

Corvi Chronicle

Journal of the American Society of Crows and Ravens Vol. XXII, No. 1, 2007(C.E.)



HAPPY 2007... Anticipate

JANUARY

*Month of the Crow,
Shawnee calendar*

Be grateful for another year. Enter into it with High Good Humor. WE EAT NO CROW.



FEBRUARY

Suicide weather

Cheer up because things are apt to get worse. Nothing great is achieved without suffering. Most of the world's useful work has been done by people who didn't feel very good.

MARCH

Habit

In the third week of March – everywhere, always, no matter what the local weather – crows begin to leave winter roosting sites and flocks for warm weather foraging and breeding territories. Cultivate a strong habit.

APRIL

Violets

Viola pedata – the Crow or Bird Foot Violet – “has been considered,” according to the Audubon Guide to North American Wildflowers, “the most beautiful violet in the

world.” This fine plant is found in at least 38 of our states. Therefore it is not only very rewarding but relatively easy to seek out and enjoy *pedata*. Plan to do so.

MAY

Commencements

Appreciate seedlings, hatchlings, suckling infants; new students, teachers, graduates; first day players, cops, waitresses; brancher crows and ravens.

JUNE

Acceptance

Crabgrass, cut-thumb, codder, slugs, chiggers, no-see-ums, moles, mice, rats, starlings, street pigeons, sparrows, other weeds, pests and varmints are as good as butterflies or bluebirds and are respectfully accepted by intelligent persons. They may be thoughtfully exterminated so long as it is a matter of genuine self interest not ideological or theological malice.

JULY

Vacation good

Dependent children are delligerently scornful of natural and cultural wonders; generally freaked out by new-to-them places, people, sounds and foods. If they cannot be left behind with a cousin at least twice

removed they should be tranquilized with Game Boys, I-Pods, Blackberries, Razors and play stations. Adults should stop at McDonald's only to urinate.

AUGUST

Be cool

Avoid outdoor cookouts or weddings which occur south of the 45th degree of north latitude. Do not make pre-emptive declarations, strikes or wars, most particularly civil ones.

SEPTEMBER

Labor days

Labour without joy is base. Labour without sorrow is base.-- John Rusking, 1867. If you say so, Johnny. “It is [in] the interest, at least as interest is vulgarly understood, of every man to live at much at his ease as he can...” Adam Smith, 1776. Good for you, Smitty.

OCTOBER

Prudence

Adopt crow roost. Expand nap time. Go easy on the lettuce. Prune rolodex. Do not use “seasonality,” “athleticism,” “commodification,” or similar such words in the presence of adults.

NOVEMBER

Political action

Members of the American Society of Crows and Ravens must, for good reasons, support those who support: passage of the Freedom From Information Act; full enforcement of the 40-hour communication week; amnesty for undocumented Canadian ravens and Mexican (Sinaloan) crows.

DECEMBER

Reverence

Celebrate a good spirit such as that of Constantine Samuel Rafinesque, quite possibly the most learned man of his times. Rafinesque died alone, penniless, suffering from stomach cancer in 1840 in a Philadelphia flop house while making plans to create an international federation of Happiness Clubs. WE DO NOT EAT CROW.



RAUCOUS! EVERYTHING RAVEN

Zerbetz exhibits in Albuquerque through April 22

Over the years, Corvi Evon Zerbetz has shared her artwork with the Chronicle, generously permitting us to reproduce her illustrations from time to time. This winter we received permission to reproduce three stunning linocuts that Zerbetz created to illustrate a story by writer Ned Rozell titled "A letter to Edgar Allen Poe" in the October 2006 issue of Alaska magazine. Her theme for the illustrations was that ravens view life as one big game. The art on the backpage is one of those illustrations and characteristically exhibits Zerbetz's eye for detail and appetite for whimsy.

We learned too that her exhibit, "Raucous! Everything Raven," which launched her most recent book, *Ten Rowdy Ravens*, (Corvi Chronicle, Summer/Fall 2005) in Ketchikan, Alaska, traveled to Albuquerque's New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science on Jan. 27. It continues in Albuquerque through April 22.

Inspired by her third book with author



Artist Evon Zerbetz was surrounded by her raven images as she installed an exhibit in the Tongass Historical Museum in Ketchikan, Alaska that ran from October 2005 through January 2006. This year the exhibit moved to the Albuquerque New Mexico Museum of Natural History.

Susan Ewing, *Ten Rowdy Ravens*, the exhibit explores the natural history of

Corvus corax through art and science themes.

In her invitation to the exhibit, Zerbetz says a statement by raven researcher Mark Pavelka echoes her exhibition theme that in the raven's world fact is sometimes stranger than fiction.

