

Turkey Vultures or Buzzards

cleaning up after us...



Hungry Hollow's own 5th-generation descendant Jim Hiatt is an amateur 'birder' and photographer in the Capay Valley, whose great grandfather named this area *Hungry Hollow*. Jim shared the pictures, information and stories on the next two pages with us. Recently looking for Redbud to photograph [see page 23], and knowing there was a "Redbud as big as an almond tree just before you get to the Boy Scout Cabin," up the Capay Valley on Cache Creek, he came upon this sight: "There were about 10 or so Turkey Vultures (Buzzards) [Cathartes aura; Page 155 of *Birds of North America*; cited on page 2 of this journal] sitting on fenceposts and one on the ground...There was a roadkill doe, and a fresh one, so they didn't want to move--enough for way more than 10 vultures, as the doe was sizable. They let me drive, slipping the clutch, up to within 30 feet of them before one or two flew a short distance away. With the full 8X snapped away with my camera, I got some lovely ones--keepers, in that normally they just won't let you get this close. Very first couple pix show something they do on colder mornings--they will spread their wings out as shown to soak up more of the sun's warmth."

A common sight in this area, the vulture is harmless, though can look frightening and act intimidating. They do not kill, but are purely *scavengers*, doing an important job of cleaning up the carrion as it begins to rot--they cannot digest it any other way! BUT lore has it, if you upset them in flight, they regurgitate on your head!

And according to good ol' Wikipedia:

The Turkey Vulture is a bird found throughout most of the Americas. It is also known in some North American regions as the turkey buzzard (or just buzzard). It's a scavenger and feeds almost exclusively on carrion, finding its food using its keen eyes and sense of smell, flying low enough to detect the gasses produced by the beginnings of the process of decay in dead animals. In flight, it uses thermals to move through the air, flapping its wings infrequently. It roosts in large community groups. Lacking a syrinx—the vocal organ of birds—its only vocalizations are grunts or low hisses. It nests in caves, hollow trees, or thickets. Each year it generally raises two chicks, which it feeds by regurgitation. It has very few natural predators. In the United States of America, the vulture receives legal protection under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey_Vulture

