

Bird Mortality Event

Virginia is one of a growing number of states in the mid-Atlantic and greater Ohio River Valley regions currently experiencing a situation where large numbers of birds have become sick, incapacitated, or died. Although extensive investigation and testing is underway, a causative agent has not yet been identified. Not all bird species appear to be affected; those most affected so far have been Common Grackles, Blue Jays, European Starlings, American Robins, and various finch species. At this time, there does not appear to be any indication of transmission to or impact for humans, but residents are urged to not come into direct contact with nor handle any birds until such time as a causative factor has been determined.

At this time, residents are being asked to immediately do the following:

- Take down all bird feeders, empty and properly dispose of any unused contents, clean and disinfect (with 10% bleach solution) the feeders, and let air dry before putting them into temporary storage. Do not refill or replace feeders until directed that conditions are safe to resume feeding. Although there is no evidence to suggest that hummingbirds currently are being impacted by this event, it is recommended that all hummingbird feeders also should be a part of this sanitation effort.
- Empty, clean, and disinfect (with 10% bleach solution) any bird baths or other receptacle used to provide birds with water for drinking or bathing; do not refill until directed.
- Keep companion animals away from sick or dead birds.
- Do not touch or handle sick or dead birds unless necessary for safety reasons; where contact is necessary, wear disposable gloves that then can be disposed safely without exposing others to potential hazard.
- If sick and/or dying birds are encountered, please complete and submit a reporting form (<https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/diseases/bird-mortality-reporting-form/>) to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources.

Because of the volume of birds involved in this event, many of our local wildlife rehabilitators are being overwhelmed with requests to provide care. Before thinking about transporting any birds to a rehabilitator, call ahead and make sure the facility is willing and capable of accepting additional patients and to obtain instructions on how to legally and safely transport an animal in need of care.

Additional information about this mortality event can be obtained at the website of the U.S. National Wildlife Health Center (<https://www.usgs.gov/news/interagency-statement-usgs-and-partners-investigating-dc-area-bird-mortality-event>).