Learning Guide

Turkeys

We hope you enjoyed learning all about turkeys. Extend your learning with this print-ready Learning Guide!

What's in this Learning Guide?

Get Set to Listen
Answer TRUE or FALSE statements before and after listening to the episode.

Vocabulary

Discussion Questions
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.1, SL.3-8.3

Writing Prompts
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.1, W.3-8.2, W.3-8.3, W.3-8.4, W.3-8.7, W.3-8.8

Wild vs. Domesticated: Venn Diagram Activity
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.5; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.1; NGSS: 3-LS4-3

Design a Turkey Habitat
NGSS:5-LS2-1, MS-LS2-4, MS-ETS1-1, MS-ETS1-2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3–8.7, W.3–8.7

Beyond the Thanksgiving Story
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3–8.6, RI.3–8.7, W.3–8.7, SL.3–8.1; C3 Social Studies: D2.His.1.3–5, D2.His.4.3–5, D2.Geo.4.3–5, D2.Geo.5.6–8; NGSS: MS-LS2-1

Decoding Turkey Talk
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3–8.7, SL.3–8.2; NGSS: 1-LS1-1, 4-LS1-2, MS-LS1-4, MS-LS1-8

Turkey-Feather Math
CCSS.Math.Content.3.OA.A.3, 4.OA.A.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3–8.1, SL.3–8.1

Additional Resources & Book List

The Children's Hour
kids public radio

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https://www.childrenshour.org/turkeys/

Get Set to Listen

1. Before listening!

Read each statement and write TRUE or FALSE based on what you already know.

2. After listening!

Based on what the experts said in the episode, write TRUE or FALSE.

Before Listening	TRUE or FALSE?	After Listening
	1. There are two species of turkeys in the world.	
	2. A turkey's head can change colors depending on how it feels.	
	3. Turkeys communicate only by gobbling.	
	4. Turkeys have better color vision and hearing than humans.	
	5. Turkeys cannot fly.	
	6. Turkeys sleep in trees to protect themselves from nighttime predators.	
	7. Humans have been interacting with turkeys for more than 10,000 years.	

What did you learn?

_____

_____

_____

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Get Set to Listen

Answer key

1. TRUE. They are the wild turkey and the ocellated turkey.
2. TRUE! The skin on a turkey's head can change colors, including red, blue, white, and pink.
3. FALSE. Turkeys make many sounds, including clicks, purrs, yelps, and gobbles.
4. TRUE. Turkeys have excellent eyesight and hearing, which help them detect danger.
5. FALSE. Wild turkeys can fly short distances, sometimes reaching speeds of nearly 50 miles per hour.
6. TRUE. Sleeping high in trees helps protect turkeys from predators on the ground.
7. TRUE. Archaeologists have discovered turkey bones, feathers, and feather blankets showing this long relationship.

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Listen

Use these Shorts clips in the classroom or anytime you want to learn more about a specific topic we talked about in the full-length Children's Hour Turkeys episode!

- **Part 1: What's a Turkey?**
  - **(segment 8:14-11:06)**
- **Part 2: Turkey Communication**
  - **(segment 15:06-19:22)**
- **Part 3: Turkeys & Humans**
  - **(segments 25:09-31:07 + 50:59-52:46)**
- **Part 4: Turkeys & Hunters**
  - **(segment 33:47-38:10)**
- **Part 5: Turkeys: Staying Safe & Growing Up**
  - **(segment 43:24-48:52)**



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Vocabulary

Listening for Words

1. Make a four-column chart and label the columns “I don’t know,” “I’ve seen or heard, but don’t know the meaning,” “I think I know the meaning,” and “I know the meaning.”
2. Write the vocabulary word in the column that describes how well you know the meaning of the word.
3. Listen to **the episode**. Note how the speaker uses the words.

Matching Words with Definitions

1. Print and cut apart the word and definition cards.
2. Spread out the word cards so you can see them all. One by one, attach a definition card to each word card.

