

## Fun facts about our feathered friend the wild turkey

Once a declining species in Michigan and across the country, wild turkeys now can be found in all counties in the Lower Peninsula and in some parts of the Upper Peninsula.

Here are some fascinating facts about *Meleagris gallopavo*, the scientific name of this thriving Thanksgiving bird.



- Wild turkeys stay in Michigan year-round. Their habitat is open grasslands, agricultural fields and forests.
- Turkeys nest on the ground, building nests of leaf litter at the base of a tree, under shrubs or brush piles, and in open fields.
- The size of a turkey's clutch is 10 to 14 eggs, and eggs incubate for 25-31 days.
- The average life span of a wild turkey is three to four years.
- Wild turkeys can reach speeds of up to 55 mph. in flight.
- A group of turkeys is called a "rafter." They can range from five to 50 birds and usually consist of only males or only females.
- Male turkeys attract females by strutting, gobbling, puffing out their feathers and fanning their tails.
- Males have spurs on their legs, which get longer as they age and are used to grapple with other turkeys over breeding rights.
- The gobbling sound we associate with turkeys comes from the males. Both males and females make a variety of calls like purrs, cackles, yelps and clucks.
- Wild turkeys have iridescent, dark feathered plumage with white barring on their wings and white or red tips on their tail and rump. The color of their head ranges from blue to white to red. Males have a "beard," which looks like a miniature horse's tail, on their chest.
- A fleshy growth above a turkey's beak is called the snood.
- Turkeys have wingspan of 4-5 feet, and they can reach up to 4 feet tall. Males often weigh 11-25 pounds, while females weigh 5-12 pounds.

Learn more about wild turkeys in Michigan at [Michigan.gov/Turkey](https://Michigan.gov/Turkey).