

THE WCR LEARNING COMMUNITY

This project is made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.



Crows gather on the wires at dusk.
Photo: Gerry Kahrmann, PNG

Thousands of crows gather in Burnaby 📖

In Burnaby, thousands of crows gather. Watchers say that 3,000 to 5,000 crows gather here every night. They stay for the whole night from sundown to sunrise.

You can see them at Still Creek at the corner of Willingdon Avenue and Highway 1. They gather here every

evening during the fall and winter.

They gather other places in the Fraser Valley too. The places they gather are called 'roosts'.

Families of crows gather in large groups. A group of crows is called a 'murder' of crows.

People are often afraid of crows

They are big. They are black. They are noisy.

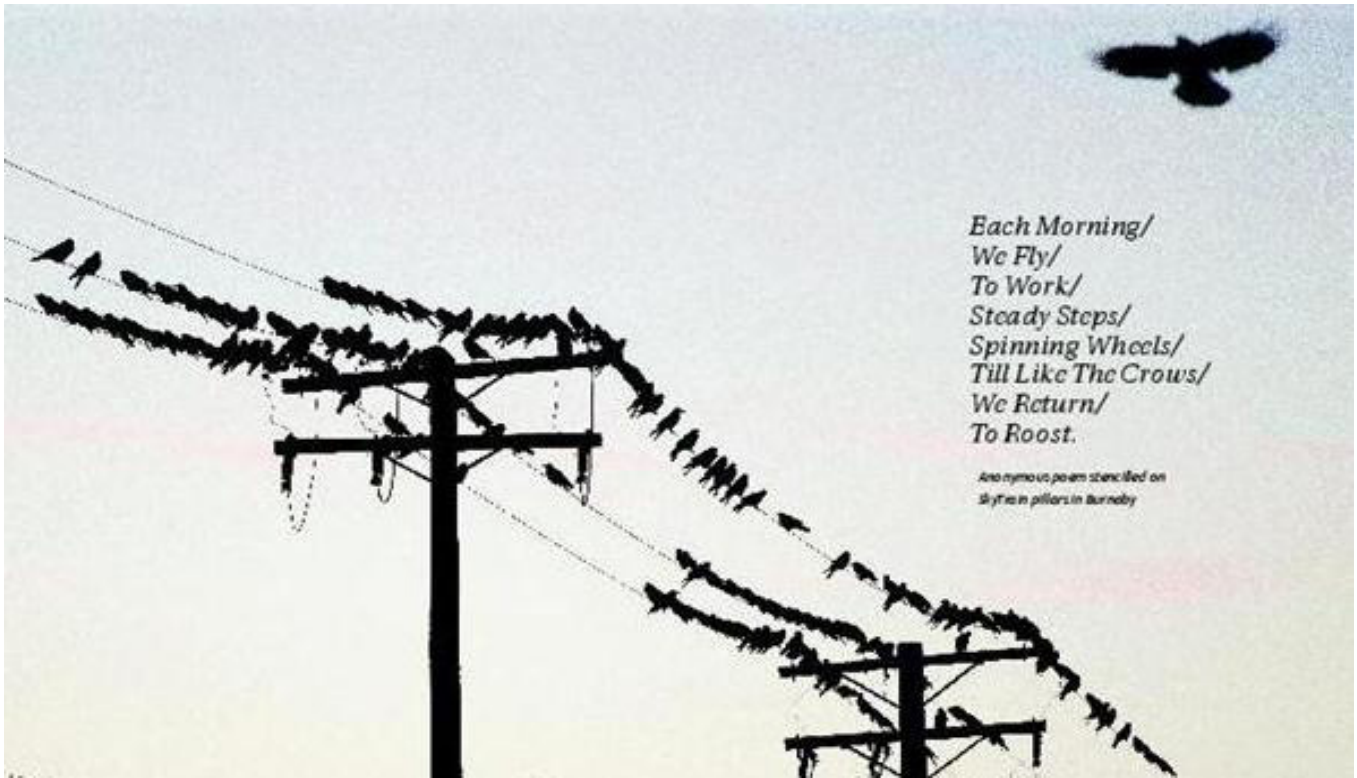
We use pictures of crows for death, danger and other bad things.

Crows are smart. They remember humans. They remember who feeds them and go to that person for food. They remember people who harmed them and can attack that person.

They protect their young from people and other threats. They fly at the threat in groups. This is called 'mobbing'.

"They are just being good parents because they see you as a threat," says Rob Butler. Rob Butler is a retired professor from Simon Fraser University. He lectures about crows.

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*Each Morning/
We Fly/
To Work/
Steady Steps/
Spinning Wheels/
Till Like The Crows/
We Return/
To Roost.*

Ano nymous poem stencilled on
skyTrain pillars in Burnaby

Crows crowd trees, power lines and street lamps before settling down for the night.

Photo: Gerry Kahrmann, PNG, *The Province*

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Crows fascinate people. Crows mate for life. They live in large family groups. Their young help raise their brothers and sisters. They can even make simple tools to help them get food.

Crows are scavengers. They will eat what they can find. Mostly they eat spilled grain, earthworms and other bugs. They also eat garbage.

Some people think crows cause problems

They make messes when they dig for beetles in the lawn and hunt for food in your garbage. They wake people up with their noisy calls at daybreak. Farmers must protect their crops. Crows love blueberries.

Others think crows are beautiful

“I try to explain to people who complain about them that they’re just like us. They’re not a gang they’re a family, raising their children, just like you,” says Derek Mathews, founder of the Avian Research Centre.

Someone left this poem on a pillar at the SkyTrain station:

Each morning
We fly
To work
Steady steps
Spinning wheels
Till like the crows
We return
To roost.

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Facts about crows

Species: The crows in BC are a subspecies of a larger crow that lives in North America.

Size: Adults weight up to 440 grams. They can be 40 centimetres long. Males are larger than females.

Breeding season: from March to July

Incubation: The female sits on the eggs for about 18 days. The parents are protective. They will attack humans if you come close to the nest.

Life expectancy: Crows live up to 12 years. The oldest crow we know of lived 30 years.

Diet: grains, seeds, garbage, dead animals, worms, grubs, mice, fish, mussels and clams. They will steal eggs and babies from other birds.

Predators: owls, hawks and eagles. Crows will mob or attack these birds when they come into their territory.

Vocabulary

Murder of crows = group of crows

Perch = a place for a bird to sit (n)
for instance a branch or roof
the act of sitting (v)

Roost = a place where groups of birds gather

Scavengers = looking for food in garbage

Mobbing = groups of crows attacking by flying at an animal, bird or person

Links

Go to *The Westcoast Reader* website for links to more information and videos.

www.thewestcoastreader.com

(Exercise on page 4...)

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What did you learn about crows?

Fill in the blanks using choices from the list below.

1. Crows gather in _____ during the fall and winter.
2. Between _____ crows gather here.
3. Places crows gather are called _____.
4. A group of crows is called a _____.
5. Crows eat _____, _____, _____ and _____.
6. Crows weigh about _____ grams.
7. Crows live _____ years.
8. People afraid of crows because they are _____, _____ and _____.
9. Crows _____ for beetles in lawns.
10. Crows _____ people.

Choices

big black noisy

12

roosts

grain earthworms bugs garbage

3,000 to 5,000

dig

murder

remember

Burnaby

440

(Answers on page 5...)

(...Continued from page 4)

Answer key

1. Burnaby
2. 3,000 to 5,000
3. roosts
4. murder
5. grain earthworms bugs garbage
6. 440
7. 12
8. big black noisy
9. dig
10. remember