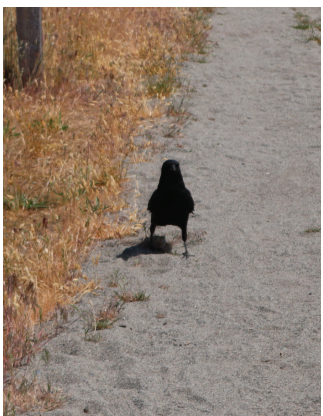
# Introduction

When I began writing these notes, I had been watching birds for just over a year. I had no expert knowledge of birds, but I didn't mind the uncertainty of being a beginner. There was plenty I didn't know, so I sometimes filled the gaps with imagination or found myself getting sentimental over small moments.

2025–2026 Unofficial Bird Report is a personal collection of photographs and short pieces about five bird species I encountered along the way. I hope it feels as familiar and welcoming as a letter to someone, or a page from a diary you happen to open.

# American crow



*Familiar Strangers*

Crows are among the birds closest to our daily lives. Their calls and appearance are so familiar that we rarely stop to notice them. They feel like streetlights or utility poles, always present and always part of the landscape.

In the sunlight, they hop along with shadows as black as their feathers. Their movements always look cheerful to me.

*Winter Occupation*

I'm not entirely sure why, but in winter I often see dozens of crows taking over a park. When more than fifty crows settle in the trees, their shiny black feathers seem to become part of the branches themselves, as if they have replaced the leaves.

Against the sunset, the wind moves through these branches filled with feathers, and I feel as though I've stepped into a season that is neither winter nor spring.



*John Hendry Park, BC*
*January 2026*

*The Shell Experiment*

I think Crows are remarkably intelligent birds.

One sunny day in April, I was sitting beneath a tree at Boundary Bay when something suddenly fell near my feet. At first, I thought it was a stone. Looking closer, I realized it was a clam.

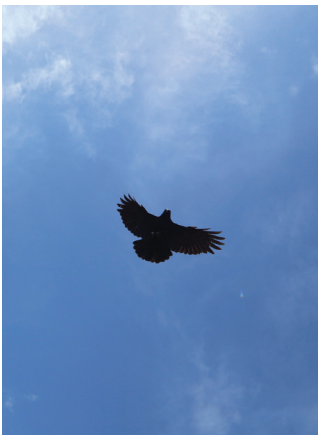
When I looked up, I saw a crow staring down at the fallen clam as if it had just lost something valuable.

I picked it up and tossed it back toward the crow.

Later, after watching other crows along the shoreline, I finally understood what had happened. Some crows collect clams from the mudflats, fly high into the air, and then drop them onto the ground. Once the shell breaks open, they eat what's inside. And that is how they enjoy their meal.



*Deep Cove, BC*
*April 2026*



*Professional Troublemakers*

To me, crows seem like born fighters. I often see them picking fights with birds much larger than themselves. Once, I watched eight crows spend more than an hour chasing and harassing a single owl. They were incredibly persistent.

I've seen them show the same confidence around hawks and eagles. They often gain altitude first, then swoop down from behind, seemingly aiming for the back of the larger bird's head.

Watching them, I get the impression that they rely on more than courage. There seems to be some strategy behind their boldness.

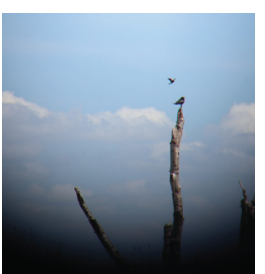
*Thornton Park, BC*
*June 2026*

*A lone coyote was moving across the field while several crows followed overhead, repeatedly diving toward it until it left the area.*



*Boundary Bay, BC*
*May 2026*

*A crow has taken over a perch that seemed to belong to a Red-winged Blackbird. The blackbird repeatedly tried to reclaim its spot, but the crow appeared completely uninterested in the protest.*





*Crows in a Bad Mood*

It was around the time when spring arrived and many birds began nesting and raising their young. The crows nesting in a roadside tree near my university seemed noticeably more sensitive and territorial.

