

Bob Watson Photography

Reflecting the Spirit of Nature
NATURE • WILDLIFE • LANDSCAPES



Featured Photograph No. 1



Wild Turkey Strutting

As sure as birds migrate in early spring, the flowers start blooming and you see the first bee, Wild Turkeys start their mating season. However, before mating begins in March and April, there must be the courtship. It's this courtship ritual that's quite a spectacle.

Adult male Wild Turkeys, called toms or gobblers, are polygamous and mate with as many hens as they can. It's during the courtship that I've seen flocks from as few as 2 hens and a tom to as many as 12 hens and 3 toms. This is when you can hear the toms gobbling to announce their presence to the hens and competing males, and demonstrating behavior referred to as strutting. It's the strutting that's a hoot to watch. The males display for the hens by puffing out their feathers, spreading out their tails like a fan, dragging their wings and all while they slowly walk back and forth. Competing males sometime spar, however, most of the time they just strut and occasionally make an aggressive movement toward each other.

Please check what's referred to as the wattle on the throat of the male turkeys in the Featured Photographs. Although normally a light pink color, it becomes bright red engorged with blood when the male is excited. Even the turkey's neck and head turn different colors depending upon its mood and how excited he is.

The Wild Turkey is difficult to approach because it has telescopic eyesight, can see

more clearly and more detail than most birds and has a field of view that's greater than 180 degrees. They can see the slightest of movement, and since they're usually in flocks, there's generally more than 1 set of eyes keeping watch. Thus, it took patience and camouflage to obtain these images.

The Wild Turkey is native to North America and there are 5 different subspecies. The Eastern Wild Turkey is the subspecies here in Indiana. By 1930 the Wild Turkey was on the verge of extinction, however thanks to wildlife restoration programs, the Wild Turkey is now abundant and thriving. I live adjacent to Potato Creek State Park in Northern Indiana where 21 birds were released in 1997.

Interesting Turkey Facts:

- Hens lay a clutch of 10 to 14 eggs during a 2-week period, usually laying 1 egg per day.
- The eggs are incubated for at least 28 days.
- The young called Poults leave their nest in 12-24 hours after hatching.
- Nests are shallow dirt depressions engulfed with woody vegetation. As such, they are prime targets for other predators.
- Turkeys have from 5,000 to 6,000 feathers.
- Juvenile males are called Jakes.
- Benjamin Franklin wanted the Wild Turkey to be our National Bird.

Featured Photograph No. 2



Wild Turkeys Strutting

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