

GENERAL NOTES

Wild Turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) with supernumerary leg spurs.—An adult male wild Turkey normally possesses one spur—a horny projection with a bony core—on the lower posterior edge of each tarsometatarsus. These spurs vary in size depending upon the age of the individual and probably some genetic factors, but are usually at least one inch long in individuals more than two years old. In examining hundreds of wild Turkeys in the southeastern United States I have observed adult males lacking a spur on one or both legs, and numerous spurs of intermediate size and shape suggesting arrested development of the spur, but until recently I had not seen or heard of a turkey with more than one spur on either leg.

In April, 1965, I obtained an approximately two-year-old male specimen from Wakulla County, Florida. This bird had two spurs on each tarsometatarsus. The extra (lower) spur on the right leg (Figure 1) is slightly larger than that on the left leg. Both have bony cores similar to normal spurs. (Comparison with normal specimens suggests that the lower spur is the extra one.)

The extra spur appears to be an enlarged, modified member of the series of conspicuous scutella (numbering six to nine in most specimens) which extends in decreasing size from the spur along the posterior edge of the tarsometatarsus toward the foot. Although the first scutellum below the spur is the largest of the series in the 10 specimens I compared, none of the normal scutella has a bony core. In the aberrant specimen the scutellum immediately above the normal spur is enlarged somewhat.

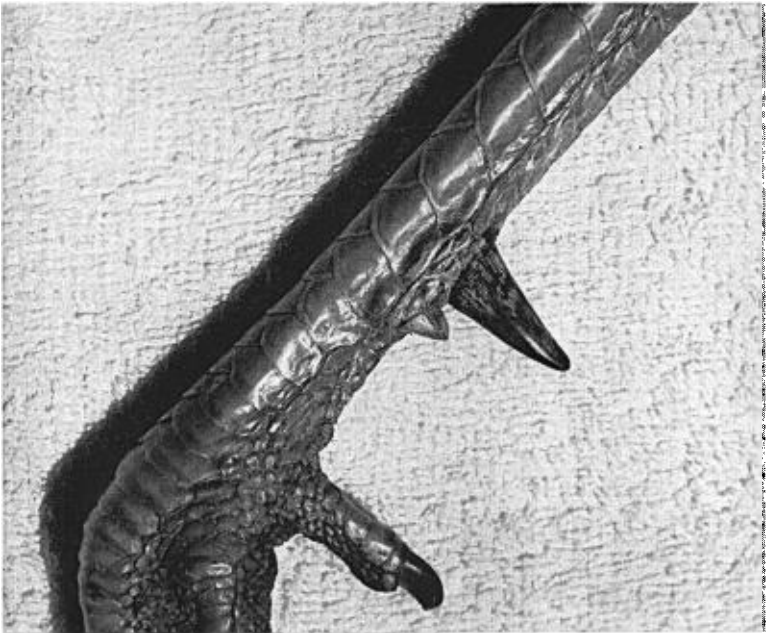


Figure 1. Right tarsometatarsus of a Turkey, bearing an extra spur.

Recently I examined another Turkey tarsometatarsus (the right one) with a similarly well developed extra lower spur and a more enlarged scutellum immediately above the normal spur. The chord of the normal spur measures approximately 30 mm. The lower spur measures about 7 mm. This specimen was taken in April, 1962, near Tallahassee, Leon County, Florida, approximately 10 miles from where the specimen described above was taken. This may indicate the presence of genetic factors for multiple spurs in the Turkey population of that area.

Wetmore (*Smiths. Misc. Colls.*, 82 [2]: 33-35, 1931) described a new species of extinct turkey from the Pleistocene of Florida (Pinellas County) which he called *M. tridens*. The diagnostic character for the new species was the presence of *three* spurs on the lower tarsometatarsus in place of the normal single spur.

One of the tarsometatarsi from the Wakulla County specimen, taken in 1965, was given to the Smithsonian Institution, the other from that specimen is in my private collection. The specimen taken in 1962 is in the private collection of Mr. Neal F. Eichholz who collected it and kindly permitted me to examine it.

This paper is a contribution of the Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Program, Florida Pittman-Robertson Project W-41-R.—LOVETT E. WILLIAMS, JR., *Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Gainesville, Florida.*

Cock pheasants rout Marsh Hawk.—While making a survey of the sex ratio of Ring-necked Pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*) on 7 October 1964, I noticed an unusual predator-prey relationship. The action described herein occurred near Hershey, Lincoln County, Nebraska.

Three cock pheasants were walking along the edge of a strip of winter wheat (*Agropyron* sp.), which was bordered by a strip of sudan grass (*Sorghum sudanense*), approximately 600 feet from me. Through 7 × 35 binoculars a hawk was seen about 50 feet from the pheasants. The hawk was between the pheasants and me and was feeding on an unidentifiable prey item. During the two-minute observation period that followed (0736-0738 hours), the pheasants walked, then ran, toward the hawk. The hawk avoided their pursuit by flying low over the ground and dragged its prey, then identified as a pheasant, from the wheat into the sudan grass six to eight feet away. The carcass of the pheasant did not appear to be completely lifted off of the ground.

The pursuing cocks followed the hawk into the dense sudan grass which was about three feet tall. I then left my vehicle and proceeded to the site of the activity. En route, a hen and a young cock were flushed. When I approached within five feet of the carcass the hawk flushed and was easily identified as a female Marsh Hawk (*Circus cyaneus*).

The dead pheasant was a female about 18 weeks old and was still warm. The hawk had "plumed" the upper back, neck, and base of the pheasant's skull. The cervical vertebrae had been completely separated about 50 mm from the skull.

No talon marks or other injury were noted on the pheasant's body. The pheasant weighed 1,052 g, or about double the average (521 g) weight of Marsh Hawks (J. J. Craighead and F. C. Craighead, Jr., *Hawks, owls and wildlife*, Harrisburg, The Stackpole Co., and Washington, D.C., Wildl. Mgmt. Inst., 1956; see pp. 416-417).

The author was employed under Pittman-Robertson Project W-15-R at the time of the observation.—JOHN P. WEIGAND, *Nebraska Game, Forestation and Parks Commission, North Platte, Nebraska.* Present address: *Montana Department of Fish and Game, Route 1, Southwest, Great Falls, Montana.*