

ORNITHOLOGY

# NATURE RAMBLINGS

by Frank Thone



## Much-Traveled Bird

➤ AS THANKSGIVING Day approaches, the turkey again struts to the fore in public attention. No magazine or Sunday newspaper feature section is complete without one, and flocks of the big birds, both living and stiff in death, appear in the markets.

We are all familiar with the fact that the turkey's name is a misnomer, that the native home of the bird is in the New World and not the Old; and many are the conjectures as to how he picked

up the name of an Asian empire as his own.

Paradoxical though it may seem, it appears probable that this highly American fowl did come to the United States from Turkey—or what was Turkey at the time our colonizing ancestors settled on the Atlantic seaboard. For the turkey of our farmyards and Thanksgiving-Day platters is not descended from the wild turkey our ancestors may have hunted in the Eastern woodlands, but from already tamed stock which they brought with them from Europe. And this Europeanized turkey was the descendant of one or more kinds of turkey which the Aztecs, Mayas and other highly civilized Indians of Middle America possessed as domestic poultry when the Spaniards first made contact with them.

Carried home to Spain, the turkey appears to have passed into the hands of that country's Mohammedan neighbors on the opposite shores of the Mediterranean, and thence to the center of Mohammedan power and culture, the Turkish capital of Constantinople. Thence the multiplying birds diffused, like several other American products such as corn, tobacco and pumpkins, over the lower Danube valley, then part of the Turkish empire.

In this roundabout way, new things from New Spain found their way even-

tually into the hands of northern Europeans. Maize or Indian corn was long known in western Europe as Turkish wheat, and the first published European name of the common pumpkin was Turkish cucumber. Curiously enough, however, the turkey was not called by that name on his first appearance in print, in the sixteenth century, but was named "a cok of Inde." When turkeys first appeared in Europe they were somehow confused with what we now know as Guinea fowl, which came from Africa and which had already picked up the name of Turkey fowl. When the zoological distinction between the two was finally made clear, the name turkey stuck to the wrong bird. And there it has stayed ever since.

*Science News Letter, November 17, 1945*

## WILDLIFE

### Food Supply of Deer Increased by Ice Storm

➤ SEVERE ice storms may be a blessing to deer and other wildlife if they last but a short time and are not accompanied by low temperatures. By breaking boughs and uprooting trees, thus bringing more green leaves within the reach of the deer, such a storm can actually improve their present and future food supply.

Some 1,120 pounds of cedar browse per acre were provided in some regions during the severe ice storm in central Maine in November, 1943, which bowed down or snapped off many forest trees, James D. Curtis of the department of forestry, University of Maine, reports in the *Journal of Wildlife Management*. From animals found feeding on these trees and from tracks and other signs that the region had been visited, it was obvious that deer and rabbits soon discovered this food.

*Science News Letter, November 17, 1945*



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