

SUMMER 2001



FLYDOWN

NEWSLETTER OF THE IDAHO STATE CHAPTER
NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION

ROOTS: THE NWTF COMES TO IDAHO

Wild turkeys were first introduced in Idaho in the early 1960's, but it took another twenty years for the National Wild Turkey Federation to arrive. Burk Mantel had just gotten into turkey hunting in his native Vermont before moving to Boise in the fall of 1981. He was interested to note the existence of Idaho's fledgling spring turkey season and further investigation led to Idaho Fish & Game biologist Andy Ogden who, in turn, suggested Boise teacher Vern Anderson, one of the very few persons hunting turkeys back then. Burk met with Vern and gained a little insight into the all-important "where" which, in those days of maybe 400 birds statewide, was vital knowledge indeed!

The following April found Burk hunting around Council. After five days without seeing another hunter, Mantel came across a camouflaged fellow running a box call trying to elicit a response from a tom across a draw. Burk recalls they were both so happy to know they weren't the only turkey hunters in the woods that you would have thought them long, lost friends at a reunion! A few days later, Burk Mantel harvested his first Idaho turkey, one of the dozen or so taken statewide that year.



Volunteers Ed Sweet, Keith Sampson and Dennis Gratton rehydrate a 1983 transplant upon arrival.

A few months later, while poking around the Fish & Game offices trying to find out about whitetail hunting, Burk met Director Jerry Conley. The two hit it off and, when the Director asked Burk's opinion on what could be done improve opportunities for hunters, the response was immediate: resume the wild turkey stocking program

which had been put on hold since the early 1970's. An avid turkey hunter himself, Conley agreed and said he'd



Burk Mantel completed the first "Idaho Slam" with this 1986 eastern taken near Dworshak Reservoir.

look into it.

Two weeks then passed and Mantel was summoned to the Director's office for a follow-up meeting. Mr. Conley said they could get plenty of turkeys from South Dakota, Nebraska and Arizona but that the Department would need the support of sportsman to make it all work. He then

asked Burk if he would take the initiative to get an NWTF chapter started in Idaho.

Burk got back in touch with Vern Anderson who was enthusiastic about the idea of transplanting more turkeys into Idaho. Vern sent for the forms from National and, within a few weeks, the seeds were being sown for an Idaho NWTF chapter. F&G biologist Andy Ogden, his sister Kay, Keith Sampson and Nampan Roy Payne were among the first members. Jerry Conley supplied a list of the ninety-some folks who'd bought a turkey tag in 1982 and Burk sent postcards to most of them announcing the first meeting.

A dozen people showed up for that initial gathering and Burk recalls it was exciting to have so many turkey hunters all in the same place to talk about turkeys! A second meeting was scheduled and a few more interested persons showed up. Mantel bought a bottle of Wild Turkey whiskey to use as a raffle item and was amazed when it fetched \$25. That small (but significant) act was the Idaho chapter's first "fund raiser" and began what has become nearly two decades of service to sportsmen in the state of Idaho... and to the wild turkey!