



NORTH CAROLINA

## Fatal songbird illness reported in North Carolina. Don't touch dead birds, state says

BY MARK PRICE

UPDATED AUGUST 10, 2021 12:02 PM



The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources was among the first to report birds dying of the mysterious eye disease. *FACEBOOK SCREENSHOT*



Only have a minute? Listen instead

-01:58

Powered by [Trinity Audio](#)

A mysterious illness that has been killing songbirds in mid-Atlantic states [may have moved into North Carolina](#), according the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.

The disease — which cause the eyes of birds to crust over — has been expanding its reach since being reported four months ago in Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland and Washington D.C.

“More recently additional states have been included, and our agency has begun receiving reports of sick and dying birds which may be due to the new disease,” [the N.C. officials reported Tuesday](#) in a Facebook post.

#### TOP ARTICLES

AD

Learn More  
Vrbo

Vrbo  
vrbo.com

BOOK NOW

Skip Ad ▶

Ad : (0:35) ?

Experts believe the illness is spread by “[birds congregating at feeders and baths](#).” Therefore, North Carolina officials are asking people to remove all bird feeders “until the threat subsides.”





California wildlife officials are discouraging bird feeders following a disease outbreak among songbirds that has been linked to feeders. BY RYAN SABALOW

## Try our improved eEdition

Discover improved tools like search and easy puzzle printing.

[READ NOW](#)

“Avoid handling sick or dead birds. If moving a bird is necessary, use gloves or an inverted plastic bag to prevent direct contact with it,” the commission says.

“Keep pets (including pet birds) away from sick or dead wild birds.”

The U.S. Geological Survey began [posting alerts about the illness in June](#), noting it was “receiving reports of sick and dying birds with eye swelling and crusty discharge, as well as neurological signs.” It was first detected in late May.

[“Behavioral abnormalities”](#) are also among the symptoms, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources says.



NC Wildlife Resources Commission

3 hours ago



In late May, biologists began to receive reports of sick and dying songbirds in Washington D.C., Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and Kentucky. Infected birds appear to be lethargic and/or have crusty or swollen eyes. More recently additional states have been included, and our agency has begun receiving reports of sick and dying birds which may be due to the new disease.

To reduce the spread of this outbreak, we recommend:

- Remove bird feeders entirely until the threat sub... [See More](#)

51

17

122

The illness is now being reported as far north as [Connecticut](#) and as far west as [Indiana](#).

Some impacted states are asking people to [remove bird baths from yards](#) until the cause is found.

“While the majority of affected birds are reported to be fledgling common grackles, blue jays, European starlings and American robins, other species of songbirds have been reported as well,” the USGS said.

“No definitive cause(s) of illness or death have been determined at this time. No human health or domestic livestock and poultry issues have been reported.”

Testing on dead birds is ongoing, but researchers have eliminated a number of causes, including Salmonella and Chlamydia, avian influenza virus and West Nile

virus, the USGS reports.

**READ NEXT**

NATIONAL

### Mystery illness killing birds in mid-Atlantic states, officials say. ‘Keep pets away’

JUNE 11, 2021 2:49 PM

---

**READ NEXT**

NATIONAL

### Large birds are dropping from heat stroke in Arizona as temperatures near 120 degrees

JUNE 18, 2021 8:00 AM

---

**READ NEXT**

NATIONAL

### Wild bird becomes obsessed with New Hampshire man, bewildering his wife and kids

MAY 26, 2021 10:09 AM

---



**Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources**  
about 2 weeks ago



#### UPDATE ON AVIAN MORTALITY EVENT IN NORTHERN/NORTHWESTERN VIRGINIA

In late May, wildlife managers in multiple states, including Virginia, began receiving reports of sick and dying birds that were exhibiting eye issues (swelling, crust discharge, etc.), along with neurological symptoms. Frequently reported species and age classes observed exhibiting these symptoms were young common grackles, blue jays, European starlings, and American robins. Other species of sick songbirds hav... [See More](#)

