



wild turkey

Meleagris gallopavo

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Galliformes
Family: Phasianidae

FEATURES

An adult wild turkey female is about 36 inches in length while the male is about 48 inches long. Both sexes have a large brown body, a finger-like projection over the beak, a hairless, blue head and barred wings. The male has rusty tips on the tail feathers, a bright red wattle on the throat and a projection or "beard" on the chest.

BEHAVIORS

The wild turkey is a permanent resident statewide in Illinois. Nesting begins in March. Eight to 12 eggs are laid in a nest on the ground in dead leaves. Eggs are tan with red-brown spots. The wild turkey lives in wooded areas and swamps. It roosts in a tree, usually over water or in a ravine. The wild turkey eats many items including acorns, agricultural grains and grasses, berries, fruits, nuts and insects. The wild turkey is native to Illinois. There are accounts of wild turkeys being plentiful in the state from the early 1700s to the end of the 1800s, but, due to overhunting, turkeys were eliminated from Illinois by the early 1900s. Turkeys have been successfully reintroduced, and populations are now stable.

HABITATS

- bottomland forests
- coniferous forest
- southern Illinois lowlands
- upland deciduous forest

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: statewide

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.
Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume 2: Woodland Habitats CD-ROM.