

TURKEY TIME!

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Do you know what bird Benjamin Franklin wanted to make the national bird of the United States instead of the Bald Eagle? That is right, he wanted the national bird to be the wild turkey! You might be most familiar with the turkeys that are raised on farms that we eat, but wild turkeys have been around much longer. Wild turkeys were used by the Native Americans as a source of food and their feathers were used to make brooms, arrow fletchings, and decorations for clothing. By the early 1800's the wild turkeys were gone from Connecticut due to over hunting, harsh winters, and forest clearing by the colonists. Turkeys were reintroduced to Connecticut starting in 1975 and today we have a healthy wild turkey population once more.



Now that we know a little about the history of turkeys, let us explore turkeys themselves. A turkey is a bird which means that it shares the same features as other birds that you might know like the robin or eagle. Turkeys have between 3,500 and 6,000 feathers covering their body. The tail feathers are used for display and balance, wing feathers for flying, and body feathers to keep the turkey warm and dry. Wild turkeys can fly which allows them to avoid predators by sleeping or roosting in trees. Wild turkeys are generally between 10-25lbs while turkeys raised on farms are typically twice as heavy causing them to not be able to fly. Turkeys have a beak that they use to eat. Wild turkeys eat plants, nuts, seeds, fruits and berries, corn, and insects. Just like other birds, turkey also lay eggs. In

the spring the male turkeys, called toms, will start gobbling and strutting, using his feathers to put on a display, to attract females. Later in the spring the female turkeys, called hens, will lay a clutch of 8-14 eggs. The hen will then incubate the eggs for 28 days. Once the baby turkeys, called poults, hatch they will remain with the hen until the following spring. Wild turkeys can be found living in forests and open fields in every state except Alaska. So next time you are near a forest or field keep your eyes out and see if you can spot any wild turkeys!

Turkey Facts:



- Most domestic (farm raised) turkeys are white while wild turkeys are shades of brown and black to help them blend in with the forest.
- Tom turkeys have bumps on their necks called caruncles. The caruncles can change color from red to white based on how the turkey is feeling. Red means that the turkey is calm and happy while white means that it is angry or scared.
- Tom turkeys have a beard which looks like hair but is actually made of special feathers.
- A group of turkeys is called a flock.
- Turkeys can run 15-25 miles per hour and fly up to 55 miles per hour for short distances.

ACTIVITIES TO TRY!

BENDABLE BONE EXPERIMENT

For directions on how to do this cool experiment visit <https://sciencebob.com/bend-a-bone-with-vinegar/>. The directions call for chicken bones, but turkey bones will work just as well.



PINECONE TURKEY

Make a pinecone turkey – for directions visit <https://pineconecraftsforkids.com/pine-cone-turkeys/>.



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