



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

Wild Turkey Hunting Today

Presentation by
Storm W. Usrey

Conservation Education Manager



Goals and Objectives

○ **Goal:**

Students will learn the basics of hunting wild turkeys along with some wild turkey biology.

○ **Objectives:**

- Correctly name the three subspecies of wild turkeys in New Mexico.
- Identify at least three examples of wild turkey sign.
- Identify at least four items to include in your turkey hunting vest or pack.
- Understand what is an omnivore.
- Give a definition of a predator.

Wild Turkey Basic Information

❖ Wild Turkey numbers

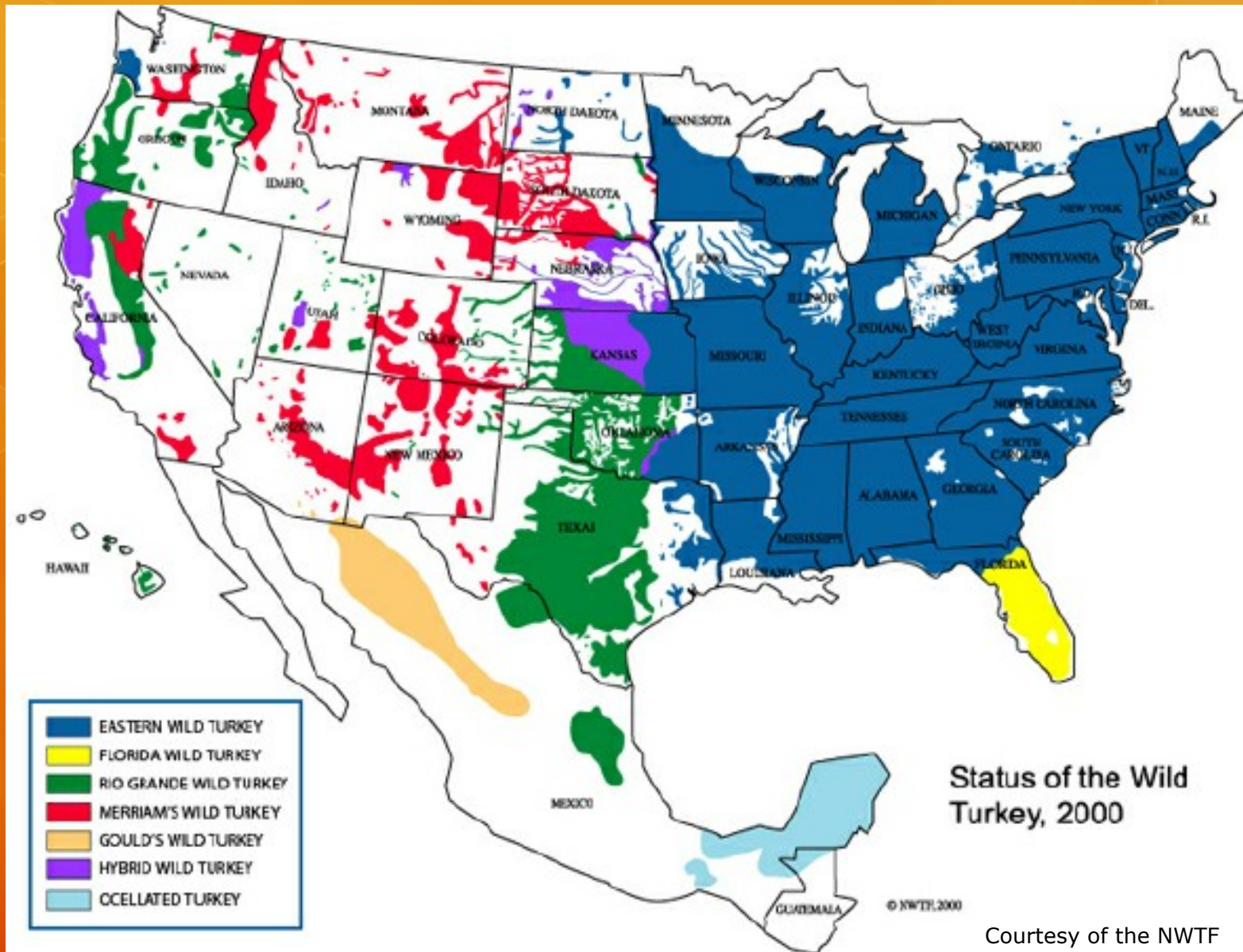
- Approximately 20,000-30,000 birds in the early 20th century
- Currently estimated at 7 million
- Rebound thanks to regulated hunting, management of habitat and transplant/work efforts from volunteers and agencies
- Supported by the National Wild Turkey Foundation (NWTf)