Around then, I often heard stories about people being attacked by crows. One day, I was walking down the street when a crow struck the back of my head. A classmate told me that she had also been attacked on her way to school around the same time.

Perhaps they were different crows. But somehow, I suspect it was the same one.

Unless we learn to speak crow and explain that it was all a misunderstanding, we may have to watch the backs of our heads each spring until we graduate.

### Things I've Heard

Someone I know told me she has been trying to befriend the local crows for several months. They still keep their distance, but they seem to recognize her as the person who brings snacks.

I'd like to be friends with them too, though I get a little nervous when they come too close. Perhaps being struck on the back of the head left more of an impression on me than I realized.



*Outside My Window*
*Septembe 2025*

# Black-capped Chickadee



*The Famous Chick-a-dee Call*

As its name suggests, the Black-capped Chickadee calls out "chick-a-dee-dee-dee," a sound that always seems cheerful to me.

*Fearless Around People*

Of all the birds I've encountered, Black-capped Chickadees seem among the most willing to approach people. When I've stood still with seeds or nuts in my open palm, they've flown over to take the food directly from my hand.

There is, however, a small side effect. Once I've offered food, they sometimes seem to expect more.

More than once, I've reached into my pocket to grab my phone, only to have an impatient chickadee rush towards me, apparently convinced that I was about to produce another snack.

It was a small misunderstanding, but I liked feeling that they trusted me. When there were no seeds left in my pocket, though, I felt a little sorry, as if I had let them down.

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*Sarsaparilla Trail, ON*
*April 2024*

*A Love for Sunflower Seeds*

I think these Chickadees seem to have a particular fondness for sunflower seeds.

I often recorded videos of them taking food from my hand. Later, while watching the footage, I noticed something interesting.

No matter what mixture of seeds was available, they almost always selected the sunflower seeds first. Their accuracy impressed me. They seemed to know exactly what they were looking for.

*"They are tiny sun-flower seed stealers.*



*Different Personalities*

Watching chickadees collect food makes it difficult to believe that they all share the same personality.

Some are cautious and only take seeds that have fallen from a person's hand.

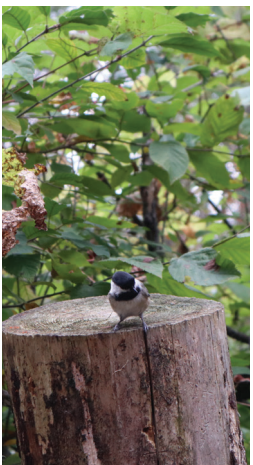
Others appear greedy enough to carry off two seeds at once.

A few seem unusually opinionated. If their preferred snack is unavailable, they peck at the palm as if filing a formal complaint before flying away.

It is a small detail, but one of the many things that makes chickadees feel both familiar and full of character.



*Sarsaparilla Trail Ottawa ON*
*September 2024*



*"If you listen carefully after a chickadee leaves with a sunflower seed, you can often hear the tiny cracking sound of its beak opening the shell."*





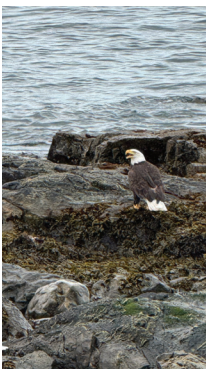
# BALD EAGLE

*A Voice That Doesn't Match the Face*

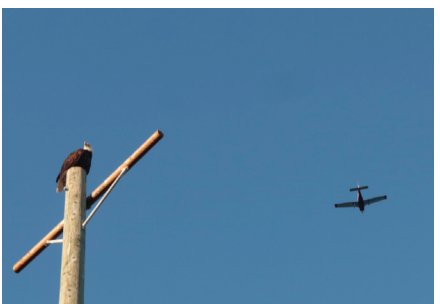
The eagle call familiar from movies and internet memes is actually the call of a different bird of prey. I hadn't realized this until I began hearing eagles after moving to Canada.

The first time I heard one was while walking along the shoreline in Victoria. An eagle called out at what looked like a hawk circling nearby, seemingly warning it to stay away.

