

# Wild Turkey

*Meleagris gallopavo*

## General Information:

-I know what you are thinking, “Turkeys on a shoreland environment? Come on Wagner, you’ve flipped your lid!” Not necessarily though. Although they are kind of rare to shoreland environments, I did see a flock of turkeys walking across Outlet Bay on Pelican Lake in Oneida County as I was ice-fishing on a blustery day. The Wild Turkey is the largest game bird in North America and was once so widespread it was considered for the US national emblem. Male turkeys gobble year round, but in the spring they are easily startled and will gobble at any abrupt noise. Today this unmistakable symbol of a Thanksgiving is becoming common again due to conservation efforts and its own adjustment to changes in its original woodland environment.

## Song:

-Gobbling may be heard up to a mile away and is easily imitated, with birds often responding to it. Several different clucking calls given by both sexes: *cluk, cluck, cut, putt*, and others.

## Behavior:

-Powerful muscular gizzard can grind the hardest foods. Eats nuts, seeds, large insect, frogs, lizards, wild fruits, and grapes. Flies to tree to roost for the night. The males display by strutting with their tail spread, wings drooped, bare skin of head intensified in color, and frequent gobbling.

## Breeding:

-Polygamous.

## Nesting:

-Incubation 27-28 days by the female. The 1 brood per year of precocial young feed themselves and have their first flight in about 14 days.

## Population:

-Rare to fairly common. Increasing.

## Conservation:

-Trap and transfer programs have helped reestablish some populations. Increased comeback of blocks of forest interspersed with agricultural areas, as well as wildlife management programs have helped increase the population.

## Shoreline Restoration Issues:

- If you would like to create an environment friendly to the Wild Turkey I would concentrate on planting a lot of Oak trees. Along the shore I would plant a lot of Swamp White Oaks (for food) along with some Tamarack, Wool-Grass, and Sweet Flag (for cover). Farther inland in the buffer zone I would plant high numbers of Red Oak, White Oak, Bur Oak, Northern Pin Oak, Pin Oak, and Black Oak. Check with the plant listing to see what oaks grow best on your property. However, I do highly recommend planting a mixture of oaks from each the Red Oak and White Oak sub-families. Underneath these trees I would concentrate my efforts on planting American and Beaked Hazelnuts.

