



Focus on Crows & Ravens to be Friends Program Saturday, Jan 28th at VC Library

Crows and Ravens

It is said, that if a person recognizes only three birds, one of them will be a crow. This is because the genus *corvus* is one of the most widely distributed birds in the world. One source states New Zealand is the only place where a crow cannot be found.

Although crows and raven belong to the same family, they differ from each other. Many people see large black birds and believe them to be one critter, but closer examination reveals aspects that set them apart from each other. Crows are smaller than ravens. According to *Sibley's Guide to Birds*, crows average 17.5 inches in length with a wing span of

Hellhole Canyon in High Density!



The Friends of Hellhole Canyon Preserve will soon be sharing a video created by Richard Rodriguez highlighting the value of the Preserve. As Richard lives in the area and is familiar with the canyon he was a natural choice for the Friends to work with on this project. Rodriguez is a recognized film maker who has won two Emmys for his documentaries. His work has been shown on PBS and other premier venues. This video, shot in HD, captures the haunting beauty of the area and describes its value for recreation, watershed and wildlife preservation. An interview with Dr. Kris Preston, a local wildlife biologist and director of the Orange County Nature Reserve, explains the critical need for wildlife corridors to maintain genetic diversity in animal populations. The Friends will use this film to promote public awareness of this accessible spot to enjoy nature and the value of protecting open space. Watch for a link to the video to appear soon on our website www.hellholecanyon.org.

39 inches. In contrast, the raven is 24 inches in length with a wing span of 53 inches. There are other differences as well. In flight the birds are quite different. Ravens can soar easily across the sky, while the crow is limited to short glides between 'rowing' wing flaps. Ravens are more talented fliers, being able to fly upside down and even do barrel rolls. They have been referred to as the stunt pilots of the bird kingdom.

The vocalizations are another difference. Although the crow can make several sounds, it is usually limited to the traditional caw. Ravens can make many unique sounds, including a burbling chuckle that almost seems to be a laugh. Ornithologists have found these sounds to have many meanings changing from bird to bird. Ravens can be taught to speak words and short sentences, even more so than parrots. Although note that neither of these birds make good pets.

Ravens, although they do
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Friends of Hellhole Canyon
Open Space Preserve
PO Box 221
Valley Center, CA 92082
Website:
www.hellholecanyon.org
760 749-5320

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**Board of Directors Meet-
ings** are held monthly, on
second Fridays. Call 760
749-5320 for location and
info.

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**The Friends is a nonprofit
land trust and environ-
mental education. We are
dedicated to protecting
natural open space at the
Preserve and in our com-
munity.**

County of San Diego Parks
Staff Ranger assigned to Hell-
hole Canyon:
Dave Holt, Supervising Ranger
Nick Sloan, Ranger
Offices at Wilderness Gardens
Preserve
Phone (760)742-1631
Cell (760) 212-5549
14209 Highway 76
Pala, Ca 92059

Friends Meetings

The Friends hold public general meetings once per quarter. The meetings feature an educational program on some natural or environmental topic and committee and officer updates.

The Friends' 2011-2012 calendar is posted on the website,
www.hellholecanyon.org.

For up-to-date info on events and activities check www.hellholecanyon.org. Click on Current News.

Docent Led Hikes

Hikes are led monthly on every 3rd Saturday, 9am from the Preserve parking lot. For information call us at 760-749-5320 or visit our web-site at www.hellholecanyon.org

For a great and safe hike, we suggest you bring the following: lots of water, hat, sunglasses and sunscreen, long-sleeved shirt and pants, sturdy hiking shoes, snack foods, binoculars, camera, tails guide books. Please note that the Preserve can get warm and then hot quickly compared to the earlier morning start times. Be Safe and See you there!!



Doggie Hikers pose for a picture of the Pack before hiking down the Trail! This Friends-sponsored hike was led by Bonnie Wheeler and her canine owners. What is the most frequent phone call to the Friend's phone line? "Are dogs allowed in the Preserve?" Answer: "Yes, if kept on a leash always and if staying on trails with their humans!"

Volunteers, Board Members Sought

Volunteers are needed to help with projects with the Friends. Are you a good organizer? Know how to mail merge? Can you write grants? Willing to join a committee of neighbors to help out here and there? Please volunteer with the Friends. We have a place for you and need your help. Call 760 828-0726 for more info and to get started.