Wild Turkey Basic Information

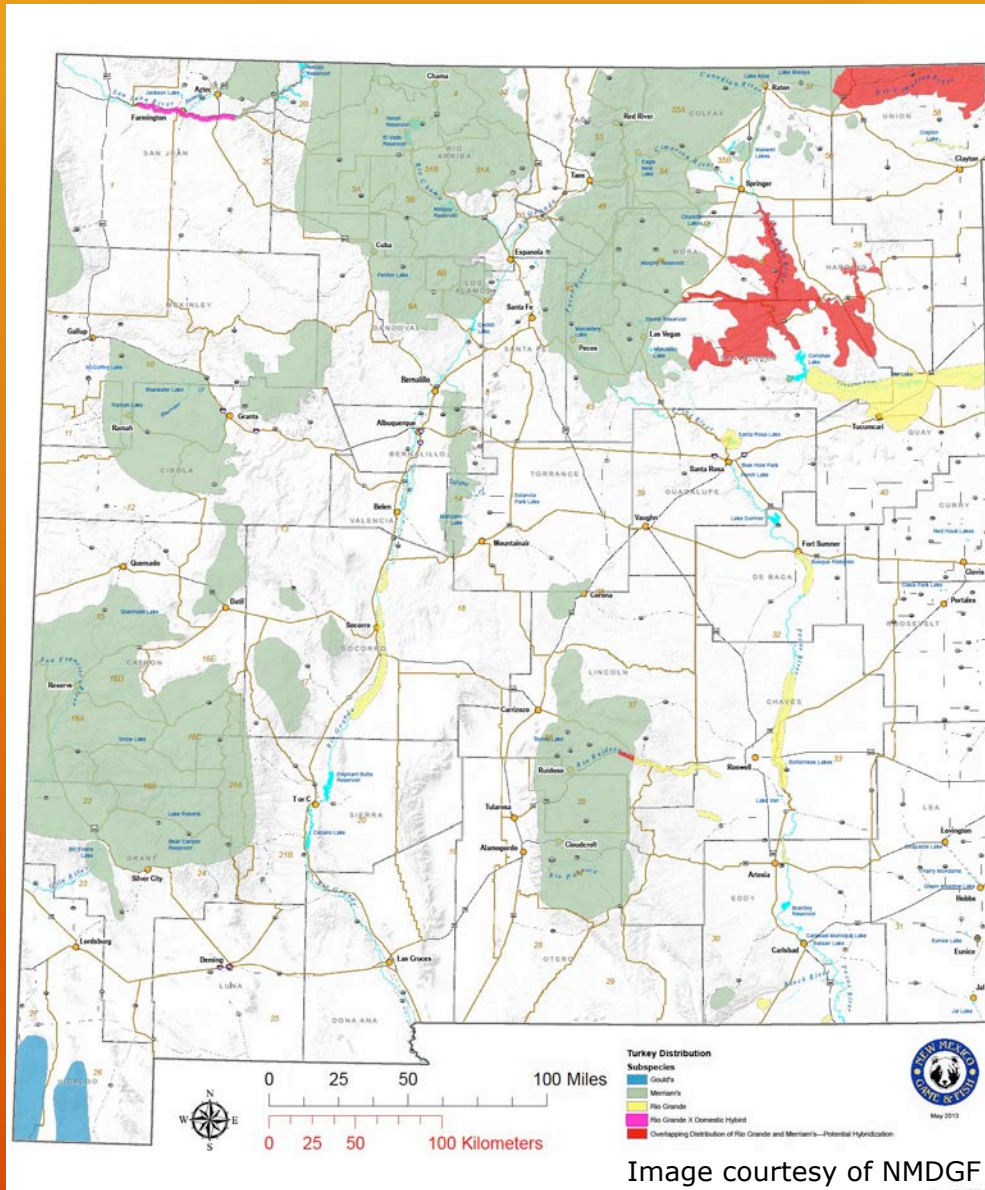
➤ World Wide: there are 6 different wild turkeys:

