

# TURKEY TIMELINE

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## TURKEY FACTS

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Weight: males 17-30lbs; females 8-12lbs

Length: males 42-48 inches; females 32-38 inches

Flight and ground speed: 25mph (max ground speed); 55mph (max flight speed)

Habitat: woodland habitats mixed with agricultural fields

Geography: native to North America, and is primarily found in eastern and central areas of the United States

Food: waste grains, insects, wild fruits and tree nuts

Subspecies: There are five subspecies of North American wild turkey: Eastern, Osceola, Rio Grande, Merriam's, and Gould's.

\*When excited, the male's head and neck coloration changes, alternating between shades of reds, whites, and blues.

\*The wild turkey can make at least 30 different calls. In the spring, the adult male makes a call known as a gobble to attract females. Humans can hear gobbles from a mile away.

\*The male turkey is often referred to as a tom and a female is called a hen.

Source: <<http://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/TurkeyHunting/WildTurkeyInformation.aspx>> & <<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/my-life-as-a-turkey-wild-turkey-fact-sheet/7299/>>

Image Source: Vince pahkala <[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wild\\_Turkeys.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wild_Turkeys.jpg)>.

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## 1500s, Wild Turkeys Believed to Be Domesticated in the Highlands of Central Mexico

Image Source: "Meleagris mexicana, Mexican Turkey" Daniel Giraud Elliot, 1869, Courtesy of the NYPL, Digital ID: 402445.



1516 Spanish First Encounter Domesticated Turkey in Mexico, Peter Martyr  
South Americans gave to members of a Spanish expedition "a great multitude of their peacockes, both cockes and hennes, deade and alyve, as well to satisfie their present necessitie, as also to carry with them into Spayne for encrease."

Sourced From: "More Than a Meal: The Turkey in History, Myth, Ritual, and Reality" By Karen Davis, Pg. 29

Image Source: Biodiversity Heritage Library <<https://accounts-flickr.yahoo.com/photos/biodivlibrary/6005770172/?rb=1>>



## 1604, Native Americans Describe Turkeys, Samuel de Champlain

"The savages, along all these coasts where we have been, say that other birds, which are very large, come along when their corn is ripe. They imitated for us their cry, which resembles that of the turkey. They showed us their feathers in several places, with which they feather their arrows, and which they have under the throat like those we have in France, and they say that a red crest falls over upon the beak. According to their description, they are as large as a bustard, which is a kind of goose, having the neck longer and twice as large as with us. All these indications led us to conclude that they were turkeys.

Source: "Early Records of the Wild Turkey" By Albert Hazen Wright, The Auk, Vol. 32, No. 1, Jan., 1915 Pg. 63 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4071615>>

Image Source: "The Wild Turkey (Meleagris gallopavo)" James E. De Kay, Courtesy of the NYPL, Digital ID: 113618.



### 1630, Abundance of Turkeys, Francis Higginson

"Here are likewise abundance of Turkeys often killed in the Woods, farre greater then our English Turkeys, and exceeding fat, sweet, and fleshy, for here they have abundance of feeding all the yeere long, as Strawberries, in Summer all places are full of them and all manner of Berries and Fruits."

Source: "Early Records of the Wild Turkey" By Albert Hazen Wright, *The Auk*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Jan., 1915 Pg. 64 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4071615>>

Image Source: "Wild turkey shooting" Currier & Ives., 1871, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ds-03098 <<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002698822/>.



### 1641, 30 Lb. Turkeys in New Amsterdam, Adriaen van der Donck

Adriaen van der Donck wrote that turkeys are "large, heavy, fat, and fine, weighing from twenty to thirty pounds each, and I have heard of one that weighed thirty-two pounds."

Sourced From: "The Turkey: An American Story" By Andrew F. Smith, University of Illinois Press, 2009, Pg. 40.

Image Source: "Wild Turkey Cock, Hen and Young" John James Audubon, 1826.



### 1661-74, Turkeys Along the Mississippi, Jesuit Relations

In America "Turkeys and fowls fly in flocks as Starlings do in France." Along the Mississippi "Turkeys strut about, on all sides," and along the Illinois River "Turkeys are found there in greater numbers than anywhere else."

Source: "Early Records of the Wild Turkey" By Albert Hazen Wright, *The Auk*, Vol. 32, No. 3, Jul., 1915. Pg. 348 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4072684>>.

