

Backyard Birds & Coffee

One turkey you don't want to eat

By
Clyde Wilson



One turkey you don't want to eat

The Turkey Vulture is extremely important to us humans in preventing much disease. It can grow as large as an eagle with a six-foot wingspan. Many of us simply call them buzzards.

This red-headed bird at a distance my look like a turkey, but be sure before you shoot as the Turkey Vulture is a federally protected species.

As it soars overhead you can see silvery-colored flight feathers. When they're not flying you can find them in forests, fields, roadsides, farmland and also hanging out at the dumpsters.

Turkey Vultures eat a great deal of carrion. That's Anglo-French for vulgar, the more rotten the better. Find some road kill, and you find these guys doing the cleanup. They like it better if it's been marinating for a few days.

You heard what goes in comes out, but that's not true with these birds. Disease and bacteria go into their digestive system, but their droppings and pellets (thrown up bones and fur) that come out are disease-free.

Boy, if we could find out their secret ingredient we could cure all the world's disease.

Considering what they eat, these are some of the cleanest animals around. They can be easily seen bathing in the water's edge. Also, being bald means easy clean up, and no head feathers keeps disease down.

These guys need no Head and Shoulders, just a few dunks in the water.

Talk about mileage, they

can soar for hours at a time, searching for food as they ride the warm thermals with a few wing beats. No need for glasses or hearing aids either as they have excellent sight and hearing, but are best known for their tremendous sense of smell.

I threw out some spoiled meat last summer in my back yard, and within minutes these cleanup birds were Johnny on the Spot. A few more minutes and the job was complete. I guess they could smell the lunchmeat I bought several weeks ago and put in the back of the fridge and forgot it was there.

At night, Turkey Vultures gather in large roosts in tall trees and on towers. On any given day you see hundreds of vultures on the two electric towers on the backside of the dam or the town's water tower. They usually return to the same roost every night.

It's one turkey you don't want to eat, but it's one we

Birding notes and quizzes

You may view all past articles of Backyard Birds & Coffee online at www.backyardbirdscoffee.com as well as check out the upcoming dates for walks and tours.

Rare Bird Alert! Franklin Gull spotted in Colonial Heights.

Kerr Lake Bird Club meets monthly. Next meeting coming up soon, Nov. 20, 2015. Social 6-7 p.m. Meeting (which is usually a continuation of the social) from 7-8 p.m. Like us on Facebook, Kerr Lake Bird Club.

VSO Winter Field Trip, North Carolina Outer Banks, Feb. 5-7, 2016. Make plans to join trip leaders Bill Akers, Jerry Via, Lee Adams and Meredith Bell at the Outer Banks of North Carolina to view waterfowl, shorebirds and raptors, along with a

wide assortment of land birds. See virginiabirds.net for more info.

Last week's quiz winner was Oliver Jones who writes, "Mr. Wilson, Hey, how are you? This week's answer to: What bird is this? It is a Scarlet Ibis. If you don't mind me asking, was that picture taken at...? Thank you."

Congrats, Oliver, for being the first with your correct answer, and I am fine, thank you.

The Scarlet Ibis inhabits tropical South America and islands of the Caribbean, but it can be found in the world's largest collection of waterfowls just a little over an hour from Mecklenburg County. Join me next week as we travel there, and yes, Mr. Jones, you are correct again. It was there that I took the picture.

This week's quiz, "Where was the picture of the Scarlet Ibis taken?"

Hint, the answer is on twitter @clydejoinclyde.

Mr. Jones and Kerr Lake Bird Club and employees of BYB&C not eligible for this contest as they already know the answer. But you may stop in for a free coffee or hot tea and pastry on me since you are so bird savvy.

Email your comments, questions, quiz answers and/or birding stories to joinclyde@gmail.com. Also on twitter @clyde-joinclyde.

Remember, don't drive and bird like I do, and take time to smell the coffee and enjoy the birds with me at our new store in downtown Bracey. Backyard Birds & Coffee (and hot tea). We are more than bird's supplies and coffee — flags, wind chimes, food stuff and gifts. Open Monday-Saturday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Vultures on tower



No Head & Shoulders for me



Impressive wingspan

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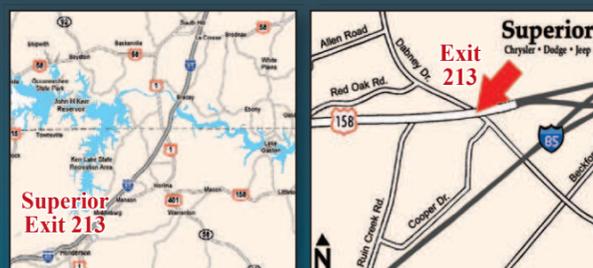
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