- ❖ Eastern
- ❖ Osceola
- ❖ Merriam's
- ❖ Rio Grande
- ❖ Gould's
- ❖ Ocellated (it's own species)

Wild Turkey Distribution Map



Turkey Subspecies of New Mexico



Merriam's



Courtesy of the NWTf

White to buff tips on tail fan. Live in mountainous areas with Ponderosa pine and oak. Found in the Rocky Mountains and across the western U.S.

Rio Grande (Rios)



Tail fan has tan on tips of feathers. Predominantly found in Central Plains states.

Gould's



Have white tips on tail fan. Found in southwest part of N.M., southeast part of A.Z. and Mexico.

Eastern



Courtesy of the NWTf

Have brown tail tips in fan. Mainly found in northern F.L., eastern part of U.S. and east towards eastern K.S., eastern O.K. and eastern T.X.

Osceola



Courtesy of the NWTf

Found in peninsula of Florida.

Ocellated



Found in Campeche, Mexico and Guatemala.

Wild Turkey Basic Information

Definitions

- **Gobblers:** males of species
- **Hens:** females of species
- **Jakes:** young males not a year old
- **Poults:** young turkeys
- **Beard:** modified feathers that come out of chest region. Found on males, but females can have them, too

Wild Turkey Basic Information

Definitions

- **Spurs:** found on leg region above feet of males
- **Roost:** trees or structure used for resting and sleeping at night
- **Waddles or caruncles:** skin on neck region (caruncles are found on Ocellated turkey's head)

Wild Turkey Basic Information



Photo credit: Storm Usrey

Mature gobbler, notice the beard on the breast area and spurs on the lower part of the legs.

Wild Turkey Basic Information



Above: Jake gobbler tail fan. Notice how middle feathers are taller than rest of fan feathers on the jake. On mature gobblers all fan feathers are same height.



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

Above: Mature Merriam's gobbler. Note the visible beard and full tail fan.

Wild Turkey Basic Information



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

Above: Two hen turkeys. Notice feathering all the way up to the head.

Right: Bearded hen. You can see the buff tipped body feathers.



Wild Turkey Lifestyle

- ❖ Spring
 - Breeding Season
- ❖ Summer
 - Hens have poults
- ❖ Fall
 - Form segregated flocks
- ❖ Winter
 - Survival mode, large flocks

The Six P's of Turkey Hunting

- **P**re-season scouting
- **P**attern your shotgun
- **P**reparation of equipment
- **P**ractice your calling
- **P**atience
- **P**ersistence

(reference: Quaker Boy Calls)

Preseason Scouting

- Find turkey sign
- Find turkeys
- Find water and feed sources, roost sites
- Learn the land status
- Talk with local Conservation Officer, Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management (BLM) staff
- Talk with locals
- Obtain written permission before hunting
- Study the proclamation

Gobbler Turkey Sign



Photo credits: Storm Usrey



Left: Gobbler track,
larger than hen track

Top: Gobbler dropping
with it's classic 'J' shape

Gobbler Turkey Sign



Photo credits: Storm Usrey



Left: Gobbler tracks and strut marks on sandy road

Top: Gobbler strutting in the spring

Hen Turkey Sign



Top: Hen dropping with it's classic spiraled appearance

Right: Hen track which is smaller than gobbler. Hens will weigh about 10-12 lbs. and gobblers will weigh 18-25 lbs (depending on subspecies). Gould's can weigh more.



