



New Disease Being Seen in Some Young Songbirds

Updated June 28, 2021

Brief Info:

Beginning in May, Washington, DC, and surrounding area wildlife rehabilitators began seeing an increase in fledgling European Starlings, Blue Jays, and Common Grackles with symptoms including a wobbly gait, sometimes accompanied by an eye discharge or the birds' eyes crusted shut. The epicenter for these cases continues to seem to be DC/MD/VA, but a few cases have also been reported in DE and PA. Samples have been submitted to multiple diagnostic labs, and we are awaiting results. At this time, we do not know what is causing the problem.

Signs to look for include the following:

Age: fledgling or juvenile

Species: European Starling, Blue Jay, and Common Grackle; a scattering of other species has been reported, but these three are by far the most common species affected.

Ocular signs: squinting, discharge, eyes crusted shut

Neurologic signs: stumbling around, not standing, head tic

Bird Feeders:

In Maryland and DC, the public has been instructed to take down their feeders/stop feeding wild birds for the time being. DE and PA have not made such an announcement. As always, we encourage everyone to keep feeders clean. Feeders should be dismantled and washed in soapy/hot water regularly (we recommend weekly) followed by a soak or mist with 10% bleach solution. Feeders should be completely dry before refilling with seed.

Handling:

If anyone encounters live or dead birds, they should wear gloves when handling and wash hands after handling (as always with any wild animal).

Live Birds:

Live birds matching the above clinical signs should be taken to TSBRR ASAP. Gloves should be worn when handling, and hands should be washed after handling.

Dead Birds:

If anyone finds a dead bird matching the above description, they should wear gloves, seal the carcass in a plastic bag, keep the carcass cool but not frozen (an ice pack in a small disposable cooler WITHOUT the carcass resting directly on the ice pack is ideal), and call the proper agency based on location found.

In MD call: MD DNR/ USDA Wildlife Services Call Center 877-463-6497

In DE call: DE Division of Fish & Wildlife (302) 735-3600



Promoting healthy populations of native wildlife

170 Possum Hollow Road, Newark, DE 19711 • (302) 737-9543 • www.tristatebird.org

In NJ email: Nicole Lewis, MS, DVM, Wildlife Veterinarian, Office of Fish and Wildlife Health and Forensics, Nicole.Lewis@dep.nj.gov, or call 1-877-WARNDEP

In PA:

Northwest: Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango, Warren; Lane Potts, (484) 667-7477.

Southwest: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington, Westmoreland; Luke Scherer, (610) 858-4444.

Northcentral: Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Lycoming, McKean, Potter, Tioga, Union; Ashley McDowell, (484) 667-7230.

Southcentral: Adams, Bedford, Blair, Cumberland, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin, Perry, Snyder, York; Matt Shaub, (610) 858-3734.

Northeast: Bradford, Carbon, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Montour, Northumberland, Pike, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Wayne, Wyoming; Lauren Maxwell, (484) 280-3171.

Southeast: Berks, Bucks, Chester, Dauphin, Delaware, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia, Schuylkill; Ian Gereg, (610) 858-2180.