Its voice was surprisingly squeaky, a series of high-pitched notes. To me, it sounded a little out of place coming from such an impressive-looking bird. But perhaps it did the job. Shortly afterwards, the other bird flew away.



*Clover Point, BC*
*April 2026*



*Bevan Fishing Pier, BC*
*April 2026*

*Easy to Spot*

I seem to spot eagles more often on days with good weather, soaring high overhead. Even from a distance, their white heads help me recognize them.

Catching sight of them circling against a blue sky is one of the small pleasures of a sunny day. When they fly low overhead, I can sometimes see their yellow beaks catching the sunlight, and even their yellow feet tucked neatly beneath their bodies.



*Aware of Their Audience*

Eagles often appear as though they know exactly how impressive they are.

They are frequently found standing alone on the tops of utility poles, dead trees, and other places with a good view.

People stop to watch them or take photographs. I sometimes wonder whether they notice the small audience below. They often stay perched while people watch, then suddenly spread their wings and fly away.

*A Nest Above the Backyard*

Not long ago, I came across an eagle sitting in a nest while out on a walk. What surprised me most was its location: in a tree that wasn't particularly tall, overlooking someone's backyard.

There was a home on the ground and another among the branches. I liked the thought of the people and eagles living as neighbours.



*West Dyke Trail, BC*
*May 2026*



### Field Note

The Bald Eagle in these photographs called repeatedly, sounding almost annoyed. Not long after, another eagle arrived at the nest. When I later showed the photographs to a friend, she joked that it must have been calling for its partner.

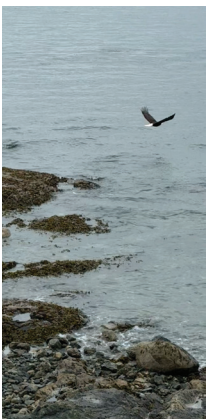
Looking at the images again, I found myself agreeing with her. I could almost hear it asking, “What took you so long?”

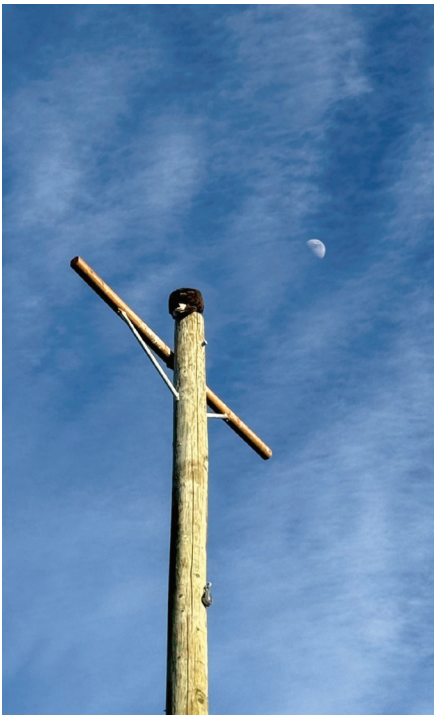
### Things I've Heard

In April, I met a birdwatcher named M while watching Bald Eagles along the shoreline in Victoria. Seeing him with a spotting scope, I asked, "Are you watching birds?"

"Yes," he replied. "Did you just see a Bald Eagle fly past here?"

That was how we started talking about birds. He shared things about Bald Eagles that I hadn't known before, including the large numbers that gather in Squamish during the annual salmon runs. The abundance of food attracts eagles from across the region.



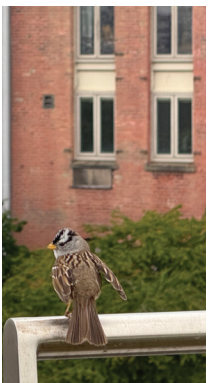




# WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW

*A Little Bird with a Crown*

I like that the word “crown” appears in this bird’s name. The black-and-white stripes on its head remind me of a crown, or perhaps an unique striped hat. Against that hat, its small beak, with hints of pink, orange, and yellow, seems to shine a little brighter.



