

youngster is in good hands.

SITUATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

Aggression towards pets and humans: Both pets and humans are far beyond the size of crow prey. Aggression is almost always the result of adult crows protecting nearby young and is limited to a very small area. It is a temporary situation that is best resolved by trying to avoid the area they are protecting. While it can be intimidating, crows rarely present a threat to humans, dogs or cats.

Unwanted crows in the neighborhood: Crows can sometimes be deterred from roosting or foraging in a given area. Loud sudden noises, such as banging pots and pans together just before sunset, can be effective in disrupting a roost location. There are also companies that sell distress calls. Scarecrows do work but only in a small geographic area and if they are built such that they move in the wind and are accompanied by some sort of noisemaker. Tightly covering garbage and compost will help reduce attractants.

Crows raiding other bird nests: Crows will prey upon small birds and will consume other bird's eggs. While this may be difficult to watch, it is entirely natural and there is no reason to intervene. Similarly, crows may themselves be preyed upon by larger predators such as Red-tailed Hawks and Great Horned Owls.

Crows are protected under Federal law: Crows are protected under the Migratory Bird Act of 1918. It is illegal to harm a crow or to destroy an active nest. It is also illegal to have a crow as a pet. Only facilities that possess federal



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Living with Urban Wildlife



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Urban Crows



Living with Urban Crows

NATURAL HISTORY

Crows are one of our most common urban wildlife residents. These omnivorous birds will eat just about anything, including fruits, vegetables, insects, small rodents, and even other birds and bird eggs. Given the opportunity, they will also raid garbage cans. Crows typically build a stick nest in the crotch of a tall tree but can also use ledges of manmade structures as well. Nest building occurs in late April and May. Crows lay 3-6 eggs, which are incubated for 18 days. The young remain in the nest for 28-35 days. It is common for youngsters to leave the nest before they are able to fly. During this time, both parents as well as offspring from the prior year care for youngsters. Young remain with the parents throughout the first year of life and help raise the following season's offspring. Crow families will establish individual territories during the breeding season, but during the non-breeding season they will gather at huge communal roosts (sleeping areas). Communal roosts can be as large as several thousand crows. During the day, crows will disperse to forage and then return to the communal roost in the evening.

FLEDGLING CROWS

Fledgling crows on the ground: Like many species, juvenile crows will typically leave the nest before they are able to fly. They will spend several days on the ground building up their flight capabilities and learning essential survival skills from their families. This is a completely normal and very important part of their life cycle. It is not uncommon to

find young crows on the ground in suburban, urban and industrial areas. Unless these birds are clearly injured, they should be left alone for their parents to care for. Crows that are in immediate danger, can be placed up off the ground on a low branch or structure, but should not be moved more than 100 feet from where they were found.

How to tell if a crow is a fledgling? Fledgling crows can be found learning to fly during the months of May, June and July. People are frequently concerned that the crow they have seen on the ground is injured rather than simply a youngster learning to fly. One easy way to tell if a crow is a youngster is to look at the color of the bird's eyes. Young crows have blue/grey eyes while adults have black eyes. Another easy way to tell if a crow is a fledgling is to look to see if other crows are hanging out nearby. If there are other crows nearby, they are likely the parents. Size of the bird is NOT a good indicator of age since fledgling crows are frequently close to the size of their parents when they leave the nest.

Wouldn't it be safer to raise the crow in captivity and let him go once he is able to fly? Although the urban landscape may seem like a hazardous place for a crow to learn to fly, many crows do manage to survive. In fact, urban crow populations are increasing. Raising a crow in captivity and then releasing it to the wild reduces its chance for survival. Crows spend between one and two years with their parents, a much longer period than



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most other bird species. This extended period is essential for young crows to learn complex life skills, a wide array of vocalizations, and to integrate into a complex social structure. Captive-raised crows miss out on all of these things and have very little chance for survival.

Why are all these other crows making such a ruckus near the fledgling? Those are the parents and youngsters from the previous year and possibly the year before that. This extended family will raise and protect the fledgling, just as this fledgling will stay with the family and help raise youngsters in future nesting seasons. Crows are very protective of their young and will bring food to the youngster, attempt to direct it away from harm, and drive off potential predators. The family may not always be present but are usually close by. Sometimes, protective behavior by adult crows can be confused for aggression against the youngster; but, rest assured that a loud, raucous group of adult crows is a sign that a