

Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo sylvestris*)



Resident breeder

Status in Quebec: Range: expanding Population: increasing

Habitat: forests, agricultural and urban areas

Ecological importance: consumes harmful insects, ticks which transmit Lyme disease, small amphibians, nuts, seeds and invasive plants, disperses seeds, fertilizes the soil, provides food for predators (foxes, coyotes, etc.), enjoyed by bird watchers and hunters.

Why should the Wild Turkey be an emblem of Morin-Heights?

Love them or not, the Wild Turkey has a remarkable comeback story. Extirpated (regional extinction) by unregulated hunting and habitat loss from parts of Canada and the U.S.A., the species has recovered well due, in part, to re-introduction programs, changes to the landscape and climate change. It is a large ground-dwelling bird (6 to 10 kg for males or toms, 3 to 6.5 kg for females or hens). Toms perform spectacular displays to attract hens which lay clutches of 10 to 12 eggs. Wild Turkeys expanded into Quebec in 1976 from the U.S.A. and Ontario, where turkeys were reintroduced in the 1980s. Additional introductions led to Wild Turkeys expanding into the Laurentians, including Morin-Heights, where hunting was allowed in 2008. Populations increased 14% to 30% annually from 1990 to 2014. As impressive birds, especially a hen with a large brood of chicks (poults), Wild Turkeys are amazing survivors, teaching us the resilience of nature and that the Wild Turkey deserves to be the emblem of Morin-Heights.