



NPS



I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Don't Feed Wildlife



It's not just a snack.

Feeding wildlife is dangerous for the animals and for you.

There are risks to people.

Animals that rely on human foods can become aggressive.

There are risks to wildlife.

Animals that rely on human foods can stop naturally hunting or foraging and starve.



You can help keep wildlife wild.

- Never feed wildlife.
- Clean up and leave no trace.
- Keep your distance.



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In general, IDFG discourages feeding wildlife at any time of year. Turkeys can sometimes be an exception because people have put them in places that may provide good spring, summer, and fall habitat, but not good winter habitat which, as you can see, can cause problems because turkeys don't usually migrate long distances. In some of these situations, landowners and agencies have taken steps to improve winter habitat conditions in certain areas in order to sustain turkey populations through the winter. IDFG would prefer this approach over winter feeding operations.

People who care about wildlife can make the biggest difference by helping to improve natural habitat conditions which provide natural cover and year-round natural food sources for wildlife. In general, winter cover can be enhanced by planting shrubs and low growing trees in shelterbelts or riparian areas and by protecting those areas from livestock with wildlife friendly fencing. Food plots for wild turkeys can serve as an alternative to direct feeding on private land but may still result in unwanted congregation of wild turkeys around residential homes.

Through decades of experience in Idaho and elsewhere, winter game bird feeding has not been shown to have a measurable long-term effect on population numbers because there are many other factors that influence population sizes. Starvation can happen during extended periods of deep snow and low temperatures, but it is not common and feeding does little to save birds under severe conditions. Game bird populations are adapted to survive through a high rate of reproductivity. Where spring and summer habitat is adequate, a relative few adult birds will produce large numbers of chicks.

IDFG does not sanction non-emergency feeding of wild turkeys or other wildlife. Our goal is to keep wildlife populations both wild and healthy.

Here is a list of some unintended consequences of winter feeding:

- Taming local populations of wild turkeys and increasing the probability of nuisance complaints in the community.*
- Disease. The recent epidemic of highly pathogenic avian influenza can be transmitted from wild birds to domestic populations and can kill wild and domestic birds very quickly. If HPAI is found in domestic poultry flocks, the USDA recommends euthanizing the entire flock to prevent potential spread to other domestic or wild flocks. Although not common, HPAI can also infect humans and pets.*
- Predation. When wild turkeys congregate it can attract predators. If turkeys congregate near humans and residential homes, there is potential for predation on domestic livestock and pets.*
- Damage to existing habitat.*
- Concentrating turkeys on private lands where hunting may not be allowed, which can exacerbate the problem.*

Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

Do not feed turkeys

Not only can supplementing food cause serious health concerns for wildlife, but it can lead to unintended consequences that threaten you, your neighbors, and both human and wildlife communities. In this instance, habituation is the conditioning of a wild animal to humans via feeding or some other positive interaction. A habituated turkey may change the way it uses habitat, where and when it moves, and may not be afraid of people or pets. As wild animals begin to associate humans with safety from predation, environmental pressures, and food, there is an increased likelihood of an interaction with those species. Most of the time these interactions with wild animals are not negative experiences, but it is important to keep wildlife wild to reduce the risk of a negative interaction.

When humans feed turkeys regularly, wild birds can come from miles away to feed as well. With the increased numbers of wild birds in one area, you could inadvertently contribute to disease transfer among turkeys. As turkeys are attracted to an area by supplemental feeding, their predators can then also be attracted to that area. If you are attracting turkeys by feeding them you can expect to also attract any of a turkeys' predators, large and small.