

TURKEY VULTURE AND LESSER YELLOW-HEADED VULTURE

Two similar large aerial scavengers. Both locate carrion by smell and sight while in flight.

1 TURKEY VULTURE

Cathartes aura PAGE 91

Large brownish-black vulture that occurs commonly and is widespread in most habitats. Adults and juveniles similar. Wingtips reach the tail tips on perched vultures. Legs are pale gray to pinkish.

a. Adult. Head is red, beak is pale yellow, and upperparts are brownish-black.

b. Juvenile. Similar to adult, but head and beak are dark; the beak has a pale base that expands with age. Brownish feather edges on upperparts are wider than adults'.

c. Adult and juvenile. Resident vultures in Costa Rica and Panama have whitish napes. They are a bit smaller than northern vultures that winter there.

d. Juvenile. Like adult but with dark head and beak.

e. Adult. Head is completely red. Underwings are two-toned: silvery remiges contrast with dark underwing coverts.

f. Adult. Upperparts are brownish-black. Note red head. Pale primary patches are less distinctive than those of 2, lacking bright, distinct, pale shaft streaks. Note that the inner three primaries are dark (newer).

g. Head-on. Soars and glides with wings in a dihedral.

2 LESSER YELLOW-HEADED VULTURE

Cathartes burrovianus PAGE 94

Large black vulture that occurs locally in wet open areas. Adults and juveniles similar. Wingtips extend far beyond tail tip on perched vultures. Legs are pale gray to pinkish.

a. Adult. Head often appears completely yellow.

b. Adult. Head is yellow, red, and pale blue and can appear mostly red when vultures are excited. Beak is pale yellow. Upperparts are black. Note pale shaft streaks on outer primaries.

c. Juvenile. Similar to adult, but head is pale gray, nape is covered with whitish down, beak is dark, and upperparts are brownish-black. Note bright pale shaft streaks on outer primaries.

d. Adult. Similar to Turkey Vulture, but wings are proportionally longer and narrower. Note the yellow head.

e. Adult. Upperparts are black, and head appears yellow. Pale primary panels show bright pale shaft streaks. Note the yellow head with bluish crown and newer dark inner three primaries.

f. Juvenile. Similar to adults, but with dark beak and pale gray head.

g. Head-on. Soars and glides with wings in a dihedral.

