

## Turkey Facts:

NWTF- National Wild Turkey Federation is dedicated to the conservation wild turkey and preservation of hunting heritage.

Turkeys were on the brink of extinction in 1930's.

Conservation efforts started in 1940's.

Today there are an estimated 7 million in North America.

Only two states don't have turkeys naturally. Alaska and Hawaii.

Bird name came from the nation of Turkey.

Mature males are Toms. Adolescent males are Jakes.

Mature females are Hens and adolescents are Jennies.

Very young turkeys of either sex are poults.

A gobbler's bald head can change colors in seconds due to emotion or excitement. They can be white, gray, red, pink, or blue.

A gobble can be heard over a mile.

Turkeys can run 25 miles per hour and fly 55 MPH.

A turkey poult can be out of the nest and searching for its own food within 24 hrs. of hatching.

Male turkeys have very little to do with raising their young.

They are "precocial" which means they are born with feathers.

Turkeys are "arboreal." They sleep in trees.

Turkeys fly for short distances but usually walk.

Tom turkeys show courtship behavior by fanning their tail feathers out. They have a flap of skin on top of their beaks called a snood and skin under their beaks called a wattle.

There are 5 sub-species of wild turkeys. (Eastern, Rio Grande, Osceola, Gould, and Merriams)

Some classifications include other sub-species. South Mexican and Ocellated.

A group of turkeys can be called a flock, gang, dole, crop, posse, rafter or a raffle.

There are over 5,500 feathers on a turkey including 18 tail feathers.

Turkeys are omnivores.

They typically live 3-5 years but up to 13 has been recorded.

Turkeys weigh 5-20 lbs. usually.

Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey to be our national bird instead of the bald eagle.

Wild turkeys have excellent day vision 3 times more powerful than humans, see in color, and can see 270 degrees around them. They have very poor night vision.

Breeding is determined by the hen.

Hens prefer nesting sites close to an opening, with some light overhead cover, good visibility to see predators, some concealment for her body.

It takes a hen up to 2 weeks to lay a compliment of 9-13 eggs. She only goes to the nest to lay an egg once a day at this time. After laying the compliment of eggs, she will set on the nest for day and night for 28 days. She may leave the nest at mid-day to take a break and forage for food.

Before hatching, hens and eggs are very susceptible to predators including crows, skunks, opossums, raccoons, hogs, foxes, coyotes, dogs and some snakes. After hatching, poults are preyed on by owls and hawks too.

After hatching, studies show that 10-40 % of nests successfully hatch and only 25% of poults live past 4 weeks.

Poor body conditioning due to poor nutrition can cause late nesting.

Land owners can improve their turkey habitat and survival by improving nesting sites, thinning mature timber, and burning undergrowth in pine forests.

Eastern Wild Turkey Characteristics: Chestnut brown tips on tail feathers, black/white barred feathers on wings, 18-30 lb. toms, 8-12 lb. hens, strongest gobbles of all sub-species, longest beards of all sub-species, most widely distributed east of the Mississippi River, and is second hardest sub-species to call. Found in 38 states and numerous Canadian Provinces. Most abundant sub-species.

Osceola: Found only in Florida, population of 100,000, toms weigh up to 20 lbs. and hens 8-12, dark brown tips on tail feathers, mostly black wings with small white bands, strong gobbles, very long spurs, long legs, shorter beards than Easterns, and hardest to call of all sub-species.

Rio Grande: Found in Western Texas, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Mexico and other western states. Toms weigh 20 and hens are 8-12. Tan tips on tail feathers, barred wings, moderate spurs, moderate gobbles, and moderate beards.

Merriam's: Abundant in the mountainous regions of the West. Rocky Mountains are considered central to their range. Snow white tips on tail feathers. More white less black on wings. Toms weigh 18-30 and hens weigh 8-12. They have the weakest gobbles, shortest spurs and beards of all sub-species.

Gould's: Can only be found in Arizona, New Mexico, and Northern Mexico. Few in the population. Toms weigh 18-30 and hens 8-12 lbs. They have long legs like the Osceola, light tips on tail feathers, moderate colored wings, moderate gobbles, beard length, and spurs.

Ocellated: Can only be found in a 50,000 square mile area of the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, northern Belize, and the El Peten region of northern Guatemala. Rainbow like iridescent feathers, grey tail feathers with blue and gold tips, white and black wings. Toms weigh 11-12 lbs. and hens weigh 6-7. They have a high pitched gobble preceded by a hollow drumming sound. No beard and very long spurs.

