



American Robin | Xianwei Zeng | Audubon Photography Awards



Fall 2024

EARTHCARE NORTHWEST

IN THIS ISSUE: BIRD BEHAVIOR

Boozy Berries: The Hidden Hazard
Murder on the Move
Messy Fall Gardening
Knock, Knock. Who's There?

Boozy Berries: the Hidden Hazard

Perhaps you have heard of Buzzwinkle, Alaska's famously inebriated moose with a fondness for fermented crabapples. Well, similarly, birds often find themselves under the influence after snacking on local berries like Beautyberry, Elderberry, and Viburnum. When ripe sugar-rich berries freeze, and then thaw, a natural fermentation process can occur, turning their juices to

alcohol. Berry-loving birds like the Cedar Waxwing, American Robin, and Swainson's Thrush, will often dine on these fermented berries as they build up their energy reserves in preparation for fall migration and colder weather. *(continued on next page)*



Deliver to a local bird advocate at this address.

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Messy Fall Gardening

by Penny Bolton

A backyard or patio can host as many as 50 bird species throughout the year. Welcome bird friends by making an inviting habitat for them. Autumn is a time that we typically clean up and put our garden to bed, but you can attract birds by leaving some messy corners just for them to enjoy.

One common yard bird is the Song Sparrow. Every yard or neighborhood park will have at least one in residence. It often perches on a low shrub, leans back, and sings a stuttering, clattering song, so they are hard to miss. These gray, beige, and brown streaked sparrows can stay in the area the entire year. They forage mostly on the ground, sometimes scratching in the soil or mulch to turn up seeds and bugs, making the habitat you provide for them all the more important.



Song Sparrow | Steve Byland

This fall, help your common backyard birds by leaving seed heads on annuals and perennials until the spring, put out platters of water for them to drink and bathe in, and leave leaf and stick piles around for them to hide in and find bugs in. A wee bit of mess is worth the pleasure of hosting your bird guests throughout the seasons.

>>> Boozy Berries - continued

While disorientation or lethargy in birds isn't a big problem, when combined with other urban hazards like free-roaming cats or reflective windows, it can become deadly. This is especially true for younger, first year birds whose livers are less efficient at processing the toxins. Adult birds may also be better at avoiding fermented berries to begin with. (Duff, 2012).



Cedar Waxwing | Mary New |
Audubon Photography Awards

If you find an intoxicated bird the best thing to do is to leave it alone and give it time to recover. If you believe the bird has sustained an injury or is in danger, you can protect it during recovery by placing it in a shoebox with holes.



Report bird mortality
or injury at dBird.org

Prevent Deadly Fall Window Collisions

Data from our Seattle Bird Collision Monitoring Project have revealed fall is the deadliest season for local birds. Thousands die every fall flying into glass. Save birds by:

- Treat the exterior of your reflective windows with a collision deterrent material like decals, streamers, or a hand-drawn soap design so birds can see them.
- Move all bird feeders or bird baths to be less than 3 feet, or greater than 30 feet from windows.
- Turn off exterior lights or close your blinds at night so your don't confuse migrating birds.

Murder on the Move: UW Bothell Crow Roost Taking Flight

by Carol Roll

If you glimpse skyward an hour before dusk, like clockwork, you will start to see clusters and sometimes even steady streams of American Crows all flying in the same direction. Our area is home to one of the nation's largest flocks (also known as a murder) of crows. The North Creek Wetland, part of the UW Bothell campus, hosts as many as 16,000 individual crows each night. Renton also hosts a large nightly roost and there may be a third large flock joining the list of local crow hot-spots.

Roosts, or groups of birds all sleeping together at night, provide birds with safety including physical safety from predators and warning communications if there is a disturbance. Late fall and winter are the best seasons to see our murders in all their cawing and squawking glory. First, the cottonwood and willow trees they perch in lose their leaves, making the sheer number of crows more visible. Second, the number of birds flocking together is significantly bigger in the fall and winter. Many crows spend spring and early summer away from their flocks to build individual nests and care for their young.

Despite their nightly routine, there is one curious change in the roosting behavior of the UW Bothell flock of late. A portion seems to be moving, sparking the interest of many crow fans and corvid researchers in the area. Last winter, as part of the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count, as many as 8,000 crows were witnessed flying past their usual Bothell roost to a newly restored wetland at Sixty Acres in Redmond. Scientists believe that this is a natural occurrence, but there is no scientific record of a similar roost move, so much remains to observe and speculate about. Some potential reasons include recent construction on the UW Bothell campus, overcrowding among the crows themselves, or the influx of large numbers of Cackling Geese now sharing the wetland. Another theory is the trees have grown taller and may no longer be the crow's "ideal" habitat in comparison to the smaller trees from more recent restoration work at the Redmond site. One can only guess at the reasons why these highly intelligent and social birds have started to explore a new roost for their nightly meet up, but it will be interesting to see what behaviors emerge next.