"With other animals you can usually throw out 90 percent of the stories you hear about them as exaggerations. With ravens, it's the opposite. No matter how strange or amazing the story, chances are pretty good that at least some raven somewhere did exactly that."

Anecdotes from scientists and curious observers provide the framework for the exhibit, Zerbetz says. "One does not have to be a corvidophile to note the behaviors of ravens - they make their presence known. Ravens have flown through my art for nearly two decades. Inspired by their striking black postures and their odd behaviors, my artwork is often driven simply by the desire to research what these birds just might be up to...."

To view a catalog of her art and learn more about Zerbetz's art and books, go online to evon@evonzerbetz.com.

DISGUISED RESEARCH

U of Alaska graduate student goes undercover to study ravens

Stacia Backensto is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. For the past three years she has been studying ravens (mainly to determine how oil and gas production effects them) in and around Prudhoe Bay on the North Slope of the Brooks Range. To do so she has needed to trap, sometimes re-trap, the birds to collect physical data on individuals and mark them for future identification. This presented a problem which has frustrated many field researchers working with corvids. Backensto explains

that after being trapped and released ravens, no matter what she is doing, immediately recognize her, remember their experience and suspiciously avoid her. This past summer to deal with with situation she began dressing as an oil field worker - baseball cap, heavy shirt, coveralls and boots - rather than as a graduate student. To complete her scam, she bought a comic mustache at a party store and wears it when ravening.

As to her study: The raven population seems to be markedly larger and more vigorous now than it was before

work began in the Prudhoe oil and gas fields. More than a 100 birds winter around the camps, feeding well on leftovers from dining halls and cookhouses. (In the summer ravens go back to work the open tundra; lemmings, the chicks and eggs of waterfowl being principle items of their diets.) In this treeless region Prudoe ravens build nests -- frequently using bits of discarded plastic and wire -- on drilling rigs and communication towers. In them they rear up to six chicks who are often hatched while temperatures are well below zero. The area

of this raven oasis created by oil and gas workers is relatively small. Consequently many young of the year are obliged to leave it in the fall. Some of the birds tagged by Backensto have turned up in Anchorage, some 700 miles south of their hatching place.

The above note is based on an article appearing in the Fairbanks Daily New Miner by Ned Rozell, a science writer for the Geophysical Institute, University of Alaska. It updates an earlier report of Backensto's field studies in the summer/fall 2005 Chronicle.

PATRIOT ACT *rattles roost*

Those who think it is a good law and order thing, which shapes up the citizenry will ask: "Be truthful. Has the Patriot Act actually interfered with your life?" If the truthful answer is, "No, not yet." The patronizing reply is apt to be: "So why object. It's only a problem for the bad guys."

The good news of the following is that many Corvis, especially those who most value their self esteem, can now truthfully answer: "Yes, it has discommoded me; forced me to change, unwillingly, a long-established custom." To elaborate:

For some 40 years my wife and I lived on the outskirts of a small (pop. 500) village in Pennsylvania. In the fall of 2006 we moved back – for reasons which do not signify here – to Michigan which we left as residents 60 years ago. For the 21 previous years I have acted as the circulation manager and bursar, so to speak, for the Corvi Chronicle. In this capacity I opened a savings account in the bank in the Pennsylvania village. When checks made out to ASCAR of the Corvi Chronicle arrived at the Kansas headquarters they were forwarded to me and deposited in the Pennsylvania account. When an issue of the Chronicle was ready I withdrew money to cover production and mailing. (An issue of the Chronicle now costs about \$750 – labor not included since it is pro bono.) As

you know this system has worked well enough for 21 years.

Before leaving Pennsylvania I closed the account there -- \$871 in it. After getting settled in Michigan I went to the village (about the same size as the one in Pennsylvania) bank to open the same sort of account in the name of ASCAR.

The bank manager (hereafter BM) asked if this bird club was incorporated or, documentably, an affiliate of an established national organization. I said no that this was a disorganization of like-minded persons.

BM asked if I was an authorized official or employee of this group. I said there were no elected officials or employees. There was a Board but the members of it were unknown.

BM said that under the provisions of the Patriot Act he could not deal with an unidentified entity. However he would be happy to open a separate account in my name into which checks from the crow people could be deposited. But only if the checks were made out to the documented person, i.e., me. I said that was not how we had been doing things or wanted to do; that we were not big on names and in fact often identified ourselves only by self-assigned numbers.

BM said well that was the way things were now and then, offering irrefutable evidence of this, added, "even for the

Girl Scouts." However, the BM said, sympathetically, that it was true the Patriot Act might occasionally cause some small inconvenience for a harmless citizen such as myself, but we should remember that it protected all of us. I said I had my doubts about that.

So there is the bad news. I expect cash is still okay.

