

Revenge Of The Turkeys! Tips For Deterring Wild Turkey Yard Damage

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An Eastern Wild Turkey. Photo courtesy of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

While turkey on a Thanksgiving plate is welcome by many, wild turkeys inhabiting a landscaped property can really ruffle feathers!

The first time wild turkeys visit a property, it can be fun to watch.

Especially when baby turkeys, or poults, are following their mothers around in the Spring. But if turkeys start visiting regularly, property owner's eventually get a firsthand look at how destructive a rafter of turkeys can be. When half a dozen or more of these 20-pound wild birds show up every morning, lawns can get scratched to bits and bird feeders raided. As for the mess they make, the less said the better. They might even scare children. Turkeys aren't inherently dangerous, but they become bolder as they lose their fear of humans (which happens when we become familiar). Their boldness might become intimidation or domination, and they could become aggressive—especially during breeding season.

Most people are reluctant to take direct action against turkeys. They are large animals that are hard to manage and it may also be illegal to control them depending on local laws. Fortunately, several options are available for property owners who would like to gently discourage wild turkeys to leave and go visit someone else.

Remove Food & Roosting Spots

Like any wild animal, when turkeys find a place they can get food easily, they'll decide to stick around. Have they found a daily banquet in the neighborhood? Are they gobbling up food scraps in the neighbor's backyard? Do they hang out near the bird feeder, waiting for birdseed to fall? Store the feeder in the shed for a while. Politely ask neighbors to stop feeding the turkeys. Keep the garbage can in the garage. Other potential snacking sources include grass seeds, nut trees, and berry bushes. Cut the grass often, and install metal poultry wire around the garden, fruit bushes, and trees. (Steer clear of polypropylene bird netting. It can harm other wildlife like possums and skunks, who can get tangled and strangled.)

Installing metal poultry wire around shrubs and trees can also help deter roosting. Wild turkeys are active during the day but sleep at night. They look for easy, comfortable places to roost—like a roof, trees, or bushes. It can also help to prune trees and bushes to make them less desirable.

Alter The Environment

Wild turkeys have stressful lives. As big as they are, they are routinely preyed upon by other wild animals and have developed an instinctive avoidance of loud noises, potential threats, or anything startling. The U.S. Humane Society recommends moving the property owner to the top of the turkey pecking order. This way, the neighborhood tom will be more likely to fear the property and less likely to try for dominance or to become a daily nuisance.

So, how does one climb to the top? One method is to introduce unfamiliar objects throughout the environment. Wild turkeys notice even the smallest changes in their surroundings. Predator kites flying from tall poles are known to scare off turkeys. Waving your hands in the air or opening an umbrella will startle turkeys into a run. Other tips include:

Loud Noises. Make some kind of noisemaker that will be loud enough to spook the birds from across the lawn. Try dropping a dozen or so pennies into a

coffee can and sealing it up. When the distinctive warbling of hungry turkeys is heard outside, stand where they can see you and shake the can until they trot away for the day.

Potential Threats. Scarecrows were originally adopted to scare off pest birds and turkeys are no exception. If a traditional scarecrow isn't for you, consider a scare-wild-predator. Anything that resembles a hungry coyote in the bushes should be enough to send the visiting turkeys on their way. Of course, if you own a real dog, turning it loose to run the perimeter of your property in the morning is an excellent way to never see another turkey near your land. If your dog is off-leash, stay somewhere close by to prevent the dog from making physical contact with a turkey and either hurting it or getting hurt.

Water the Turkeys. Turkeys are fairly easy to startle, and they can be sent skittering back by sudden jets of water. Motion activated sprinklers, hoses, and even squirt guns have been known to work on whole groups of turkeys. This tactic is especially effective when it's sudden and comes from an unexpected direction. Ideally, the splash should hit the ground close to, but not directly on, the largest tom in the group. Once he starts running, the others almost always follow.

Another humane solution to turkey issues are two products from Nite Guard. During the day, when turkeys are active, Nite Guard Repellent Tape can scare them away. This durable flash tape creates bright flashes of light and startling crackling sounds, which turkeys can't stand. At night, Nite Guard Solar lights employ red flashing lights to mimic the presence of a predator. This sends the wild turkeys into fight or flight, and they quickly flee your property.

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Article adapted with permission from two blog entries at [Nite Guard](#), manufacturers of predator deterrent products. Photo from the [National Wild Turkey Federation](#) (NWTF) Resource Library.

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