

BLACK VULTURES

Common Name: Black Vulture

Other Names: buzzard, carrion crow

Scientific Name: Coragyps atratus

Appearance:

- size - approximately 22 inches
- weight - 3.8-5.1 pounds
- wingspan - 54 inches
- color - dull black
- distinguishing features - wrinkles cover their heads and faces, tips of each wing are white, tips of their bills are grayish, whitish legs, rounded tails, and their feet extend past their tails during flight

Range:

- statewide
- also found throughout the southeastern United States, north to Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and west to southeast Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri

Habitat:

- landfills, pastures, and wherever vultures can find sources of carrion

Diet:

- carrion
- occasionally vegetable and plant matter
- occasionally will prey upon young, sick, or weak animals

Reproduction:

- breed annually with the same mate
- eggs are laid on the ground in a dense thicket, scrub area, hollow log, cave, or old building
- one to four egg clutches laid from February to June
- eggs hatch in 35-40 days
- nestling period is 70-100 days

Behavior:

- highly gregarious (social)
- fly in small groups to food sources
- typically return to dependable food sources rather than seeking out new sources

Continued...

- feed in large groups
- communal roosting
- defecate on legs to keep cool
- disgorge stomach contents when threatened with attack

Problems:

- prey upon young, sick, or weak livestock
- damage window caulking, asphalt roof shingles, vinyl seat covers from boats, tractors, and cars, swimming pool covers and enclosures, boat canopies, and plastic flowers at cemeteries
- manure can deface and damage roofs of houses, office buildings, and electrical transmission towers

Solutions:

- exclusion from resting areas by attaching a taut wire about eight inches high across the peak of a roof or other perching structure (metal wire may be attached to an electric fence energizer for added effect)
- sticky repellents or double-sided tape may be used to discourage vultures from resting sites (manufacturers directions must be followed because these products may discolor painted, stained, or natural wood siding and may melt in hot weather, leaving unsightly streaks)
- helium filled mylar balloons may be placed into trees used as roost sites
- pyrotechnics (fireworks made for bird control) may be used to disperse vultures from roost areas (consult state, county, and local laws or ordinances regarding noise and the possession and use of pyrotechnics prior to initiating this method of control)
- removal of food sources such as dead livestock and road killed animals makes an area less attractive to vultures
- trapping (see legal aspects)
- shooting (see legal aspects)
- calving livestock indoors or in pastures with heavy natural cover

Legal Aspects:

- vultures are protected by Federal law and cannot be killed without proper permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

TURKEY VULTURES

Common Name: Turkey Vulture

Other Names: buzzard, carrion crow

Scientific Name: Cathartes aura

Appearance:

- size - approximately 25 inches
- weight - 3.5-5.3 pounds
- wingspan - 72 inches
- color - blackish brown
- distinguishing features - red head and legs, tips of their bills are white, undersides of their wings are lined in gray, long tails which extend past their legs during flight

Range:

- statewide
- also found throughout South America, Central America and most of North America: from the southern portion of Canada down south through the 48 states of the U.S. mainland

Habitat:

- landfills, pastures, and wherever vultures can find sources of carrion

Diet:

- carrion
- occasionally vegetable and plant matter

Reproduction:

- breed annually with the same mate
- eggs are laid on the ground in a dense thicket, scrub area, hollow log, cave, or old building
- one to four egg clutches laid from March to July
- eggs hatch in 35-40 days
- nestling period is 55-90 days

Behavior:

- migrate in groups during daylight
- gregarious (social)
- fly in small groups to food sources
- well developed sense of smell helps turkey vultures to easily find new sources of carrion

Continued...

- communal roosting
- defecate on legs to keep cool
- disgorge stomach contents when threatened with attack

Problems:

- damage window caulking, asphalt roof shingles, vinyl seat covers from boats, tractors, and cars, swimming pool covers and enclosures, boat canopies, and plastic flowers at cemeteries
- manure can deface and damage roofs of houses, office buildings, and electrical transmission towers
- kill calves and other newborn livestock

Solutions:

- exclusion from resting areas by attaching a taut wire about eight inches high across the peak of a roof or other perching structure (metal wire may be attached to an electric fence energizer for added effect)
- sticky repellents or double-sided tape may be used to discourage vultures from resting sites (manufacturers directions must be followed because these products may discolor painted, stained, or natural wood siding and may melt in hot weather, leaving unsightly streaks)
- helium filled mylar balloons may be placed into trees used as roost sites
- pyrotechnics (fireworks made for bird control) may be used to disperse vultures from roost areas (consult state, county, and local laws or ordinances regarding noise and the possession and use of pyrotechnics prior to initiating this method of control)
- removal of food sources such as dead livestock and road killed animals makes an area less attractive to vultures
- trapping (see legal aspects)
- shooting (see legal aspects)
- calve livestock indoors or in pastures with heavy natural cover

Legal Aspects:

- vultures are protected by Federal law and cannot be killed without proper permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.