

BLACK VULTURES IN MARYLAND

Coragyps atratus

Description and Range

The black vulture is relatively new to Maryland. The first recorded nests here date from the beginning of the 20th century. The expansion of roads and automobiles has likely driven their population expansion. Now climate change is driving the population higher and farther northward. Black vultures remain significantly less common in Western Maryland than in the rest of the state.

Diet and Habitat

Black vultures normally feed on animal carcasses, such as road-killed animals, and in this way they play an important role in the ecosystem. In some situations, black vultures can also exhibit predatory behavior toward wildlife and livestock, especially weak or incapacitated animals. Human conflicts with black vultures have increased as their population has increased in abundance and range.

Species Protections

Black vultures are protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, state laws, and regulations that prohibit the killing of birds or destruction of eggs or active nests without a permit.

Cooperative Efforts to Resolve Conflict

To address conflicts with black vultures, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services actively cooperate to identify and implement workable solutions for vulture predation on newborn and adult livestock. Non-lethal solutions do not require a permit, but lethal solutions require a federal Migratory Bird Depredation Permit. Maryland DNR continues to work with these federal agencies to learn about scientifically based solutions to resolve conflicts with black vultures, including pilot projects underway in the United States.

For assistance in Maryland, call toll-free 1-877-463-6497. U.S. Department Agriculture Wildlife Services operators are available from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except state holidays. For phone numbers outside of Maryland, please call 410-349-8055.



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