of the grand characters I've known in my fishing life. The fact that the area just happens to be where I attended undergraduate school (and have fished a great deal), not to mention that I consider the fine folks of the area "home people" (they are sons and daughters of the Appalachians with the same sort of raising and perspective I have) adds to the appeal of the event.

### This Month's Special

Although April now belongs to pursuit of wild turkeys in my world, such was not always the case. In my youth and well beyond the month meant the opening of another trout season and lots of time astream.



With that in mind I am featuring, for the first time ever, my award-winning book on the streams I fished in those days (and still do, just not in April). It is *Fly Fishing in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park: An Insider's Guide to A Pursuit of Passion*.

The book, which I consider to be perhaps the finest I have ever written (and certainly it has a lot of my heart and soul in it), is available in both paperbound and hardbound forms. Running to some 450 pages, with a removable map; lots of graphs of stream gradients, monthly temperatures, rainfall and more; an extensive section of both vintage and modern photos; a

I'll also have a booth at the show on Saturday and Sunday. I hope you'll attend, maybe try your hand with a new rod or two at the 100-foot casting pond, visit a bunch of purveyors of fly fishing gear, and perhaps sample provisions from local vineyards.

For details and tickets for the **Second Annual Thunder Valley Fly and Wine**, call 423.Bristol or visit [www.tvflyandwine.org](http://www.tvflyandwine.org). Hope to see you there.



bibliography; and coverage of every stream of note in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, it is a book one reviewer kindly said "will be relevant a century from now." I think he was referring to the ample dose of history included in its pages, but whatever the case it was a gratifying assessment.

**I'm reducing the cost of either version, if you include normal shipping costs, by ten dollars. In other words, the paperback version is \$19.95 and the hardbound one \$32.50.**

Order through PayPal by clicking the button(s) below or send check to Jim Casada, 1250 Yorkdale Drive, Rock Hill, SC 29730-7638.

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## A Time of Travail I Treasure

If anyone has been paying attention, you know I'm a good many dollars, even more days and a newsletter short. I didn't get around to getting the mid-month one for March written, and this one is shamefully late. For those who are turkey hunters, the explanation is simple. For those who aren't, all I can do is beg a bit of forgiveness and assure you that those who share my hopeless addiction to His Majesty, the wild gobbler, understand. One of my favorite writers, Archibald Rutledge, summed matters up perfectly when he wrote: "Some men are mere hunters; others are turkey hunters." For better or worse, I belong to the latter clan. That translates to the fact that I'm in the woods virtually every day from mid-March (scouting time) through the end of April. Our season here in South Carolina opens on April 1 and runs until May 1. I'll run myself ragged hunting some property I own, a lease, and using the occasional day like this one when the weather is bad to play catch up. Right now it's raining like all get out, but I'll likely be back at it tomorrow.

Throw in hunts in at least two other states, a class reunion (the 50<sup>th</sup> of my college graduating class) where I expect everyone but me to look old, a speaking engagement, and a mid-year board meeting of the Southeastern Outdoor Press Association, and you begin to get the picture. April is a month which flies by, leaves me worn and battered, and is a time of travail I truly treasure. I'm never sure whether I'm happier to see opening day of turkey season arrive or to finish up the last day of the season (or fill all my tags), but all in all it is a month of magic.

I had a wonderful prelude to April late last month in my native Great Smokies of North Carolina. A first cousin whom I saw regularly when we were kids traveled to the high country with her husband, their two children, and the significant other of her son for a truly special day. Her mother, my Aunt Jessie (one of eight siblings of my father), was born in a little mountain homestead nestled high up on a small branch in what is now part of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Theirs was a hardscrabble way of life—subsistence farming, cutting some acid wood for "cash money," and living the timeless mountain method of making do with what you've got.

My father spent the most memorable years of his life on the little farm, and he always had a special corner of his heart reserved for the place and the experiences he enjoyed there during his boyhood. The family was poor—and I don't think the description "dirt poor" would have been an overstatement. Yet somehow the children who lived to adulthood (two girls died early) made successful careers for themselves and carved out a meaningful place in the world.

