

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

A Turkey Vulture Roost on Eastern Long Island

On 10 Jan 2009 I visited the Post Office in New Suffolk, Suffolk County, on the North Fork of Long Island. Kim Norkelun, the Postmaster, knowing my interest in birds, told me that up to 17 Turkey Vultures had been roosting in the Browers Woods section of Mattituck since before Christmas. He described the roost area, which he passed daily while walking his dogs, as consisting of mostly tall, deciduous trees covering about an acre in a wooded residential neighborhood.

Between 11 and 22 January, I made six evening checks of the roost. The average number of vultures I counted was 10 and the maximum was 16. Kim made a similar number of visits with similar results. We both found the roost abandoned on 22 January, but we have good evidence that the vultures remained in the general area. For instance, Kim observed at least 10 vultures investigating a road-killed Mallard behind his house, about a quarter of a mile from the original roost site, on 25 January, and by 31 January as many as 12 vultures were using a second roosting area near his house.

I am not aware of any previous reports of comparable Turkey Vulture roosts on Long Island. Despite this species' southern affinities, it remained notably scarce on Long Island long after becoming numerous in adjacent mainland areas. Only in the last several years has the species shown a dramatic increase in abundance here.

Paul Gillen, P. O. Box 710, Cutchogue, NY 11935