

# Birds that bring gifts and do the gardening



**A recent Magazine story reported how an eight-year-old girl in the US regularly receives gifts from crows - they seem to be thanking her for feeding them. It inspired readers to email us with details of their own remarkable relationships with birds.**

In the original story [Gabi Mann explained](#) how crows have brought her a hoard of presents including coloured glass, paper clips, buttons and pieces of jewellery. It turns out she isn't the only person to receive gifts from wild birds.

**Lynn Witte, US (above):** I am the adopted mother of a baby crow that had been injured. I affectionately call her Sheryl Crow. I interacted with her constantly, hand fed her, encouraged her recovery and in the process I fell in love with this beautiful and intelligent creature. Over the summer she grew and eventually she learned to fly. Sheryl brings me gifts. My first was presented to me with her wings splayed open and head bowed. I was very ceremoniously handed a yellow foam dart from a toy gun! She refused to take the dart back as she does when we play games. I felt truly honoured. She has continued to surprise me with gifts that she finds.



A Santa figurine was a gift that she brought to me. Sheryl usually brings bottle caps, screws, fishing bobbers, even a feather from a bird - never food or dead animals. When she brings them she spreads her wings completely and bows her head. Sheryl loves eggs, cheese, bacon, hamburgers, potatoes, blueberries, watermelon, peas and carrots - just about everything. Sheryl also likes to play games - she loves to hide rocks and shiny objects.



When Sheryl was bitten by a dog, Lynn took her to the vet for treatment

**Katie Ross, Mukilteo, Washington, US:** I feed our backyard crows every day. When they get something they really love, like leftover ribs with bits of meat still on them, I often find a gift on our porch railing. We've received everything from shiny polished rocks from our neighbour's landscaping to bright red bits of yarn to dead bugs. We love our crows!

**Alex Fischer, Santa Fe, New Mexico, US:** Years ago I was regularly putting out food for a raven. One day it brought me the small wooden handle of a tool, perhaps a small chisel. I treasured the connection, and still have the little wooden handle.

**Alison Alcoba, Seattle, Washington, US:** I have a collection of bits from our crows - toys mostly: a smashed Hot Wheels car, a plastic toy spinning top, a bright Cracker Jack token, a Donald Duck PEZ dispenser head, all left for us in the bird bath. We feed our crows peanuts, and our cat Black Bart used to play with the local crows. When Bart was killed by a coyote one early morning, it was the distress call of the crows that alerted us to what was left of his body. A week to the day after Bart died, we were awakened by a similar racket. When we went outside to see what the noise was about, there were about 40 crows in our yard, and below them, right on the spot where we found Bart's body the week before, was the collar he had been wearing, complete with name tag. That was the kindest gift of all and it gave us closure.



**Amethyst Selma-Selene, Stockport:** On two occasions I had lost an item of jewellery that was important to me and weeks later I was given it back by magpies, members of the crow family. I bought this beautiful Victorian pentacle from America and I had it just one week before I lost it. Three weeks later, on a Sunday morning, I was off to my little shop when three magpies started to swoop down at me chattering loudly. Then they swooped down on to the road near the edge of the pavement. This went on for about three minutes until I stepped out on to the road to try and avoid the magpies' behaviour. It was then I noticed something shining on the road. And there was my Victorian pentacle on the road. They were showing me where it was, and I was amazed to find it again.



The pentacle earring, I lost a few months ago. I was going to put my dustbin out for collection but waited because the magpies were feeding. When they left I walked down the path and there it was.

I have Mr Elliott who is a crow and lives with me. He was injured as a baby and only has sight in one eye. He will be two around May and he has been with me since he was seven or eight weeks old.

Mr Elliott

**Guenther Lenske, Germany:** I raised a baby crow from May 2013 to September 2014. When I got him he could not fly due to broken wing feathers so I kept him in a big cage in the garden directly by my bedroom window and let him out in the garden every day. It took about a year for the broken feathers to be replaced by new, stronger ones enabling him to fly. Before he left, he put a few little stones in my living room.



