

wild turkey *Meleagris gallopavo*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Galliformes

Family: Phasianidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

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

BEHAVIORS

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

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; swamps

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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