

Vultures

At least a dozen letters landed on Town Administrator Jerry Schiro's desk in March, voicing opposition to Middleburg's late-February plans for driving flocks of ill-behaved vultures away from the town's water tanks and residential areas.

The plan called for hanging the carcasses of dead vultures in sensitive areas to drive off the larger flocks. After consultation with state and federal wildlife and conservation authorities, the town received a permit to kill up to 200 of the birds.

Opponents of the plan were outraged. They were "... disappointed that the leadership ... of Middleburg would kill a vulture and hang it in effigy ..." They cited the undeniable ecological value of the birds as scavengers. They decried the impression sight of vulture carcasses would make on "young impressionable minds." They noted that there was "no hard evidence that excrement from vultures has ever caused a human illness."

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They threatened that "if one vulture is killed" they would "not be able to spend another cent in Middleburg" or bring an out-of-town visitor to the village. They suggested keeping other dead animals out of town, noting that "If the vultures don't have anything to eat ... they will move on."

Middleburg Police Chief Steve Webber noted that his men had no desire whatsoever to kill and hang a bird, and would do so only upon expert advice and as an absolute last resort to protect the town's citizens and water supply.

Town Administrator Jerry Schiro, hoping to avoid being forced into shooting anything, looked into purchasing an artificial vulture or two, and found several on line. One, he noted, seemed to be smiling.

At press time the only dead vulture in Middleburg had been hit by a car, and the flocks, like last month's starlings, appear to have moved on.

Pink Box

The town's visitor center served more than 740 visitors in February and according to Town Economic Develop-

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