

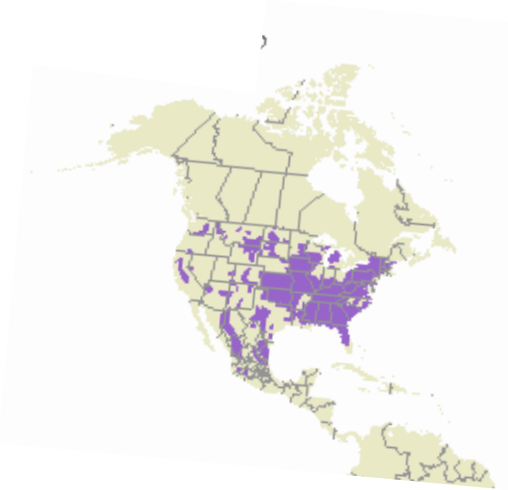
Wild Turkey

Meleagris gallopavo



The Wild Turkey is a large bird that primarily lives on the ground in open woodlands. It eats a variety of foods, from fruit and nuts to fern fronds and insects. And, in fact, contrary to popular myth, turkeys can and do fly--they can fly up to 55 miles per hour for short distances! You will likely see them on the ground, though; they typically remain grounded unless spooked.

Domesticated Turkeys were brought from Europe to America by settlers, although originally explorers found the species in Mexico. You can tell Wild Turkeys from their domesticated cousins by the tips of their tail feathers; Wild Turkeys have brown tail feathers while the domesticated Turkey has white tips.



Wild Turkeys can fly up to 55 mph for short distances!

From left to right: while strutting, male Turkeys' colors intensify (courtesy of the Fish and Wildlife Service); a Wild Turkey hen looks quite different than her male counterpart (courtesy of the Pennsylvania Game Commission); the turkey range extends throughout the US, but is most prevalent in the east (courtesy of www.songbirdgarden.com).



Nests can be found on the ground, usually on a pile of leaves. Baby turkeys are raised quickly by their mothers, who feed them for a few days before they start foraging on their own. Babies and mothers join together in bands of 30 birds, sometimes many more, depending on the season.

The 19th and early 20th centuries saw Wild Turkey populations decline significantly due to overhunting and decreasing habitat. Due to reintroduction programs, the species has been re-established throughout the U.S., even in places where it didn't naturally live before, and populations are on the rise.



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