



# TURKEYS

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*Simple Marvels of God's World*



## TURKEY FACTS

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- ▶ **TURKEYS CAN FLY** People often think turkeys are clumsy, but wild turkeys can fly up to 55 mph, usually in short bursts when escaping predators. Domestic turkeys usually can't fly because they are bred to be much heavier.
- ▶ **TURKEYS HAVE EXCELLENT VISION** Their eyes are three times more sensitive to light than human eyes, and they have a 270-degree field of vision. This incredible vision is able to detect motion many yards away. They are able to see UVA light which helps them when they are detecting prey, selecting a mate and foraging for food.



## TURKEY FACTS

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Although they lack 3D vision, they use a series of head bobbing movements, similar to pigeons. These quick head movements allow their eyes to gather information about depths and distances of objects around them.

Only male turkeys gobble

- ▶ **ONLY MALES GOBBLE** and they do so to attract females during mating season. Both male and female turkeys are very vocal though. They make a variety of sounds, including gobbles, purrs, yelps, and clucks and can recognize each other by their voices. More than 20 unique vocalizations have been identified in free-living turkeys.



# TURKEY FACTS

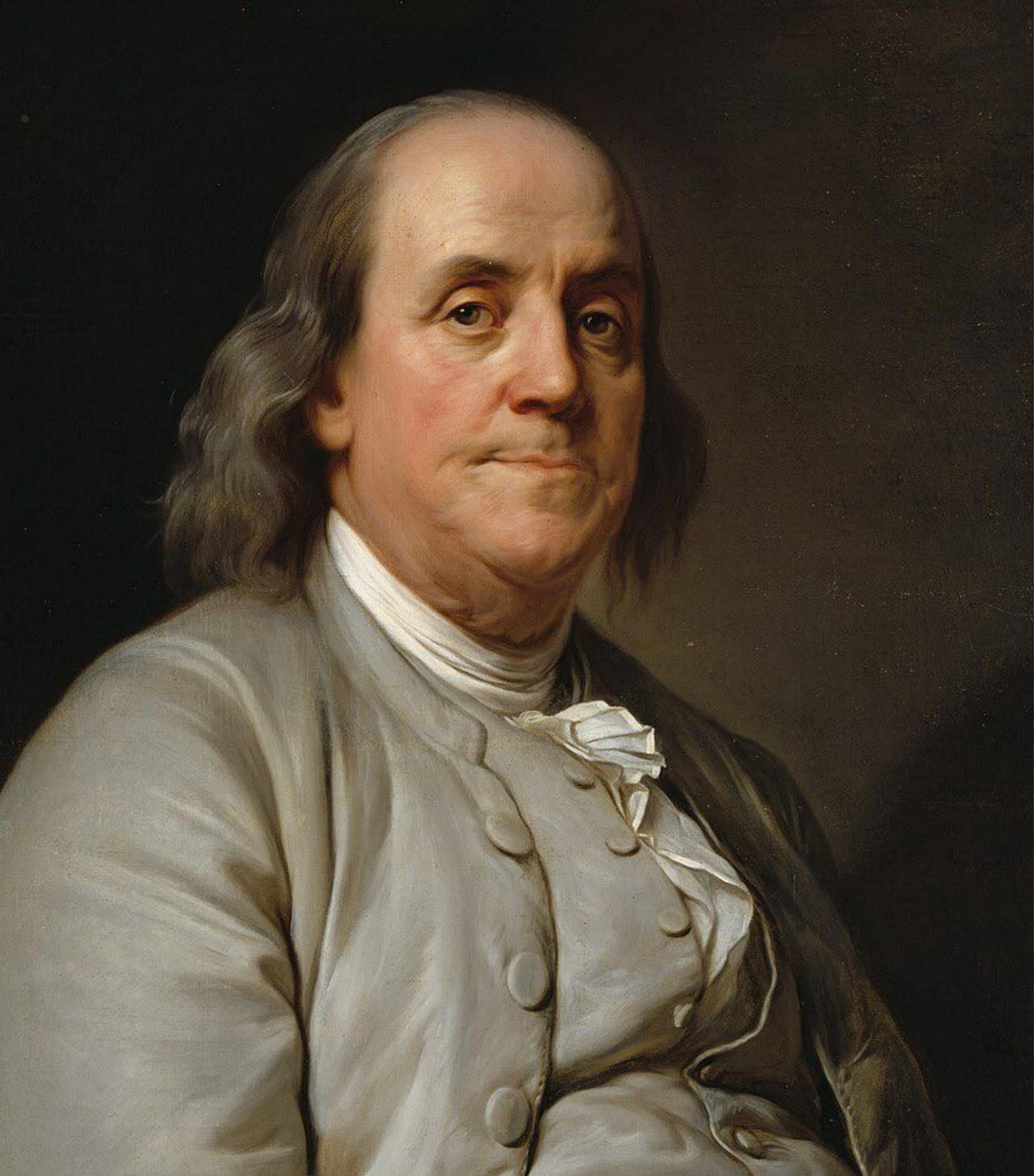
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## ► TURKEYS CAN CHANGE COLORS

