



Another Busy Day

The months of March and April are full of activity for a Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO). March is when we do the bulk of our trout stocking to prepare for the opening day of trout season. During April, we are actively patrolling our waterways as the trout season is in full swing. There is rarely a slow day at this time of year and one particular day this past April was no different.

While on patrol along the Bushkill Creek in Northampton County, a gentleman approached me and stated that a wild turkey was caught in fishing line just upstream from my location. He stated the turkey was unable to free itself and needed assistance.

Not being well versed in wild turkeys, I called the local Pennsylvania Game Commission Wildlife Conservation Officer (WCO) to inform him of the situation. As my luck would have it, he was attending to a more pressing issue and asked if I would be able to assist the turkey. I stated I would assist and asked for some basic wild turkey handling instructions before attempting to address this task.

Although I did not receive a great description of the turkey's location, he wasn't hard to find. All I had to do was walk to the spot where six teenagers had congregated, and I found the bird. The turkey was sitting under some low lying brush

The instructions I received from the Pennsylvania Game Commission WCO were simple enough. They consisted of throwing a net over the turkey, picking it up by grasping the bird around its wings and placing the turkey in the back of my patrol truck. I reviewed the plan in my head a few times as I walked back and forth from the turkey's location under

the brush to my patrol truck in an effort to give the impression to my audience that I had everything under control.

Fortunately, I had an illegal cast net I confiscated from an angler still in my patrol truck. The net was approximately 8-feet in diameter, so it was big enough to cover the turkey. Unfortunately, trying to throw the net under the brush and over the bird was a little more of a test than I anticipated. My less than accurate throw got caught in the brush and barely covered the bird. As I tried to gather the net for a second throw, the turkey became a little restless and decided he would be safer in a nearby storm drain.

Now, not only did I still have to get the net around the turkey, but I also had to get him out of the storm drain. I spread the cast net out above the storm drain, crawled up the pipe and pulled the turkey out of the drain by the tail. As the turkey came out of the storm drain, I pulled the net over him and step one of the plan was complete.

I grasped the turkey around the wings. I was smiling since step two of the plan was accomplished. I even heard a cheer from my audience acknowledging my progress, but my smile and their faith vanished quickly. On my way to put the turkey in my truck, I realized I underestimated the strength of a wild turkey's wings. With only 3-feet left to my open truck cap, the turkey flapped its wings, escaped from my grasp and all of my work up to this point was lost. Much to my surprise, the turkey was a little more tired than I was at this point, and I was able to get the net over him in a quick fashion and into the back of my truck.

I ended up taking the turkey to an isolated location, cleaned him up a bit and sent him on his way while thanking him for an exciting end to another busy day. ☐



Photo - WCO Jeffrey Sabo