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***Nature* explores wild parenting in *My Life As A Turkey*
Wednesday, November 16, 2011 on PBS**

Exclusive content and streaming videos available at pbs.org/nature

When wildlife artist and naturalist Joe Hutto wants to “talk turkey,” he means something quite different than you might think, because he actually speaks the language of wild turkeys. And having spent more than a year as the full-time parent of a clutch of young turkeys, he learned much more than just how to talk turkey. What started as an informal science experiment became a very personal, very emotional journey that ended up changing his life in ways he could never have imagined. Based on his true story, *Nature's My Life as a Turkey* recreates Hutto's moving tale of raising wild turkey hatchlings in Florida's Flatwoods. The film premieres Wednesday, November 16, 2011 at 8 p.m.(ET) on PBS (check local listings) and will stream online at pbs.org/nature. Hutto's illustrated book about his experience, *Illumination in the Flatwoods* will be re-released by The Lyons Press to coincide with the broadcast.

Celebrating its 30th season, *Nature* is a production of THIRTEEN in association with WNET New York Public Media, the parent company of THIRTEEN and WLIW21, New York's public television stations and operator of NJTV. For nearly 50 years, WNET has been producing and broadcasting national and local documentaries and other programs for the New York community.

Fred Kaufman, series executive producer, says, “How could a story about raising wild turkeys be so emotional? Joe Hutto's experience is unlike anything I have seen in 30 years of *Nature*.”

Already possessing a broad background in the natural sciences, Joe Hutto had a life-long interest in and experience with “imprinting” young animals. Imprinting refers to that first moment of life when some creatures form an instant connection with the individual they forever recognize as their mother. It had long been Hutto’s hope to learn about the secret world of wild turkeys by having young turkey chicks, called poults, imprint on him, but obtaining wild turkey eggs or young poults had proven to be next to impossible. So when he arrived home one day to find a bowl filled with wild turkey eggs on his doorstep, he went out immediately to obtain an incubator, determined to become their mother. He had no idea what kind of relentless task he was about to commit himself to.

He began speaking with them even before they hatched, and bonded with them as they emerged from their shells. Then, day after day, he lived as a turkey mother, taking on the full-time job of raising 16 turkey chicks. It was a role he would learn from scratch and leave him caught up in wonder. There was little he could teach them that they did not already know, but he showed them the lay of the land and protected them from harm as best he could.

It seemed they had much more to teach him. The level of awareness and sensitivity of his young family to the world around them simply transcended anything he had experienced before. He learned their individual idiosyncrasies and voices, and became especially fond of two he named Sweet Pea and Turkey Boy. Sweet Pea was a snuggler, and Turkey Boy the bold rascal of the bunch.

During their time together, Hutto dutifully cared for his charges around the clock, roosting with them, taking them on foraging trips and grasshopper hunts, coping with snake invasions, immersing himself in their world. In the process, they revealed their charming curiosity, survival instincts, and surprising intellect. Life was good.

But eventually, things changed. His children grew up, and Hutto had to let them go off on their own. It was harder than he ever imagined.

Nature is a production of THIRTEEN in association with WNET for PBS. Fred Kaufman is executive producer. **My Life As A Turkey** is a production of Passion Pictures, THIRTEEN and the BBC in association with WNET New York Public Media. Produced by David Allen.

Nature pioneered a television genre that is now widely emulated in the broadcast industry. Throughout the series’ history, **Nature** has brought the natural world into the homes of millions of viewers. The series has been consistently among the most-watched primetime series on public television.

Nature has won more than 600 honors from the television industry, the international wildlife film communities, and environmental organizations including 10 Emmys, three Peabodys and the first award given to a television program by the Sierra Club. In October 2010, the series won the Christopher Parsons Outstanding Achievement Award, given to “an organization or individual that has made a globally significant contribution to wildlife filmmaking, conservation and/or the public’s understanding of the environment.” The award, given by the Wildscreen Festival in Bristol, England, is one of the wildlife film industry’s highest honors.

PBS.org/nature is the award-winning web companion to **Nature** featuring streaming episodes, teacher's guides, and more.

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About WNET New York Public Media

[WNET](#) is America's flagship public media outlet, bringing quality arts, education and public affairs programming to more than five million viewers each week. The parent company of public television stations [THIRTEEN](#) and [WLIW21](#) and operator of [NJTV](#), WNET produces such acclaimed PBS series as [Great Performances](#), [American Masters](#), [Nature](#), [Need to Know](#), [Charlie Rose](#), [Tavis Smiley](#) and a range of documentaries, children's programs, and local news and cultural offerings available on air and online. Pioneers in educational programming, WNET has created such groundbreaking series as [Get the Math](#), [Noah Compende](#) and [Cyberchase](#) and provides tools for educators that bring compelling content to life in the classroom and at home. WNET highlights the tri-state's unique culture and diverse communities through [SundayArts](#), [Reel 13](#), [NJ Today](#) and the new online newsmagazine [MetroFocus](#).

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