Writing with New Words

After working with the words and definitions, write a one-page essay or story that uses at least three of the words.

molt	To lose old feathers and grow new ones.
syrinx	A special bird voice box located deep in the chest where the windpipe splits into two tubes leading to the lungs.

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Vocabulary

species	A group of similar living things that can reproduce with one another.
subspecies	A smaller group within a species that has some differences from other groups.
domesticated	Tamed or raised by humans over many generations.
vulnerable	Easily hurt, harmed, or attacked.

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Vocabulary

poult	A baby turkey.
kinship group	A group of individuals who live together as a family.
roost	A place where birds rest or sleep, often in trees.
conservation	Protecting animals, plants, and natural places.

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Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think turkeys live in flocks instead of spending all their time alone?
2. What might happen to wild turkeys if their habitat disappeared?
3. Why might turkeys have been important to Pueblo peoples and other Indigenous communities beyond being a source of food?
4. What does domestication mean? How might Indigenous peoples have cared for turkeys? How is raising and caring for an animal different from simply hunting it?
5. What responsibilities might people have when caring for animals that are important to their culture?
6. Do you think animals have their own languages? What makes you think that?
7. What might humans learn from the way turkeys work together and communicate?
8. Imagine you are a turkey. What would be the hardest part of your day?

Group Discussion Strategies

Think Pair Share:
1. Individually, student writes down their answer to a question.
2. Students pair up and tell each other their answers.
3. Teacher calls for volunteers to share with the whole class their answer (and/or their partner's answer). Teacher notes key words/phrases on board.

Round Robin:
1. Teacher poses one question (written on top of a large page) to students, who are assembled into small groups of 3 or 4.
2. Students take turns brainstorming the answers. The recorder of the group writes down all answers.
3. The leader reads the group's ideas to the entire class. Teacher moderates.

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Writing Prompts

Narrative Prompts

1. Imagine you are a wild turkey living in the forest. Describe a day in your life. Where do you go? What do you eat? What dangers do you face? Where do you sleep at night?
2. Imagine you are an archaeologist 1,000 years from now. What might you find that tells people how humans and turkeys lived together?
3. You are a young turkey learning how to survive in the wild. Write a story about your first adventure away from your mother. What challenges do you encounter? How do you overcome them?
4. Imagine you can understand everything turkeys say. One day, you overhear a conversation between two turkeys. What are they talking about? What secrets do they share? Use dialogue in your story.

Informational/Expository Prompts

1. Why do many people in the United States associate turkeys with Thanksgiving?
2. Explain how turkeys use their eyesight, hearing, speed, flight, and group behaviors to protect themselves from predators.
3. Explain how turkeys traveled between the Americas and Europe.
4. Explain why wild turkey populations declined in the early 1900s, how conservation efforts helped them recover, and why protecting their habitats remains important.
5. Explain how humans and turkeys have interacted for thousands of years. Include information about domestication, food, feathers, and archaeological discoveries.

Opinion/Persuasive Prompts

1. Wild turkeys were once close to disappearing in many areas. Do you think people should protect animals before their populations become endangered? Explain your reasoning.
2. Can an animal be important to a community in ways that go beyond its economic value?
3. What responsibilities do humans have toward animals they have domesticated?