Are you interested in helping to provide leadership and contributing to the growth and development of our organization? Then please consider joining our Board of Directors. Our board is composed of regular community residents. You are qualified by your interest in protecting open space and outdoors recreation. Please call 760 749-5320 for more info or to discuss how you can help the Friends. We need you! Don't be shy!

Join Friends Email List

Visit www.hellholecanyon.org and click on join email list and receive updates and reminders of upcoming events and news.

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flock at times, are generally more solitary birds than the crows. The crow can be seen in large flocks and when roosting at night these flocks can number in the thousands.

Ravens have a larger, heavier bill and a wedge shaped tail, as opposed to the crow's fan tail. This difference can be seen particularly in flight. Ravens also have a shaggier throat than the crow and have wings that end with longer 'fingers' of feathers.

Despite their differences, both of these birds have figured frequently in history and literature. Generally the genus *corvus* is seen as a harbinger of doom, crafty pests, as being curious and cheeky, loud and annoying, and too intelligent and suspicious.

References to them go back to Greek myths. Apollo supposedly turns the originally white crow black after one brings the god bad news. Aesop uses the crow in many of his fables. In them the crow is clever and manipulative. Norse mythology has two ravens sitting on the shoulders of Odin. Huginn and Muninn symbolizing mind and memory, fly out each day and bring back the news of the world to him.

In Shakespeare the crows and ravens appear frequently. In *Macbeth* the title character says that, "the raven himself is hoarse that croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan," the soon to be murdered king of Scotland. And, of course, Edgar Allan Poe immortalizes the raven in the self same poem as the bird intones, "Nevermore" from above the bust of Pallas.

Usually, the role of crows and ravens is that of a harbinger of doom or death. This may be because the crows followed the armies into battle, anticipating the feast to come. With their dark plumage, hunched stance and tendency to eat carrion, they do not bring with them a sunny, cheerful feeling. However in the Bible, they are often linked with God in a positive way.

These birds have also found their way into our language. A *crow's nest* is so named because of the high places the birds build their nests. The noisy crow brings the expression *to crow* about an achievement. If anyone has seen crows bouncing across the ground, it is easy to see where *crow hop* comes from. Their straight flight brings us *as the crow flies*, and *to eat crow*, meaning to have to say or do something distasteful goes back to a southern song from the early 1800's.

Perhaps some of the most famous ravens inhabit the Tower of London. Their presence goes way back in history and a flock of them is maintained in the tower by the Beefeaters, a special squad of soldiers that ensure their continued presence. The legend is that not only does their cawing keep away approaching danger, but it is believed that if the ravens ever desert the tower, disaster will befall the monarchy and the building itself will collapse.

Other cultures view the crows and ravens as beneficial. The Inuit believe ravens help them to hunt caribou, polar bear and seals, pointing out the location of the prey. Of course, when the natives are finished with the kill, the birds can clean up. Similar behavior is seen with wolves. Scientists claim the crows follow hunting wolf packs with the same intent of finishing off the leftovers. The Vikings also see the ravens as a positive sign, an omen of impending victory.

But crows and ravens are also seen as playful and inventive. They have been seen sliding in the snow, collecting shiny objects, and using tools to acquire food. Some claim these birds can even count. In one study, crows would see three people enter a building and when only two came out, they would not go for the tempting food until the third person emerged.

So even though many people see the genus *corvus* as an agricultural pest, a robber of nests, and an eater of road kill, the birds do have a good side. They are believed to be monogamous and mate for life, the families staying together and helping each other. The birds show signs of planning, communication, and problem solving. The crow and the raven are more than an omen of bad times.



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Friends General Meeting Saturday Jan 28th at 10am, at VC County Library! Don't miss our program on Raven and Crows !!!
More inside!

Return Service Requested

Program About Ravens and Crows

On January 28 at 10:00 AM the Friends of Hellhole Canyon will present speakers from Project Wildlife. Nikki Boiskin and Carol Crafts will share their knowledge about crows and ravens.

Nikki has had a lifelong love of animals. She joined Project Wildlife in 1998 doing opossum rescue and rehabilitation and is currently on the board of directors for that organization. She fosters a crow named Margarita and will be bringing her to the meeting.

Carol Crafts uses her skills as a registered nurse to help with the care and handling of exotic animals for Project Wildlife. She is also a docent for two local preserves and a member of the San Diego Tracking Team. She cares for a raven and will be bringing the bird to help illustrate her talk. Read inside for more detail!