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

Wild Turkey Sign



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

Above: Wild turkey scratching on forest floor

Wild Turkey Sign



Above: Wild turkey dusting bowl on a sandy road. Dusting keeps mites off of the turkeys.

Wild Turkey Sign

Wing Feather



Tail Feather



Body
feather:
Hens are
buff tipped
and
gobblers
are black
tipped.



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

Pattern your shotgun

- 10, 12, 20 gauge shotguns
- Full to super full chokes
- Rifle style sights or scope
- #4 - #6 shot size turkey loads
- Shoot at regular bullseye
- Shoot at turkey head targets
- Practice from 15-45 yards
- Need 7-10 pellets in the vital area
- Always practice safety at the range and when hunting!!!



Other Weapon types...muzzleloader shotgun and archery equipment



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

Prepare Equipment

- ❖ Total camouflage
- ❖ Turkey vest or pack
 - Turkey calls
 - Locator calls (shock gobble)
 - Coyote howler, owl hoot, elk bugle, crow call, etc.
 - Gloves and facemask
 - Thermocell w/ batteries and cartridges
 - Flashlight (spare batteries)
 - GPS (spare batteries)
 - Sharp knife



Photo credit: Storm Usrey

Prepare Equipment

- Map and compass
- Toilet paper
- Ammo
- Decoys (if legal)
- Rain jacket or additional clothing
- Water and snacks
- Survival gear



Photo credit: Storm Usrey

Can you think of other gear you might need?

Practice Turkey Calling

- Get your hands on a turkey calling DVD, CD or watch YouTube clips and practice!!!!
Turkeys make the following sounds in their vocabulary.
 - Gobbles (gobbler)
 - Yelps (hen and gobbler)
 - Clucks
 - Purrs
 - Cackles
 - Whine
 - Cutting
 - Putt
 - Kee-Kee Run



Photo credit: Storm Usrey

Patience

- ❖ Locate gobbler's on roost (put them to bed)
 - Gobbler's attract hens by gobbling
- ❖ If gobbler goes silent, no worries
 - Don't over call and have patience
 - 10-15 minutes of silence can go a long ways
- ❖ Know lay of land and turkey behavior
 - Rain
 - Field turkeys
 - Turkeys above you in elevation/topography
 - Stay put, Mid-day can be key

Patience

- ❖ Turkeys' senses
 - ❖ Incredible eyesight and hearing!
- ❖ Find Zones (strut, feeding, watering)
- ❖ Locate multiple gobblers or birds before season



Photo credit: Storm Usrey

Persistence

- Don't give up!
- If other hunters on a gobbler, find more turkeys
- Be safe and always assume turkey sounds in the woods is another hunter! Think Safety!
- Stay ethical and have fun



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

Thank you and take a child hunting



Photo credit: Storm Usrey

Reference Material

- New Mexico Wild Turkey Management Plan 2013-2018. New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Santa Fe, New Mexico.
<http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/download/conservation/species/birds/management-recovery-plans/Turkey-Management-Plan.pdf>
- Talkin' Turkey Spring & Fall. Instructional CD.
www.quakerboy.com
- Wild Turkeys, All About Turkeys: National Wild Turkey Federation. Retrieved March 17, 2020.
<https://www.nwtf.org/hunt/category/all-about-wild-turkeys>

Additional Reading Material

- New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Wildlife Notes, Wild Turkey.

<http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/download/education/conservation/wildlife-notes/birds/wild-turkey.pdf>

- Wild Turkeys of New Mexico.

<http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/download/publications/wildlife/Wild-Turkeys-of-New-Mexico.pdf>