

Vultures – “Nature’s Janitors” ©

by Dan Pemble, Kissimmee, Florida

Several species of vultures (also known as “buzzards”) are quite widely spread throughout the United States and most everyone living here has seen one variety or the other. Amongst so many others of nature’s creations that I have observed from the swimming pool deck of my Florida home, on many occasions I have marveled at the sight of vultures endlessly and almost effortlessly circling in the sky high above, waiting and watching to see what if anything on the ground needs some scouring!



The varieties of vultures seen in Florida are quite healthy indeed and are mostly non-migratory. Both black and turkey vultures are native to Florida; although similar in appearance, there are significant differences:

- Black vultures have mostly black feathers & black neck and head skin
- Turkey vultures have mostly brown feathers with pinkish-colored neck and head skin
- Turkey vultures are slightly larger than their black cousins
- Turkey vultures have a great sense of smell that is used to find their meals
- Black vultures have no similar sense of smell and find their meals by sight alone
- Turkey vultures prefer to feed by themselves versus black vultures feeding in groups

Being scavengers, black and turkey vultures are carrion-eaters, meaning they feed on already-dead creatures’ carcasses. Certainly neither of these vultures is the “cutest kid on the block” but they do indeed provide excellent janitorial services for our roads and general surroundings!

