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The advertisement is a dark-themed banner. On the left, the band name 'ALICE IN CHAINS' is written in large, bold, red and white letters, with the date and time 'JULY 22, 8PM' below it. In the center is a circular graphic with a red background and a white moon, featuring a stylized, dark, mountain-like or rock formation. On the right, the 'Turning Stone' logo is in a white script font, with 'RESORT | CASINO' and the website 'TURNINGSTONE.COM' below it. A yellow vertical bar on the far right contains the text 'CLICK HERE'. A small 'X CLOSE' button is in the top right corner.

**Hunting for woodcock in Central New York
can be a challenging outing**

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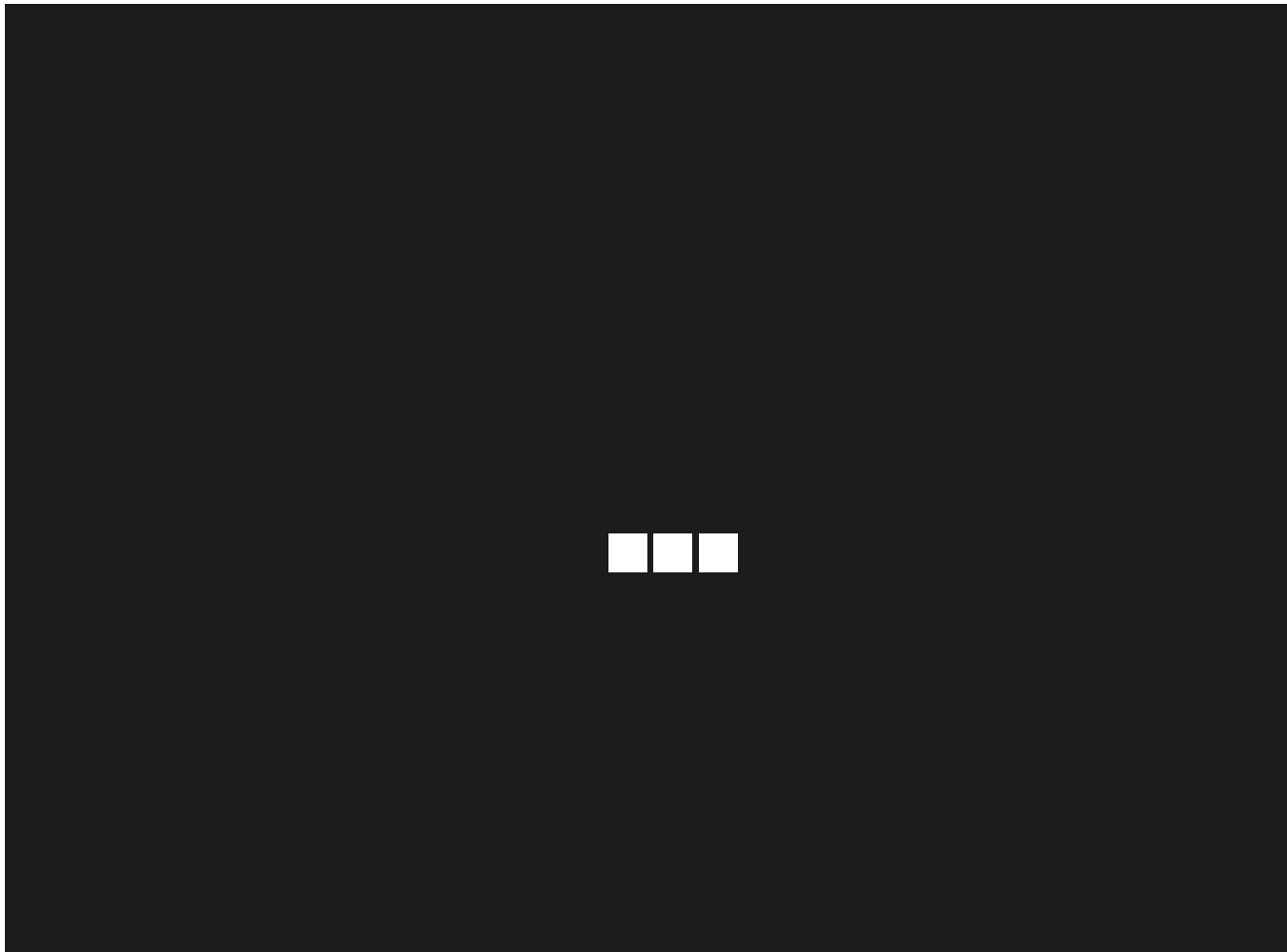
By [David Figura](#) | dfigura@syracuse.com

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Dan Kremers, whistle in his mouth, smiled when he hollered at one of his hunting dogs.

“C’mon old man, let’s go. Get in there. Find a bird,” he said to Maximus (“Max” for short), his 8-year-old pudelpointer as he walked along the edge of an island of heavy-duty brush and saplings at the Three Rivers Wildlife Management Area near Baldwinsville.

Kremers, 32, of Palermo, was out Thursday morning hunting woodcock with his two pudelpointers, Maximus and Mojo.

Woodcock hunting is not for the faint at heart. This popular upland game bird, about the size of a mourning dove, prefers wet, new-growth forest land. It can be tough going, and having a dog to flush the birds is a must.

One of Kremers’ dogs had a bell around its collar; another had a radio beeper. That helped Kremers keep track of where they were at all times. He used the whistle to help give his dogs instructions.

“Dogs will flush 25 birds to my one,” he said. “Any time you get within 25 yards of a ruffed grouse, for example, you’re going to flush it. Woodcock are different.

