

Burnaby group nursing orphan raven

BY JENNIFER MOREAU, BURNABY NOW JUNE 29, 2011



This fledgling, orphan raven was found on the side of the road near Grand Forks and brought in to the Wildlife Rescue Association of B.C. Wildlife rehabilitators have to cover themselves and use a raven puppet to feed the bird so it does not become habituated to humans.

Photograph by: Paul Steeves, SPECIAL TO THE BURNABY NOW

The Wildlife Rescue Association of B.C. is mothering a fledgling orphaned raven at its Burnaby headquarters. The raven was found near Grand Forks and brought to the association on June 26.

"It was (brought in by) somebody coming back to Vancouver, and it was found on the side of the road," said Yolanda Brooks, the association's spokesperson. "They didn't see any sign of parents, so basically it was an orphan."

Wildlife rehabilitators are hand-feeding the young bird every 45 minutes, from dawn till dusk. They have to wear a full, burka-like covering and use a raven hand puppet so the bird does not become accustomed to receiving food from humans.

"Ravens are a species prone to imprinting while in care, and the head gear and puppet are two of the measures we take to keep them as wild as possible. If the raven becomes habituated to humans its chances of survival in the wild would be slim," said Brooks. "At a certain point in their development, baby birds form an attachment to their parents. If they are raised by humans without the proper precautions, the bird will form a bond with humans. This is known as imprinting, and ravens are a species at risk from the phenomenon because they are naturally very social animals."

The fledgling will be released in a few weeks, once it can eat and fly on its own.

"Most of the time we release the animals as close as possible to where they were found," Brooks said.

Often, with fledgling ravens and crows, parents will be nearby, feeding the young on the ground while they learn to fly. It's best to watch for parents before bringing an assumed orphan to wildlife rehabilitators, Brooks cautioned.

"They have to be observed for as long as possible to make sure they are a true orphans," Brooks said. "Their parents are the best for helping to raise the young. They do a much better job of it out in the wild."

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