But if you want to contribute by check it now must be made out to Bil Gilbert (ASCAR). We will see how and if this works. If not we will just have to be secure without the Chronicle. – *Bil Gilbert, A Documented Entity*

The following is a reminder of ASCAR's traditional policy in regards such matters

The Corvi Chronicle is published irregularly by corvi who have an interest in or need for doing so for members of The American Society of Crows and Ravens and others. There is no subscription fee, but it is customary and seemly to send contributions to pay for production and mailing. There is a direct connection between contributions, the size of the Chronicle and its frequency of distribution. Those who do not choose to contribute will continue to receive the Chronicle and enjoy all membership privileges. However, they will no doubt suffer a loss of self-esteem and may occasionally be mocked by other corvis.

Love those ravens!



Caw! Caw!

This is Clarke-Clarke. He's sitting on the garden fence. He and his mate, Auk-Auk, share space with us. We enjoy each other's company in the yard of an old schoolhouse that was built in 1876 in Marshall, Calif., (near Tomales Bay on the West Coast). My dad has lived in the schoolhouse for the last 30 years. My husband and I moved over from Hawaii five years ago to keep an eye on the guy (89.5) and met the ravens.

Clarke-Clarke and Awk-Awk are in love – they're a pair for life...She is preening him for a change, now that her 'mothering' is over for this year.

We would like to receive the Corvi Chronicle. An artist from Garberville, Calif., who has been a friend of my father's for a long time told me about it. I'm not crazy about crows, but I can rave about ravens! – *Corvi 949, Marshall, Calif.*



THE TALK OF THE ROOST

CROWFANITIES & ESCROW

Corvi 1294 of Brussels, Wis., submitted the following note from BirdScope, Spring 2006, Cornell Lab of Ornithology:

Crows are black birds and blackbirds are also, but a crow in the snow is so much the more so. If you're pro-crow you proclaim his intellect, his resourcefulness and the visual poetry of his somber silhouette on the calligraphy of the cornfield. But if it's your cornfield, you have good caws to compose creative crowfanities when he arrives. Think of it as sharecropping: he gets the grasshoppers, you get the corn, and the few ears missed in the harvest are held in, well – escrow. Written by Charley Harper.

REALLY OLD CROW

Several readers sent us an Associated Press story reporting that Tata, a 59-year-old crow, had died July 2, 2006, in Bearsville, N.Y. We received clippings from newspapers in Poughkeepsie, N.Y.; Kansas City, Mo.; and Santa Fe, N.M., among others. Headlines indicated that Tata was possibly the world's oldest crow.

Reporters had called on Kevin McGowan, Cornell University ornithologist, to verify if Tata, blinded by cataracts in his final years, indeed may have been the world's oldest crow. McGowan told the reporter that while claims of animal longevity are difficult to verify, Tata's age, given the crow's protection from predators, disease and accidents in the

wild, sounded reasonable. McGowan said the oldest living crow he has documented since banding the crow as a fledging in the wild is age 15. Reports of a crow that may be twice that old in the wild are undocumented.

Tata's protected care began in 1947 when a caretaker found the crow as an injured fledging after a thunderstorm in a Long Island cemetery. The caretaker brought the crow, which was never able to fly, to a local family, the Manettas, known for caring for animals. After more than 50 years, the Manettas in 2001 experiencing their own health needs gave over the care of Tata to Kristine Flones, a wildlife rehabilitator in the Woodstock, N.Y., hamlet of Bearsville, 95 miles north of New York City.

Flones reported that Tata had remained an alert bird in his old age, responding to wild crows by cawing, often loudly, at 5 a.m. on spring days.

ESCAPE ARTIST

An article in a newsletter for The Wildlife Center of Espanola, N.M., notes the center "is fortunate to have an educational Chihuahuan raven, *Corvus cryptobucus*, named Che (Mayan for 'spirit of the woods')." The bird had been confiscated by the New Mexico Department of Fish and Game from an Artesia resident who had found the raven with a broken wing and was keeping him as a pet without a permit.

Written by Mary Nunz, the article notes that Chihuahuan ravens are somewhat

smaller than common ravens and are found at lower altitudes in New Mexico. They have distinguishing white at the base of their neck feathers that can only be observed when the feathers are ruffled. These ravens are particularly fond of grasshoppers and other insects as well as carrion. Unlike their larger relatives, they are usually found in large flocks, Nunz notes.

"Che enjoys playing with parrot toys and can extract colored pieces of plastic from a box with openings of different shapes. He can untangle a leash wrapped around his perch. His cleverness, however, presents a challenge to handlers because he can think of countless ways to escape while being jessed."

YOSMITE: LOVE THAT IMAGE

Corvi 333 of Avalon, Calif., who has corresponded regularly over the years with reports of crows and ravens wrote last summer of a fellow Corvi's observations.