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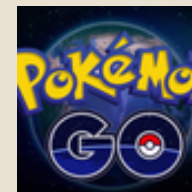
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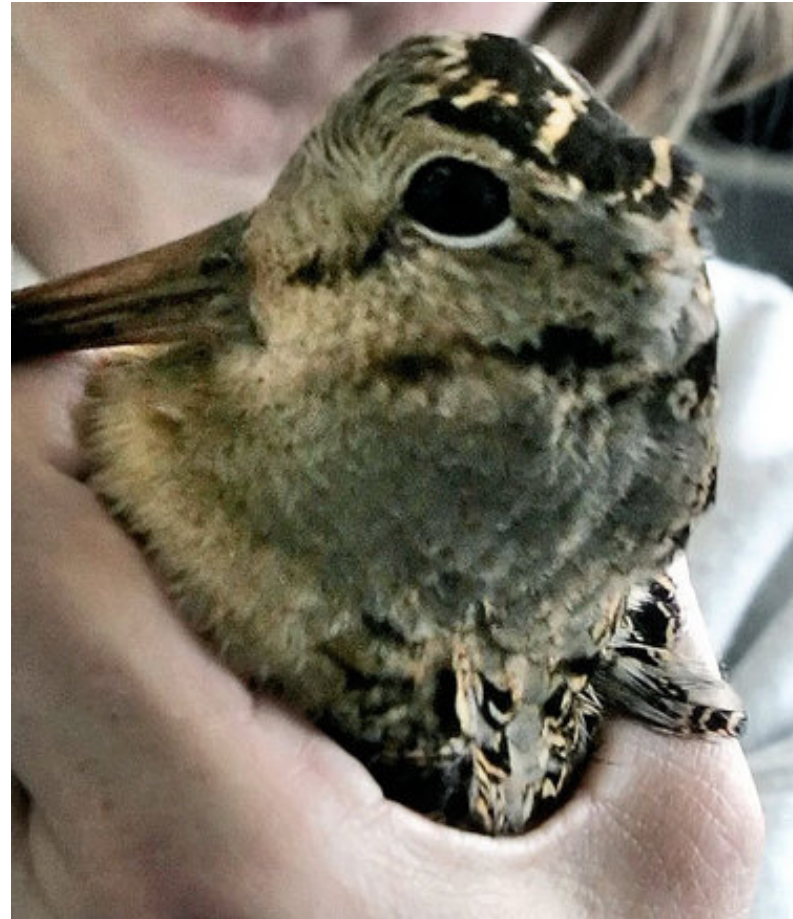
You can get so close you'll almost step on them."

The woodcock is an unusual bird.

"Most people wouldn't know what one looked like if it landed on their porch," Kremers said.

It has a bill that looks too long for its body, and its ears are forward on the face, between the eyes and bill. Its eyes are set high on its head, giving it a 360-degree field of vision, according to Lance Clark, a wildlife biologist at the DEC's Cortland office.

The bird's long bill has a



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flexible tip that helps when probing moist soil for earthworms, their preferred food. A single bird can eat its weight in worms each day. Its breast meat is dark and the meat on its legs is white.

Woodcocks, because of the placement of the eyes on their head, have a 360-degree field of vision.

Clark said the DEC “doesn’t have a good sense” about the numbers of woodcocks in the state. He said the consensus is that their population is stable. Next season, the bird’s monthlong hunting season will be extended by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, he said. The current season opened Oct. 6 and closes Nov. 4. The daily bag limit is three birds.

Woodcocks are migratory birds, flying at night.

“There’s a lot of native birds out there, but many of the birds you see today are usually not the birds you’ll see tomorrow,” Kremers said. “Their numbers usually seem to peak around Oct. 20. Some days you’ll flush 20 birds; some days, three. They migrate in and out.”

Thursday’s hunt was one of those lean days. Two state-owned wildlife management areas were hit, but only four birds were flushed, in addition to a few pheasants. Kremers didn’t take a single shot with his over-and-under, Italian-made .410 shotgun.

Kremers took a break to talk about woodcock hunting, a sport he’s enjoyed since he was a teen.

How’d you get started hunting these birds?

My father introduced me to the sport. I grew up with bird dogs, rabbit dogs and coon dogs. I started hunting with dogs by myself when I was 16.

Why do you enjoy this type of hunting?

The fun thing is going in where it's really thick, seeing the bird and then figuring out how you're going to get a shot off — and then pulling it off. The birds are not terribly fast. And they'll flush and they can land again as close as 20 to 30 yards away. If you flushed them on a golf course, it wouldn't be that much fun.

What I particularly like about it is very few people do this. I rarely run into another woodcock hunter.

How difficult is it to shoot one — say, compared to a ruffed grouse?

A ruffed grouse is like (hitting) a major-league curve ball. A woodcock is like a knuckleball. It's not really fast, but pretty erratic.

How do you know for sure if there's woodcocks in the area you're hunting?

A good give-away is the traces (of urine and feces) they leave, called “splashings or chalk marks,” on the ground or the leaves.

Is the meat edible? Do you have a favorite recipe?

I use a number of marinades and I almost always grill them. Some people like them, some people think they're awful. If you overcook them, they're awful. You want to undercook them. Some people say the meat tastes like liver. I don't like liver, but I like woodcock. All I can say is they taste like ... well, woodcock.

What's the best kind of gun to use for woodcock hunting?

You want something that throws an open pattern of shot because many of your shots are close. Most people don't use their good guns when they go woodcock hunting because you can really scratch them up going through all the thick stuff.



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