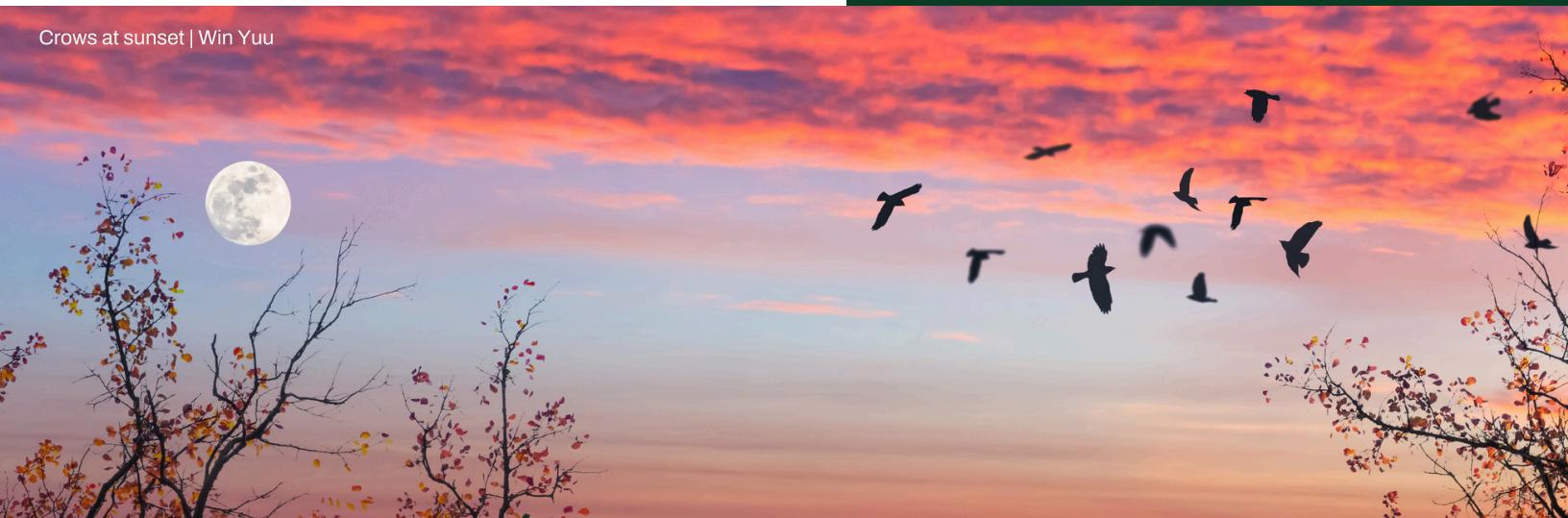
Crows at sunset | Win Yuu

VISIT THE CROWS

Birds Connect Seattle offers more than 100 Neighborhood Bird Outings every year. These free public gatherings are led by knowledgeable volunteers and provide a chance to share in the wonder of birds in a variety of local parks.

See the crows at two upcoming Neighborhood Bird Outings. More details on our website:

- November 17: UW Bothell roost
- October 10: Renton roost by IKEA (for young adults)



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From the Executive Director

Dear members,

As we bid farewell to summer warblers and embrace the beauty of fall, I'm thrilled to share our latest newsletter in a new format. This issue highlights fascinating bird behaviors and connects them to important conservation actions we all can take. Thank you for your continued support, and we hope you enjoy the changing of the seasons.



For birds, and all their fascinating behaviors,

Claire Catania

Claire Catania
Executive Director

Knock, Knock. Who's There?

Have you ever come across a tree and seen a distinct "woodpecker" looking hole, and wondered, "what made that?"

Our area is home to several woodpecker species, thanks in part to our diverse tree canopy. Each species has distinct beak and tongue anatomy, diet, and size, which result in different tree drilling methods. While it may just look like a hole at first glance, it can reveal quite a bit about the species and its behavior.

Read the full article and take the woodpecker hole quiz.



OPTICS NIGHT & YARD SALE

Friday, Sept 27, 4 - 7 pm and
Saturday, Sept 28, 10 am - 5 pm
at The Nature Shop



Discounted optics, books,
vintage treasures, office furniture
and supplies, bird art and more!

Woodpecker nesting holes | David Johnson