111

30

290



## Connecticut Fish and Wildlife

about 2 weeks ago



UPDATE: Work continues to identify the cause of the emerging illness affecting songbirds across the eastern United States. Although some known bird diseases have been ruled out, the cause remains unknown. While cases seem to be dropping in some states, we have not observed a similar trend in Connecticut. The DEEP Wildlife Division has received hundreds of reports of dead birds during July, most of which were not suitable for analysis. Three birds exhibiting symptoms consisten... [See More](#)

71

78

582

### RELATED STORIES FROM DURHAM HERALD SUN

NATIONAL

Watch moment seagull smacks teen in face during amusement park ride in New Jersey

JULY 22, 2021 11:37 AM

NATIONAL

Rare parrot-like bird thought to have died in 2019 mysteriously reappears in Hawaii

JULY 25, 2021 10:30 AM

NATIONAL

Tiny 'diva hen' wins fans after video

NORTH-CAROLINA

Snakes look like monsters as fungal

# shows it taking on horse in New Hampshire barn

JULY 12, 2021 4:47 PM

# disease spreads in eastern U.S., experts say

JULY 19, 2021 8:24 AM

**MARK PRICE**

    704-358-5149

Mark Price has been a reporter for The Charlotte Observer since 1991, covering beats including schools, crime, immigration, LGBTQ issues, homelessness and nonprofits. He graduated from the University of Memphis with majors in journalism and art history, and a minor in geology.

## COMMENTS

**0 Comments**

Sort by Oldest



Add a comment...

[Facebook Comments Plugin](#)

NORTH CAROLINA

**READ NEXT**

**TRENDING STORIES**

### Surfing teen gets upstaged when



# 'He thought it was a toy.' Toddler fatally shoots dad in grandma's North Carolina home

BY JOE MARUSAK

AUGUST 10, 2021 10:45 AM



The father was feeding his son dinner when the boy playfully picked up the gun and fired, the grandmother tells WBTV.

**KEEP READING** →

## shark bursts from wave off SC and starts spinning

AUGUST 09, 2021 8:10 AM

## One Triangle county sees over 4,000 new cases in two weeks, as NC battles delta variant

UPDATED AUGUST 09, 2021 08:53 AM

## 'Best meteor shower of year' peaks this week. You may see 100 per hour — and fireballs

UPDATED AUGUST 10, 2021 10:08 AM

## Genocide 'in my own backyard': How NC educators long ignored state's eugenics history

UPDATED AUGUST 09, 2021 03:50 PM

## 3-year-old dies after he disappears from boat on Tennessee lake, officials say

AUGUST 08, 2021 2:48 PM

CORONAVIRUS

## NC's COVID surge is steeper than it was months ago. Here's why this wave is different.

UPDATED AUGUST 10, 2021 10:17 AM

CORONAVIRUS

## COVID vaccine live updates: Here's what to know in North Carolina on Aug. 10

UPDATED AUGUST 10, 2021 09:43 AM

NORTH CAROLINA

## 'A rallying cry': What the UN's new climate report means for North Carolina

UPDATED AUGUST 10, 2021 08:50 AM

BUSINESS

## Here are the 5 hottest ZIP codes in the Triangle where buyers are looking for homes

UPDATED AUGUST 10, 2021 08:49 AM

NORTH CAROLINA

At 40, NC woman searched for her long-lost half-brother. She found a new best friend.

UPDATED AUGUST 10, 2021 07:55 AM

STATE

NC House budget spends more on construction, pay than Senate

AUGUST 10, 2021 12:04 PM

## Take Us With You

Real-time updates and all local stories you want right in the palm of your hand.

[DURHAM HERALD SUN APP →](#)

[VIEW NEWSLETTERS →](#)

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

[Start a Subscription](#)

[Customer Service](#)

[eEdition](#)

[Vacation Hold](#)

[Pay Your Bill](#)

[Rewards](#)

### LEARN MORE

[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[News in Education](#)

### ADVERTISING

[Advertise with Us](#)

Place a Classifieds

**COPYRIGHT**

**PRIVACY POLICY**

**TERMS OF SERVICE**