

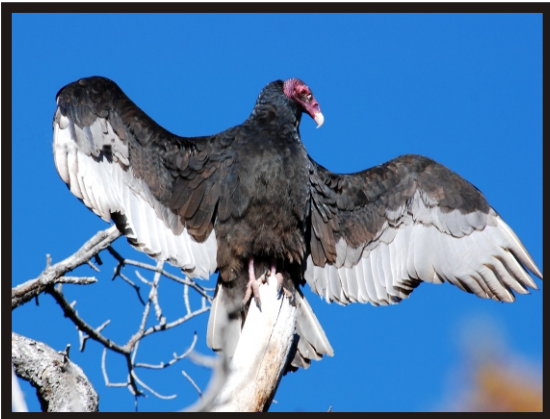
# Turkey Vulture

## *Cathartes aura*



-Turkey vultures can be found throughout the United States, into Mexico, and just across the border into Canada.

-Frijoles Canyon in Bandelier has one of the largest turkey vulture roosts in New Mexico. At one time more than 80 vultures could be found there most summer nights. The average roost count today is closer to 40 - 50 individuals.



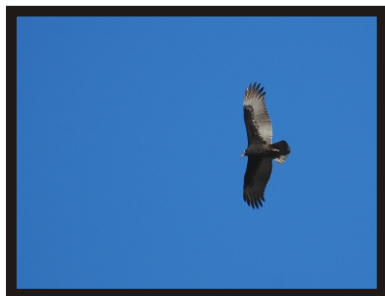
-On cool mornings, turkey vultures will find a roost where they can sun themselves before beginning the day's search for food.

-Turkey vultures are very efficient fliers, using thermal updrafts to gain elevation and soaring for long distances.

-Turkey vultures in Bandelier are summer birds (March - September), migrating south into Mexico for the winter.

-A turkey vulture's diet consists mostly of carrion (dead animals). They use their excellent sense of smell (absent or minimal in most birds) coupled with very good eyesight to locate their food.

-Turkey vultures have very few feathers (mostly a bit of down) on their heads. As consumers of carrion, this adaptation helps keep turkey vultures healthy. Feathers would get very messy and could provide habitat for the spread of disease.



-Young turkey vultures have black heads instead of the notable pink heads of their parents.