

A GROUSE STORY

by Barry Bain

After a twenty-five minute drive from the office, I reached my destination, pulled off to the shoulder of the road, and cut the engine. I was to meet a client regarding site preparation on a wet site for hedgerow planting.

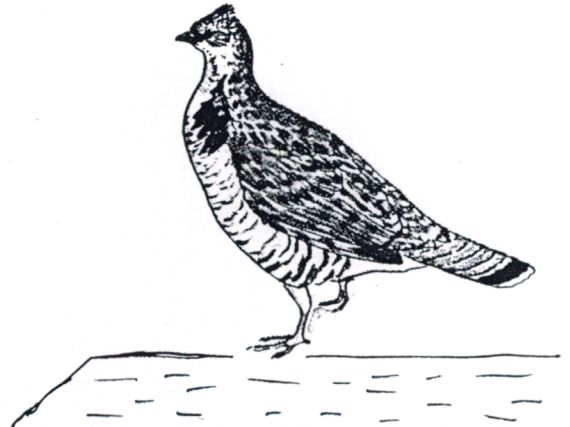
I wasn't there a minute when I was startled by the sudden sound of flapping wings, then the sound of a bird landing on the rail of the box of my pick-up. I turned my head very slowly in fear of frightening off whatever bird landed on the truck. There, about two feet from me through the rear window, was a Ruffed Grouse. The grouse hopped from the rail of the truck box to a plastic tool box, the type that stretches from one side to just about the other side and is about level with the base of the rear cab window. Now the bird was no more than a foot from me. As I watched in almost disbelief, knowing that the bird had to have seen me, it jumped back on the rail, made one trip around the perimeter of the truck box, and bounced back onto the tool box.

While watching the bird I realized that a substantial amount of time had passed with still no sign of my appointment. I decided to go down to the community store and inquire about where my client lived.

Starting my engine, the bird flew from the truck. As I was driving down the road, I looked in my rear view mirror and there, flying down the road behind me about two feet of the ground, was the grouse. I stopped the truck and backed up the road to where I was parked originally desiring to know what my new found friend would do next. I did not have long to wait. Up to the rail, to the tool box, he landed and pecked at the window.

Going through my head at this time was Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds". What's going on?

There, shortly after arriving on the scene with many apologies for his delay was my client. In the course of telling him about my experience, he told me what you might already have guessed; this grouse is tame. A man in the area was building a new home on a wooded lot and befriended this bird by feeding him everyday. Now anyone stopping within this bird's territory is liable to be greeted by this feathered footed fowl.



MINI CENSUS OF PIPING PLOVERS

by Dan McAskill

The Island Nature Trust commenced this season's Piping Plover Guardianship Program with an evening for guardians and potential guardians at Ravenwood on March 31. This session was followed by