

FieldNotes



MEET THE MAKER: Rod builder Howard Schelske with the vice president's fly rod.



Dick Cheney's New Toy

MOST FLY RODS AREN'T MADE FOR AN OFFICE. But this one was built for one of the highest in the land: 9 feet of hand-split Chinese bamboo, assembled to cast a 5-weight line with perfection. Silk wrappings. Brass and agate guides. A cross-grained Oregon walnut reel seat and Cape buffalo horn highlights. Every nickel-silver surface is scribed with engraving by an Italian master. "It is very ornate," says Howard Schelske, the Stayton, Oregon, rod builder who crafted the piece. "Very showy."

And very unlike the man for whom it was built—angler, Wyoming ranch owner, and U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney. Three months ago, Schelske delivered the rod to Cheney in a private meeting at the White House. "The first thing he said was that he'd never seen anything like it," Schelske says. "He was very pleased with it." Rightly so—Schelske puts more than 60 hours of handwork into each of his rods. Cheney's, he says, is valued at upwards of \$3,000.

In his West Wing office, Cheney flashed pictures of a 20-pound steelhead he had pulled from British Columbia's Babine River, and trout from Oregon's Deschutes. "He had six or eight fish photos in his desk drawer," reports Schelske, who figures that the rod destined for Cheney's Wyoming spread is in capable hands. "I promised him that it'll put a fly anywhere he thinks it'll catch a fish," Schelske says. Although, he adds, "it might tend to cast slightly to the right."

—T. EDWARD NICKENS

THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT

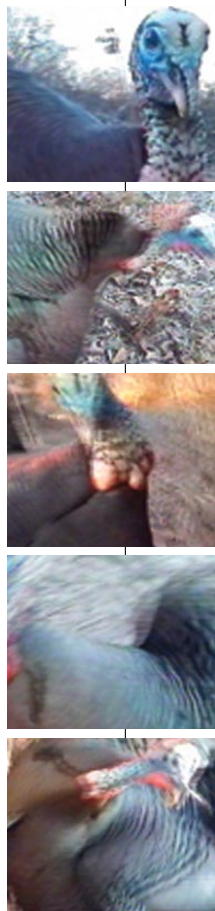
The video starts with an empty dirt road, and the sounds of Montauk, New York, turkey hunter Peter Fagan yelping with a slate call. In the distance, a bird struts into view. Minutes later, the 20-pound tom is in Fagan's lap pecking at the lens as Fagan yells, "I hope this is on record!" In the eight-minute assault that follows, the bird unleashes a frenzy of flapping wings and challenge purrs, and spurs Fagan seven times in the leg, before it finally calms and wanders back down the road.

There's no turkey hunting near Montauk, but since Fagan started taking his video camera along when he practices his calls, he'd never had an encounter like this until last spring. "That stuff's not supposed to happen," he says.

And 140 miles away in Cranford, New Jersey, many suburban residents had similar thoughts. The local police department received five complaints earlier this year of turkey attacks on people, most of which involved a mailman, who used a stick to kill one bird after a flock surrounded his truck, and used his mailbag to fend off two others.

Bob Eriksen, regional wildlife biologist with the National Wild Turkey Federation, says that because these birds hadn't been hunted, they had no fear of humans and had become used to seeing Fagan out with his calls, and the mailman out on his route. "When you have birds that don't see people as a threat, and it's mating season, the potential for aggression toward humans is increased." —TOM KEER

FREEZE FRAMES: Fagan's footage of the attacking turkey.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: TIMOTHY J. GONZALEZ/THE STATESMAN JOURNAL (2); COURTESY OF PETER FAGAN (5); COURTESY OF BASS

RISING STARS



MELINDA MIZE > Bass Fishing

Melinda Mize, a 22-year-old college senior and National Guardswoman from Arkansas, wants to be the first woman to qualify for the Bassmaster Tour and Classic. "My goal is to be in the top 20 at the end of the year and play with the big boys." Competing since a young age, she has finished in the top 50 three times out of 15 BASS events. Mize will be at the Western Open Division tournaments in October and November. —TYLER D. JOHNSON