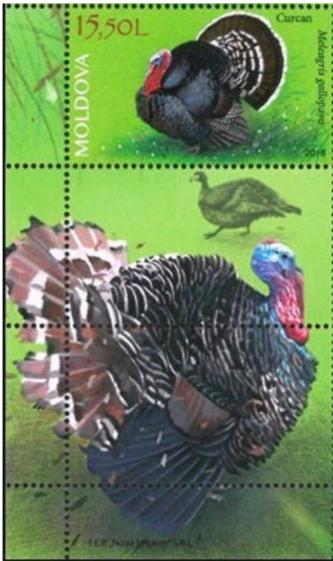


THE TERRIFIC TURKEY

By Michele M. Bresso, PhD

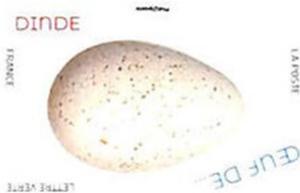


Indigenous to North America, the bird made its first British appearance in the 1500s. At that time, most exotic items came from Asia, and all those products were labeled with the same moniker: Turkey rugs (Persian carpets), Turkey flour (flour from India), and Turkey bags (Hungarian carpet bags), for example. When this equally exotic bird, with its tall, gangly neck and bright red wattle was introduced to British society, it was dubbed a turkey coq, later shortened to turkey.



(l-r) U.S. 1956 Wildlife Conservation series; Canada 2014 personalized stamp; Mexico 1980

(Above) Moldova 2018: Turkey stamp from sheet that includes male and female turkeys in selvage; (below) France 2020: Turkey egg from Bird Eggs booklet

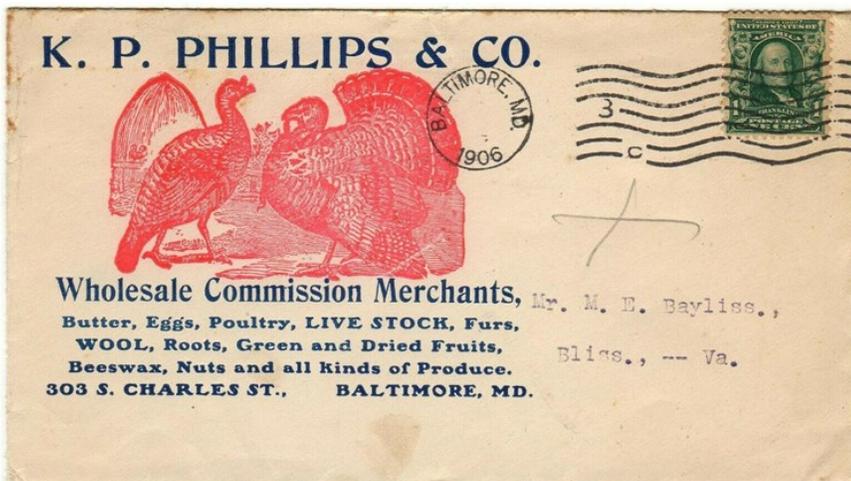


TURKEYS IN THE WILD

Wild turkeys, *genus Meleagris*, prefer wooded areas as a habitat, especially nut trees (oak, hickory, beech). There they find shelter, protection, and food. Like most avians, the male turkey is brilliant with a rainbow of facial colors including red, blue, green and yellow. Plumage is lavish and showy with striped feathers in hues from light to dark. The male's throaty, reverberating call is know as a "gobble." Females are brown with some white striping on wing tips. The hen's face is muted with a hint of blue under the neck. Females are the only turkey parent to tend the eggs, which average 2-2.7 inches in length and are light brown and speckled.

TURKEY AS A FOOD SOURCE

Turkeys are hunted for food, and some 240 million turkeys are raised on farms in the U.S., according to the National Turkey Federation. The meat is rich in protein and vitamins, low in fat. Thanks to global marketing, turkey is enjoyed internationally.



(Above) 1906 food merchants commercial cover with turkey on corner card; (right) Turkey representing a holiday food—U.S. 1994: Norman Rockwell minisheet shows a roast turkey taking center stage at the Thanksgiving dinner table; Cuba 1956: Christmas stamp.