Aunt Jessie in many ways had one of the longest, toughest rows to hoe. She was the first member of the family to graduate from college (Maryville College in Tennessee), thanks to plenty of intelligence, a willingness to work hard, support from some of her siblings including my father and doing everything possible to scrape along. One of the things I learned from her daughter, Carolyn, was that both Aunt Jessie and her younger sister, Aunt Emma, who attended the same institution, earned part of their keep and tuition by working as seamstresses in a college shop. Aunt Jessie was a beautiful woman not only in a physical sense (a photo from her college years in a school annual dubs her a "Highland Lassie" and leaves no doubt about her loveliness, but in spirit as well.

She married a few years after graduation, had a child, and then suffered tragedy when Carolyn was still a babe in arms. Her husband was killed in a commercial plane crash and with that her world crashed in around her. She and Carolyn would make a trek from Chicago to the mountains every summer, staying for two or three weeks, and there were other occasional visits as well. I always remember Aunt Jessie as being a bit sad but serene and ever so sweet.

Those memories came flooding back when we bushwhacked up Juneywhank Branch on a rainy March day to a place my brother, Don, and I have been many times but was new to Carolyn and her family. Between the rain, slogging through the brush, and the bittersweetness of the moment, it was difficult to ascertain all the mixed emotions on display. That being said, when we sat, soaked, on a log and ate our hearty repast of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, then offered multiple toasts using water from the spring which had served the homestead, I'm sure Carolyn felt a sense of fulfillment. Or, as she put it while looking at an early blooming bloodroot flower just above the spring, she felt a sense of completeness knowing that her mother and her memories of their many years together had come full circle. Historians such as yours truly often turn to the phrase "You can't know where you are going if you don't know where you've been." With the visit to the old Casada home Carolyn realized, likely in a fuller, more meaningful fashion than ever before, just where she came from.

We were already wet, and an absolute deluge made certain no dry stitch remained on anyone by the time we were back to our vehicles. However, warm showers, dry clothes, and a visit to the home where our grandparents lived in later years (both Aunt Jessie and my father, along with several of their siblings, helped purchase the home for them in what I consider a most admirable example of devotion to their parents). The folks who now own it were graciousness exemplified, and they seemed to take delight in each of us sharing particular memories of the place—where Carolyn slept each summer on their annual visits; the site where Grandpa rocked and told tales; the place where dozens of cousins, aunts, uncles, and even friends feasted at Christmas, and for me a spot which was almost as memorable in some ways as Daddy's boyhood home was for him.

That in turn led to the rites of spring and dealing with longbeards. The season has now been open here for seven days, and to this point I've been on a roll. We can kill five birds in South Carolina, and I only have one tag left. Of course the quest is one where things can turn in a hurry, and I long ago learned to savor the good times because they'll assuredly yield to dark days which will make the Joe Btfspk, the Al Capp cartoon character in the Li'l Abner comic strip who went around with a cloud over his head, look like a harbinger of good fortune. For example, there was the time in my evolving apprenticeship in turkey

hunting where, after having killed two or three dozen turkeys and enjoying a run of calling in and dispatching seven or eight birds in a fairly short time, that I got the sadly misguided notion I had become a turkey killing machine.

My comeuppance came soon enough—in spades. I had a run of four or five straight misses, might nigh messed my pants when a turkey about five yards away and straight behind me gobbled, could effectively muzzle the most vocal of turkeys simply by essaying a few soft yelps and generally got into a blue funk. The sport is one of incredible highs and abysmal lows, but at least I've been at it long enough to know that the aforementioned Archibald Rutledge knew whereof he spoke when he suggested, after having accounted for 339 turkeys, that he had possibly reached the kindergarten stage in his evolution as a turkey hunter. I'm not quite to the 339 mark (although I'm mighty close to 300), and there are two things about pursuing gobblers and the lore of the sport I feel confident in saying: (1) Rutledge was right about the educational process and (2) The only absolute in turkey hunting is that there are no absolutes.