Image Source: "Wild Turkey." Courtesy of the NYPL, Digital ID: 1589193.



### 1703, Rich in Turkeys, Baron LaHontan

"Upon the brink of this Lake [Lake Erie] we frequently saw flocks of fifty or sixty Turkey's, which run incredibly fast upon the Sands; And the Savages of our company kill'd great numbers of 'em, which they gave to us in exchange for the fish that we catch'd... The River of Illinese is intituled to Riches, by vertue of the benign Climate, and of the great quantities of... Turkeys that feed on its brinks."

Source: "Early Records of the Wild Turkey" By Albert Hazen Wright, *The Auk*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Jan., 1915 Pg. 62, 349 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4071615>> & <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4072684>>.

Image Source: "Wild Turkey. Female & Young." John J. Audubon, 1840, Courtesy of the NYPL, Digital ID: 108549.



### 1784, The Turkey Should be the National Bird, Benjamin Franklin

"For my own part I wish the Bald Eagle had not been chosen the Representative of our Country. He is a Bird of bad moral Character. He does not get his Living honestly... For the Truth the Turkey is in Comparison a much more respectable Bird, and withal a true original Native of America . . . He is besides, though a little vain & silly, a Bird of Courage, and would not hesitate to attack a Grenadier of the British Guards who should presume to invade his Farm Yard with a red Coat on."

Sourced From: "American Myths: Benjamin Franklin's Turkey and the Presidential Seal, By Jimmy Stamp, *smithsonian.com*, January 25, 2013 <<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/american-myths-benjamin-franklins-turkey-and-the-presidential-seal-6623414/?no-ist>>.

Image Source: Johann Daniel Meyer, 1752, <[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Meyer\\_Zeit-Vertreib\\_2\\_Tafel\\_003.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Meyer_Zeit-Vertreib_2_Tafel_003.jpg)>



### 1817, Woods Full of Wild Turkeys, Samuel R. Brown

"Wild Turkeys abound in the hilly districts [of Illinois]... The woods [of Indiana] abound with deer, bears, wolves, and wild turkeys... In travelling seven miles through the woods of Dearborn country I counted two bears, three deer, and upwards of one hundred turkeys; more than half of the latter however are young ones, just beginning to fly."

Sourced From: "Early Records of the Wild Turkey" By Albert Hazen Wright, *The Auk*, Vol. 32, No. 3, Jul., 1915. Pg. 350 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4072684>>.

Image Source: W. L. Walton, 1834-1855, British Library HMNTS 10470.i.4 <[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wild\\_Turkey\\_-\\_Sportsman\\_and\\_Naturalist\\_in\\_Canada.jpeg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wild_Turkey_-_Sportsman_and_Naturalist_in_Canada.jpeg)>.



### 1818, Turkey at Every Meal, Morris Birkbeck

"We are now feasting on wild turkeys. We have not sat down to dinner for last last month, I believe, without a fine roast turkey. They weight about twelve pounds, and sold five for a dollar. Some weigh twenty-five pounds — I have heard of thirty. They are fat and tender: better I fancy, than Norfolk turkeys; but I must not be too positive on this nice point."

Source: "Notes on a Journey in America" By Morris Birkbeck, London, 1818, Pg. 123, 149. Sourced From: "Early Records of the Wild Turkey" By Albert Hazen Wright, The Auk, Vol. 32, No. 3, Jul., 1915. Pg. 350 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4072684>>.

Image Source: "Thanksgiving day." R.J. Wealthy, 1905 Courtesy of the NYPL, Digital ID: 1588330.



### 1840, Bountiful Turkeys in Missouri

Historians recorded "too many wild turkeys even to consider raising tame birds" and "turkeys so numerous and easily obtained as to be scarcely worthy of consideration."

Source: "Wild Turkey Restoration" Missouri Department of Conservation <<http://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/wildlife-restoration/wild-turkey-restoration>>

Image Source: "Pheasants and turkeys" The pictorial museum of animated nature, 1856, Courtesy of the NYPL, Digital ID: 820067.

