

THE TURKEY VULTURE IN NEW YORK STATE

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Early in this century when Elon Howard Eaton wrote his monumental treatise on the birds of the State, the Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura septentrionalis*) was a somewhat infrequent visitor and no breeding records had been established. Since then there has been a marked change in the incidence of this species, increases being particularly apparent during the past twenty years. Throughout the warmer months of the year the Turkey Vulture can be seen in many parts of the State, and we now have a scattering of breeding records, dating from 1925.

Although the initial breeding record comes from Westchester County, it was in western New York that the Turkey Vulture began to appear in numbers. During the 1930's they were being reported regularly at Oak Orchard Swamp in Genesee County. By that time the species had become established in that portion of the Province of Ontario lying north of Lake Erie and the expansion into western New York may have come from that area.

The following table gives the nestings in New York State known to the writer:

Year	Locality	Authority
1925	Lewisboro, Westchester County	Bird Lore 28:175
1927	Tonawanda Swamp, Orleans County	Beardslee and Mitchell (1965)
c.1928	Bergen Swamp, Genesee County	Gardner Bump
1934	Long Mountain Harriman State Park, Orange County	W. H. Carr
1938	Lyndonville, Orleans County	William Smith
1939	Millbrook Mountain, Ulster County	Daniel Smiley
1942-4	Ulster County	Daniel Smiley
1955	Rockland County	John C. Orth
1957	Davenport, Delaware County	Burland
c.1958	Blooming Grove, Orange County	Martha Earl
1962	Humphrey, Cattaraugus County	Audubon Field Notes 16:473
1964-70	Marengo Swamp, Wayne County	Kingbird XVII:20
1967	Picton Island, Jefferson County	Kingbird XVIII:25
1968	Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, Orleans County	Kingbird XIX:22

It will be noted that most of these have been documented. It is not surprising that the list is short, since Turkey Vulture nests are difficult to locate. Most have been found in rocky hill terrain or in extensive swamps, both favorite nesting sites for the species. In addition to the fourteen nesting records listed I have been advised by Harold Mitchell that two

downy young, recently out of the nest, were found in Oak Orchard Swamp by William Jameson on June 18, 1938.

It will also be noted that the sites in western New York were mainly in extensive swampy areas, while those in the southeastern part of the State were in hilly country. Of particular interest is the site in Marengo Swamp, Wayne County, used annually since 1964. A detailed account by Walter Benning is given in *The Kingbird* 17: 20-21 1967, on observations of this nest in 1966.

Although the Turkey Vulture probably should not be considered a true migrant, a definite seasonal movement is very apparent in the State. Birds leave for more temperate regions in the autumn, although there have been scattered sightings in winter in the southernmost parts of the State. Spring and fall movement can be noted at various "Hawk Lookouts." In this connection spring counts at Derby Hill in Oswego County are of interest. Totals are recorded below.

1963-30	1966-79	1969-278
1964-77	1967-162	1970-181
1965-40	1968-81	

A number of reasons have been advanced for the range extension of the Turkey Vulture during this century. The general conclusion is that it is a biologically successful species and is able to find sufficient food in the northeast except during the coldest months.

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