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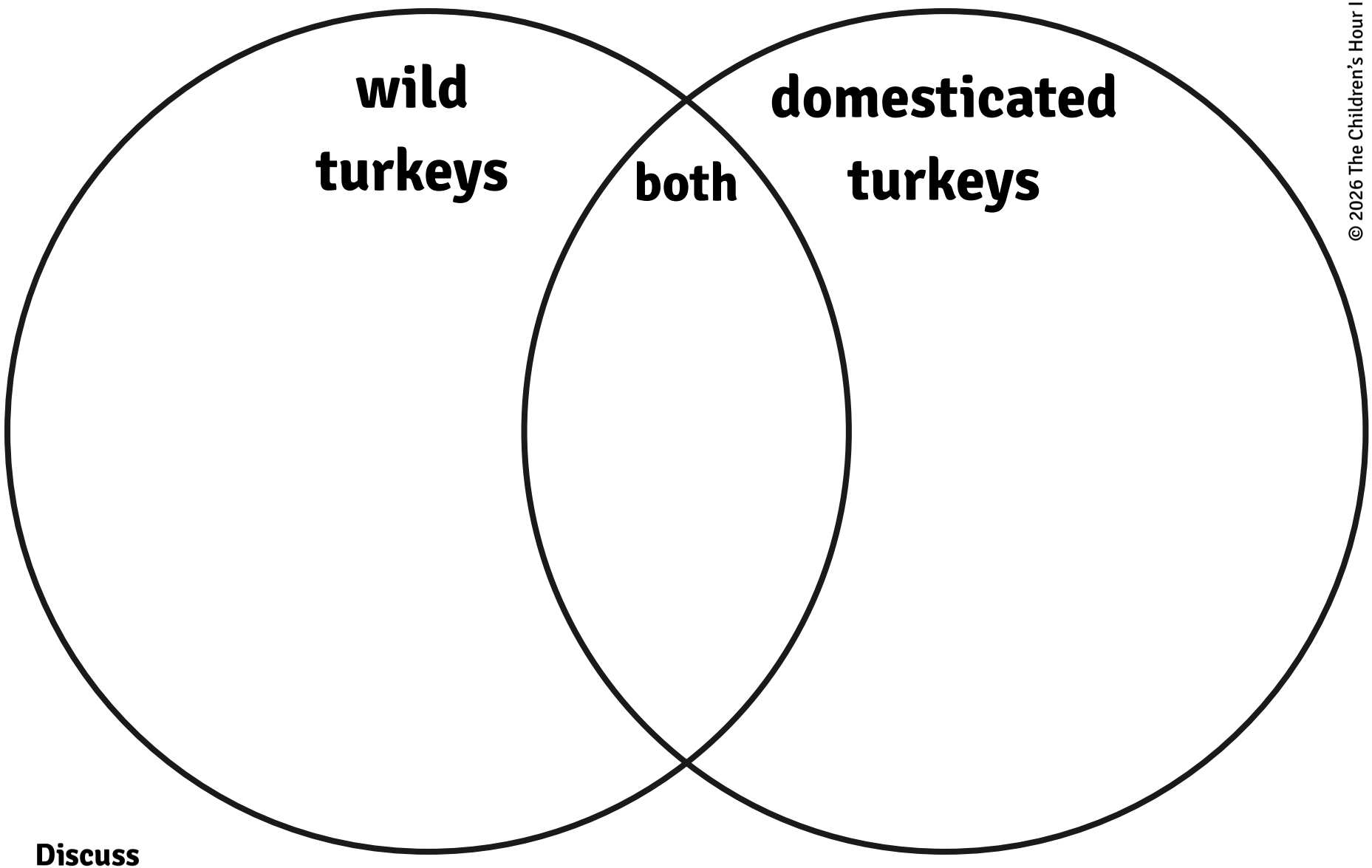
Wild vs. Domesticated

Name_____

Listen

- *Part* 3: Turkeys & Humans (segment 25:09-31:07 + 50:59-52:46)

Compare and contrast wild turkeys and farm-raised turkeys. Explain how their habitats, behaviors, and relationships with humans differ.



Discuss

- *How have humans influenced animal lives through domestication?*
- *Is domestication only about changing an animal, or does it also change humans and their communities?*

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Design a Turkey Habitat

Listen

- Part 1: What's a Turkey? (segment 8:14-11:06)
- Part 5: Turkeys: Staying Safe & Growing Up (segment 43:24-48:52)

Your Mission

You are a wildlife biologist, and your job is to investigate what a wild turkey needs to survive in its habitat.