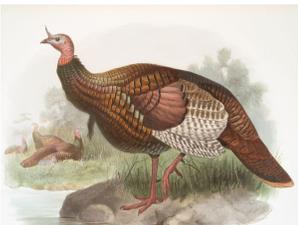


### 1843, Shooting Wild Turkey Along the Missouri River, John James Audubon

"Went out, but only shot a fine large Turkey-hen, which I brought down on the wing at about forty yards. It ran very swiftly, however, and had not Harris's dog come to our assistance, we might have lost it.... I was astonished to see how many of the large shot I had put into her body. This hen weighed 11¾ pounds. She had a nest, no doubt, but we could not find it."

Source: "Audubon and His Journals, Volume I." By Maria R. Audubon, Charles Scribner's Sons. 1897. <[http://www2.latech.edu/~bimagee/louisiana\\_anthology/texts/audubon/audubon--journal\\_1.html](http://www2.latech.edu/~bimagee/louisiana_anthology/texts/audubon/audubon--journal_1.html)>

Image Source: "The birds of America; from original drawings" John J. Audubon, 1827, Courtesy of the Library of Congress American Memory, Digital ID icufaw bpc0008.



### 1863, President Lincoln Creates Thanksgiving and Pardons the First White House Turkey

"Thanksgiving was first celebrated as a national holiday in 1863, after Abraham Lincoln's presidential proclamation, which set the date as the last Thursday in November.... It was, however, in late 1863, when the Lincolns received a live turkey for the family to feast on at Christmas. Tad, ever fond of animals, quickly adopted the bird as a pet, naming him Jack and teaching him to follow behind as he hiked around the White House grounds. On Christmas Eve, Lincoln told his son that the pet would no longer be a pet. 'Jack was sent here to be killed and eaten for this very Christmas,' he told Tad, who answered, 'I can't help it. He's a good turkey, and I don't want him killed.' The boy argued that the bird had every right to live, and as always, the president gave in to his son, writing a reprieve for the turkey on a card and handing it to Tad."

Source: "The History of Pardoning Turkeys Began With Tad Lincoln" By Gilbert King, smithsonian.com, 20102, <<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-history-of-pardoning-turkeys-began-with-tad-lincoln-141137570/>>

Image Source: "Meleagris gallopavo" Daniel Giraud Elliot, 1872, Courtesy of the NYPL, Digital ID: 465863.



### 1900s, Due to Over-Hunting and Habitat Loss, the Wild Turkey Population Plummeted to an Estimated 30,000 Birds

Source: "Wild Turkey Restoration: The Greatest Conservation Success Story?" By Matt Miller, The Nature Conservancy, 2013 <<http://blog.nature.org/science/2013/11/26/wild-turkey-restoration-the-greatest-conservation-success-story/>>

Image Source: "A Florida hunting scene" Burgert Brothers, 1926 Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-41025 <<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012646799/>>



## 1905, Lacey Act Prohibiting the Interstate Sale of Taken Wildlife

Image Source: "Puck Thanksgiving 1904" L.M. Glackens, 1904, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppms-ca-25905 <<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2011645587/>>.

## 1909, A. W. Dimock

"When the creatures of the wild were named, the wild turkey should have been christened Wise Turkey. The big bird is by nature sociable and if, at times, he seems distrustful of human beings, it is because he is quick to recognize a hostile purpose.... In many states where the wild bird once flourished, they may now be classed with the dodo...It would be a misfortune for this grand creature, perhaps the bird most closely associated with the progress of our race on this continent, to become extinct... Yet this has already happened in most of the States of the Union...There is yet time to save this beautiful bird to the people of this country."

## 1916, The Majesty of the Turkey, Henry P. Bridges

"I never could understand why the turkey did not take the place of the American eagle. His broad shoulders and deep chest and firm step show that he is hardy as an oak. He has a clear-cut game head, jeweled with bright eyes, and is always on the lookout for trouble. His suspicion makes him the grandest American game bird to stalk. I hope that every state in the Union will do everything possible to fill its woods with this bird."



