

WINTER COURTSHIP BEHAVIOUR IN BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS

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Bohemian Waxwings include a "gift-passing" ceremony² during courtship display, in which edible or inedible objects are passed back and forth between members of a pair. This ceremony appears to be linked with the establishment and maintenance of the pair-bond. Instances of this ceremony have been recorded on the breeding grounds³ and in captivity¹. In this note, we report an instance of the "gift-passing" ceremony between two Bohemian Waxwings on the wintering

grounds.

At 1300 on March 15, 1978, we saw a flock of about 40 Bohemian Waxwings foraging in a mixed woodlot along the Red River near the University of Manitoba campus at Winnipeg. We observed two birds, perched on a log at least 10m away from the main flock. One bird (bird A) flew to the ground and picked up a piece of ice or snow (slightly larger than the bill). It hopped back onto the log and presented it to

Bohemian Waxwings

Wayne Lynch





Bohemian Waxwing

Lorne Scott

the other bird (bird B). B accepted immediately and then passed it back to A, which accepted and offered it back to B which took it after a few seconds delay. There then followed five more exchanges, each bird accepting immediately when offered the object. A ended up with the piece of ice and swallowed it. A then hopped off the log and ate some snow while B remained on the log, apparently resting. The two birds then flew off together.

Both birds had erect crests during the ceremony, but we noted neither the "fluffed-out" appearance¹ nor any

vocalizations.

This observation on the "gift-passing" ceremony in winter suggests that pairing in some Bohemian Waxwings may occur before arrival on the breeding grounds.

¹MEADEN, F. 1964. Breeding the Waxwing. *Avic. Mag.* 70:190-195.

²MEADEN, F., and C. J. O. HARRISON. 1965. Courtship display in the Waxwing. *Brit. Birds* 58:206-208.

³NERO, R. W. 1963. *Birds of the Lake Athabasca Region, Saskatchewan*. Sask. Nat. Hist. Soc. Spec. Pub. 5. 143 pp.