The color of a male turkey's head and throat will change depending on his mood. When he is excited, his head will turn blue. When he is feeling stressed, his head will turn bright red. The color may shift and change many times throughout the day as he feels various levels of stress and relaxation, sometimes within seconds!

## ► TURKEYS CAN REMEMBER UP TO 100 DIFFERENT FACES

They recognize individual humans and will either avoid or approach those they associate with positive or negative experiences.



## TURKEY FACTS

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### ► DID BENJAMIN FRANKLIN REALLY WANT THE TURKEY TO BE THE NATIONAL BIRD?

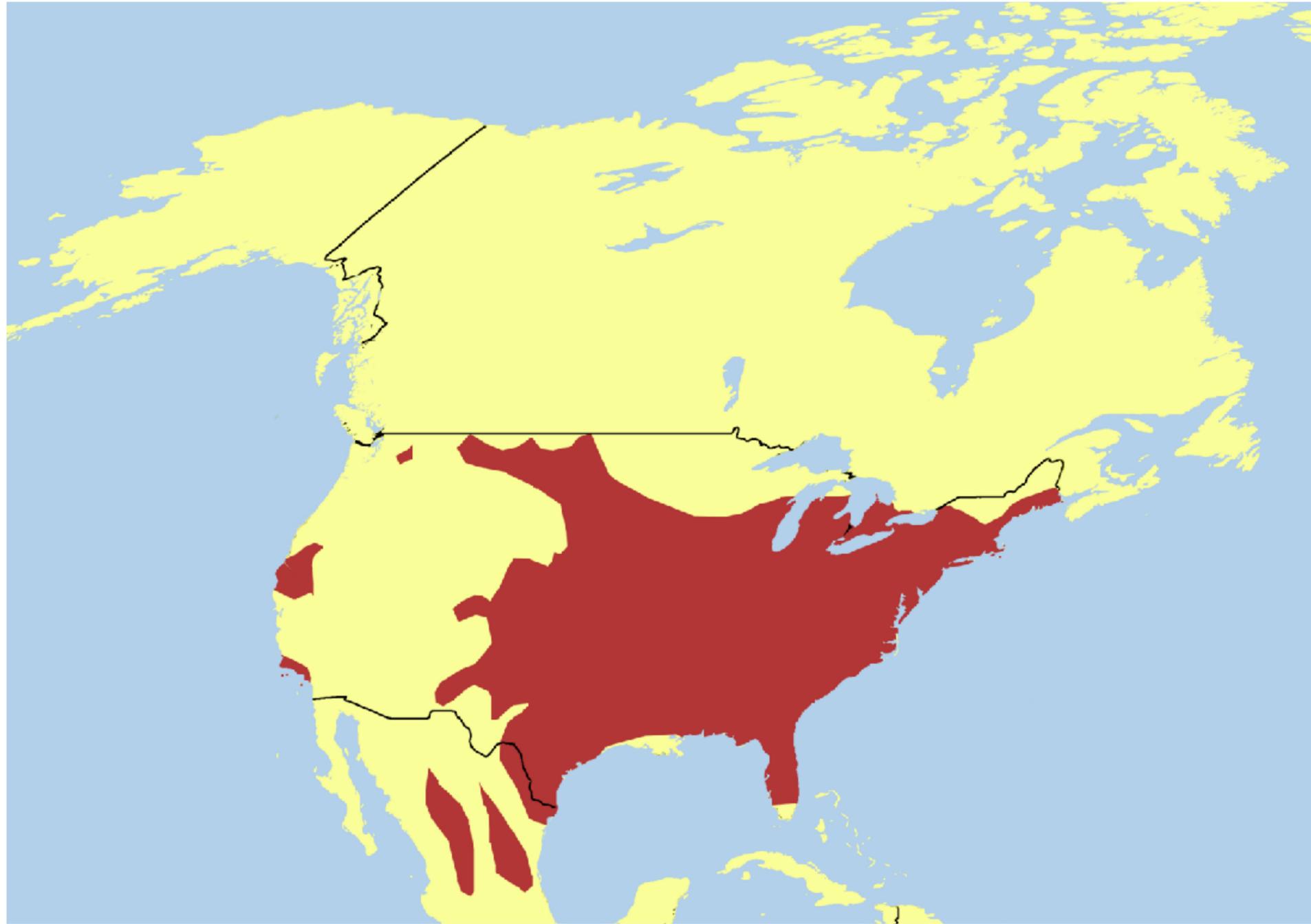
Sort of—but not exactly.

