



# Wild Turkey Trivia



Wild turkeys are large, fascinating birds — easy to identify by their bright colors and distinctive gobbling. Let's see how much you know about their biology and behavior! Decide whether each statement is true or false and fill in the blanks below. (Answers are on the back.)

- |   | TRUE/FALSE |
|---|------------|
| 1. Wild turkeys are much too big to fly. They spend their lives on the ground.                    | _____      |
| 2. When chickens get older, they grow longer tail feathers and become turkeys.                    | _____      |
| 3. At night, wild turkeys prefer to sleep (or roost) in the tallest trees they can find.          | _____      |
| 4. Turkeys are vegetarians that feed only on seeds, nuts, plants and berries.                     | _____      |
| 5. You can tell whether a turkey is female or male by looking at the shape of its poop.           | _____      |
| 6. An adult turkey has around 5,000–6,000 feathers.   | _____      |
| 7. Male turkeys have sharp 2-inch claws on the backs of their legs, and they use them as weapons. | _____      |
| 8. Turkeys dislike water and don't know how to swim.  | _____      |
| 9. Both male and female turkeys can grow beards.  | _____      |
| 10. Father turkeys take an active role in raising their offspring.                                | _____      |
| 11. Turkeys have an excellent sense of smell, and can catch a human's scent from a mile away.     | _____      |
| 12. A turkey's head will change color when it gets agitated or excited.                           | _____      |



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## —Answer key



1. **False.** Wild turkeys can fly up to 55 miles per hour but usually just for short distances.
2. **False.** While chickens and turkeys are both birds, they are completely different species. Chickens do not turn into turkeys!
3. **True.** This is one of the wild turkey's best defenses against predators. They will often sleep in tree branches that are 20 to 30 feet off the ground!
4. **False.** Even though they eat plants, nuts and berries, turkeys will also eat large insects, worms, snails, and even small lizards and snakes. They are omnivores who will feed on almost anything that fits in their mouths!
5. **True.** The poop of a female turkey is typically shaped like a spiral, while a male turkey's poop is shaped more like the letter J.
6. **True.** A turkey's feathers provide protection, warmth and the ability to fly. Males spread out their long tail feathers to impress females.
7. **True.** The males use these claws — called spurs — in fights for dominance and for the chance to mate with many females.
8. **False.** Turkeys don't mind the water, and they are decent swimmers. They tuck in their wings, spread out their tail feathers and kick with their legs.
9. **True.** However, the beard does not hang from the turkey's face. It is the clump of odd, bristly feathers that grows from the middle of a turkey's chest. Most males have beards, but only about 10-20% of females do.
10. **False.** The mother turkeys (called hens) do all of the egg incubation and parenting. The young turkeys will stay with their mother through the first four or five months after they hatch.
11. **False.** A turkey's eyesight and hearing are its strongest senses — much stronger than those of humans. A turkey's sense of smell is fairly weak.
12. **True.** Male turkeys have bald heads that noticeably change color — from red to blue to white — depending on whether they are stressed, excited or relaxed. Increased or reduced blood flow causes the changes in color!