



SHOW NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE SHOW NOTES

Episode Title: What's Up With All The Crows?!

Episode # & Date: Episode #16 – February 13, 2020

Episode Description: Have you noticed that now more than ever, crows seem to be everywhere in San Mateo? Judy finds out why.

Episode Web Page: <https://sanmateofocus.com/crows/>

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

I'm Judy Gordon, and *this* is San Mateo Focus.

We seem to have a lot more crows in San Mateo than we've had in previous years. Recently, I noticed that the back wiper blade of my car needed replacing. But, it was unusual because a strip of rubber that was on the blade was hanging, as if it had been picked off. I remember that I'd heard a funny story a while back about young crows, and that they liked to peck on the rubber edging of cars. I wondered if my car wiper blade was the victim of a teenage crow prank.

Curious about the influx of crows in San Mateo, I reached out to the Sequoia Audubon Society, which meets the second Thursday night of each month at the San Mateo Garden Center at Beresford Park. They told me that the person to talk to is Alvaro Jaramillo (har a mee o). Alvaro is a member of the Society, a biologist, and also organizes nature tours throughout the world for avid bird watchers. After I finished my talk with Alvaro, I don't look at crows the same as I did before.

First of all, I've found that I'm "crow approved". One of my questions was why do crows in my backyard just sit and stare at me, without flying away when I go out there. Alvaro says its partly because of their intelligence and their experience. And partly because of their size. They know that people generally leave them alone, so they are less concerned about us, and will actually communicate this to other crows. The crow species that we have here is called the American Crow. They're related to the Common Raven. The raven is larger and is even more bold.

Why San Mateo? And why do they seem to like to thump around all over my roof each morning? Crows do well where people are. They like the open areas to forage - like lawns and parking lots. Rooftops give them a great open view. They also like how we leave garbage around, in dumpsters, or roadsides. All of that provides easy food. Having large trees in our suburban areas, but trees that are isolated, is also something that crows like. They can nest in the trees, and they can seek shelter in the trees. But, the trees are not dense enough to have formed a forest which begins to block out the open foraging areas. Crows aren't forest birds; they are edge species. They need the open and a few trees, essentially what we have created in our urban areas in San Mateo County. Alvaro says that all the development in San Mateo - starting way back in the 70s, has helped create this perfect



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environment for crows. He did say that my impression that they have really recently seemed to be all over could have been because about 15 years ago, the West Nile virus affected crows and ravens and their populations declined noticeably. So, the increase that I think I've seen may in fact be the restoration to pre West Nile numbers, or higher.

So, what other mischief can crows get into? Because of their intelligence, They learn, and can pass on information to other individuals in the flock. Crows are social, with a lot of interaction between flock members. A few years ago, at Halloween, our neighbor put out 2 very lifelike fake crows as part of their decorations. The day after Halloween, their front yard was full of real crows checking out the new members of the community. Likely they recognize each other as individuals, and form bonds and they are clever enough to work in teams in order to achieve common goals. Crows just like to have fun and play. They like to play in snow, and since we don't have any here, in the City of Davis, there are stories about how they like to drop walnuts on streets to crack them open - people were even beginning to suspect that they were dropping them in front of cars, so the cars would crack them open. They'll show up at schools, not necessarily while children are eating their lunch, but afterwards, when they know they'll be able to pick up the leftovers. The big roost for local crows around here is at Oracle Headquarters. I'm wondering what the noise is like over there when they all come home each night.

If this short lesson on crows in San Mateo sparked your interest in other bird species, **Here's The Deal:** the local Sequoia Audubon Society group is all about learning, teaching, enjoying, and conserving the birds of San Mateo County. The best way to get involved with the Society is to attend one of their field trips.

Okay, that's all the time we have for this episode. Have a great week. Thanks to Jack Radsliff for the original music to this podcast. If you'd like more information about our sponsor or the topics in today's episode, go to sanmateofocus.com.

HELPFUL LINKS:

[Article: Why Do Crows Attack Cars?](#)

[Website: Sequoia Audubon Society](#)

[Website: Alvaro's Adventures](#)

[NPR Story: Crows: Are They Scary Or Just Scary-Smart?](#)

[Video: BBC Earth: Are Crows the Ultimate Problem Solvers? | Inside the Animal Mind](#)

[Video: Crow Skiing Down Roof](#)

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Podcast Name: San Mateo Focus



Description: Whether you're new to San Mateo, California, or a long time resident, the San Mateo Focus Podcast is the place to learn about local history, good eats, and things to do.

Website: <http://www.sanmateofocus.com>

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