

Wild Turkeys Rock!



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

By Storm W. Usrey
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Different types of wild turkeys

1. Eastern
2. Osceola
3. Rio Grande
4. Merriam's
5. Gould's
6. Ocellated



Various subspecies of wild turkeys



Courtesy of the NWTf



Top (left to right): Eastern, Rio Grande, & Merriam's.

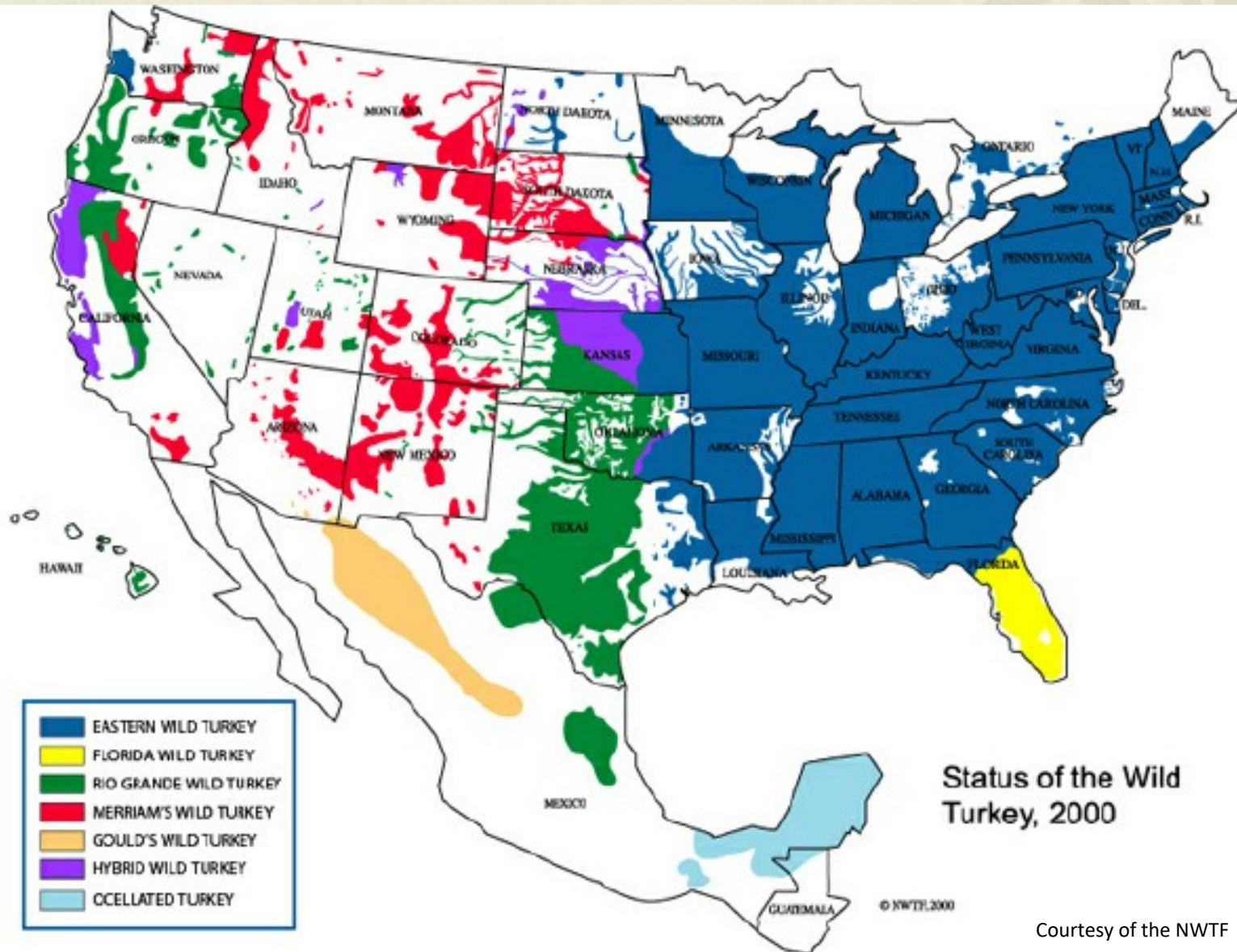
Bottom (left to right): Gould's & Osceola.

Ocellated wild turkey



Courtesy of the NWTF

Wild turkey distribution map



Wild turkey numbers today

Wild turkeys at the beginning of the 20th century were approximately 30,000 and now number approximately 7 million. What a huge conservation success story!

