

## Nature Notes from Raymond O'Connor Common Raven



This magnificent flier is the aerial equal of the hawks and falcons and North America's largest passerine. If any bird truly enjoys flying to the point of playing, it must be the raven. The Common Raven is strong in

flight, often rising in circles. It alternates deep wing beats with long glides or soaring on flat wings like a hawk. It soars on thermals or updrafts.

Intelligent, resourceful hunters and scavengers, groups of the Common Raven have been observed working together to capture prey that is too large for one bird to conquer.

The Common Raven is a revered totem and spirit to many Native Americans. The adults of this bird, which is Yukon Territory's avian emblem, are glossy black overall with a huge 'Roman nose' and shaggy throat feathers that can be elevated or sleeked down. The female is similar to the male but smaller.

The Common Raven is found solitary or in pairs or in small groups. It is a quick learner. It is gregarious in winter, when it may occur in large foraging flocks and nightly communal roosts.

The Common Raven is an active forager, scavenger and hunter. It is omnivorous; eating a wide variety of small invertebrates, from tadpoles and shellfish to worms and insects. It also takes many rodents, as well as carrion and refuse.

These birds have an elaborate courtship flight with great display of acrobatics and pair flying, male above female, wing-tip and heads touching. They mate for life.

The nest is built with branches and sticks on the outside. The cup is made of small sticks, lined with bark chips, animal hair, sheep's wool, lichens, moss, seaweed, and grass. The nest is typically in a fork of a tree about 13 – 24 feet above the ground. It is built by both sexes.

The incubation is 18-21 days by the female. The young stay in the nest for 38 – 44 days brooded by the female and fed by both the male and female.

The Common Raven has 1 brood per year.

## News from Here, There and Anywhere Reporter Teri Soos

Hi everyone, are we having spring? Or is it summer? With the nice winter I was sure spring would start in early March. But then we got snow and I wasn't so happy. But it didn't last long and our nice weather returned.

I like winter and snow but once in a while like this year it's nice not to have any and have the freedom to come and go without worrying about the roads or the temperature. I was in Portage talking with a small group of people in a store and we were discussing, among other things, the weather. I said I really liked not having snow. One person of the group scolded me. Didn't I realize how much we need snow for moisture for the wells and dugouts and a good sowing season. Well, I sort of back tracked and said, yes, I did see all that and felt badly for those dealing with those problems. But, I still say I really have enjoyed this kind of winter and hope the warm weather continues. I like things easier rather than frustrating (as in can I drive in this or not).

Well, now I will get on with my column. Before we go any further, let's wish a few of our lovely ladies and gentlemen, happy birthday. People who celebrated their birthdays this month are Jesse Yungkurt, Alverna Arksey, Ellen Forsley, Erna Wiebe, and Harry Lazor. To all these and anyone else celebrating this month we wish you all the very best of health and happiness in the coming year and for years to come.

And since birthdays bring to mind new lives too, we have a few new little ones to add to our list. We congratulate the parents and wish the best for their new additions.

A new daughter was born to Daryl and Candace Kennedy. I hear her name is Rylee.

Scott and Crystal Leclerc also welcomed a new daughter, Rebecca.

Ed Rinn's daughter and husband also welcomed a new daughter. She is Inez Rinn's great granddaughter and Inez tells me she has a real Icelandic name, Freya.

While I'm speaking of Inez and her family, I'm happy to be able to tell you Inez is now home from her long stay in the hospital and out and about walking with a walker after breaking her hip in December.