"Stewart ... mentioned that driving to work in the Yosemite Valley recently, he saw a raven on a parked car, hanging from the rear view mirror, looking at his or her reflection. Stew wondered if he saw what he thought he saw, until he got to his desk and found the copy of the hotel's daily circular, The Daily Granite, of July 21, 2006:

Raven Vandalism at Hwy 140/120 (Diversion Dam) Parking Lot
The Wildlife Office has received

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TALK *continued*

numerous reports of a raven causing damage to vehicles parked at the Hwy 140/Hwy 120 (Diversion Dam) parking lot. The raven has been observed by the Wildlife Staff throughout the Valley as it targets different parking lots (including the Wildlife Office back in May). This particular raven seems entertained by its own reflection in vehicle windows and has even offered its reflection roadkill presents (and leaving vehicle owners with an unpleasant mess).

The raven also has special interest in windshield wipers and is able to peel them off in a matter of minutes (the Wildlife Office has replaced at least 4 wipers on our own trucks). This behavior is unexplainable, but young ravens are very investigative and curious. They often "play" with objects that are not edible; things that are pliant yet resistant, and soft enough to dismantle, but tough enough to give a bit of a challenge. You can protect your vehicle by covering your wiper blades with cardboard or some other material able to withstand the pulling and plucking of the raven. If you have any questions or would like to report a sighting please contact the Wildlife Office.

After talking with a co-worker after she returned from out-of-town business, he found that it was her car from which the narcissistic raven had taken almost new wiper blades.

Sometime ago, Stew showed me a loading dock roof, perhaps 30 feet along the slope. He said that one day he happened to look up when it was covered with snow, a raven walked to the top, rolled down a "virgin" portion of snow. The bird was still enjoying repeating this routine when our Corvi got bored and left.

NORTH CASCADES AGITATORS

A related windshield wiper "theft" in the North Cascades National Park was reported by the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Sept. 19, 2006, in a story written by Mary Andom. Park officials reported a raven had banged its beak on a window at the visitor center until the raven's beak was bloody. Staff members had flapped their arms and tried, unsuccessfully, to shoo the raven from the

"DON'T GO, SHANE" AWARD goes to innovative Wyoming man

For the past two years residents of Riverton, Wyo., have been using lethal and other means in an attempt to rid their community of a small crow roost. However, in an effort to attract the birds and provide them with sanctuary, a nearby rancher, Ed Fowler, has been putting out crow food in his pastures and has set up a genera-



tor to light a promising crow roost site in cottonwood thickets on his property. According to USA Today, Fowler commented, "The crows aren't going to hurt anything and I get the fertilizer. The crows are part of our community as much as anybody." In recognition of his good works and attitude, the Board of ASCAR has named Fowler the winner in 2006 of the coveted, "Don't Go, Shane" Award.

window. An ornithologist advised that perhaps the raven had been pecking at its own reflection in the glass. Another theory was that perhaps the raven was defending its territory from two large raven murals on the center's interior walls. Rangers later covered the window with dark butcher paper, which the raven ripped to shreds, according to the report.

When the raven re-appeared some time later, it arrived with a companion and the two were observed tearing the rubber blades from windshield wipers of cars parked near the visitor center. Consequently signs were posted in the parking lot advising campers "of the raven agitators," Andom wrote. Drivers were advised to cover their wipers with rags.

Pressed for explanations of the raven behavior, park officials' suggestions ranged from boredom, the need for a challenge, perhaps a fetish for rubber or a previous bad experience with a motor vehicle to "we really don't know."

Charles Beall, acting chief interpreter for the park, said that the signs had amused visitors whose cars were untouched by ravens. He assured the reporter that the birds were not a threat to campers and that personal encounters with ravens were rare.

"The ravens are not brazen; they don't like to be around where there are people." When pressed for tips for action to take on finding a raven at the windshield of a car, Beall suggested shouting and waving your arms to scare the birds.

"They need adverse conditioning so a negative experience can be attached to the behavior."

Andom too had called Kevin McGowan, Cornell ornithologist. She asked about the wiper blade destruction. McGowan offered that the ravens well could have been at play, that the pliant rubber wipers provided enough resistance for a challenge and that it could have been learned behavior – one bird watching another. "If you watch young birds, they like to manipulate objects by hiding pebbles and taking apart branches. It's appropriate behavior with in appropriate circumstances."

YELLOWSTONE ZIP ZIP

More on ravens in national parks from a column by Alan Kesselheim in the Aug. 6, 2006, edition of the Albuquerque Journal. Corvi 742 of Santa Fe, N.M., sent Kesselheim's account of an April 2005 trip to Yellowstone National Park.

Kesselheim and a companion had parked their bikes on a bridge railing and walked to a nearby creek for a picnic. As they sat in the sunshine, watching a herd of bison in the distance, and ate their sandwiches, Kesselheim noticed a raven fly past with something in its beak. When it landed a short distance away, Kesselheim stood to see what the bird had in its beak.

