

# Wild Turkey Trivia

<<< The six sub-species and information about them >>>



Gould's



Eastern



Merriam's



Rio Grande



Osceola



Ocellated

Photos courtesy of the NWTf



## <<< Range Map >>>



## <<< Eastern >>>

Eastern wild turkeys are the most widely distributed subspecies east of the Mississippi River. They are also the most abundant. You can find Easterns in 38 states and several Canadian provinces. They've been transplanted to some western states, too. Characteristics of the subspecies include long beards, chestnut-brown tips on tail feathers, and white and black bars on the wings. Adult males can weigh 18 to 30 pounds and adult females 8 to 12 pounds. Experienced turkey hunters will tell you that Easterns have the strongest gobbles of all subspecies and they're second to Osceolas in difficulty of calling.

## <<< Gould's >>>

The most protected of the five wild turkey subspecies in the United States is the Gould's or Mexican wild turkey. Few in numbers compared to other subspecies, it can be found only in Arizona, New Mexico, and northern Mexico. Large-framed turkeys, Gould's have long legs similar to Osceolas, plus large feet and tail feathers. They sport light-colored tips on tail feathers, and their wings are moderate in coloration. Adult males weigh 18 to 30 pounds and adult females 8 to 12 pounds. Compared to other subspecies, they have moderate gobbles, beard lengths, and spur lengths.

## <<< Rio Grande >>>

First described in 1879, the Rio Grande wild turkey is found in the semi-arid areas of the southern Great Plains states: Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, New Mexico, and other western states. Mexico also harbors a healthy population, and it was introduced to Hawaii in the 1950s. Rios – named after the Rio Grande River – have tan-colored tips on tail feathers and the same amount of black and white barring on wings. Adult males weigh approximately 20 pounds and adult females run 8 to 12 pounds. The subspecies is known for its long legs, moderate gobbles, moderate beard lengths, and moderate spur lengths. Gregarious birds, the Rio Grande subspecies likes to flock up, especially in the winter, and they're vocal and easier to call than Easterns.

## <<< Ocellated >>>

The Ocellated turkey is a species found only in a 50,000-square-mile area in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, northern Belize, and the El Petén region of northern Guatemala. It's remarkably different from other species thanks to its rainbow-like iridescent feathering, grey tail feathers with blue and gold tips, and white and black wings. Substantially smaller than U.S. turkeys, Ocellated males run 11 to 12 pounds and adult females weigh 6 to 7 pounds. Their high-pitched gobbles are preceded by a hollow drumming sound, they lack beards, and they sport impressively long spurs.

## <<< Osceola >>>

The unique Osceola (or Florida) wild turkey, *meleagris gallopavo osceola*, is only found on the Florida peninsula. There are about 100,000 of them in Florida today. They're recognizable by their dark-brown tips on tail feathers and mostly black wings with very small white bands. Smaller than Easterns, Osceola adult males weigh about 20 pounds, and adult females weigh 8 to 12 pounds. The subspecies is distinctive for its long legs, strong gobbles, and very long spurs, though beard lengths typically run shorter than Easterns. It's considered the toughest subspecies to call.

## <<< Merriam's >>>

Named in honor of C. Hart Merriam, the first chief of the U.S. Biological Survey, the Merriam's wild turkey is a beautiful bird that inhabits gorgeous western landscapes. These wild turkeys are most abundant in the mountainous regions of the West, and the Rocky Mountains and Black Hills of South Dakota are considered the population's central hub. Merriam's have striking snow-white tail feather tips, and more white and less black on their wings. Large birds, adult male Merriam's weigh 18 to 30 pounds and females run 8 to 12 pounds. They have the weakest gobbles, shortest beards, and shortest spurs of all subspecies.