The Mini Page®

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Founded by Betty Debnam

Next Week: A twisted story

What a Turkey!

photo © National Wild Turkey Federation

Mini Fact:
Ben Franklin admired the wild turkey so much that he thought it should be our national bird.

Is turkey on your menu this week? Turkey is an American tradition for Thanksgiving meals.

Spanish explorers discovered turkeys in Mexico in 1571. Explorers carried them back to Europe, so the Pilgrims were familiar with turkeys when they arrived in North America.

A Pilgrim leader wrote about their Thanksgiving feast in 1621: "Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on **fowling.**" That means they went out hunting for birds such as ducks, geese or turkeys.

Turkey meat

Most of us will eat the meat of a **domestic** (doh-MEHS-tick) turkey. Domestic turkeys can't fly or run very fast. They make more noise by gobbling than wild turkeys.

Domestic turkeys are usually raised in pens and are fed corn and other feed mixes. Most have white feathers.

The leading domestic turkey-producing states are North Carolina and Minnesota.

Wild turkeys

In the early 1900s, there were only 30,000 wild turkeys in North America. Today, there are nearly 7 million. State and national wildlife groups have worked to protect the bird and its habitat.

Hunting wild turkeys is a popular sport.

Wild turkey fact-a-roonies

• Wild turkeys can hear very well, although they don't have any ears that stick out. They see well during the daytime, but not at night.

• Wild turkeys can fly as fast as 55 miles per hour for short distances. They can walk as fast as 20 miles per hour.

• Male turkeys are "toms" or "gobblers." Females are "hens." Babies are "poults."

• Turkeys have from 5,000 to 6,000 feathers. When he wants to show off to attract a mate, a tom turkey spreads out his tail feathers and struts.

• Poults eat berries, seeds and insects. Adults eat acorns, insects and small reptiles.

• After a hen has mated, she starts looking for a place thick with plants so she can hide the shallow nest she scrapes out of the ground.

• Wild turkeys are on the ground during the day and roost in trees at night.

Audubon's birds

John James Audubon knew birds. He was one of the best artists ever to draw birds in natural, lifelike settings.

The pages in Audubon's folio measured 26 1/2 inches wide and 39 1/2 inches high.

It took him many years to create his "Birds of America" folio. (In this case, **folio** refers to a book with oversized pages.)

In the folio were 435 watercolor images of 1,065 birds of 489 different species. The first bird in Audubon's book was the wild turkey.

Audubon wrote: "The great size and beauty of the Wild Turkey, its value as a delicate and prized article of food … render (make) it one of the most interesting of birds … in the United States."

Audubon's folio was published between 1827 and 1838.

Resources

On the Web:
- nwtf.org/hunt/article/life-turkey-nest

At the library:
- "Wild Turkeys" by Meryl Magby
- "This Strange Wilderness: The Life and Art of John James Audubon" by Nancy Plain

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of turkeys are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

AUDUBON, BIRDS, DINNER, DOMESTIC, FEATHERS, FOLIO, GOBBLER, HABITAT, HEN, HUNT, NEST, PILGRIM, POULT, ROOST, SPANISH, SPECIES, THANKSGIVING, TOM, TURKEY, WILD.

J	W	I	L	D	R	E	L	B	B	O	G	W	G	L
B	F	F	H	Y	R	H	P	D	I	N	N	E	R	C
K	B	E	O	A	E	S	A	I	T	T	N	U	H	I
T	I	H	A	L	U	K	P	B	L	L	T	V	N	T
S	R	Z	E	T	I	D	R	A	I	G	U	O	X	S
E	D	D	V	N	H	O	U	U	N	T	R	O	M	E
N	S	P	E	C	I	E	S	B	T	I	A	I	P	M
L	X	W	T	S	O	O	R	C	O	Q	S	T	M	O
Y	B	G	N	I	V	I	G	S	K	N	A	H	T	D

Cook's Corner

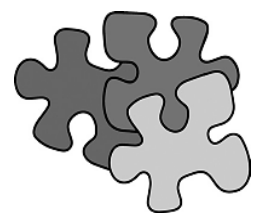
Turkey Vegetable Soup

You'll need:
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 carrots, peeled and cut crosswise
- 1 1/2 cups chopped red onion
- 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes with juice
- 1 (15.5-ounce) can cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (32-ounce) container beef broth
- 1/2 pound lean ground turkey, cooked
- 1 1/2 teaspoons marjoram
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

You'll need:
1. In a large pot, heat olive oil and cook carrots and onion until they begin to soften.
2. Add can of chopped tomatoes. Bring mixture to a boil, then simmer for 10 minutes. Add the beans, broth, turkey and spices.
3. Bring mixture to a boil again, then simmer for 10 minutes. Serve with bread or crackers.

* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

Puzzling



Unscramble the words below that remind us of Thanksgiving.

yamifl _____

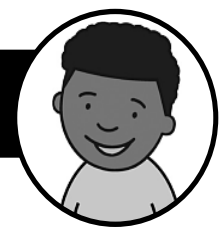
tureagtid _____

emlas _____

kpnumip _____

Answers: family, gratitude, meals, pumpkin.

Mini Jokes



Terry: Why is a turkey an important band member?
Timmy: It always has the drumsticks!

Tyler: When is it fun to serve a rubber turkey?
Tessa: On Pranksgiving!

Eco Note

Birds that choose their own mates (instead of scientists choosing for them) seem happier and have more successful breeding, say researchers at the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology in Germany, where they studied zebra finches.

adapted with permission from Earthweek.com

For later:

Find out where your Thanksgiving turkey was raised. Look at a map to see how many states your turkey passed through to get to your table.

Teachers:

For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit:
bbs.amuniversal.com/teaching_guides.html

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