- Habitat management
- Research
- Transplant efforts
- Hard work from state agencies, volunteers, organizations like National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) & land management agencies
- Funded by monies from hunters (hunting licenses, stamps, Pittman-Robertson dollars)

Gobbler vs hen

1. Head
2. Tracks
3. Droppings
4. Body feathers
5. Sounds
6. Spurs and sometimes beards



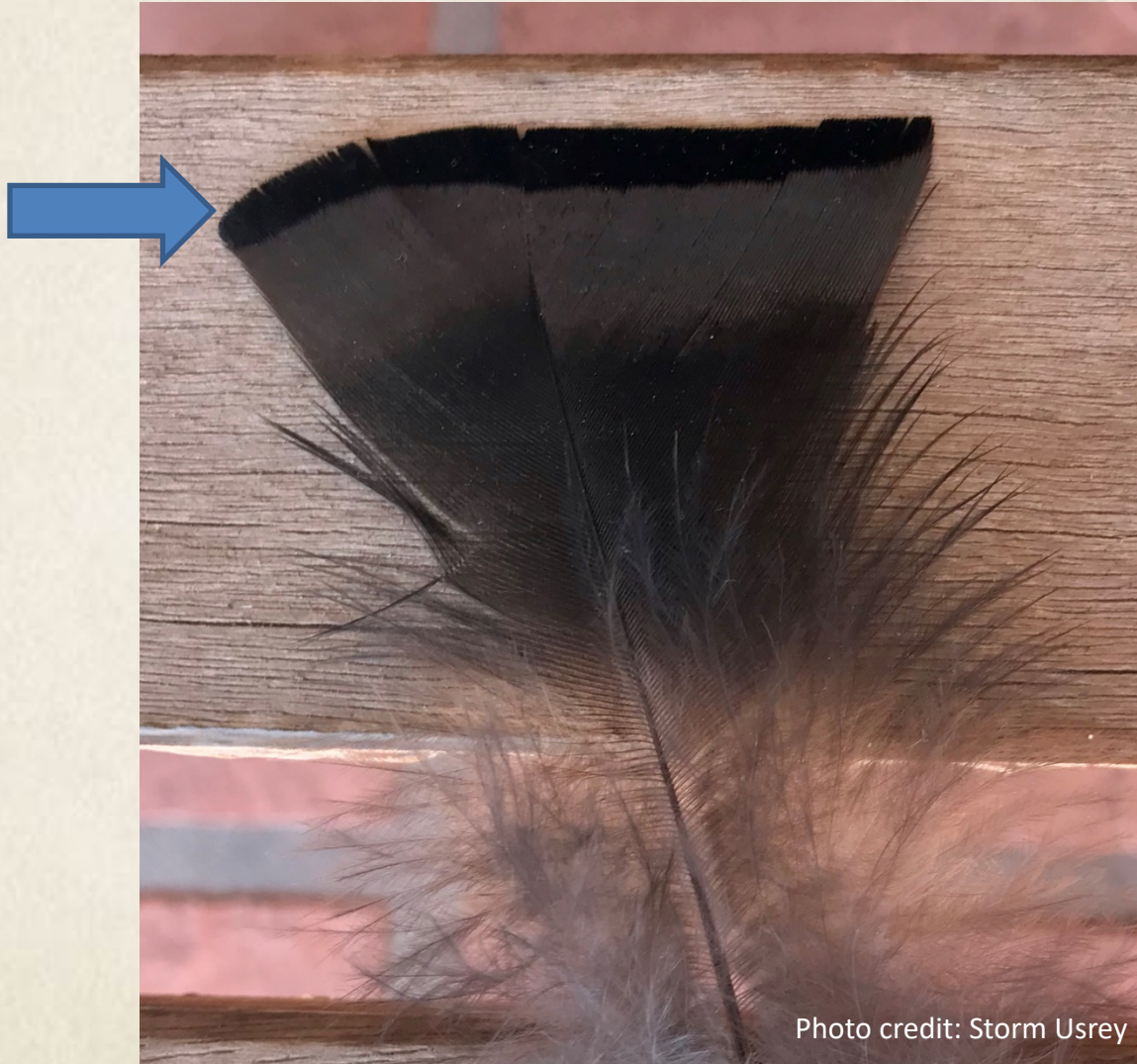
Photo credit: Storm Usrey

Gobbler (male)



Courtesy of the NWTf

Gobbler breast feather (black tip)



