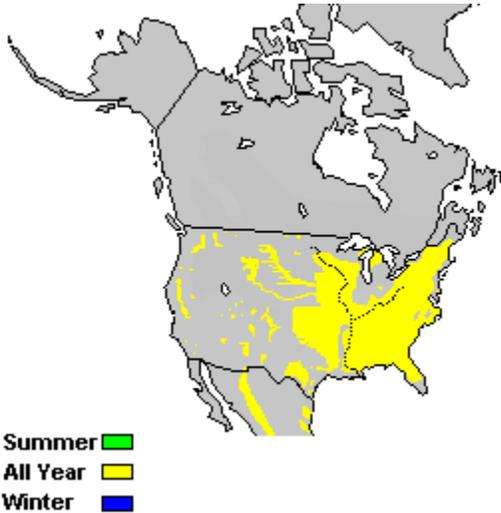


Wild Turkey

Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo*



[Sound](#) (104k)

Description:

Size: Male: 46 inches (117 cm)

Female: 37 inches (94 cm)

Abundance: • Common

Quick Identification: Dark, iridescent body bare head is pink and blue Male has red skin patch on throat

Identification Tips:

- Very large, small-headed, round-winged, long-tailed, ground-dwelling bird
- Unfeathered bluish head and reddish throat
- Dark breast, belly and upper back
- Iridescent bronze and green wings
- Barred primaries
- Dark, fan-shaped tail with brown or buff band at tip

Adult male

- Larger head with wattle at throat, caruncled forehead, and projection behind the bill
- More iridescent plumage

Similar species:

- Too large to be confused with any other bird.

Habitat:

- Open woodlands with clearings, forest edges, and brushy areas.
- Semiarid mountains in the southwest.
- Roost in trees at night.
- Spends early morning and late afternoon foraging on ground for acorns, seeds, fruits, nuts and insects. Poor flier. Largest North American game bird.

Nesting/Feeding:**Breeding:**

- Mature deciduous and deciduous-conifer forests, open woodland, especially in mountains.
- 1 brood.
- Mating system is polygynous.

Displays:

- Males gobble and strut with plumage erect, tail fanned, head ornaments swollen, and wings drooped with quills rattling.

Nest:

- Usually concealed in grass or shrubs; shallow depression lined with a few dead leaves, grass.
- Female builds nest.

Eggs:

- Ten to twelve.
- Buff to white, marked with dull brown. 2.5" (63 mm).

Chick Development:

- Female incubates. Incubation takes 27-28 days.

- Development is precocial (mobile, downy, follow parents, are shown food).
- Young are able to fly after 6-10 days.
- Female tends young.

Diet:

- Mostly seeds, nuts (especially acorns), fruit, leaves of many plants; also insects, especially grasshoppers, terrestrial invertebrates, small vertebrates.

Conservation:

- Winter resident. Reintroduced to much of range where formerly extirpated by habitat loss and diseases spread by domestic poultry (latter still problem in east and southeast).

- **Notes:** Nearly became national bird of U.S., losing by one vote in congressional ballot. Female performs distraction display. Chicks roost under body, wings, and tail of female until about 4 weeks old. Family groups and brood less females coalesce into flocks when young are several weeks old. Roost in trees. Winter flocks, either unisexual or mixed, usually to 40-50, much larger in some areas.