

Just for Kids

Meet the Wild Turkey

Welcome Back Wild Turkey

Although wild turkeys were common in Connecticut when the first settlers arrived and are common today, this was not always the case. Turkeys disappeared from the state by the early 1800s due to clearing of their forest habitat, over hunting (there were no laws to protect them like there are today) and several bad winters which caused many turkeys to starve because they could not find food. By the 1950s, many forests grew back and wildlife biologists and sportsmen began looking for ways to bring the turkey back to Connecticut. In 1975, 22 wild turkeys from New York were live-captured (using a large net carried over the birds by 3 small rockets) and then released in the northwest corner of Connecticut. This population grew to such a large number that they could be captured and moved to other towns. Now, between 18,000 and 25,000 wild turkeys are found throughout the state. To pay for this project, Connecticut received money from a program called the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act. By paying a special tax on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment, sportsmen provide money for wildlife projects like Connecticut's turkey restoration project.

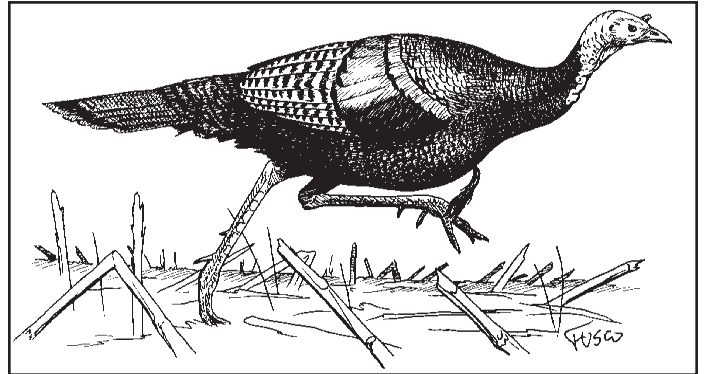


Unscramble the Words Below:

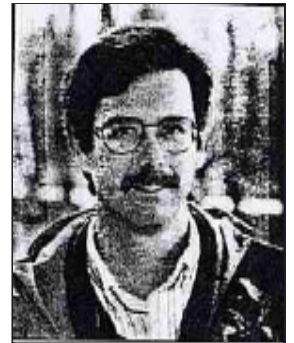
1. Forests, pastures, cornfields and hayfields make up a wild turkey's **B A T I T A H**.
2. Young turkeys are called **U T O L S P**.
3. A tom turkey has **S R U P S** on its legs and a **D E R B A** on its breast.
4. Turkeys eat primarily **R N A O C S**, **F R T I U S** and **S N S I T C E**.
5. Adult male turkeys are called **T S M O** and adult female turkeys are called **S E H N**.

Answers to Scramble:

1. habitat, 2. poults, 3. spurs, beards, 4. acorns, fruits, insects, 5. toms, hens



Adult male turkeys are called toms. Male turkeys have beards and spurs on their legs.



Interview with our Turkey Biologist, Mike Gregonis

CTW: What does a turkey biologist do?

Mike: A wild turkey biologist keeps track of the number of turkeys in the forest, teaches people about turkeys and conducts research to learn more about these birds. To become a turkey biologist, I needed at least four years of college education studying plants and animals.

CTW: Where do turkeys live?

Mike: Wild turkeys mainly live in the forest, spending their days feeding on acorns, berries and other fruit and roosting in trees at night. Their habitat also includes pastures, cornfield and hayfields where they feed on seeds and insects.

CTW: Why do turkeys gobble?

Mike: Only male turkeys gobble and they do so because they want to attract hens for mating purposes. Males will also gobble at loud noises such as thunder, owl hoots, coyote howls or crow calls; however, no one is sure why they do this.

CTW: Can turkeys fly?

Mike: Wild turkeys are good fliers and can fly as fast as 55 miles per hour. In fact, poults or young turkeys can make their first flights at about eight to 10 days old.