Gobblers



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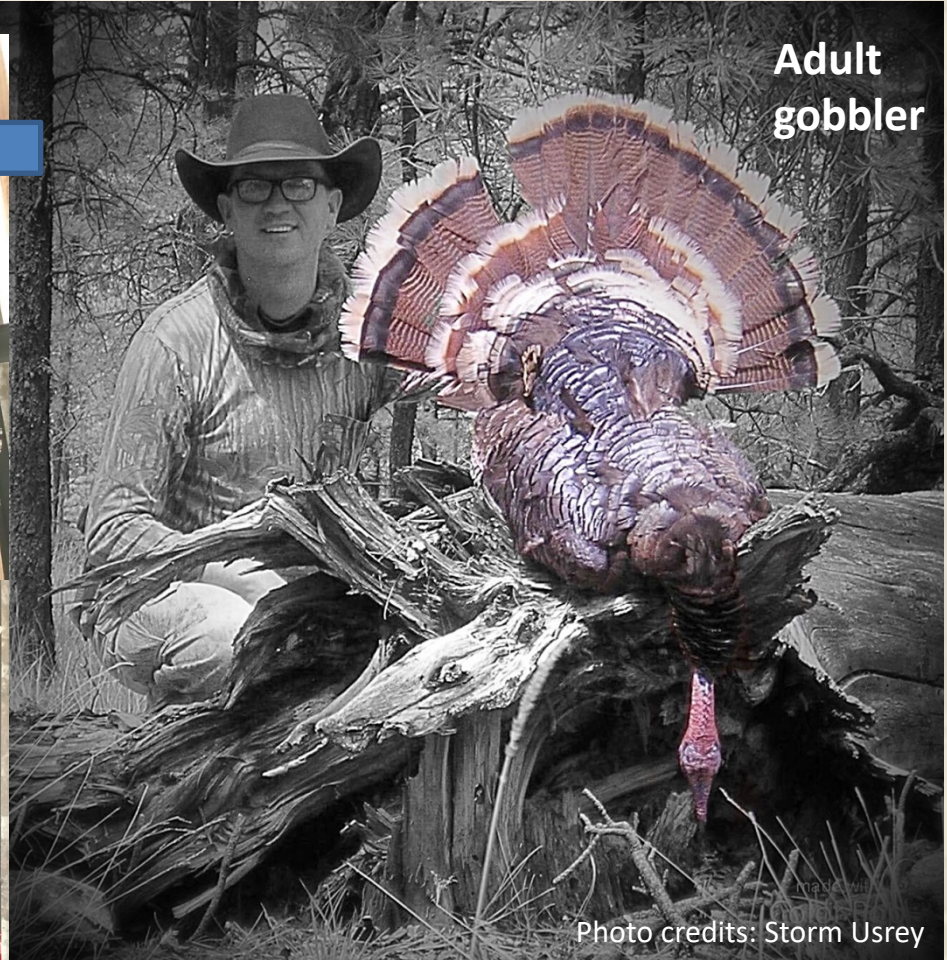


Jake versus mature gobbler or tom

J
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A
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Tail feathers are taller, in center of tail fan,
on jakes

Aging by spur size



Aging a gobbler can be done by looking at the spurs. Although this may not be the most effective it can give some indication to the age of a gobbler. All of the spurs in the picture, above, came from four individual adult Merriam's with full tail fans. I would approximate the spur on the left from a 2 year old, the middle two from a 3 year old tom, and the spur on the far right from a 3-4+ year old bird. Jakes will have a small bump in the Merriam's subspecies. Gould's are not known for growing large spurs and Osceola's have the largest of the subspecies found in the United States. Easterns & Rios can grow good sized spurs as well. Based on my experience, gobblers living in sandy soil tend to have better spur growth.

Look at outermost primary feathers for aging (gobbler or hens)

Check the outermost two primary wing feathers. If barring stops & black tipped it is a juvenile bird. If barring continues through out the feather tip its an adult.



Adult



Juvenile

Hen (female)



Photo credit: Mark Watson

Hen breast feather (buff tip)

