

What should I do with the dead bird that I found?

Is it a group of wild birds?

The highly pathogenic avian influenza virus, referred to as HPAI H5N1, has been widely circulating in poultry and wild birds across many European and Asian countries for the last several years. In November 2021, this virus strain was detected in Newfoundland, Canada, and in January 2022, it was detected in the United States. HPAI H5N1 has affected commercial poultry operations, backyard flocks, wild birds and mammalian wildlife. Within the United States and Canada, the virus is causing illness and death in many species of wild birds, including raptors and avian scavengers (e.g., bald eagles, black vultures), seabirds (e.g., gulls, pelicans), waterfowl (e.g., lesser scaup, mallards), and geese (e.g., snow geese, Canada geese). Sick birds have been observed with neurological signs such as lethargy, tremors, and circling in water. Reports of neurologic illness and death in mammalian wildlife (e.g., foxes, mountain lions, skunks, raccoons, bears), including outbreaks in marine mammals (e.g. seals, sea lions), have also been increasing. In March/April 2024, HPAI H5N1 was reported in neonatal goats and dairy cows for the first time.

HPAI H5N1 is present in CO & UT and has been confirmed to date in Rio Blanco, Moffat, and Duchesne Counties.

There are usually few symptoms in waterfowl and shorebirds, but the virus can kill raptors and scavengers quickly. The virus is spread among birds through nasal and oral discharge, as well as fecal droppings. It can be spread to backyard poultry and domestic birds through contaminated shoes or vehicles.

Songbirds are not typically affected by avian flu, so as of January 2025 there is no official recommendation to remove their bird feeders unless they also have backyard chickens or domestic ducks, which are susceptible to the virus. However, it's always recommended to regularly clean bird feeders and baths.

While there have been over 60 confirmed reported human cases of bird flu associated mostly with commercial agricultural operations (dairy and poultry farms), as of January 2025 there has been no documented person-to-person spread of bird flu and current public health risk is low.

There is a lot of variability in knowing when to report dead birds suspected of H5N1, so please work with RSS if you receive report of dead birds that are not obvious roadkill or show signs of predation, especially groups of the same species or solitary raptors. RSS will work with NPS wildlife health veterinarians and/or state wildlife agencies to determine if disease testing is necessary.

Bird flu is a hot topic in the news right now and new information is coming out weekly. Stay informed on bird flu news here: [H5 Bird Flu: Current Situation | Bird Flu | CDC](#)

Is it an eagle?

Given that eagles and other raptors are highly susceptible to H5N1 and have tested positive for bird flu in several states and Canadian provinces, contact RSS staff immediately with the date, description (bald, golden) and exact location you found the eagle. If you do not have a GPS, turn on the geolocate feature on your phone and it will record the XY coordinates when you take a photo.

If it is obvious, indicate how the bird likely died (hit by a car, electrocuted, shot).

If you feel comfortable and have the proper equipment (gloves, a shovel, and a trash bag at a minimum), record the date and location (GPS coordinates if possible) and take a few pictures. If you do not have a GPS, turn on the geolocate feature on your phone and it will record the XY coordinates when you take a photo. No matter the physical condition of the bird, gently collect the bird in the garbage bag and bring it to a member of the natural resources staff. If you are on the Green River side of the monument, find a maintenance or LE staff person to direct you to the wildlife freezer and place it in there. Be sure your notes are attached to the bag. Please include your name and contact info on the notes.

What happens to the eagle? Natural resources staff will store the eagle in a freezer until the regional USFWS Migratory Bird Permit office and/or a USFWS special agent can be reached. They will direct us what to do with the eagle, which could include shipping it to the USFWS National Eagle and Wildlife Property Repository in Denver, where eagle parts are made available for Native American religious and cultural ceremonies and practices.

Is it a federally listed (threatened or endangered) species?

Please follow the same instructions given above. In this area, threatened or endangered bird species include the Mexican spotted owl and the yellow-billed cuckoo. The greater sage-grouse is NOT listed, thus no need to collect.

What happens to these special status birds? Natural resources staff will store the bird in a freezer until the regional USFWS Migratory Bird Permit office and/or a USFWS special agent can be reached.

Is it a migratory species?

Dinosaur is home to many migratory bird species, so there is a good chance the bird falls under this category of protection. A permit is not needed by the park to collect and retain a migratory species (that is NOT an eagle or a T&E species) that has been discovered during the course of normal park operations (AKA not *intentionally* salvaged or collected). However, Dinosaur does not generally have an interest in collecting and keeping dead birds. An exception to this may be a bird that is of interest to park staff for interpretive or scientific study, such as a sage grouse with a GPS receiver, raptor, or sandhill crane. Please refer to the updated 2024 staff memo on procedures for handling dead animals in developed areas.

What happens to these birds? Call RSS if you are unsure if the bird is of interest to park staff. Otherwise, properly dispose of the bird in an area beyond the edge of the developed area. This is

accomplished by placing the bird in the bushes and grass where it can decompose naturally or become a meal for scavengers, such as magpies. Never dump dead wildlife off the monument. It is also not necessary to bag them or place them in the trash or dumpster.

Notes:

- While DINO is not required to have a permit to retain and store migratory birds, a federal permit is needed by the taxidermist selected to prepare any bird that will be used for interpretive or scientific purposes. Resource staff will call the regional migratory permit office once a taxidermist is selected to initiate the permit process. Individuals are also not allowed to possess migratory birds without the proper state and federal permits.
- USFWS considers “proper” disposal methods to include deep burial or incineration.
- List of Migratory Bird Species Protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act as of 2020: <https://www.fws.gov/birds/policies-and-regulations/laws-legislations/migratory-bird-treaty-act.php>
- Bald and Golden Eagle information: <https://www.fws.gov/birds/management/managed-species/bald-and-golden-eagle-information.php>

Is it just a bird?

These are all other birds that do not occur on the Migratory Bird List of Protected Species, which are usually non-native species. Migratory or not, dead birds can be properly disposed of using the procedure outlined above. Please also refer to the updated 2024 staff memo on procedures for handling dead animals in developed/front country areas.

WILDLIFE FREEZER LOCATIONS:

Green River District Resource Building kitchen. Please see GRD LE or maintenance staff for access if RSS staff is not available. NO FOOD STORAGE IN THE WILDLIFE FREEZER!

Canyon Visitor Center/HQ in the EMS room behind the Auditorium. Please see Yampa district LE staff for access if RSS staff is not available.

Contact information

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