

## Why does Henrico County test birds for the West Nile virus?

Certain birds can be good indicators for determining areas that have West Nile virus-carrying mosquitoes.

When a bird tests positive at the Virginia DCLS lab, we trap mosquitoes in the area to determine if they also carry the virus.

If positive mosquitoes are found, the county notifies residents near the affected area.

A special notice is sent describing the risk of contracting West Nile virus, reducing your risk, avoiding mosquito bites, mosquito-proofing your home, and helping out in your community.

The best way to control mosquitoes is to eliminate any standing water around your home and community. Additional information is available upon request.

### WEB SITES

Virginia Department of Health  
[www.vdh.state.va.us](http://www.vdh.state.va.us)

Virginia Mosquito Control Association  
[www.mosquito-va.org/index.html](http://www.mosquito-va.org/index.html)

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

EPA Pesticides & Mosquito Control  
[www.epa.gov/pesticides/](http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/)

County of Henrico  
[www.co.henrico.va.us](http://www.co.henrico.va.us)  
*Click on the West Nile virus link*

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT:  
Standing Water or Mosquito Concerns  
contact**

**The West Nile Virus Information Line  
(804) 226-NILE (6453)**

Bird collection is based on the following criteria:

1. Bird must be a crow, blue jay or raptor

Bird must be dead less than 24 hours and not eaten by insects

Bird must not show any signs of trauma (killed by an animal, vehicle or accident)

County of Henrico  
Department of Public Works  
Environmental Division  
P.O. Box 27032  
Richmond, VA 23273-7032

Phone: 804-226-NILE (6453)  
Fax: 804-501-7470  
E-mail: [orl02@co.henrico.va.us](mailto:orl02@co.henrico.va.us)



## County of Henrico

Department of Public Works  
Environmental Division



**Bird Identification Guide  
for West Nile Virus  
Collection and Testing**

*PROUD OF OUR PROGRESS;  
EXCITED ABOUT OUR FUTURE*

**(804) 226-NILE (6453)**

# Types of birds collected for West Nile virus testing

## Crows

Entirely black from beak to tail, crows have brown eyes, black legs and feet, a fan-shaped tail, and an iridescent violet gloss on body with iridescent blue-violet and green-blue gloss on wings.

The crow can range up from 15-20 inches from tip of beak to tip of tail have a wingspan of 33-40 inches.



**Species often confused with crows but not collected for testing:**

**Ravens** - Are rarer and much larger than crows (about 24 inches) with center tail feathers longer than outer tail feathers.

**Grackles** - Smaller (around 12-17 inches) with longer tails, light eyes and iridescence.

**Starlings** - Much smaller (8.5 inches) with stubby tails and can be spotted.

## Raptors or Birds of Prey

Birds of prey or raptors are meat-eaters that use their strong feet, claws and hooked beaks to catch and kill their prey.

This group includes eagles, osprey, hawks, owls (great horned owl), kites, harriers, buzzards, merlins, vultures, goshawks and condors.

### Hawks



The hawk has uniformly dark brown upper-parts, white wing linings, white throat, black bill with yellow nostrils, wide chestnut band on chest and a pale buff to white belly. Depending on the variety, the tail may be red or have bands varying in color from black to white. It is 19-22 inches in length and has a wingspan of 46-58 inches.

### Owls

Their ears look like horns on the head. Owls have brownish-gray upper-parts with a white chin and throat. Their eyes are yellow and have rusty facial disks encircling them. The tail is brownish, barred with dark browns and white. It measures 18-25 inches long and has a wingspan of 36-60 inches.

### Falcons

The falcon has two vertical dark facial lines, streaked or spotted under-parts, short rounded wings, reddish back with dark barring and a red tail without barring. It measures 9-12 inches in length and has a wingspan of 20-25 inches.

## Blue Jays

The blue jay has a bright blue back and wings with white spots and fine black-barred ripples on wings and tail.

It has a long black beak, grayish-white under-parts and black legs and feet. A black collar line extends from the breast to the nape and has a purplish crest and back.



*\*Note - Information is based on bird species found in North America and in our locality.*

*Photos courtesy of the Virginia Department of Health.*

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