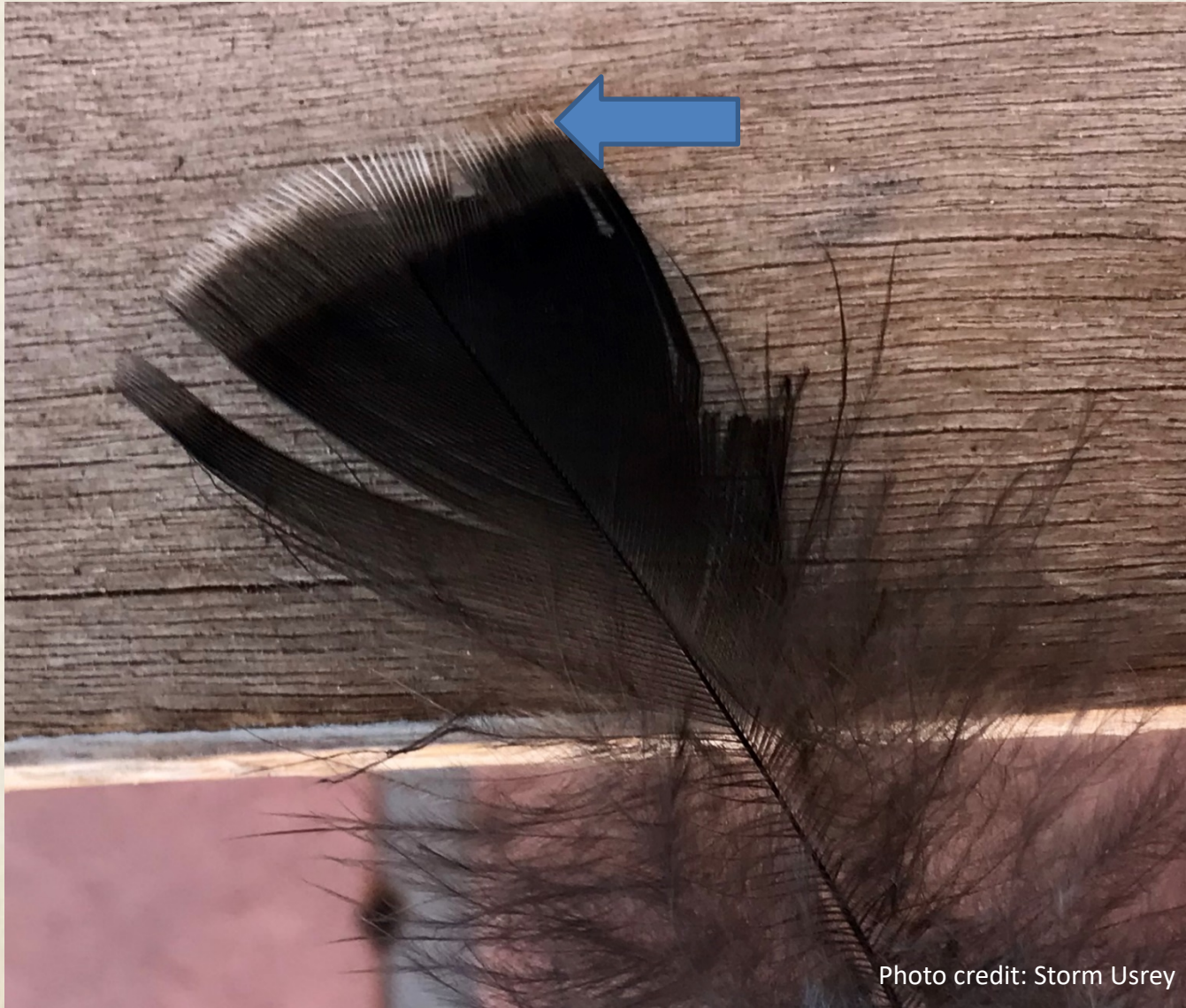


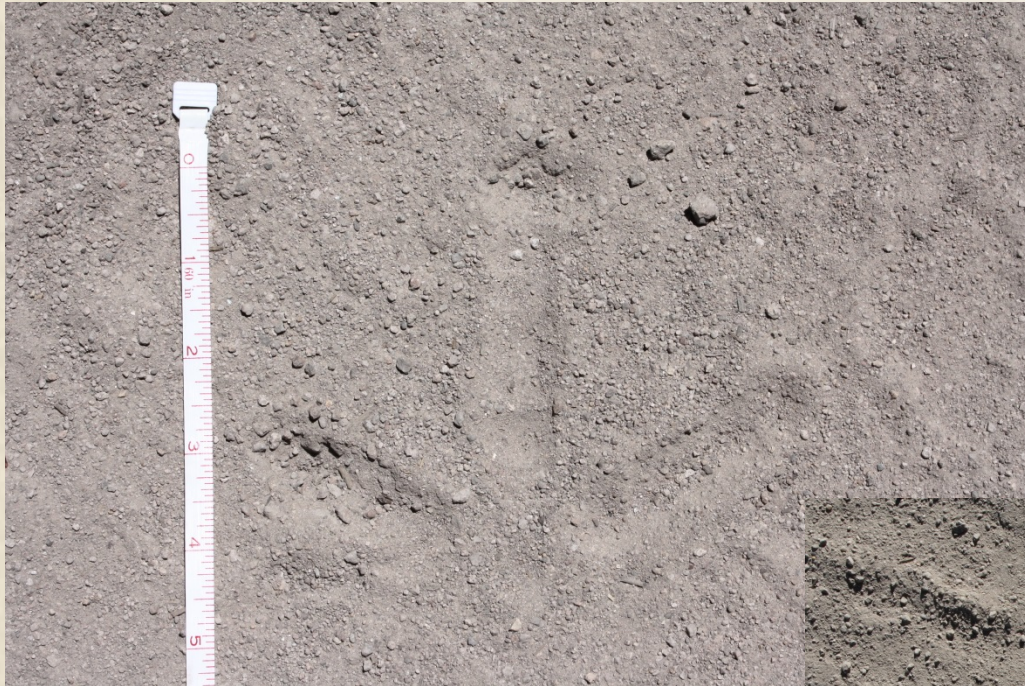
Photo credit: Storm Usrey

Hens



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

Tracks



gobbler track

Note: Similar to sandhill crane tracks. Sandhill crane tracks tend to be splayed out more and have narrower toes.



hen track

Photo credits: Storm Usrey

Droppings



gobbler



hen

Photo credits: Storm Usrey

Strut marks



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

Other turkey sign



dusting bowl

turkey scratching



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

What's on the menu

seeds, nuts, berries



insects



green grass



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

Language

1. Yelps
2. Putts
3. Purrs
4. Cutting
5. Cackle
6. Tree Yelp
7. Kee Kee
8. Gobble



Photo credit: Storm Usrey