Eastern Wild Turkey

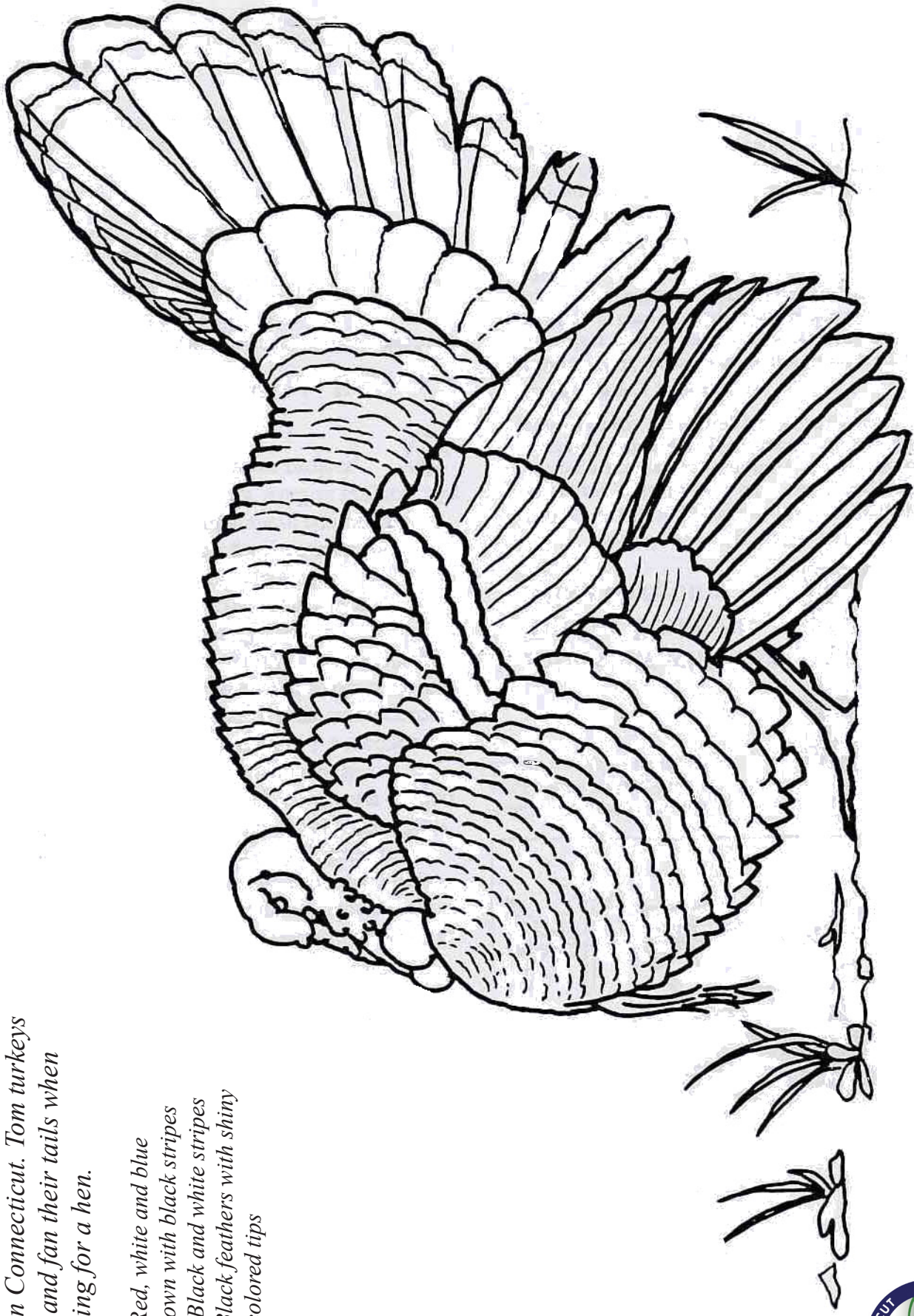
Wild turkeys are found in all 169 towns in Connecticut. Tom turkeys gobble and fan their tails when displaying for a hen.

Head: Red, white and blue

Tail: Brown with black stripes

Wings: Black and white stripes

Body: Black feathers with shiny bronze-colored tips



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