
NOTES AND LETTERS

BIRD BEHAVIOR: NORTHERN GOSHAWK, COMMON RAVEN AND AMERICAN CROW

Northern Goshawk

Our house backs onto a wild ravine in west Calgary and for a number of years I have been providing cracked corn for pheasants. This winter, the pheasant flock was as large as 22 on several days. In late January (2008), an immature Northern Goshawk showed up and regularly hunted the pheasants, being successful a couple of times each week. Mostly it perched on deck rails, fences, and sometimes willows waiting an air-borne opportunity to strike the pheasants. On two or three occasions, I observed the goshawk fly to the ground and attempt to ambush (confuse?) the pheasants by running, Velociraptor-like, after them through the willows. I did not see it making a kill through this technique.

Common Raven

In the late 1990s, we were having lunch on a bank of the Bow River at Bow Valley Provincial Park. We noticed 4 or 5 adult Canada Geese in the water surrounding a single gosling. I wondered why there was not a larger number of chicks and quickly observed a possible answer. A Common Raven glided in and circled above the geese, which moved to deeper water. The raven attempted a couple of times to get the chick but a dominant goose deftly pushed the gosling underwater

at key times to avert danger. At an opportune moment, the raven dived in, grabbing the chick with its beak. It flew up and over to a nearby gravel bar, landing to kill and eat parts of the chick. The adult geese watched helplessly.

American Crow

In 1954/55 I had a pet American Crow in Young, Saskatchewan. At night, it roosted in the storeroom at the back of my parents' drug store. In late afternoon, as the store was closing, my mom or dad would call the crow's name (originally 'Jake' but shifted to 'Jick') and it would fly into the front of the store, search until it found a pencil, and then fly directly to the store room. In the morning, there would be a groove pecked the length of the pencil and all the graphite would be gone. On the few occasions when Jick could not find a pencil, it settled for a (then 5¢!) chocolate bar. As a matter of interest, Jick stayed with us through the winter and unfortunately was shot the second year by someone who did not like the way it befriended kids by swooping in to steal a toque. Of course, I do not condone capturing/adopting pets from the wild, but if a youngster brings home a newborn, what else could a parent do but provide life support?

- Ken Scott, Email: <ken@glisten.biz>

BOREAL OWL AT DEWBERRY, AB

According to the Lone Pine Field Guide, *Birds of Alberta*, "The Boreal Owl ranks in the top five of the most-desired species to see." This guide also says that Alberta is one of the best places in the world to encounter this pint-sized owl.

I took this picture early in the morning on March 4, 2008, outside my home in Dewberry, north of Lloydminster. The owl was on the branch at seven a.m. when I first saw it and was still there at ten a.m. when I left. We did look for the owl over the next few days but we are surrounded by heavy bush and there

was still lots of snow on the ground, and we did not see it. Apparently they are very approachable.

My wife and I felt quite honoured with this very tame and beautiful owl. As we do have a mixedwood and conifer woodland, we have hopes that it may stay and nest. The nest is usually placed in an old woodpecker hole or other tree cavity.

- Maurice Clarke, Box 143 Dewberry, AB, T0B 1G0.



Boreal Owl at Dewberry, AB on March 4, 2008.

Maurice Clarke