

SEPTEMBER ECO-BLITZ CHALLENGE

TURKEY VULTURE

PHOTO BY FORMER PARK SUPERVISOR KEVIN SMITH



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QUESTIONS

[maricopacountyparks
@maricopa.gov](mailto:maricopacountyparks@maricopa.gov)

TURKEY VULTURE



Photo by former Park Supervisor
Kevin Smith

This month, we're learning all about the **Turkey Vulture** (*Cathartes aura*). Here are some fun and fascinating facts:

- Turkey Vultures are **large, dark birds** with long, broad wings and a **distinctive, featherless, bright-red head** and hooked bill.
- They're **masters of soaring!** Turkey Vultures ride rising columns of warm air, called thermals, to gain altitude and glide through the sky while using very little energy. Their exceptional sense of smell also helps them locate carrion.
- Even their name tells a story. The scientific name *Cathartes aura* is commonly interpreted as "purifying breeze" or "cleansing breeze." As scavengers, **Turkey Vultures provide an essential ecosystem service** by consuming carrion, **helping clean the environment** and recycle nutrients.

Sources:

- **Migratory Pollinators Program: White-winged Doves** (*Zenaidura macroura*) - <https://desertmuseum.org/pollination/doves.php>