As the raven took flight again, Kesselheim glanced back toward their bikes to see a pair of wind pants dangling

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BOOK NOTES

Considering preservation passion

Seeking the Sacred Raven by Mark James Walters, Washington, D.C.; Island Press, 2006.

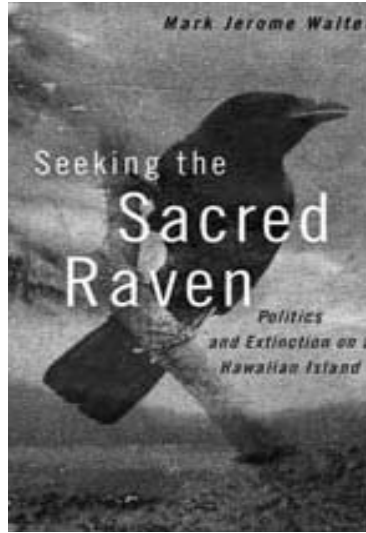
This book should not be judged by a uninformative cover and title page. It is actually about a bird best known as the 'Alala or Hawaiian (sometimes, Kono) crow. However, Walters writes that the species "is closer to the raven family than to the crow." Thus the title. Presumably it was chosen for about the same reasons some hunters will call coyotes "brush wolves," i.e., to make them seem more impressive, sexier. In taxonomic fact all birds commonly called crows or ravens are members of the same genus, *Corvus* -- of which there are some 40 species -- and of one family, *Corvidae*.

There is also "the Sacred Raven" bit, which suggests the subject is unique and portentously significant. But as hundreds of surviving myths from many parts of the world indicate, most pantheists believed, as did the aboriginal Hawaiians, that their crows/ravens had important sacred connections; were variously messengers or counselors of the gods. The article is the most off-putting thing about "the Sacred Raven."

No more nits will be picked here. Generally Walters provides a good summary of the documentable natural history of the Hawaiian crow. Certainly the Polynesian settlers were well acquainted with the birds and the first European invaders (Captain Cook and his crew in 1778) saw some of them. Otherwise not much is now known about their status before the latter part of the 19th century when European naturalists began systematically to survey Hawaiian fauna. Then 'Alala were numerous, often collecting in large flocks in woodlands on drier upland slopes. However, 50 years later -- in 1937 -- when one of the pioneering ornithologists, George Munro, returned to the island he was shocked to find the crows, "greatly reduced in numbers. I saw no flocks, only a few scattered individuals."

This species like many other Hawaiian ones declined for now well-understood reasons: 20th century style agriculture and development spread infectious diseases, drastically altered and eliminated habitats; exotic species (e.g. mongoose) with which the native fauna did not cope well were introduced and became established; as native populations declined so did their genetic diversity and vigor.

Researchers thought there were only 10 or 12 wild Hawaiian crows left in 1990. There were three in 1999 and the



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last of those died in 2002. However there did remain 40 birds who had been reared in aviary/labs on the islands. The plan or hope is that within a few years birds from this colony (which now has some 50 individuals) can be released into a new, 5,000 acre sanctuary, which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is preparing for them.

Captive breeding-and-release programs have helped re-establish some severely endangered species in the wild -- e.g., black-footed ferrets, California condors, whooping cranes. But there are some doubts about how well this will work with the 'Alala because there will be no birds in the wild to mentor the aviary reared ones when they are released. The importance of this was neatly summarized by Lawrence Kilham, perhaps the most insightful of our Corvi students. He once wrote that given the complexity of their acquired culture, "It takes a long time to learn to be a good crow."

Frequently endangered species programs have touched off bitter disputes among federal and state wildlife operatives, private institutions and individuals about how rescue efforts should be managed and -- most especially -- by whom. (The Hawaiian crow has caused a considerable number of controversies which Walters describes in considerable detail.) Such squabbles can and certainly have been counter-productive but are understandable given ordinary human ambitions. At least when appealing birds and mammals are involved, endangered species projects have been consistently popular with the general

public. Therefore they can further careers, promote grants, generate TV appearances and lecture gigs for those conducting this work.

But to be fair about it ... Many of the belligerents in these zoological turf wars are also the kind of people who will (sometimes have in the past) risk friendships, reputations and careers to further -- they firmly believe -- the best interests of a ferret, crane or crow. They are the ones most passionately convinced that pulling a species back from the brink of extinction is absolutely necessary and noble work worth whatever sacrifices are required. While admiring and sharing some of these convictions one can still wonder why they are so common and strong.