That being said, I'll be in the woods once again tomorrow morning before heading to Tennessee the following day. Then, late in the month I'll give the birds a try, if things work out appropriately, up in the high country of my boyhood home. I'd really like to kill a turkey there since they weren't part of the landscape when I was a youngster, although I had heard about old timers hunting them. However, my primary purpose for that trip will be to introduce a fellow who has never hunted turkeys to the sport.

Turkeys are enough to keep any marginally sane soul preoccupied, and this time of year the matter of my sanity is highly questionable. Others are better suited to judge that. For my part, I'll just keep taking to the woods, remembering to admire wildflowers and the unfolding of spring in all its beauty, and chasing gobblers.



Bluets are one of the first flowers to appear in my part of the world, and this striking patch caught my eye on an April day in the N.C. high country.



The hunter's quest should never be so single-minded that he overlooks beauty at his feet, such as this happy blending of phlox and fringed phacelia.



Spotting morel mushrooms  
can be the cherry atop a turkey hunter's sundae.

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## RECIPES

This month's recipes focus on wild turkey—in part because it is the season and also thanks to the fact that I have an abundance of this fine meat. We'll start with some dishes featuring dark meat, something far too many hunters discard. Yes it can be chewy or tough, but that doesn't mean that, properly prepared, it isn't tasty. The ethical hunter eats what he kills, and a large gobbler has several pounds of dark meat and giblets in addition to the white meat of the breast.

### WILD TURKEY PATE

Dark meat (legs, thighs, back medallions, wings, neck) and giblets from a wild turkey  
 Two boiled eggs  
 1 sweet onion  
 3-4 cloves garlic  
 Butter and olive oil  
 Salt and pepper to taste

Cook the legs, thighs, medallions, wings and neck in a pot until well done and as close to tender as the dark meat of a wild turkey gets. Allow to cool and then remove meat from the bones, being especially careful with the long bony parts in the legs. Mince thoroughly in a food processor and set aside.

Boil two eggs. Peel, chop finely and set aside.

Chop the giblets into small pieces and sauté, using all butter (my preference) or a mixture of butter and olive oil, in a large frying pan with the chopped onion and garlic. When done, mix thoroughly with the dark meat, add salt

and black pepper to taste (I like lots of black pepper) and press into a bowl or mold and chill until solid. Serve with toast wedges or crackers.

### WILD TURKEY AND NOODLES

Dark meat from a wild turkey  
 Chicken stock or stock saved from cooking the turkey meat  
 Macaroni noodles or other pasta  
 Salt and pepper to taste

Prepare the dark meat by cooking thoroughly in water. If you wish, you can set aside the water to use as stock when the cooking is completed. Allow to cool then strip meat from the bones of the neck, legs, thighs and wings. Chop coarsely on a cutting board and then place in stock on chicken broth. Thicken by additional cooking.

In a separate pan, prepare pasta and, when cooked, toss with butter. Pour dark meat over the noodles and dig in for a hearty meal.

### WILD TURKEY SCALLOPINI WITH ASPARAGUS SAUCE

1 package Knorr béarnaise sauce mix  
 3 tablespoons chopped leeks  
 1 can (15-ounce) asparagus spears  
 1 pound wild turkey breast fillets or a pound of previously cooked and chopped dark meat  
 2 tablespoons butter  
 2 tablespoons olive oil  
 ½ cup flour  
 1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Prepare béarnaise sauce according to package instructions. Cook leeks in microwave for about a minute. Chop half of asparagus and add to sauce along with leeks. Set aside.

Pound turkey fillets or dark meat with a meat mallet. Melt butter in skillet and add olive oil. Lightly flour breast fillets and brown on each side until golden. Place meat in shallow greased 9 x 13 inch casserole dish. Spread asparagus sauce over each piece of meat. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese, top with remaining asparagus and and brown lightly under the boiler. Serve at once.

### RANCH TURKEY STRIPS

1 teaspoon of a packet of Ranch Original Dry Salad Dressing mix  
 2 tablespoons olive oil  
 ½ pound wild turkey breast strips

Combine Ranch dressing mix with olive oil. Marinate turkey strips for 15 minutes. Grill for 10-12 minutes in frying pan, grilling pan, broiler on atop an outdoor grill. Serve immediately.

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