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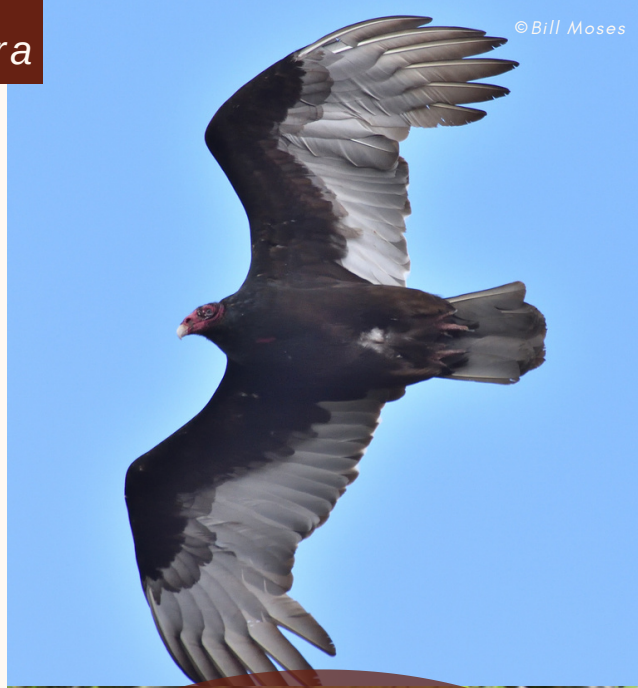
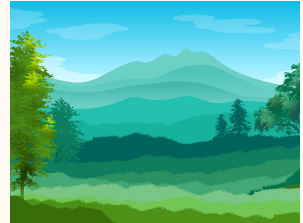
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TURKEY VULTURE

Cathartes aura

Range & Habitat

The most widespread and abundant vulture in the state, Turkey Vultures are found in suburban and rural areas and open and forested habitats. Their preferred habitat includes farmland with pasture and carrion close to undisturbed forested areas for perching, roosting, and nesting.



Nesting Behavior

One of the most important requirements for the location of a Turkey Vulture nest appears to be isolation from human disturbance. They shift their nest site widely from year-to-year, making it difficult to locate nests. Once a nest is active, both adult birds can be seen flying over the nest site and perching nearby, remaining in sight of it.

The breeding season for Turkey Vultures commences in March, with most birds nesting between April and May and fledging in July. The female usually lays a clutch of two eggs, occasionally one, and very rarely three. Typically, Turkey Vulture eggs are deposited on a sheltered surface, such as a cliff, cave, or crevice in rocks, a burrow, inside a hollow tree or dense thicket.



Large, heavy-bodied, carrion-eating bird. Dark brown with silver underwings and red head. Wings held in dihedral or V-shape.

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©Hawk Mountain

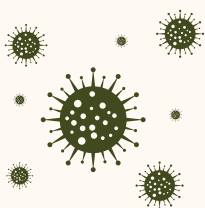
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What Does a Turkey Vulture Nest Look Like?

Turkey Vultures do not build a nest; instead, they find a dark recesses beneath boulders, on a stump, or logs, in hollow trees, on cliff ledges, or in abandoned buildings. On occasion, adults may also spend days or weeks sitting in the nest before laying their eggs.

Status & Threats

In Pennsylvania, the Turkey Vulture is considered “Secure and Increasing”. However, scavenging raptors are disproportionately threatened due to risks from disease, persecution, poisoning, and contamination from other environmental toxins including lead and mercury.



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Conservation & Management

As they feed on rotting meat, vultures are susceptible to being poisoned by toxins or lead present in dead animals. The predominant worry is the lead pellets that hunters use, which can enter the carcass or gut pile, and can cause lead poisoning when consumed. Switching to non-lead ammunition will help other avian scavengers including eagles.