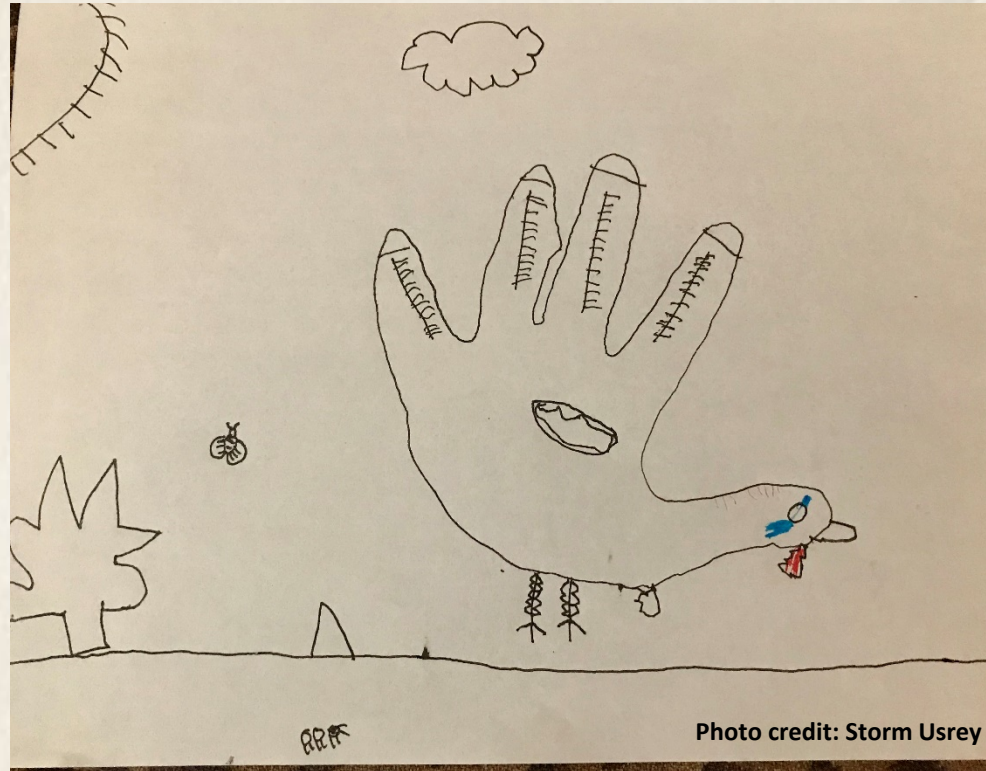
Predators of wild turkeys through out their various life cycles

- Bobcats
- Coyotes
- Mountain lions
- Foxes
- Bears
- Mexican gray wolves
- Raptors
- Snakes
- Raccoons
- Coatis



To name a few here in the land of enchantment...

Turkey drawing with the kiddos



You can have kids trace their hand and make a wild turkey drawing. They can color it and add the components of habitat which include food, water, cover & space. Older kids are welcome to draw a wild turkey by free hand. James Gonzales drew the above picture.

Try your artistic skills

Try your hand at drawing, painting, and even photography of our beautiful landscape and wildlife that call New Mexico home!

Enjoy nature responsibly in the future



Photo credits: Storm Usrey

Thank you for your time



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