Ben Franklin never formally proposed the turkey as the national bird.

However, in a private letter to his daughter in 1784, Franklin did complain that the bald eagle had “bad moral character” and claimed the turkey was:

“a much more respectable bird... a true original native of America... and though a little vain and silly, a bird of courage.”

He didn't try to make it the national bird, but he definitely praised the turkey and criticized the eagle in writing, which led to the popular myth.



*Location of the Wild and Domestic Turkey*



*Location of the Ocellated Turkey*



The name *turkey* originated as a shortening of *turkey cock* and *turkey hen* and initially denoted the guineafowl, an African bird to which the turkeys of North America are only distantly related. Guineafowl were first imported to Europe via Turkey, hence the name. Following the establishment of English colonies in the New World, the name was transferred to the superficially similar North American bird.

“Turkeys have been known to be aggressive toward humans and pets in residential areas. Wild turkeys have a social structure and pecking order and habituated turkeys may respond to humans and animals as they do to other turkeys. Habituated turkeys may attempt to dominate or attack people that the birds view as subordinates.”

“Habituated turkeys” are wild turkeys that have lost their natural fear of humans because they’ve been exposed to people too often—usually due to being fed, allowed near homes, or living in neighborhoods.

# Feeding

Wild turkeys feed on various wildlife, depending on the season. In the warmer months of spring and summer, their diet consists mainly of grains such as wheat, corn, and of smaller animals such as grasshoppers, spiders, worms, and lizards. In the colder months of fall and winter, wild turkeys consume smaller fruits and nuts such as grapes, blueberries, acorns, and walnuts. To find this food, they have to continuously forage and feed most during the sunrise and sunset hours.

Domesticated turkeys consume a commercially produced feed formulated to increase the size of the turkeys. To supplement their nutrition, farmers will also feed them grains that wild turkeys eat, such as corn.

Turkey reproduction is a seasonal process involving polygamous males and females, who build ground nests for their eggs and raise their young, called poults, together. The breeding season is triggered by increasing daylight, and the cycle includes courtship displays by the males, mating, and a 28-day incubation period for the eggs. Hens can lay one egg per day over several weeks and may lay fertilized eggs for up to 50 days after a single mating

- **Nest building:** Once receptive, the hen builds a shallow ground nest in a hidden location, like under vegetation, and lines it with dead leaves.
- **Egg laying and incubation:** A hen typically lays one egg per day for about two weeks, resulting in a clutch of 9 to 13 eggs. She will not begin incubating the eggs until the last one is laid. The incubation period is about 28 days, during which the hen sits on the nest and leaves only once a day to feed, water, and defecate.

## Hatching and raising poult

- **Hatching:** The eggs hatch into young turkeys called poult, usually in late May or early June in northern states.
- **Early life:** Poult are born with an acute vision and alertness, allowing them to follow the hen shortly after hatching. They can walk and usually leave the nest within 12–24 hours.
- **Family groups:** The hen cares for the poult, and they often form larger groups with other hens and their broods to travel and forage together through the summer and winter.
- **Mortality:** Cold, wet weather and predators pose the greatest threats to poult during their first few weeks of life.





## SPIRITUAL LESSON

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Turkeys are everyday, humble creatures, not majestic like eagles or fierce like lions.

God often uses ordinary things to teach extraordinary truths.

Just as turkeys became a symbol of gratitude and thanksgiving, we learn:

“In everything give thanks”  
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)