There is the technical challenge of it but only for a few zoologists and botanists. More generally being in favor of somebody try to save this or that is -- since almost always our kind has endangered this or that -- a fairly easy-to-take guilt

BOOK NOTES *continued**Human nature and endangered species*

assuager. However, more serious pro-endangered species explanations (the sort made to Congressional committees), are based on the premise that the extinction of a species is a Very Bad Thing for us and everybody else now. Therefore it should be prevented or at least controlled like influenza or measles. Among others often offered in support of this proposition are the following claims:

ψ A species may have properties – presently unknown – which in the future could be of great value for us. An extinct species cannot be exploited. Anything is of course possible. But given the 10 million or so still to be examined species the if-we-had-only-put-it-in-an-autoclav-we-might-have-found-a-cure-for-cancer conceit is not compelling.

ψ Any extinction reduces the gene pool. Again mathematically true but rather irrelevant since this metaphoric basin is constantly shrinking or expanding. Apparently in the past there were times when 80 percent or more of the things then living here disappeared rather suddenly as such events are measured. This was no doubt hard on the extinctees but now seems to have been beneficial for others. Consider the increase in numbers and diversity of mammals after – and very possibly because of – the disappearance of many big reptiles.

ψ The loss of a species can upset larger ecological balances; create rents in what has been called the web of life. See above. The single-sparrow-has-fallen repeatedly without so far as can now be seen causing long-term disruptions nor many if

any short-term ones. It can be plausibly argued that if all our endangered species gave it up tomorrow, the tremors and aftershocks caused by their passing would be minimal and difficult to detect. Few of us quick ones would even know they were gone until their caretakers told us about it.

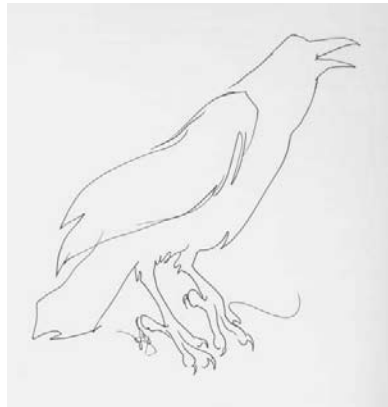
In short, the material consequences of our endangered species works are negligible though it is often politically expedient to claim otherwise. But the extinction of species – like the death of individuals – is of critical ecological importance for us and everything else. Who wants to picnic near the den of a Tyrannosaurus rex? Or stand in a checkout line with a bunch of low brow Neanderthals?

Yet to repeat. I am among the many who believe that trying to halt or delay the extinction of a species is a Very Good Thing for us to be doing. Because:

When asked why they will invest and risk so much to scale a difficult mountain, the classic response of serious climbers is, “because it is there.” Something similar is probably the most honest and complete explanation of why we make efforts to save endangered species. It is, “because we can.”

The capacity to care about whether or not there are any Hawaiian crows is a unique endowment of human nature; a salient and defining one. Because these conservative acts are so unrewarding in terms of material self-interest they may better reflect human peculiarity than do our arts and technologies; intra-specific compassion and charity.

Based on past happening, recognizing and expressing our humanity seems to be a more hopeful way to go than trying to ignore and stifle it.



Nightwing Studio pastel by Judith Gebhard Smith of Olympia, Wash. www.nightwingstudio.com

TALK *continued*

from the bridge.

“The raven did not have a bagel in its beak. It was my apple, which had been zipped inside the back pack. The pack is now open wide, completely unzipped.

“The bird went through the contents, tossing out my pants, dropping our camera in its case on the ground and pilfering a couple of carrots before taking wing with the apple. I hadn’t been away from the bike five minutes before that trickster had the joint cased and the burglarly in the bag, so to speak.”

A year later, on a backpacking trip with his family in Canyonlands National

Park in Utah, Kesselheim and his family left their backpacks before hiking to an arch above them. Observing a couple of ravens and remembering Yellowstone, Kesselheim advised everyone to stash their backpacks under an overhang.

“I don’t really believe that ravens as a species have figured out zippers, but I’d been victimized once, and these birds seemed altogether too interested in us.

“Our side-hike takes a couple of hours. Approaching our packs again, I can see from 20 yards away that I’ve been had. Despite being under a sandstone overhang and being zipped up tight, the packs have been violated. All the pocket zippers hang open. Bandanas, blister band-aids, pocketknives, a pair of binoculars lie strewn around like an apartment bedroom

after it’s been ransacked by bad guys.

“...Ravens aren’t the only species that has figured us out. Check out the chipmunk scene on Angel’s Landing in Zion National Park, or ask rangers in Glacier National Park how good bears are at opening coolers and car doors.

“...So far as I can tell, violations featuring ravens and zippers seem limited to the national park system. That, after all, is where backpacks and zippered compartments protecting goodies abound. The knowledge may not have spread beyond park boundaries yet, but I’m thinking it’s only a matter of time...”



