



LIVING WITH RAVENS

Information on Ravens

The Australian Raven, *Corvus coronoides*, is the largest member of the crow family in Australia. Ravens are magnificent birds, with glossy black plumage suffused with a purple and green iridescence. Their melancholy, rattling call is unmistakable.

The Australian Raven is protected in Western Australia under the *Wildlife Conservation Act*. While there are those who love to hear the call of the raven and enjoy their presence, the increase in the number of ravens around Perth is perceived as a nuisance by some urban residents.

Whilst ravens have been more commonly associated with country areas in the past, they are now thriving in the drastically modified urban environment that we have created. Food is easily accessible in the suburbs.

As well as being considered noisy, ravens are often blamed for the disappearance of other native species in the metropolitan area, by out-competing them for resources. However, it is more probable that the scarcity of urban bushland, the proliferation of sparsely planted gardens with manicured lawns and the use of insecticides have been the major contributing factors in the decline of other native bird species.

Another factor contributing to the increase in raven numbers in the metropolitan area is the availability of roosting and nesting sites. Ravens prefer to nest between 10 and 25 metres above the ground and therefore are more likely to be found in well-established suburbs, or other areas where established trees have been retained.

Ravens are omnivorous, consuming meat, eggs, insects, fruit, bread, seeds, berries and even flower parts. Ravens can often be seen turning over mulch in gardens and hunting for worms and beetles on lawns. They are opportunistic feeders, switching diet according to food availability.

Problem Ravens

Studies have shown that the greater the number of humans using an area, the greater the number of ravens likely to be found there.

Ravens have benefited from the changes associated with urbanisation and proper in the open garden and parkland habitats now available to them. They also have a natural role as scavengers and are quick to taken advantage of litter and food refuse from rubbish bins and waste disposal sites in our urban environment. Unfortunately, some people also deliberately encourage ravens with offerings of food.

Providing a regular artificial food source results in unnaturally larger than normal numbers of animals living in an area, whilst eroding their capacity to forage for their own food.



Living With Ravens (cont)

Deterring Ravens

A localised cull would not have significant impact on numbers, as the resultant 'vacuum' would soon be filled by ravens disbursing from neighbouring areas.

Reducing artificial sources of food by altering waste management practices will be the most effective means of regulating raven numbers in the metropolitan area. Bins must be fitted with self-closing lids and all litter and food scraps should be disposed of correctly.

The feeding of ravens is strongly discouraged.

Effective long-term control of raven numbers requires a concerted effort by the community to devise better waste management practices. It is only with good planning and application of these management practices within your suburb that raven numbers will gradually decline over time.

Ravens are adept to finding food from natural as well as artificial sources and will always be part of our urban environment and must be accepted as such.

References

Trounson, D. & M., 1996, *Australian Birds Simply Classified*, 4th Edn., National Book Distributers and Publishers, NSW, Australia

Reader's Digest, 1997, *Reader's Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds*, 2nd Edn., Reader's Digest, Sydney, Australia

