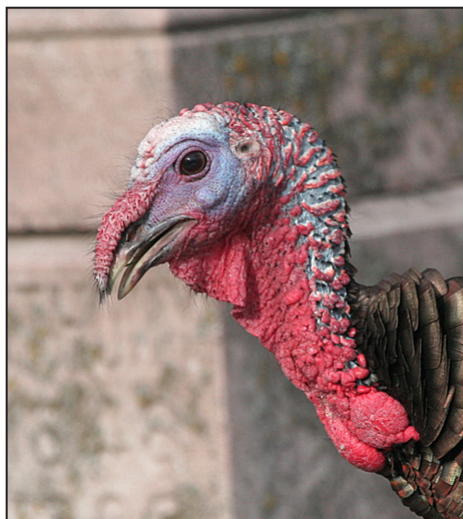


# Mecklenburg Audubon Society

## Species Notes: Turkey Tidbits



Impress you friends and relatives at Thanksgiving dinner table this year with these turkey tidbits.

- Wild turkeys are native to North America and there are five subspecies: Eastern, Osceola (Florida), Rio Grande, Merriam's (Rocky Mountains and the neighboring prairies of Wyoming, Montana and South Dakota) and Gould's (central Mexico into the southernmost parts of New Mexico and Arizona).
- Between 5,000 and 6,000 feathers cover the body of an adult turkey. They provide a variety of survival functions such as keeping them warm and dry, flying, and showing off for the opposite sex.
- The head and upper part of the neck are featherless. If you look close, you can see little bumps of skin on the bare area.
- The gobbler, or male turkey, is more colorful, while the hen is drab brown to camouflage her with her surroundings.
- Gobblers have beards - tufts of filaments, or modified feathers - growing out from the chest. It can grow to an average length of nine inches with some growing much longer.
- Wild turkeys have excellent vision during the day but don't see well at night.
- Turkeys can run at speeds up to 25 mph, and they can fly up to 55 mph.
- Newly-hatched turkeys must be ready to leave the nest to feed within 12 to 24 hours.
- Poults, young turkeys, eat insects, berries and seeds, while adults will eat anything from acorns and berries to insects and small reptiles.
- Wild turkeys like open areas for feeding, mating and habitat. They use forested areas as cover from predators and for roosting in trees at night. A varied habitat of both open and covered area is essential for wild turkey survival.