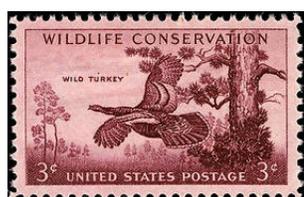
Source: "Breeding the Wild Turkey" Bulletin — American Game Protective Association, New York City, June 1, 1916, Volume 5, Pg. 3 <[http://books.google.com/books?id=zJHkAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA24-IA43&pg=PA24-IA43&dq=too+many+wild+turkeys+even+to+consider+raising+tame+birds&source=bl&ots=P\\_Mr1M4sq-&sig=p8GAIHSMnG7D8rcQ2f19RBvdJtg&hl=en&sa=X&ei=TGVzVKPsL4WsyASdklJA&ved=0CCMQ6AEwAzgK#v=onepage&q=turkey&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=zJHkAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA24-IA43&pg=PA24-IA43&dq=too+many+wild+turkeys+even+to+consider+raising+tame+birds&source=bl&ots=P_Mr1M4sq-&sig=p8GAIHSMnG7D8rcQ2f19RBvdJtg&hl=en&sa=X&ei=TGVzVKPsL4WsyASdklJA&ved=0CCMQ6AEwAzgK#v=onepage&q=turkey&f=false)>.  
Image Source: "Birds. Turkey (gobbler's head)" Theodor Horydczak, 1920, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-H813-1993-003 <<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/thc1995004400/PP/>>

## 1925 - 1943, Turkey Restoration Efforts

"From 1925 to 1943, an effort was made to halt the decline in turkey numbers. Approximately 14,000 game farm turkeys were released to supply more breeding stock. The hunting season for turkeys was closed in 1937. However, turkey numbers still decreased and the release of game farm turkeys appeared futile.... It became evident that restocking wild turkeys to unoccupied range was the solution to restoring the species, but it could not be done easily. First, a source of native wild turkeys was needed. Secondly, a method of trapping wild turkeys had to be developed, and finally, captured turkeys would need to be released in areas where their chance of survival was high."



Source: "Wild Turkey Restoration" Missouri Department of Conservation <<http://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/wildlife-restoration/wild-turkey-restoration>>  
Image Source: "Mexican wild turkey" Louis Agassiz Fierstein, 1920, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-DIG-det-4a26643 <<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/det1994023445/PP/>>



## 1950s, Invention of the Rocket Net Trap Brings Turkeys Back From Extinction

"With the development of the rocket net trap in the 1950's, the history of the wild turkey underwent a dramatic reversal. For the first time, large numbers of wild turkeys became available for transplanting to unoccupied habitats and turkey populations began the long road back from near extinction."

Source: "Wild Turkey Information" Iowa Department of Natural Resources, <<http://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/TurkeyHunting/WildTurkeyInformation.asp>>  
Image Source: Bureau of Printing and Engraving <[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wildlife\\_turkey\\_1956\\_U.S.\\_stamp.1.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wildlife_turkey_1956_U.S._stamp.1.jpg)>.



### 1980, Wild Turkey Numbers Reach 1.8 Million

Image Source: "Wild turkey hen at Fisheating Creek in Glades County, Florida." Lovett E. Wilson, 1985, Florida Memory, <<http://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/96244>>.



### 1990, Wild Turkey Numbers Reach 3.5 Million

Image Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture < [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:20111117-APHIS-DB-0005\\_-\\_Flickr\\_-\\_USDAgov.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:20111117-APHIS-DB-0005_-_Flickr_-_USDAgov.jpg)>



### 1997, Wild Turkeys Return to American Fields, New York Times

"These days, though, countless hens wander freely, broods in tow, through the woods and fields of rural and suburban America and are often seen feeding along heavily trafficked roadways. There are wild turkeys in metropolitan Atlanta and the suburbs of New York and Boston. Wild turkeys have even been spotted in Van Cortland Park in the Bronx. 'Wild turkeys have proved to be more adaptable than we ever thought,' said Dr. James G. Dickson, a research biologist for the United States Forest Service in Nacogdoches, Tex. They often seem unperturbed by people, especially when tempted by a feast and not chased by dogs or guns. According to National Wildlife magazine, a man in Massachusetts counted 78 wild turkeys in his yard after he and his neighbors sprinkled corn on their lawns to attract them."

Source: "Wild Turkeys Return To American Fields" By Jane E. Brody, New York Times, 1997 <<http://www.nytimes.com/1997/11/25/science/wild-turkeys-return-to-american-fields.html>>

Image Source: MTSOfan <<https://accounts-flickr.yahoo.com/photos/mtsofan/8246208327/?rb=1>>



### 2014, Wild Turkey Numbers Reach 7 Million, Now Abundant Enough to Be Hunted Again in 49 U.S. States and Canada

Image Source: Malcolm <[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wild\\_Turkey.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wild_Turkey.jpg)>

## HERITAGE BREED V. FACTORY FARMED

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### HERITAGE BREED

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Cost: \$8/lb.

