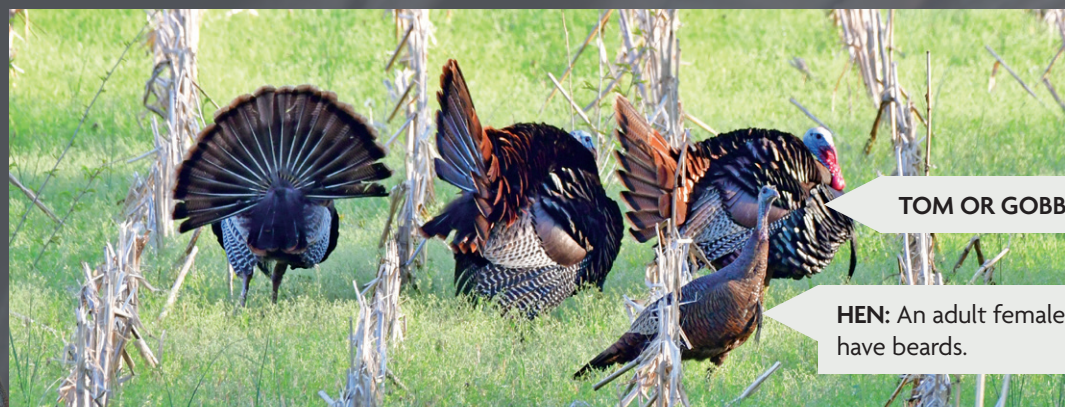


# TURKEY TERMS

Each of the five subspecies of American wild turkey has its distinct physical and behavioral characteristics, but here are common terms:



**TOM OR GOBLER:** An adult male.

**HEN:** An adult female, about 5% of which have beards.

**STRUT:** Springtime courtship display of a gobbler in which it fans its tail feathers, drops its wings, flares its back and breast feathers, changes its head and caruncle from blue to red or flesh tone, brings its head and neck down into an “s” shape, and moves about to attract hens.

**SNOOD:** A flap of skin that hangs down over the beak. Females prefer to mate with long-snooded males, and male turkeys defer to males with longer snoods.

**CARUNCLE:** Loose, bumpy skin on the head and neck thought to play a role in attracting a mate. The male’s caruncles can become engorged with blood and turn red, white or blue.

**WATTLE:** A flap of loose skin hanging under the chin and neck.

**BEARD:** A tuft of bristly feathers off the chest of males, although some hens have beards. The longer the beard, the older and healthier the bird. Some toms have multiple beards.



**POULT:** Newborns, male or female.



**JENNY:** A juvenile female.



**JAKE:** A juvenile male.



**SPUR:** A pointed growth off the back of a turkey’s leg just above the foot. Both sexes are born with a small button spur, but the male’s continues to grow and the female’s does not. Older, more dominant birds have the longest, sharpest spurs, which allow them to fend off younger birds when vying for the right to breed.

# TURKEY TALK

If you ask most people what sound a turkey makes, they’ll say gobble. That’s only the beginning. They also cackle, cluck, purr, yelp ... and a lot more. In fact, wild turkeys make 28 distinct sounds, and each has its own purpose.

Some sounds are made only by male turkeys, known as gobblers or toms. The female, or hen, has her own language. Here are the most common ones, which you can listen to at [nwtf.org/hunt/wild-turkey-basics/turkey-sounds](http://nwtf.org/hunt/wild-turkey-basics/turkey-sounds):

**ASSEMBLY:** A series of loud yelps used by a hen to assemble her flock or young poults. It’s usually a little more emphatic and longer than a standard series of yelps.

**CAKCLE:** A cackle usually consists of three to 10 irregularly spaced notes, loud and staccato, increasing in pitch as the call nears its end. The cackle is generally associated with leaving the roost but can also be heard when a bird is flying up to a roost.

**CLUCK:** One or more short, staccato notes. It’s generally used by one bird to get the attention of another and can reassure an approaching gobbler that a hen is waiting for him.

**CLUCK and PURR:** A cluck followed by a rolling purr, often associated with flock talk or the feeling of contentment.

**CUTT:** Loud, sharp clucks that are often mixed with yelping. Cutting is a sign that turkeys are excited, not alarmed.

**GOBBLE:** A loud, rapid gurgling sound made by male turkeys. The gobble is one of the principal vocalizations of the male wild turkey and is used primarily in the spring to let hens know he is in the area.

**KEE KEE RUN:** A three-note call that lasts about two seconds. A variation is merely a kee kee followed by a yelp. The kee kee is the call of lost young turkeys, and variations are also made by adult birds.

**PURR:** A soft, rolling call turkeys make when content. It is a low vocal communication often made by birds that are feeding.

**PUTT:** A single or several sharp notes generally associated as an alarm that means the bird has seen or heard something and is signaling danger.

**TREE CALL:** A series of soft muffled yelps given by a roosted bird that sometimes picks up in volume as fly-down time nears. It may be accompanied by soft clucking and is generally acknowledged as a call to communicate with others in a flock.

**YELP:** A basic hen sound often delivered in a series of single note vocalizations. It can have different meanings depending on how the hen uses it, but it’s a basic call commonly used to communicate with a gobbler during mating season. A variation is the “excited yelp”, which is similar to a plain yelp but much more excited, rapid and with more volume. This is not a sign of alarm but indicates that a turkey is worked up about something.

Source: National Wild Turkey Federation