

Wild turkeys that vanished in 1800s return to New England

By WILSON RING Associated Press

MONTPELIER, Vt. — Wild turkeys, once common across New England, are back after disappearing from the region in the 19th century and are now regularly spotted in rural fields, suburban neighborhoods and even the airspace above interstate highways.



John Hall/Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department via AP

In this circa 1970 photo provided by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, game warden Ross Hoyt, left, and biologist Joseph Artmann release a wild turkey in Saxtons River, Vt., at a time when they were almost gone from the Vermont countryside.

one end of the state to the other, Scott said.

Vermont has also helped other states in the region and beyond restore or build their populations, sending turkeys to places including Maine, Rhode Island, New Jersey,

just a New England phenomenon.

Wild turkeys are now found in all U.S. states except Alaska, said Pete Muller, public relations manager for the National Wild Turkey Federation, which is trying to maintain and expand turkey habitats across the country.

"When you think about this particular time of year, Thanksgiving, most people will think of turkeys," said Muller, who estimates the national turkey population is around 6 million.

He said it's unclear whether turkeys were actually part of the original Thanksgiving held by the Pilgrims in what is now Plymouth, Massachusetts.

"Whether there were actually turkeys there or not, the American wild turkey is cemented into this country's history," Muller said.

Now, not far from the site of that original Thanksgiving, in Foxborough, Massachu-

setts, turkeys are so common some have turned aggressive toward people who feed them. In Vermont, flocks of 200 or 300 turkeys can damage farmers' grain bunkers by eating the feed intended for cattle and fouling the rest with their droppings, Scott said.

Vermont's native turkey population was wiped out in the 19th century because of habitat loss caused by farming practices that clear cut forests from much of the state. In the 1850s, only about 25 percent of Vermont was forested.

Unsuccessful efforts to restore partially domesticated turkeys were made in the middle of the 20th century.

In the 1960s, a Vermont biologist who once worked in New York developed a program that brought the 31 turkeys that had been trapped in New York's Allegheny and Steuben counties to Pawlet and Hubbardton, according to a history of the program

provided by Vermont Fish and Wildlife. The area was considered ideal because of the combination of forests and farm fields littered with cow corn.

Within a year, the population was estimated at 150. By 1973, the population had rebounded enough for a limited hunting season in the area where they were first released.

In 1977 and 1978, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife released 41 birds from Vermont in the towns of York and Eliot as part of a yearslong restoration effort. Within a few years, Maine biologists were catching and releasing their birds in other parts of the state. Now they're found in all 16 Maine counties.

New Hampshire began its turkey restoration in the 1970s. Now there are an estimated 35,000 to 45,000 statewide.

PARENTS TALK BACK Teaching kids to recognize fake news

There's a mild-mannered warrior in the front lines of the propaganda wars. Kylie Peters, a librarian in the Chicago area, has been concerned about the rise of so-called "fake news": deliberately false stories made to appear factual, designed to sway public opinion.



'She was applauded for advocating a new immigration policy.' 'She was criticized for advocating a new immigration policy.' 'These both make sense, so in this case, 'advocating' is a neutral description.' One of Peters' most critical tips?

"Librarians are the original search engine," said Peters, who works at Geneva Public Library in suburban Chicago. A recent analysis showed that fake or hoax stories got more reader engagement on Facebook than real news stories during the last three months of the election.

"People think they don't need libraries because of Google. In fact, they need us more than ever to help them combat information overload, and sort and evaluate the current glut of information," Peters wrote in a recent Facebook post. She shared strategies for identifying false information and biases, noting that biases are not always bad — as long as you know what they are.

Here are her tips for helping your children learn how to distinguish facts from fiction or propaganda online:

"Your first stop when you visit an unfamiliar website should be the 'about' page. Is the information there neutral? Why does this website exist? Who funds the site? Who owns it? Who runs it? What are that person or people's goals? Are contributors paid? What is the submission process for content? All of these can be clues about both accuracy and biases.

"Scroll to the very bottom of the page and look at who owns the copyright. Is it an individual? A business? A smaller division of a large business? What makes this site qualified to provide accurate information on the topic the site covers?"

"Does the website cite its sources? Are the sources reliable? Does it link to reliable sites?"

Peters encourages readers to get context clues from a site's domain name — "sites that end in .gov are from the U.S. government, while .edu is an educational institution" — and reminds them to trust their guts. If a site looks unprofessional, it probably is.

"Look at graphic design. Your instincts are right on this one: Poor graphic design may be an indicator of low-quality material. The same goes for material with lots of grammar and spelling errors, exclamation points and capital letters."

It gets trickier when it comes time to evaluate the content itself. Keep an eye out for this kind of language, Peters says:

"Watch for 'bias words' that indicate emotion, opinion or slant, or linguistic tricks to make things sound a certain way. Unbiased words will be neutral, and will make sense when used in both a positive and a negative sentence. For example:

"Don't use Google search rankings as an indicator of accuracy!" To drive the point home, she shared this example: "I just Googled 'Martin Luther King Jr.' and the fourth result was a white supremacist site. We don't know Google's algorithm for search results," she says, and even if someone figured it out, the algorithm is constantly changing.

"The more a site is linked to by other sites and shared on social media, the more likely it is to be high on the results page. Your results may be affected by your location and by your previous searches. Sites portraying a subject positively tend to appear at the top of the page, and negatively, at the bottom." Business considerations are at play, too: "Google owns a lot of products, and it pushes its own properties to the top of the search results.

"Website owners know you're most likely to click one of the top five search results. There are a lot of tricks people will use to make their Google search rankings go up. For example, by artificially increasing the number of links to their site or by showing search engines different data from what they show human visitors. Google tries to catch spam and stop manipulation of its system, but it's an ongoing war."

Think you and your child are ready to spot the fake news from the real? Try this test: Google the phrase "Save the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus" and click on the site that comes up first.

"Can you identify the clues that this is not a reliable website?" Peters asks.

"Even better, show the site to someone who doesn't know about it and see if they believe it. This site was specifically designed to teach students digital literacy, and has some built-in clues to help you identify it as false information."

Identifying reliable websites and sources "may sound like a lot of work, but it becomes quick and easy once you've had some practice," says Peters.

Other librarians added their own tips to her suggestions. One mentioned "triangulation," meaning "visiting at least three sites to verify the facts."

If you do get overwhelmed, Peters reminds you that librarians are there to help.

"If you haven't been to your local library lately, you should go," she says. "It's probably a lot cooler than you think."

Aisha Sultan is a St. Louis-based journalist who studies parenting in the digital age.

Friday Morning

Table with columns for Station, Time (6 AM, 6:30, 7 AM, 7:30, 8 AM, 8:30, 9 AM, 9:30, 10 AM, 10:30, 11 AM, 11:30) and Program Name.

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