

Wild Turkeys - almost our national bird



Wild Turkeys

When Benjamin Franklin suggested the wild turkey as our national bird, he obviously noticed its fascinating characteristics and appeal. Although the turkey lost by just one vote to the bald eagle, its keen senses make it one of America's favorite game birds. Due to unregulated hunting, the wild turkey was eliminated from Indiana at the turn of the century (1900). It wasn't until the 1930s and 1940s that the turkey was reintroduced into the Hoosier countryside. Thanks to hunters donating money, along with bird lovers and the creation of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTFF), the wild turkeys' home range is fully rejuvenated in most every county in Indiana. Pursuing this weary animal is extremely exciting, but getting close enough to observe turkeys is sometimes difficult due to their extraordinary sense of sight. If you plan on getting close, you had better wear some type of camouflage.

Although turkeys spend most of their time on the ground during the day, they sleep in trees at night. Turkeys cannot see well in the dark. Sleeping in trees provides protection from predators that roam and can see at night. They fly up to roost at dusk, and fly down at dawn to begin their daily rituals. Yes, turkeys can fly. Actually they are excellent flyers, and can fly straight up 50 feet to roost in a tree at night. If they can't outrun a predator---and they can run fast---they will just simply fly away at an alarming rate. They also have to be fast in order to capture some of their favorite food...insects. Turkeys love insects, especially in the spring. Their food somewhat differs season by season, eating corn and nuts in the fall and mostly insects in the springtime.



A flock of wild turkeys

You might find turkeys near a ridge looking over a grassy knoll or in the middle of a hardwood forest, but wherever you are, you can always distinguish the distinct "gobble" of the male wild turkey, a symbol of our heritage and freedom.