

# Turkey



Dan Smith

Reintroduction efforts for the Eastern Wild Turkey began in the 1970s and have resulted in thriving turkey populations in Wisconsin. However, the success of these efforts has led to an increase in human-turkey conflicts. Backyards and parks provide excellent habitat for turkeys, and urban areas have fewer natural predators than rural areas. Turkeys forage in gardens, roost in trees and on homes, cause vehicle accidents and even act aggressive toward humans and pets during the spring mating season.

## Don't Feed Wildlife

- Feeding leads to turkeys being unafraid of human and even following humans for handouts. This can result in aggressive birds and pose human health and safety risks.
- Remove bird seed from the ground, thus eliminating an easy food source that draws turkeys to your yard.

## Protect Your Pet

- Turkeys are large birds and may become aggressive during mating season or defensive of flightless poults. Males have spurs that can injure pets. Always keep pets leashed and under your supervision when outdoors. While legal to allow your pet to chase or harass turkeys causing conflict, they can not harm them in any way.

## Discourage Turkeys

- Erect fences around your garden to keep turkeys out. Turkeys can fly, but prefer to stay on the ground whenever possible. If the area of interest is relatively small, a fence may be sufficient to keep turkeys out.
- Scare tactics such as predator decoys, sticks and fences decorated with Mylar® flagging and noise machines make turkeys uncomfortable and encourage them to locate new, friendlier habitat. Change the environment by moving objects frequently to keep birds on edge.
- Nontoxic, biodegradable repellents such as Methyl anthranilate can be sprayed on crops, gardens and lawns to keep turkeys from using the area. This repellent has a bad taste that will deter turkeys while not harming them in any way.
- Collect fruit or nuts that fall from trees and dispose of the them offsite.



Catherine Khalar

## Quick Facts

- Even in urban areas, hearing turkeys gobbling is a sure sign of spring. It's a sound Wisconsin residents wouldn't have been fortunate to hear 50 years ago.
- Turkey trapping is a useful removal measure, with the correct permits. Contact the USDA Wildlife Services at 1-800-433-0663 (in southern Wisconsin) or 1-800-228-1368 (in northern Wisconsin) for more information.
- Harvesting turkeys is legal during the regulated fall and spring hunting seasons, and DNR permits may be issued to remove turkeys out of season. Many municipalities in Wisconsin have specific regulations regarding the discharge of firearms, so check local ordinances.
- Urban bowhunting is a cost-effective method to reduce nuisance turkeys in areas that do not allow hunting with firearms. However, please check with your local government to ensure adherence to local ordinances.

For more information, visit our webpage:

[dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov)

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