Research

Read this article from the National Wild Turkey Federation to learn more.

1. What do wild turkeys eat? _____

   _____

2. Where do they live and what kind of shelter do they need? _____

   _____

   _____

3. How do turkeys stay safe from predators? _____

   _____

   _____

4. What do they need to raise young? _____

   _____

5. What else does a turkey need to survive and thrive? _____

   _____

   _____

Create

Use what you learned to draw or construct the perfect habitat for a wild turkey. Include food, water, nesting areas, protection, and roosting trees. Label your habitat and explain why each feature matters.

Write

Create a habitat management plan and defend your decisions with evidence.

Bonus Challenge

A new road or housing development is built. What happens to the turkeys?

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Beyond the Thanksgiving Story

Turkeys have played meaningful roles in Indigenous life long before Thanksgiving became a national holiday. Explore the importance of turkeys to ancestral Pueblo communities and other Indigenous peoples of the Southwest.

Listen

- **Part 3: Turkeys & Humans (segment 25:09-31:07 + 50:59-52:46)**

Research

- Listen to the **Zuni traditional turkey song**.
- Read ***The Poor Turkey Girl: A Zuni Legend***.
- Research the history of turkeys in the ancestral Pueblo Southwest.
  - **Turkeys: A Major Part of Ancestral Pueblo Life**
  - **The Ancient Art of Raising Turkeys**
- Watch **The Real Story of Turkeys** to learn about the ancient and modern history of turkeys.

Discuss/Write

- *How have Indigenous peoples used turkey feathers and other turkey resources?*
- *What can archaeological evidence tell us about relationships between humans and animals?*
- *How might different communities understand the importance of turkeys?*
- *Compare the Thanksgiving turkey story with the much longer history of human-turkey relationships.*

Reflect

What changes when we learn about an animal from the perspective of the people who have lived alongside it for thousands of years?

Remember

- Indigenous communities are living communities, not simply people from the distant past. Different Nations have different relationships, traditions, and teachings about turkeys.
- When discussing Zuni songs, dances, or other cultural practices, use materials shared or approved by Zuni community members. Some cultural knowledge is not intended for general reproduction or performance.

Share

Create a museum exhibit titled *Turkeys: More Than Thanksgiving Dinner*.

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Decoding Turkey Talk

Listen

- Part 2: Turkey Communication (segment 15:06-19:22)
- Part 4: Turkeys & Hunters (segment 33:47-38:10)

Turkeys communicate using gobbles, clicks, yelps, and purrs. Listen to different turkey vocalizations and see if you can figure out what they're saying. Then, create your own turkey language!

Investigate

1. Listen to recordings of different turkey calls. (***Spoiler Alert:*** *this website explains the purpose of the call, so if you want to guess their meanings first, have someone else play them for you.)*
2. Identify differences in volume, pitch, rhythm, and duration.
3. Imagine what different calls might communicate.

Create

Invent a turkey communication system using sounds, gestures, and movements.
For example:

- One gobble: I am here!
- Three clicks: Stay close!
- A soft purr: Everything is okay.

See how closely your turkey language matches the vocalizations wild turkeys use to communicate specific messages, as described on the National Wild Turkey Federation website.

Watch

Turkey Talk to learn how wild turkeys use their vocalizations to communicate clearly.



Reflect

How might taking the time to pay close attention to animal behaviors affect your relationship with the natural world?

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Turkey-Feather Math

Through calculations and investigation, discover the resourcefulness, planning, and knowledge involved in ancestral Pueblo feather blanket making, some requiring 12,000 turkey feathers!

Listen

- Part 3: Turkeys & Humans (segment 25:09-31:07 + 50:59-52:46)

How Many Feathers Does It Take to Make One 12,000-Feather Blanket?

