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The Herald Sun

NORTH CAROLINA

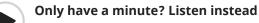
Fatal songbird illness reported in North Carolina. Don't touch dead birds, state says

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*



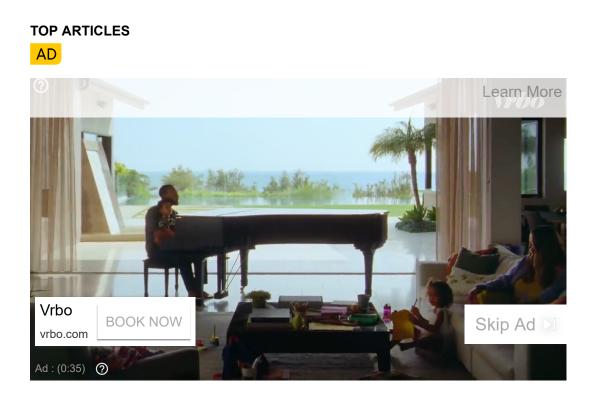
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A mysterious illness that has been killing songbirds in mid-Atlantic states <u>may have</u> <u>moved into North Carolina</u>, according the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.

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," <u>the</u> <u>N.C. officials reported Tuesday in</u> a Facebook post.



Experts believe the illness is spread by "<u>birds congregating at feeders and baths</u>." 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

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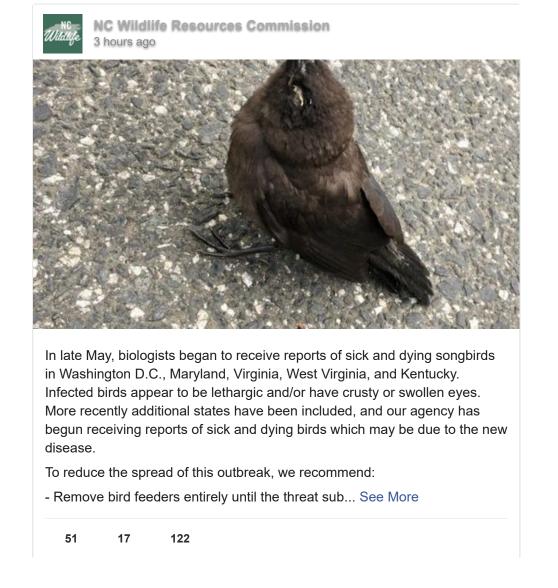
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"Avoid handling sick or dead birds. If moving a bird is necessary, use gloves or an inverted plastic bag to prevent direct contact with it," the commission says.

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

The U.S. Geological Survey began<u>posting alerts about the illness in June</u>, 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.

<u>"Behavioral abnormalities"</u> are also among the symptoms, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources says.



The illness is now being reported as far north as <u>Connecticut</u> and as far west as <u>Indiana.</u>

Some impacted states are asking people to <u>remove bird baths from yards</u> 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.

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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

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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

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MARK PRICE



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.

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