

GEORGIA DNR MONITORING FOR BIRD ILLNESS

July 16, 2021

In late May, sick and dying birds with swelling eyes, crusty discharge around their eyes and neurological symptoms were reported in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and Kentucky. Recent reports have also come from Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana.

According to reports reviewed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, most of the affected birds documented have been fledgling blue jays, American robins, common grackles and European starlings, although other species of songbirds have been reported.

Wildlife disease labs are testing the birds for toxins, parasites, bacterial diseases and viral infections. Studies have ruled out salmonella bacteria, several families of viruses and *Trichomonas* parasites.

The illness and its cause are not yet known. No issues have been reported with human health or with pets, domestic livestock or poultry. As of mid-July, no cases have been confirmed in Georgia.

Symptoms

- Can include swollen/crusty patches over eyes (sometimes with oozing discharge), tremors or seizures and a lack of balance, partial paralysis or other neurological conditions.
- Affected birds also are often lethargic.

What You Can Do

- People finding sick or dead birds in Georgia with these symptoms are encouraged to contact DNR wildlife biologist Todd Schneider (478-994-1438; todd.schneider@dnr.ga.gov).
- At this point DNR is not recommending taking bird feeders down. If the disease is confirmed in Georgia, DNR will provide any further and appropriate recommendations.
- The agency continues to strongly recommend that people regularly clean bird feeders and bird baths and maintain feeding areas.
 - Clean feeders weekly using a 10 percent bleach solution (one part bleach to nine parts water). Then rinse the feeders thoroughly and let them air dry. Wear protective gloves while cleaning feeders, feeding areas and bird baths, and wash carefully afterward.
 - Rake up bird seed, hulls and bird droppings beneath feeders two or more times a week. It is especially important that wet seed and hulls are promptly removed. Discard them in the trash.
 - Empty and clean bird baths every two days when bird visitation is heavy.
 - If you have multiple feeders, space them out to help reduce gatherings of birds.
- If you find sick or dead wild birds at feeders or in your yard:
 - Avoid handling them unless necessary. If you do handle them, avoid direct contact by wearing disposable plastic/latex gloves. Wash thoroughly afterward.
 - Keep pets (including pet birds) away from sick or dead wild birds.
 - Dispose of dead birds in a sealable plastic bag in a secured outdoor trash bin or bury them deeply. This will help prevent disease transmission to other birds and wildlife.