




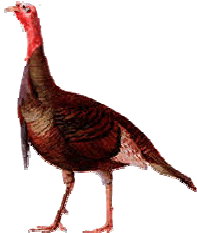



## **How to Make Money Raising Wild Turkeys!** **By Carl G. Kline, MBA**

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## Introduction

The Wild Turkey is the bird that nearly beat out the Bald Eagle to become a symbol of the United States of America. Benjamin Franklin, although a persuasive man, did not win his battle to make the Wild Turkey the American national bird. It's probably just as well because there might be a lot of confusion today if Ben had had his way. There are five varieties of American Wild Turkey:

	<p>The Mexican Turkey. (Central Mexico.)</p>
<p>Merriam's Turkey. (Mountains of Southern Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Western Texas, and Parts of Mexico.)</p>	
	<p>The Rio Grande Turkey. (Middle Texas and Parts of Mexico.)</p>
<p>The Florida Turkey. (Florida at least as far North as Gainesville.)</p>	
	<p>The Eastern Turkey. (Southeastern United States to Oklahoma, Central Missouri and East to New England.)</p>

These Wild Turkeys are the forerunners of our domestic turkey and have been nearly extinct in the United States for many years. Today, the Wild Turkey is on its way back to having a healthy population in most states due to improved conservation and good stocking programs. Many private individuals have begun to raise Wild Turkey for fun and profit. The usual variety raised and found in the United States is the Eastern Turkey. It is the most common variety now, as it was when the settlers first came to this country. The Eastern Turkey is the forefather of the domestic Bronze Turkey and the bird most of us think of

when we think of a Wild Turkey. In fact, many persons are hard put to tell the differences between the Bronze and the Eastern Wild Turkey.

The most obvious difference is size. The Bronze tom often reaches well over thirty pounds and is also referred to as the Mammoth Bronze, whereas the Eastern or Wild Turkey seldom exceeds 16 to 20 pounds. The Wild Turkey is a leaner, rangier bird with excellent flight capability while the Bronze Turkey has trouble getting off the ground to roost or breed; and artificial insemination is often used on commercial turkey farms. The Bronze inherited his basic feather colors from the Wild Turkey but there are some differences. The Bronze has a bar or streak of white bordering the tail and wing feathers while the Wild Eastern Turkey has a brown border instead of white. Both varieties have the beard and similar features of the neck and head. Incidentally, the beard length does not indicate the age of the tom in either type.

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**BONUS:** See 6 pages of my favorite Wild Turkey Recipes at the end. (Recipes are good with domestic turkey also.)

# *Raising Wild Turkeys*

## **I. Where To Start**

### **A. Shall I Buy Eggs?**

This approach to getting into the business of starting your Wild Turkey flock should be considered. Buying eggs seems like the cheap and easy way to get started. It seldom is, unless you happen be an expert at incubation and hatching. Wild Turkey eggs are very hard to hatch. If you have had experience with hatching eggs before, it might be fun to try some Wild Turkey eggs. But if you're planning on having a flock, buy some poults at the same time you get the eggs.



### **B. Why Not Start With Breeders?**

This is probably your next question. First, breeder stock is more expensive than poults. If you have a chance to buy some breeder stock real cheap, don't! Bargains are seldom found on good birds. Good breeders cost more because they are worth more. Always buy from a well-established reputable game farm and avoid so-called bargains. They may not be pure bred or they may be older or unproven younger stock, but rarely is a good purebred breeder sold at a cheap price. But, why start with breeders anyway, when poults can get you started and you can buy many for the price of a good pair of breeders. You avoid the expense of keeping the breeders over the winter and the problem of providing space for them.

### **C. The Advantages of Starting With Poults**

The advantages are numerous. Healthy vigorous poults seldom die if careful attention is paid to good management methods. By starting with poults, the expense of buying an incubator is overcome, and also overcome is the disappointment of waiting 28 days for the eggs to hatch and finding that none or few are going to. Few, if any, game farms will guarantee eggs to hatch as they have no control over their handling. But most game farms will sell or send healthy well-formed poults and insure them against damage during transit. When the poults are picked up or arrive you can see if they have been damaged but if the eggs have been mishandled or been exposed to extreme hot or cold conditions it will be very hard for you to see this damage unless their shells are cracked or broken. Starting your flock by buying poults from a reputable breeder is by far the least expensive and safest way to get your Wild Turkey flock started.

