

Colorado's Wild Turkeys

There are two species of wild turkeys found in Colorado. They are the Merriam's and the Rio Grande. Merriam's turkeys are the only turkeys that are native to Colorado. The two species are difficult to tell apart. The Merriam's tail feathers have white tips and Rio Grande's are tan. Merriam's turkeys live in ponderosa pine forests in elevations up to 8,000 feet while Rio Grande turkeys live in wooded areas along lowland streams and rivers.

Turkeys are omnivorous. They eat anything—insects, grasses, frogs, and even snakes! They have keen eyesight that helps them see and escape predators. Turkeys roost in trees at night and forage on the ground during the day.

Male turkeys are called gobblers or toms, and the females are called hens. Hens lay 8–12 eggs at a time and the chicks usually leave the nest the first day. Benjamin Franklin wanted the wild turkey to be the national bird. The bald eagle was chosen instead.

