

THE DANGERS OF WILD TURKEYS

There are many dangerous jobs, like working high steel, race car driving, fireman, policeman, working with deadly chemicals or viruses, that sort of thing. We don't often think of a mailman in this category, but by Neds, I've been reading stuff lately that would qualify mailmen for danger pay. (OK, ladies, I apologize for the masculine in the above career descriptions. It just seemed awkward to say fireperson, mailperson, etc. So with your agreement, I'll continue to say mailman and you can interpret it as mailperson.)

In urban locales, mailmen are attacked quite regularly by protective dogs. Last year Canadian mail carriers received over 1,500 dog bites, and carry pepper spray or other dissuaders for security. I read where a slavering Rottweiler dove right through a screen door to get his fangs into the thigh of a mailman. Dinky little dogs the size of gerbils fasten like limpets onto the ankles of mailmen and have to be pried off with the jaws of life. You might think a rural mailman is not exposed to these risks because they're in vehicles. Sure, maybe a savage farm dog races down the lane and tries to rip off the rear view mirror, but it can't get at the mailman inside.

As a youth, I helped deliver papers in a WWII open jeep. My friend would drive and I would hurl the papers toward the front step of the subscriber. The jeep slowed only imperceptibly as it passed the residence of a recipient of "The Globe", which meant a great deal of skill was required in the air delivery. At one location, a large brindle dog consistently raced out and tried to get his fangs into us through the doorless jeep. He wasn't trying to bite tires. Oh no, he wanted human flesh. We were fearful of this crazed animal, having to lift our feet above the seats, so at one point our clever driver edged the vehicle ever closer to a prickly hedge. The dog, lusting for blood was totally engrossed in his mission until he ran at full speed into the thorns. He was a smart dog because that single episode cured him of trying to kill us.

In spite of my experience, I never thought of a rural mailman as being at risk given the protective shield of their car ...until I read this:

"A mob of sex-crazed wild turkeys has been stalking and attacking U.S. Postal workers in Madison, Wisconsin. The birds, some as large as forty pounds, have been jumping on the backs of postal workers' legs, gobbling like maniacs, and biting and scratching."

Whoa! As our faithful mailman Rick drives along that dangerous intersection of County Road #17 and County Road #16, there is often a mob of fifty or more turkeys foraging in the field. They are sufficiently numerous that they could stop his car, wrestle him out, and savagely have their way with him. He may brave sleet, hail,

and dark of night, but sex-crazed wild turkeys, that's another matter. I don't think Rick signed up for that. Last Friday, I didn't get my paper, and I worried that Rick had been ravaged by this mob of turkeys.

I subscribe to Ontario Out of Doors, and many issues feature turkey hunting. I see guys (and gals) dressed in complete camouflage, even to wearing face paint and camo masks. Their guns are even painted in camo. If they were walking down the street, you wouldn't see them. They would say hello and scare the daylight out of you because they're invisible. Apparently, they adopt this attire because the wild turkey is reputed to be a supremely intelligent and wary bird. These intelligent and wary birds are the same ones attempting to rape mailmen. If the hunters dressed as female turkeys or mail carriers and carried a club, I think their success rate would soar.

In England, a vicious seagull regularly attacked the local mail carrier. This seagull didn't simply buzz the guy, he dove at him, voraciously pecking his scalp and drawing blood. The carrier, wisely in my view, refused to deliver mail to the area guarded by this seagull.

It's the uniform, you know. I had a dog that disliked mailmen, border crossing officials, policemen... anyone in a uniform, and I think this hatred afflicts many animals, including seagulls and turkeys. My theory is that they are protesting the goofy short pants mailmen and UPS

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