Wild Turkeys
By Guy Belleranti

The turkeys people eat at Thanksgiving were raised on farms. However, they are not much different from wild turkeys that live in the woods all across North America. Many years ago, wild turkeys were an important food for Native Americans and pioneers.

Wild turkeys are omnivores. Omnivores eat plants and meat. Wild turkeys spend their days looking for food on the ground. They often eat insects, berries, seeds, nuts, flowers, grain and small lizards and frogs. At night they fly up into trees and sleep, safe from predators.

Male wild turkeys can be called toms or gobblers. Females are called hens. A baby turkey is called a poult.

Males are much bigger than females and are brightly colored. Males have long hair-like feathers on their chests called beards. In early spring males make loud gobble sounds and fan their tails to attract females.

Female wild turkeys build nests on the ground. They lay eggs in their nests and sit on the eggs to keep them warm until they hatch. Females are not brightly colored. They have plain brown and black colors, which gives them camouflage. Camouflage helps female wild turkeys blend in with trees and other plants.

Long ago, wild turkeys were over-hunted. And their forest habitat was cut down to make cities, farms and roads. By the early 1900's American wild turkeys were almost extinct. However, great conservation efforts saved the turkeys. Today, the United States has over seven million wild turkeys.
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1. Where do wild turkeys find most of their food?
   a. in trees
   b. in lakes and streams
   c. on the ground
   d. underground

2. What is an omnivore? ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________

3. Where do wild turkeys sleep?
   a. in nests
   b. in trees
   c. near caves
   d. on the ground

4. Which has brighter colors, a male wild turkey or a female wild turkey?
   ___________________________________________

5. Male turkeys are called ________________________.
   Female turkeys are called ________________________.
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Draw straight lines to match each vocabulary word on the left with its definition on the right.

1. omnivore • ability to blend into one's surroundings; difficult to see
2. woods • place where an animal lives
3. pioneers • animals who hunt other animals;
4. habitat • early settlers or explorers

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1. Where do wild turkeys find most of their food?  c
   a. in trees
   b. in lakes and streams
   c. on the ground

2. What is an omnivore?  an animal that eats both meat and plants

3. Where do wild turkeys sleep?  b
   a. in nests
   b. in trees
   c. near caves
   d. on the ground

4. Which has brighter colors, a male wild turkey or a female wild turkey?  a male wild turkey

5. Male turkeys are called toms. (also accept: gobblers)
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Draw straight lines to match each vocabulary word on the left with its definition on the right.

1. omnivore
   - ability to blend into one's surroundings; difficult to see

2. woods
   - place where an animal lives

3. pioneers
   - animals who hunt other animals; antonym for prey

4. camouflage
   - animal that eats meat and plants

5. predators
   - area with lots of trees

6. habitat
   - early settlers or explorers

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