**Stephanie St James, Madeira Beach, Florida, US:** I have a shop in a tourist area and a number of seabirds frequently come to my shop because I have rescued a few. There was a crow that showed up with a split bottom beak and I began to feed him. That was 7 years ago, and he and a number of others continue to show up.



I recently moved very close to my shop location and they found me at home as well. That is when the gifts started to arrive. The first was a piece of candy in a wrapper, and it was dropped in front of me. Then just a wrapper, bolts, shells and some bones arrived.



**Rick Zevering, Mountshannon, Co Clare, Ireland:** In 1994, in Leusden, Holland, where I lived, I found a young crow that had fallen out of the nest. I named the crow Gorre, and he soon became a rather dominant member of my household. He was extremely jealous of just about anybody touching me or even talking to me. He had a very obvious sense of humour - pulling loose my shoelaces while I was reading the newspaper then quickly hiding behind a cupboard or sneaking up on the cats from behind while they were eating. He would hack them viciously in the tail which made them flee and then help himself to the cat food. Gorre adored

me and gave me presents all the time. Mostly in the form of cat food that he had stolen, but occasionally he would bring me a stone, the lid of a milk bottle, a feather, a big live beetle and small branches or leaves.



He would fly into the house, land on my leg and he would then deposit his gift in my outstretched hand. This happened so frequently that I decided to put down a tray on a cupboard where all the items were kept. If I asked him to put it in the tray he would fly over to the cupboard and very meticulously place his latest gift among the others. Next door to us they were barbecuing and he landed on the barbecue, stole a sausage and brought it straight back to me, an act that caused some tension between the neighbours and us. Eventually more neighbours started to complain about Gorre. He would sit in front of a car at the parking lot and refuse to leave, or he would attack the neighbours' cats. It was with pain in my heart that I eventually had to move him to a forest 10km away. I never saw him again.

**Edna King, Pfaffing, Bavaria, Germany:** About 12 years ago when I was tending the vegetables in the garden, a very nosy and very big crow started to hang about. I called him Jakob and gave him some bread and cat food. Jakob soon came regularly for his meals and for "observing" me, as I like to describe it. When I finished weeding, I had the habit of tearing the bits very small. One day, I removed some bad leaves from the zucchini plant, Jakob ran as fast as he could towards me, ripped these leaves with his beak and his claws to tiny bits. He stomped on the shreds and croaked while doing this and he continued doing so with every leaf I pulled out. On some days he worked like a shredder. So my gift from Jakob was his help. It was a wonderful and also very hilarious gift.

**Diane Cooper, High Wycombe:** Many years ago, while on holiday in a cottage in Kent with our cousin (then about five), we noticed a crow-type bird visiting. It paid particular interest to my cousin (we think because of her high pitched voice). It followed her every day, accepted food from her hand and was photographed on her shoulder. One day she was sat on her bed when it landed on the open window sill and dropped a shiny coin on to her bed. We worked

out afterwards that the bird was a jackdaw. Sadly we never saw it again on any other visit to this family cottage but then our cousin never visited again.

**Michael Ostrogorsky, Seattle, US:** Our Greenwing macaw parrot Roxanne has a set of crow friends who visit daily. They eat our cast-off parrot food we put out for them. On occasion I will find trinkets such as bottle caps and bent nails on the back porch steps.



**Kimberly Niemaseck, Kathmandu, Nepal:** A new batch of baby crows was born and started visiting my balcony. I would feed them from time to time. Soon one became a regular and would call for me from the railing. I would always run and bring whatever was in the house. Then one morning I woke up to a broken piece of a shiny red glass bangle, commonly found on the streets of Kathmandu, but not three stories up on a balcony railing. I knew it had to be from the crow and I felt like a little girl showing it off to my friends. I saved it and had it lovingly on my dresser until I fell to the pressure of local friends who reminded me how broken red bangles were considered bad luck in the relationship department. I reluctantly got rid of it - if you knew my dating history you would understand.



The red bangle is at the bottom of the photo, to left of the lamp

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