Time to Slaughter: 26-28 weeks

Breed: Types include Standard Bronze, Black Spanish, Beltsville Small White, Narragansett, Jersey Buff, Slate, White Midget and White Holland, all bred from the oldest continuous stock of heritage turkeys in the world, similar to what the Pilgrims ate. Smaller breasts, darker leg meat, and are generally gamier in flavor than industrially raised turkeys.

Food: Diet of corn and soybean meal mixed with a supplement of vitamins and minerals, as well as grubs, bugs, and grasses from roaming the farm.

Hormones & Antibiotics: Raised antibiotic-free.

Additives: All natural and contain no additives.

Quality of Life: Moving freely within a spacious, natural environment.

Environmental Impact: "Many heritage turkey breeds have lately been on the brink of extinction, so supporting their continued farming is a step in the direction of preserving the earth's species diversity. They are raised free-range in a low-density, sustainable circumstances so that the natural environment is minimally disrupted."

### CONVENTIONAL/FACTORY FARMED

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Cost: \$1.89/lb.

Time to Slaughter: 14 -18 weeks

Breed: 99% of all turkeys in the U.S. are Broad Breasted White, which produce maximal white meat and breast meat in minimum growing time. They are an ungainly bird, too stocky in the chest to fly or to reproduce naturally (all industrial turkeys today are the product of artificial insemination).

Food: Diet of corn and soybean meal mixed with a supplement of vitamins and minerals.

Hormones & Antibiotics: Given antibiotics throughout their lives. USDA requires a mandatory pre-slaughter antibiotic withdrawal period. "These turkeys' immune systems are weak from the start, and to prevent even the mildest pathogen from killing them, farmers add large amounts of antibiotics to their feed. The antibiotics also help the turkeys grow faster and prevent ailments like diabetes, respiratory problems, heart disease and joint pains that result from an unvaried diet and lack of exercise."

Additives: Typically injected with a solution of water, salt, preservatives, vegetable oils, and flavorings during the packaging process.

Quality of Life: Factory farmed birds never see the light of day. A few days after birth their beaks are snipped off and they are raised in a concentrated, crowded indoor space with no windows, with 10,000 other turkeys, and where bright lights shine 24 hours a day. They can't roost (clutching onto something with their claws when they sleep) and instead, the turkeys are forced to rest in an unnatural position — analogous to what sleeping sitting up is for humans. The selective breeding process has created turkeys that produce breast meat in a small period of time, which renders them top-heavy and unable to fly.

Environmental Impact: Airborne ammonia emissions from waste can be harmful to the turkeys as well as the workers who spend time in the poultry houses. The use of preventative antibiotics in livestock has been found to create drug-resistant 'superbugs' in animals or humans. Opponents of genetically modified food object to the selective breeding practices that have been used to create the modern industrial turkey.

# DOMESTICATED TURKEY FACTS

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## TURKEY FACTS

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Numbers Raised: In 2013, more than 240 million turkeys were raised. More than 200 million were consumed in the United States.

Numbers Eaten on U.S. Holidays: 46 million turkeys are eaten each Thanksgiving, 22 million on Christmas and 19 million turkeys on Easter

Amount Eaten: In 2013, U.S. consumption of turkey was 16.0 pounds per person.

Weight at Slaughter: Toms at 18 weeks, avg. 38 pounds. Hens at 14 weeks, 17.5 pounds when processed.

### Where Turkeys Are Farmed:

#### Top Turkey Producing States for 2013

Minnesota — 44 million turkeys

North Carolina — 34 million turkeys

Arkansas — 28 million turkeys

Indiana — 17.5 million turkeys

Missouri — 17 million turkeys

Virginia — 15.5 million turkeys

California — 13 million turkeys

South Carolina — 12 million turkeys

Pennsylvania — 7 million turkeys

Ohio — 5.5 million turkeys

Other — 46.5 million turkeys

Source: National Turkey Federation <<http://www.eatturkey.com/>>

Image Source: Marji Beach <<https://accounts-flickr.yahoo.com/photos/rinalia/6859335741/sizes/l/>>