ALL THINGS IN GOOD TIME

Editor, Journal of the American Society of Crows and Ravens

First, compliments for producing such an interesting digest of wildlife Crows. As a former crow pet owner, I deeply appreciate reading and digesting the contents of your productive mind.

I am now past my 90th birthday and my medical restrictions do not hamper my reading and writing interests. In my very early 70s, I wrote a book on real estate. It was successful. I now do some poetry. ... I wrote this verse on how our pet crow joined our family ranks.

*An orphan am I who fell from my nest
Breathing yet among leaves at rest
I'm alone you see in a forest of trees
Awaiting for someone to find and help me.*

*Oh, lucky me I was born free
High up a tall pine tree.
Finding me were two bird lovers
Who turned me over to family members
With warm compassion to help revive me.*

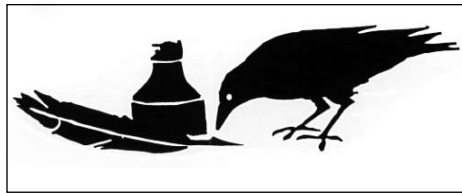
*Oh lucky me, I now have a family tree
Of loving people who treasure me
And do all they can to keep me free.*

I noticed your reference to a new book, *Crows Encounters with the Wise Guys* by Candace Savage. May I ask you for the address of the publisher? – *Corvi 951, Mashpee, Ma.*

EDITOR'S NOTE: Greystone Books
#201 - 2323 Quebec Street
Vancouver, BC V5T 4S7
or to email their customer service department: dani.lacusta@douglas-mcintyre.com

PEANUT BUTTER AND JELLY THIEVES

Thank you for keeping the Corvi Chronicle coming for so many years. It's



LETTERS

about time we sent you some "silver" in trade.

We continue to keep our "beach" crows and ravens well fed. Our cat "Raven" still looks to them for advice. If she could grow wings ... A flying black cat would be so cool...but scary!

Traveled to Seattle, Wash., where we enjoyed a family of park crows stealing a pre-schooler group's lunch. Boy were those kids mad! And they blamed the squirrels, cuz' the crows flew to safety! – *Corvi JesiCaw II and Grace Corvi I-don't-know, Manila, Calif.*

COUNTLESS NUMBERS

Sir:
I am writing to thank you for your latest, and to enclose a small donation. Also I have two questions:

1) Why do you refer to individuals in the plural (corvi) when the singular (corvus) is correct: Surely you know better.

2) Ref/ #43's indignation and your response: Am I the only #129 on your books? If not, how many others? I enclose a SASE for your response.

You have published my musings twice, and while feeling honored by such, I don't but wonder whether my cash contributions affect your publishing decisions. As always – *Corvi 129, Gulf Breeze, Fla.*

EDITOR'S NOTE: Regarding conventional

plural and singular designations: "When they are wrong, they are no longer corvi" may also be read as "When he is wrong he is no longer corvus." or "When she is wrong, she is no longer corva." Number of 129s on the books? Countless. Cash affec? Sweet.

CROW-NADO WITNESS

Dear Fellow Crows

I have no idea what my number may be and I am not bothered by anonymity, but should I have a number, let it be something unoriginal like 1916 ... Or, if #70 isn't taken, the letters added up that spell corvid. Please choose for me, as I don't want to double up on another's.

Today I threw out a handful of peanuts in the shell into the parking lot where my warehouse is. I reside in the office space above my business. I was very pleasantly surprised to hear crows cawing shortly after the offering. As soon as I peered out at the group from the upstairs window, they noticed me and took off, but they came back fairly quickly. A couple of pigeons joined in on the dinner scene. Then a friend parked in the lot over the peanuts as he was to join me for dinner. I wish I'd started sooner with this peanut ritual like I had done at other places I've lived. I'm determined to become friends with my local crows.

I have had some affinity for crows, and maybe them for me, most of my life. Since I was a child, I would find injured, dying and baby crows and try to nurse them to health. Alas, none had lived and my parents didn't know of a place that would take them in. When I was in high school and college, I was able to help rehab sick and baby birds with the help of professionals. I could go on a walk

Continued on next page

The Corvi Chronicle is published irregularly by corvi who have an interest in or need for doing so for members of The American Society of Crows and Ravens and others. There is no subscription fee, but it is customary and seemly to send contributions to pay for production and mailing. There is a direct connection between contributions, the size of the Chronicle and its frequency of distribution. Those who do not choose to contribute will continue to receive the Chronicle and enjoy all membership privileges. However, they will no doubt suffer a loss of self-esteem and may occasionally be mocked by other corvis.

Members are reminded to make new corvi by duplicating and passing along issues of the Chronicle.

