# **KEEPING STUDENTS WELL** INFORMED AT HOME WHILE THEY'RE DISTANCE LEARNING.

Turkeys have

5,000 to 6,000

feathers.

Exploring the realms of history, science, nature and technology

Considered sacred in ancient Mexican cultures and a close competitor for the national bird of the United States, the wild turkey lives in the woods of North America. Turkeys spend their days foraging for food and their nights in low tree branches.

snood

wattle

TURKEYS

### In a word

Dispatch

NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION

The North American turkey has little to do with Turkey the country. The bird got its name in the mid-1500s when British settlers confused it with the African guinea fowl, a bird known at that time as a turkey chicken.

A group of turkeys is called a rafter or a flock. Male turkeys are called toms or gobblers, after the sound they make when trying to attract a mate. Females are called hens, and babies are called poults.

### Wild species

There are five subspecies of wild turkeys: eastern, Osceola, Rio Grande, Merriam's, and Gould's.

The pilgrims hunted and ate the eastern wild turkey. These birds are sometimes called forest turkeys.

### Dinnertime

Wild turkeys are omnivorous and eat a variety of food. They eat grasses, grains, insects, nuts, berries and small reptiles. Domestic turkeys are typically fed nutritional food pellets, but they may also enjoy vegetable snacks.

Both male and female turkeys have a snood and a wattle. A hen does not have a beard or spurs.

Wild

turkey

A turkey hen

of 10 to 18

eggs at

a time.

will lay a clutch

18 tail feathers make up the male's distinct fan. Many of this bird's feathers are iridescent, which gives it a luminescent shine.

## Did you know?

Wild turkeys almost became extinct in the 1930s due to overhunting and deforestation.

There are now more than 7 million wild turkeys in North America.

Turkeys make more than 20 distinct vocalizations. The gobble sound can be heard a mile away. Other turkey sounds include "purrs," "yelps" and "kee-kees."

The average lifespan of a wild turkey is 3-5 years.

Wild turkeys can run at speeds up to 25 miles per hour.

A turkey's sex can be determined from its droppings males produce spiral-shaped poop, and females' poop is shaped like the letter J.

Male turkeys are about twice as large as females. Domestic turkeys weigh twice as much as wild turkeys.

The wild turkey's head and wattles change color with mood. The head can be red, pink, white or blue.

beard An adult wild turkey tom weighs 16-22 lbs. An adult hen weighs 8-12 lbs. spur

### Domestic breeds

Domestic turkeys were first raised by Native Americans in Mexico and

Wild turkeys can fly and can manage short distances at speeds up to 55 mph. Domestic turkeys have been bred for food and have become too heavy to fly.

Turkeys spend a lot of time on the ground, where they feed and lay eggs.

### Bringing up baby

Wild turkeys mate in early spring. Shortly after mating, the female prepares a nest on the ground and lays her eggs.

The eggs incubate for about a month. The poults are precocial, which means they are born well developed and ready to forage for themselves in about 24 hours. They are born with feathers but cannot fly for the first two weeks. The mother stays with them on the ground, keeping them safe and warm until they are ready to roost in the trees.

The young turkeys stay with their mother for a year or so. The male has very little to do with raising the babies.

Central America, who began breeding them about 2,000 years ago.

Today, there are many domestic turkey breeds found around the world, but not nearly as many as chicken or duck breeds.

**Domestic** turkey

> Thanksgiving is sometimes called "Turkey Day" because this bird is traditionally served as dinner on that holiday.

Wild turkeys see in color and have excellent day vision.

The first presidential pardons were granted to domestic turkeys in 1947. Since then, every president has "pardoned" two birds before Thanksgiving. The pardoned birds live out their days on farms.

Young poults know their mother's alarm call and will respond by freezing or running to hide if she sounds the alarm.

Juveniles are as big as adults by winter.

tch

More turkeys are consumed on Thanksgiving than on any other holiday.

to subscribe: (520) 423-8685

The average American eats 18 pounds of turkey annually.

SOURCES: World Book Encyclopedia, World Book Inc.; https://onekindplanet.org; https://www.roysfarm.com; https://www.livescience.com; https://forum.a nericanexpedition.us; https://www.fws.gov; https://www.allaboutbirds.org

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Poult



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