

Turkey Vulture



GARDEN EARTH
NATURALIST
ECO-SERVICE CARDS

TURKEY VULTURE

Cathartes aura

ORDER: Ciconiiformes

IDENTIFICATION CLUES



- ◆ 27 inches long; 70 inch wingspan
- ◆ dark, almost black body
- ◆ head featherless, gray (young) or red (adult)
- ◆ tail long and pale underneath



Where to Look

Turkey vultures are seen on the roads and roadsides feeding on carrion (dead animals) or in flight searching for a meal. When soaring, the vulture's wings form a 'V' which helps distinguish them from other raptors.



What It Eats.

Turkey vultures are both scavengers (feed on dead animals) and hunters (of small live prey).



Nesting

Turkey vultures prefer secluded, dark nesting sites such as caves, abandoned buildings and thick vegetation. They only lay 1-2 eggs directly on the ground.



Call or Song

The turkey vulture is usually silent but will occasionally make hissing noises as it feeds on a dead carcass.



Migration?

The turkey vulture spends the winter in the South but travels to the northern US and Canada for the summer.



Did You Know

The turkey vulture has a great sense of smell. The part of the brain responsible for smell is unusually large in vultures. This heightened sense of smell helps the vulture find its next meal.