ASCAR has a home page or chat room on the Internet:

<http://www.ascaronline.org/>

Editor..... Corvi #66

Art Directors Corvi #005, #8, #30, #48 and #1492

The Board ... Known only to themselves

The Chronicle accepts articles and manuscripts of reasonable length on any topic acknowledged by The Board, news clippings and general correspondence. Unused material will be returned in good time to the authors. Commentary (insightful, indignant or otherwise) should be addressed to:

ASCAR / CORVI CHRONICLE
KAW RIVER VALLEY ROOST
BOX 1423
LAWRENCE KS 66044-8423

LETTERS *continued*

and find a crow with a broken wing and easily pick it up and the birds always seemed to be so calm with me. I have helped many other species of birds, but the crows are my favorite.

Everywhere I have lived, I would attract crows and jays to my home, mostly to my neighbors' displeasure. I would always enthusiastically explain how intelligent they are and their strong familial bonds and structures to help them understand that they're not pests and horrid baby bird killers that just poop on their cars or some menace from a movie that would peck ones eyes out. I used to have wine and cheese parties with crows at one residence in Long Beach. They would see my car arrive in the drive and wait for me on the overhead wires to bring their dinner out. I would throw out grapes and cheese cubes and stale crackers (sometimes perfectly good crackers) and I'd have a glass of wine while

Privacy act

ASCAR now numbers — so think some who enjoy counting things — about 900 members. Alphabetically and in terms of interests and attitudes members range — an expression — from academics to Zoroastrians. But only the Editor and an associate minion know who and where they all are. This is in keeping with the Corvi Privacy Act that forbids those who know from talking about or to other corvis or using their names and addresses in the Chronicle without permission. The CPA is occasionally tested by purveyors of crow curios wanting access to mailing lists.

However, because many members have similar interests and have indicated a desire to make the acquaintance of others who share them, some thought has been given to adjusting the CPA to accommodate these wishes. Therefore anyone who would like to hear from other corvi should send along their name and address to the editor. These will be published occasionally in the Chronicle. Names are not absolutely necessary — Corvi numbers will do — but addresses are. Obviously those who wish to remain known only to the editor and her associate minion should do nothing and will continue to enjoy the protection of CPA.



Eugene Beckes of Stark Raven Graphics, St. Ignatius, Mont., sent one of his note cards that features the same magpie photo as he uses for his business card above. He describes the photo as a lucky shot and says he is now focusing on ravens that frequent a Missoula

meatpacking plant. When he isn't working with a camera or computer, Beckes writes limericks:

*I was a raven in a former life
and I had me a raven wife,
raven kids and a raven nest;
That's the life I loved the best.*

my friends helped themselves to the hors d'oeuvres in the grass. Like Barb Kirpluk, people thought I was the crazy crow girl, more like crazy crow lady now. I used to walk every day in their neighborhood and have my little shadows following.

In my town of San Pedro and the nearby towns of Rancho Palos Verdes and Rolling Hills, we have some raven pairs. I love to go to Trader Joe's and see the TJ couple strolling in the lot. They are not skittish and I can throw food out for them. The one who seems to be the male always tests the food first and then his mate joins in and they share. I don't know how far the territory for each pair spans, so I could very well see the same ones fly around my area where I live. It's nice to see them living with us in a populated area. I don't think I'll be dragging out a cow carcass out for them any time soon, but there is plenty of carrion for them to have from the roadkill in the area. Despite the density of the city, we do have a lot of riparian areas in hills and gullies that are home to skunk (which we smell constantly), raccoon, coyote, opossum, feral cats, rats and mice. Since we are close to the ocean and the coastline of the Palos Verdes Peninsula, they must have access to tide pool delights, fish and the occasional dead seal or sea lion and birds. Last autumn I saw what

I call a "crownado." There must have been 150 crows that started a tight vortex a hundred feet or so above ground and they rose higher and higher, circling counter-clockwise the whole time, until I could barely seem them in the sky. It was amazing. I camp frequently in the Sequoia National Monument with the Sequoia Task Force and Sierra Club. My wakeup call every morning is from ravens.

I have some small parrots and a 15 year old female starling. I still do the occasional rehab of starlings. People call me Bird Girl. At 38.5, I'm hardly a girl. I am a closet ornithologist, Audubon member and collect corvid art. I can't get enough information about corvids of all kinds. I love to get your newsletter, so thank you for more information, musing and news contributions from yourself and others. I do not know why the Web site is not working, but if you need funds to keep it going, I hope my contribution might help a bit. — Corvi 1916, San Pedro, Calif.

EDITOR'S
NOTE: The
ASCAR Website
Webmaster plans
to have the site
up soon.





COME PLAY WITH ME!

Linocut by Evon Zerbetz of Ketchikan, Alaska, who opened an exhibit in January in Albuquerque New Mexico's Museum of Natural History. The exhibit runs through April 22. *Printed with artist's permission.*

CORVI CHRONICLE

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