

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)



Turkey Vultures Hovering over Field – May 26,2013

Turkey Vultures have been in the county for a long time. Arthur Latton referred to them in his book and talked of their importance.

“Another spot of interest to bird lovers, is south of the southwest corner of the former game refuge, in the town of Westboro. Here one may see a number of turkey vultures soaring about to the southeast of this fire lane, in the early part of summer. These are some of our larger visitors, having a wing spread of 6 feet. There evidently is a nesting place some where in that vicinity, for few have ever been seen elsewhere in the county. It may take many visits before you are fortunate enough to see them. A good time would be a warm clear day when visibility is good; then you are likely to see some of these birds soaring about. They have a reddish naked head, and the rest of the body is brownish black. Their diet is made up of carrion, and since they are scavengers they should not be molested.”

We have seen them hovering silently over our fields. The feathers on their huge wings are spread apart like fingers. The above photo shows them flying high above. Sometimes a thermal updraft helps them hover in a circle in what looks like a boiling caldron. Birders call this a “kettle.” Because they are scavengers, they have likely been seen when there is road kill or other food of that kind available.



Turkey Vultures in Maple (Photo by Loretta Kuse)

Turkey Vulture and Crow (Photo by Hildegard Kuse)

April 21, 2016

Turkey Vulture

Strange bird,
So absurd,
With taste
For waste,

Bad smell
Won't repell
Your feast
On a beast.

Your use
For refuse
Keeps clean
And green,

Each space
And place
In our land
So grand.

Vulture
Your culture --
Variety
In society!

Loretta Kuse
May 10, 1996

Bibliography

Latton, A. 1947. Reminiscences and anecdotes of early Taylor County. Medford, Wisconsin: Self published, p. 158.

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