1. If one turkey provides 600 usable feathers, how many turkeys might be needed?

2. What if each turkey provides 800 feathers?

3. How many feathers would be needed for 3 blankets?

4. Estimate how long it might take to collect enough feathers for a 12,000-feather blanket.

Reflect

- *How could people collect feathers over time?*
- *What does this tell us about the planning, knowledge, and relationships involved in creating something so important?*

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Turkey-Feather Math

Answer key

How Many Feathers Does It Take?

1. If one turkey provides 60 usable feathers, how many turkeys might be needed?

12,000÷60=200
That would mean 200 turkeys if each provided 60 usable feathers.

2. What if each turkey provides 40 feathers?

12,000÷40=300
That would mean 300 turkeys if each provided 40 usable feathers.

3. How many feathers would be needed for 3 blankets?

12,000x3=36,000
That would mean 36,000 feathers would be needed for 3 blankets.

4. Estimate how long it might take to collect enough feathers from 10 turkeys for a 12,000-feather blanket.

Example estimate:
If each turkey takes 4 months to generate 60 feathers, and you have only 10 turkeys:
4 months x 60 feathers x 10 turkeys = 24,000 feathers
That's enough for two 12,000-feather blankets. So, to make just one blanket, it would take half as much time:
4 months ÷ 2 = 2 months

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Additional Resources

About Wild Turkeys: Wild Turkey Habitat
Read this article about wild turkey habitats and learn more about conservation efforts from the National Wild Turkey Federation.

The Poor Turkey Girl: A Zuni Legend
Read this tale and many others from Ya-Native: Preserving & Sharing Our Cultures.

Turkeys: A Major Part of Ancestral Pueblo Life
While the popular notion of the American Thanksgiving is less than 400 years old, the turkey has been part of American lives for more than 2,000 years

The Ancient Art of Raising Turkeys
Learn how Ancestral Puebloans domesticated turkeys more than 1,500 years before the first Thanksgiving.

Videos

The Real Story of Turkeys
An 8:37-minute video from the Hutchings Museum explains the ancient and modern history of turkeys.

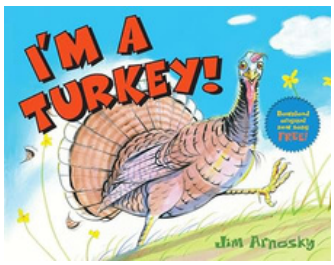
Turkey Talk
Learn how wild turkeys use their vocalizations to communicate clearly. Includes links to background reading and discussion questions.

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Book List



Turkeys (Farm Animals)
by Betsy Rathburn
This non-fiction book features vibrant real-life photographs and simple, accessible text that introduces young kids to farm turkeys, their diet, and daily routine.
ages 3-6



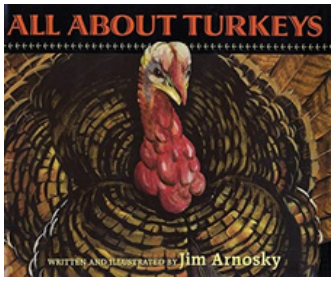
I'm a Turkey!
by Jim Aronsky
Join wild turkey Tom and his flock as they explore life in the wild, stay alert for predators, and learn fun facts about turkeys through a catchy song!
ages 4-8



The Nature Kid's Guide to Turkeys
by David Anderson
This level 2 reader is designed for children building independent reading skills while diving deeper into bird nature and turkey habits.
ages 5-8



Turkey: A Fun and Educational Book for Kids with Amazing Facts and Pictures
by Odette Leo
This book is packed with fun facts, colorful pictures, and biology basics about wild and domesticated turkeys, including differences between toms and hens
ages 5-9



All About Turkeys
by Jim Aronsky
A classic, richly illustrated guide that explores wild turkey behavior, habitats, life cycles, and physical traits with detailed watercolors and clear, engaging text.
ages 6-10

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