

Wild turkey damage to crops and wildlife mostly exaggerated

June 5 2013



This image shows a male or tom wild turkey (*M. gallopavo*). Credit: Entomological Society of America

As populations of wild turkeys have increased, the number of complaints about crop damage has also increased. However, a literature review which will be published in the June 2013 issue of *Journal of Integrated Pest Management*, finds that these claims are mostly exaggerated.

The literature review, entitled "Real and Perceived Damage by [Wild Turkeys](#): A Literature Review," was conducted to determine real and perceived damage caused by wild turkeys in North America. The results show that although wild turkeys can cause damage to [agricultural crops](#) such as corn, soybeans, wheat, and hay, the majority of actual damage is usually minor or caused by other wildlife such as white-tailed deer or raccoons. Thus, estimates of damage by wild turkeys are often inflated.

The authors found that wild turkeys do occasionally damage specialty crops, turfgrass, or ornamental flowers that may have higher value than common agricultural crops, but because of the small size of many specialty operations, simple damage management techniques can be used to reduce damage.

The authors also investigated the effects wild turkeys may have on other species of wildlife, but found no evidence of widespread negative effects. While wild turkeys have been observed consuming unusual or uncommon food items including snakes, [salamanders](#), lizards, bluegill, crayfish, and tadpoles, such events were rarely documented. Wild turkeys have also been implicated in the decline of bobwhite quail and ring-necked pheasants, but the authors were unable to find any scientific evidence to substantiate these claims.

To the contrary, some studies in the reviewed literature note that wild turkeys can benefit society, and landowners have indicated that wild turkeys benefit agricultural crops by eating insects and controlling weeds. In some cases, while wild turkeys may appear to be damaging crops, they are actually feeding on insects or waste grain.

Provided by Entomological Society of America

Citation: Wild turkey damage to crops and wildlife mostly exaggerated (2013, June 5) retrieved 2

May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-06-wild-turkey-crops-wildlife-exaggerated.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.