

NATURE NOTES: Talking Turkey

by Peter English

Last month we talked about Mississippi Kites and their amazing 5500 mile migration. It turns out that they are not alone in the hawk world with that tremendous migration. Swainson's Hawks are even more amazing, as they travel from as far north as Alaska to the plains of north-central Argentina - south of where the Mississippi Kites end up stopping. All that distance to spend Thanksgiving in a place that has better weather and better food than they would find if they stayed in North America with us.

Speaking of Thanksgiving - one of the iconic parts of the holiday revolves around a bird. Turkeys are native to North America and are found in all of the lower 48 states. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the number of Turkeys dwindled as people shot pretty much anything that moved in the wild. Passenger Pigeons and Carolina Parakeets ended up going extinct from all the shooting, but Turkeys made it. Their wide distribution today is primarily the result of reintroduction programs and rational hunting laws.

This round of reintroductions in the 1940s and onward



The brown tail feathers indicate that this is a true wild turkey.

was actually the second big reintroduction of Turkeys in the US. Back in the 1500s and 1600s, explorers from Europe were shipping all kinds of things back to home from the New World. Among these were Turkeys from Mexico. The Europeans of the time found the Turkeys to be delicious, and soon figured out how to domesticate them. When British settlers came to North America in the 1700s they brought domesticated Turkeys here with them.

But the Turkeys the Europeans had domesticated were the Western US/Mexican subspecies, and it has white tips to the feathers at the base of the tail and the tail itself. The other four North American subspecies that are found in most of the US have brownish tips to the tail. So the domesticated Turkeys the

Europeans brought had white feathers where the native turkeys had brown. As domesticated turkeys escaped and joined the local wild populations, bits of white started turning up in the tail feathers. To this day you can tell if a Wild Turkey has domesticated blood in it by the color of its tail.

The Forum

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CARPENTER ANTS

Carpenter ants nest outdoors in dead wood (tree stumps or dead limbs, fences, firewood, etc.). They may also be found in wood siding, beams, joists, fascia boards or trim on structures. Damage is usually limited since carpenter ants tunnel and nest within wood; they do not eat wood. However, wood can become weakened by carpenter ant excavation.



Carpenter ants are large ants that can vary in color from all black to reddish to yellowish or a combination of colors. These ants have one node, no stinger and a circle of hairs at the tip of their abdomen.

Galleries in the nest are excavated following the grain of the wood and have clean, smooth walls. Nest locations may be discovered by searching for piles of sawdust-looking material under exit holes. Sawdust is coarse and may also contain soil or sand, uneaten insects as well as dead ants from the colony.

Carpenter ants are able to enter homes from tree branches or utility lines touching the home, through cracks and crevices around windows and doors, cracks in foundation walls, ventilation openings or heating and air conditioning ducts.

Here are some tips for a carpenter ant infestation:

- Remove dead trees and/ or limbs and remove tree stumps from the landscape. Many times you can remove the (possible) nesting sites and get rid of the ants without using pesticides.
- Prune trees and shrubs that touch the home. Carpenter ants will often use these areas as a bridge to enter the home.
- Replace wood that is water damaged. Carpenter ants are drawn to moisture damaged wood, so make sure to repair any water leaks and replace damaged wood.
- Remove wood debris and firewood that is near the home. Carpenter ants may nest in firewood and when it is stacked right next to the home, it allows the ants to enter more easily.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.

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Paul is a sweet, loving boy—and he almost always has a smile on face! While he is extremely active and loves to play sports and be outside, Paul does well academically and is a polite young man.

Paul is 7 years old and is confident in his abilities to entertain others with his dance moves, creativity, and jokes. An abundance of support and patience will help Paul achieve success in his promising young life.

To find out more about Paul, please contact Grace Lindgren, LMSW, Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter, at (512) 810-0813 or gclindgren@helpinghandhome.org.

Adopting a child from the foster care system requires little or no cost to the adoptive family and funding may be available to help the adoptive family support the child or sibling group.

The Heart Gallery of Central Texas is a program of Partnerships for Children. To learn more about the adoption or fostering process, please call the Heart Gallery of Central Texas at (512) 834-3102, email heartgallery@partnershipsforchildren.org or visit our website at www.partnershipsforchildren.org.



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TENNIS TIPS

By USPTA/PTR Master Professional
Fernando Velasco



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4

THE MODERN GAME: THE SWINGING BACKHAND APPROACH SHOT OR VOLLEY

In previous newsletters, I offered tips on how to execute the basic strokes for players who are just beginning to play tennis or who want to resume playing.

I am now offering suggestions on how to play the “modern” game mostly geared towards players who are happy with hitting the ball over the net and controlling the point with consistency. These players may be already playing for leagues or in tournaments and are looking for more “weapons” on the court.

In this issue, I will offer instructions on how to execute “The Swinging Backhand Approach Shot or Volley.” This shot is used when an opponent hits a soft shot that is floating high on the service line area. The player will take advantage and will hit the ball on the fly with a huge swing, thus hitting with top spin high over the net and hit with power. When the ball hits the court, it will take a big hop, forcing the opponent to fall back close to the fence, or to hit the ball on the rise. This shot can be used as a “winner” or as an “approach shot.”

In the illustrations, Vishwa Aduru, one of the top players of the Grey Rock Tennis Academy, shows the proper technique to execute this stroke. Vishwa is coached by the Director of the Tennis Academy, Darin Pleasant.

Step 1: The Back Swing: When Vishwa sees the opportunity, he makes a quick turn of his upper body and takes the racket high

and back. The head of the racket is now at shoulder height, his shoulders are turned, the left hand is gripping the racket tight and the right hand is semi-relaxed. His weight is on the front foot as his momentum carries him forward to attack the ball. His left wrist is “laid back” to allow maximum point of contact.

Step 2: The Point of Contact: The success of a top spin shot is keeping the ball on the strings going from low to high in a 30 degree angle and accelerating the racket head around the outside of the ball. Vishwa started the swing high and “looped” it to allow the head of the racket to drop down. He will be brushing around the outside of the ball as he makes contact with it. His left shoulder is almost opening and his weight is moving through the shot.

Step 3: The Follow Through: In order to get maximum control and power, Vishwa is keeping left arm extended through the shot. He has “snapped” his left wrist and has the head of the racket facing down. His weight is going forward.

Step 4: The Finish: Vishwa’s upper body acceleration forced the head of the racket to “wrap around” his right shoulder, thus creating the most power and topspin on the ball. His legs are already in position to move forward the net for a volley. His left foot should naturally move forward due to his momentum and racket speed. From his looks, he apparently hit a very deep volley for a winner.

Look in the next Newsletter for: “The Modern Game: The Slice Overhead”

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