

STUDY QUESTIONS

TO “BRING IN THE CLEAN-UP CREW”

Study and learn facts and ideas based on this Young Naturalists nonfiction story in *Minnesota Conservation Volunteer*, July-August 2025, www.mndnr.gov/mcvmagazine.

Minnesota Conservation Volunteer magazine is your guide to wild things. Every other month, six times a year, the magazine arrives in your school library. Each one has a story for Young Naturalists like you. **Are you curious about wild things?** Young Naturalists tells true stories that can answer all kinds of questions such as these—

Have you ever heard of a purple wartyback? How about a pink heelsplitter, pimple-back, or monkeyface? All are Minnesota freshwater mussels. Read Young Naturalists stories to learn which species (kinds) of critters live in Minnesota—frogs, salamanders, snakes, wild cats, wild dogs, weasels, mice, and rabbits.

Want to **peek inside the den of a red fox** and see how the kits grow up? Are you a rock hound searching for agates? Have you ever wondered what's alive under snow? How animals see? Why is a bluebird blue? How birds fly?

Would you like to hear the true story of **giants of the ice age**? Young Naturalists also tells you about the underground universe. You can read the story of a tiny owl that went to a hospital with an injured wing. Find out about a boy who worked in a logging camp. Read the story of Ojibwe children today hunting and gathering like their ancestors did.

Learn how to get started **camping, snowshoeing, ice fishing, or canoeing**.

Find these stories and more online at www.mndnr.gov/young_naturalists.

Your knowledge of wild things helps you explore and enjoy the outdoors. Have fun!

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1. WHAT FEATURE OF A TURKEY VULTURE ALLOWS IT TO EAT CARRION WITHOUT GETTING SICK?

- a. Its acidic stomach
- b. Special proteins in its stomach
- c. Its regurgitation of carrion
- d. Its olfactory system

2. WHAT COVERS THE HEAD OF A TURKEY VULTURE?

- a. Plumage
- b. Porous skin
- c. Bristles
- d. None of the above

3. WHAT ARE THREE IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TURKEY VULTURE?

4. IS THE NECK OF A HUMAN OR A TURKEY VULTURE MORE FLEXIBLE, AND WHY IS THAT?

5. HOW ARE TURKEY VULTURES DISTINCT FROM OTHER RAPTORS?

6. WHAT TRAIT FOR THE TURKEY VULTURE IS SHARED WITH WILD TURKEYS?

- a. Similar wingspan
- b. Featherless head
- c. Talons

7. WHY IS THE STORY TITLE “BRING IN THE CLEAN-UP CREW” A GOOD TITLE FOR A STORY ON TURKEY VULTURES?

8. WHILE FROM A DISTANCE A YOUNG TURKEY VULTURE LOOKS LIKE AN ADULT, BUT UP CLOSE, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD HELP DISTINGUISH THE YOUNG BIRD FROM THE ADULT?

- a. The young bird’s head is gray, and its beak is black.
- b. The young bird’s head is white, similar to a bald eagle.
- c. The young bird’s feathers are gray rather than black like the adults’ feathers.
- d. The feathers of the adult’s body has more of a metallic shimmer to them.

9. WHY ARE TURKEY VULTURES DESCRIBED IN THE STORY AS PICKY EATERS, EVEN THOUGH THEY EAT ALL SORTS OF DEAD ANIMALS?

10. TRUE OR FALSE. A TURKEY VULTURE PREFERS FLYING OVER FLAT LANDSCAPES, SO THEY CAN HAVE A BETTER VIEW AS THEY SEARCH FOR CARRION.

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13. CHALLENGE QUESTION: THE STORY MENTIONS THAT A CAPTIVE TURKEY VULTURE, “TOMMY,” FLEW MORE THAN 2,500 MILES—ALL THE WAY TO GUATEMALA – IN 23 DAYS! HOW MANY MILES PER HOUR WAS TOMMY FLYING (ASSUMING TOMMY FLEW STRAIGHT THROUGH WITHOUT STOPPING)?

MINNESOTA COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENTS PRACTICE ITEMS

1. USING CLUES FROM THE STORY, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS BEST DESCRIBES THE AUTHOR’S MAIN PURPOSE FOR WRITING “THE CLEAN-UP CREW?”

- a. To help readers learn about the ways vultures are similar to and different from other raptors
- b. To encourage readers to donate money to keep turkey vultures from going extinct in the coming years.
- c. To encourage readers to have a positive attitude toward vultures and appreciate their interesting features, including their contribution to the world around us.
- d. To help readers realize how lucky they are to spot a turkey vulture in the wild.

2. COLORATION IS AMONG THE MANY SURPRISING FEATURES OF THE

TURKEY VULTURE. UP CLOSE, WHAT COLOR ARE THE FEATHERS ON THE UPPER PART OF A TURKEY VULTURE'S BODY?

- a. plain brown.
- b. a deep 'sooty' gray
- c. speckled white, gray, black, and brown
- d. dark brown, bronze and metallic blue

3. WHAT PHYSICAL TRAIT OF A TURKEY VULTURE AIDS IT IN KEEPING ITSELF CLEAN DESPITE ITS SCAVENGER FEEDING HABITS?

- a. It has a long, sturdy beak for preening its feathers.
- b. The metallic blue feather coloration attracts sunlight, and the warmth disinfects its feathers.
- c. It has a featherless head.
- d. Its curved talons help comb through its feathers after eating.

4. WHERE WOULD YOU BE LIKELY TO SEE A TURKEY VULTURE?

- a. In the forest during the evening, when they start to hunt their prey.
- b. In the prairies and other grassy areas.
- c. In cities near garbage cans or dumpsters
- d. Along roadsides

5. USING STORY DETAILS, WHAT CAN WE INFER REGARDING WHICH TURKEY VULTURE IN THE STORY—TOMMY OR AURA—HAD THE HEALTHIER DIET?

VOCABULARY

Talon – claws on a bird's toes

Scavenger – animals that eat the remains of animals that have already died

Carrion – the remains of an animal that has died and becomes food for another animal

Thermals - columns of warm air that rise off areas heated by sunlight.

Plumage – feathers

Olfactory – relating to the sense of smell

Hide – animal skin

Carcass – the body of a dead animal

Fledgling – a young bird that has grown feathers and is learning to fly

Broods – an adult bird sitting on or near the chicks

Regurgitate – to bring up food that has been swallowed

Aloft – airborne, or something up in the air