

Buzzards

Feb 1, 2008

Are Back

Leesburg
Today

Two western Loudoun towns have found themselves in recent weeks the reluctant hosts of those pesky birds, the turkey buzzards and the black vultures.

Middleburg and Hamilton both report flocks of the large birds settling in trees in their towns. Not only are the birds somewhat scary looking for kids, but the biggest problems are the malodorous droppings and vomit the birds leave all over the ground, often near where children are playing.

"They're nasty," Middleburg Administrator Jerry Schiro said. "They like to sun themselves, and the metal of water tanks reflect the heat."

In his town, the council has authorized Police Chief Steve Webber to renew a permit that will allow him to shoot one of the buzzards, and hang the body in a tree where its fellows roost. That, apparently, is more successful than any amount of banging on tins or other methods residents have tried to get their unwelcome guests to leave town.

Hamilton Mayor Ray Whitbey met with a United States Department of Agriculture representative this week to see about getting a permit for his town. The council, which debated the matter at its January meeting, is concerned because the birds are now spread over a two-block area in the center of town, radiating out from the water tower, and seem to be increasing.

"They're starting to do it on school grounds," Whitbey said, also leaving excrement on a field near the elementary school where kids play and do fire drills.

Whitbey is fast becoming an expert on the birds, noting that the black vulture, which apparently likes Hamilton, is much harder to get rid of than the turkey buzzard.

"They're very territorial," he said.