

TURKEY HUNTING

in New Zealand

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #94 —

First, let me say that Brenda and I didn't travel all the way to New Zealand to hunt turkeys; we were there for chamois and tahr – mountain antelope introduced to New Zealand in the early 20th century, from Europe and Asia. However, after the main events were complete, 'do you want to shoot a turkey' was one of the questions. After we said yes, the next question was 'how many do you want to shoot?' We responded with 'one each' and didn't understand until much later the nature of the question.

The following morning we drove to a ranch about 45 minutes or so out. It was all pretty routine; we crossed a creek into ranch headquarters, then turned west and headed into the ranch – cruising through the river bottom, with snow-covered hills to the south.



Coming down off the hill, there were rabbits everywhere and our guide encouraged us to shoot them, as they are a nuisance in New Zealand.

We hadn't gone a mile, when our guide stopped and pointed out a large flock of turkeys feeding near the top of a hill about a half mile in front of us and to the left. We drove on down

the valley floor until we were out of sight of the turkeys, then parked the car and began the stalk up the back side of the hill. These hills were pretty serious; we climbed a thousand or more feet through the snow, stopping often to rest, as it was a pretty tough climb.

At the top of the hill, our guide led us quietly through the scattered brush and into position to shoot. Brenda had a 12 gauge semi-auto and I had a scoped 223 bolt action



A couple of Merriam Turkeys, whose ancestors were imported from the United States a hundred years earlier.

rifle (legal for turkeys in New Zealand) – both loaner guns from the outfitter. Brenda was to shoot first, and I expected to get a shot if they didn't fly far and landed within sight. Surprisingly though, our guide pointed out which turkey he wanted me to shoot.

Brenda was patient, as always, and when she shot,

"...it was a pretty tough climb."

all the heads went up, but interestingly not a turkey flew away. I fired – two turkeys on the ground flopping – but still nothing flew. We walked out to retrieve our birds and the rest of the flock just stood around or began to move off. They simply had no fear of humans and now we knew why the guide had asked 'how many do you want to shoot?' He would never have taken us to this spot if we had just wanted to blast every turkey in sight – apparently some hunters do.



Larry Potterfield
The South Island
New Zealand
9 June 2010



Another incidental trophy was the common brushtail possum, a native of Australia. We shot these the night before.