

Bird Ticks killing Birds in Clayton County

Have you seen a bird with a fat tick stuck to its face? A component of this tick's saliva causes paralysis in birds preventing the birds from flying and walking. If so, the University of Georgia would like to know about it. In fact, you can participate in a research project by donating the ticks to UGA.

The paralysis first affects the wings and legs. Eventually paralysis progresses until the bird becomes unable to breathe, which produces death.

Interestingly, if the ticks are removed before the bird develops breathing problems, all these effects will quickly be reversed and the bird will recover and be fine.

If you want to attempt to rescue the bird, recommendations are that you wrap the animal in a towel to keep it from struggling. Pick the ticks off, examining under the feathers carefully to be sure all have been removed. Avian rehabilitators suggest then placing the animal in a large paper bag or box for a few hours to allow it to recover before it is released in the wild, where it might be at a disadvantage if it encountered predators before regaining flight ability.

University of Georgia entomologists would like to have the tick specimens, if you can remove the ticks and place them in a small container with rubbing alcohol. Take the ticks to the Clayton County Extension office, along with a note recording (1) the date the bird was found, (2) the species of bird, (3) whether bird is juvenile or adult, and (4) your phone number, if you do not mind our calling to follow up. Call 770 473 5435 with questions.

These ticks are specific to birds and cannot harm humans. For more information about these unusual ticks, check out the website <http://www.hiltonpond.org/ThisWeek060115.html>.