



CAPTAIN CURIOSITY™ GUIDE TO THE UNIVERSE

Topic: Wild Turkeys

EVER WONDER WHERE TO FIND WILD TURKEYS?

Wild turkeys are native to North America, and can be spotted in open woodlands and forests with lots of clearings. They move around looking for food during the day, especially in the early morning and late afternoon, and

roost in the trees at night. They do not hibernate or fly south, so they are easier to spot in the fall and winter when the leaves are off the trees. They sometimes feed out in cow pastures or even in your backyard bird feeder – so keep your eyes peeled! They lay eggs in the spring in large nests made in shallow dirt holes surrounded by woody plants.



EVER WONDER HOW BIG WILD TURKEYS ARE? Wild turkeys are a bit skinnier than their relatives (the domesticated turkeys that we can buy at the store), but the males can grow to be up to 4 feet long! When you see a turkey in the woods, you will have no doubt what it is – they are really big birds!

EVER WONDER HOW TO TELL A MALE TURKEY FROM A FEMALE? Male turkeys are called “toms” or “gobblers” and females are called “hens.” Toms are larger and have a fan-like tail with patterned feathers. They also have a red “wattle” on their throat and a “snood” that hangs over their beak! When excited or angry, a tom’s head sometimes turns bright blue or red. Toms also make a distinctive “gobble gobble” sound to attract hens; it is so loud that it can sometimes be heard a mile away. Hens are smaller and don’t have the showy feathers, a wattle or a snood. They also can’t make that gobble sound. . . .

EVER WONDER WHAT WILD TURKEYS EAT? Wild turkeys eat acorns, nuts, grasses, trees (such as hazel, chestnut and hickory), various seeds, berries (such as juniper and bearberry), roots and insects. Turkeys also sometimes eat small frogs, toads, lizards and snakes.



EVER WONDER IF TURKEYS CAN FLY? Yes, turkeys can fly, but they usually fly close to the ground and for short distances only. They are also fast runners, and despite what a lot of people say, scientists believe they are very smart!

You Can Do It!

Make turkey bones bend like rubber. Materials: thin turkey or chicken bones, vinegar, container. Procedure: clean the bones well by boiling or baking in a hot oven. Now soak in vinegar. Depending on the size, the bone should turn rubbery in 2-7 days! What is happening: Bones are made up of two main substances -- calcium and soft bone tissue. Calcium is a hard mineral that keeps bones strong. (This is why your mom always tells you to drink milk, which contains a lot of calcium!) Vinegar is a mild acid. Acids break down calcium through a chemical reaction. So, when you put turkey or chicken bones into vinegar, it dissolves the calcium in the bones, leaving behind the soft bone tissue, which feels like rubber!