*Seattle Waterfront , Washington*
*April 2026*



*Trillium Park, BC*
*May 2026*

*Different Personalities*

I see many different sparrows in Vancouver, but I still find it difficult to tell them apart. Sometimes I wonder how many species I've seen without realizing they were different.

Song Sparrows and White-crowned Sparrows are the two I find easiest to recognize. As I became more familiar with them, I began to notice how different they felt to me, even though both were small birds with voices that made me stop and listen.

The White-crowned Sparrow's black-and-white crown also helps me pick it out among the other sparrows. Perhaps that is why I sometimes feel grateful for its little crown. It gives me something familiar to look for.



*The Poet and the Public Speaker*

These two familiar sparrows leave quite different impressions on me. The Song Sparrow reminds me of an enthusiastic public speaker, hopping from one perch to another while delivering a passionate speech. The White-crowned Sparrow feels more like a poet standing a few steps back, quietly whistling to itself.







*Spring Singer*

During winter, I sometimes spotted White-crowned Sparrows among the shrubs and undergrowth. They were easy for me to miss, partly hidden among the branches.

Once spring arrived, I began to notice them much more often. I saw them singing from trees and utility wires, and sometimes chasing one another. Their presence suddenly felt much larger.

At other times, I watched them hopping quietly beneath bushes, searching for food. I liked the contrast between the birds singing so boldly above me and the same small birds quietly going about their day below.



*Emily Carr University of Art + Design*
*May 2026*

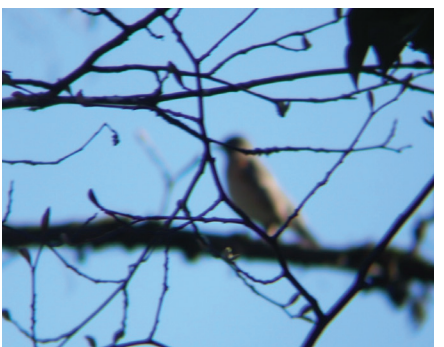
*"A White-crowned Sparrow after losing a territorial dispute. Its retreat looked surprisingly tragic."*

*A Possible First Encounter*

I don't have many photographs of White-crowned Sparrows from Vancouver.

In early March, I photographed a small bird while out on a walk. The image turned out far too blurry for me to identify the species at the time.

Looking back, I remember the bird having a slimmer shape and greyer plumage than a Song Sparrow. Because of this, I sometimes wonder if the bird in the photograph may have been a White-crowned Sparrow. When I'm out watching birds, I often meet others like this one, whose identities remain a small mystery to me.





**Field Note**

Since this spring, at least two White-crowned Sparrows have been regular visitors around my university. I've most often seen them between four and six in the afternoon.

Their visits sometimes feel like a small clock marking the passing of my day. For a while, I would look out of the window around that time to watch them hopping across the university parking lot or singing from the top of a sign. Like people, they seem to follow schedules of their own.

# Anna's Hummingbird



*The Sound Before the Sight*

Anna's Hummingbirds are so small that I often notice them by sound before I see them.

Their distinctive wingbeats reveal their presence long before I can find them among the branches.

When an Anna's Hummingbird flies nearby, it produces a soft "brrrrrr" or "whirrrrr" sound. It often reminds me of a tiny airplane or the propeller of a miniature drone.



*The Lingering Sound*

There is a small side effect to spending too much time watching hummingbirds. For a while, their wingbeats seem to linger in my ears. Sometimes I hear a similar sound in running water, bathroom fans, or other machines and immediately think of hummingbirds. Before I know it, I'm looking around for one, even indoors.



*Everett Crowley Park, BC*
*April 2026*

*A Hidden Nest*

In March, I was fortunate enough to discover a hummingbird nest.

At first, I thought the bird might be injured because it remained motionless for such a long time. Later, when I showed my photographs to a friend, they explained that the Anna's Hummingbird was actually sitting on a nest.

From where I stood, the nest looked like part of the hummingbird's folded wing. What I had mistaken for feathers was actually a carefully built nest.

The nest was so small that its bits of plant material seemed to blend into the bird's feathers.

When I returned two weeks later, the hummingbird that had been sitting there was gone. Only the empty nest remained.



*"What I had assumed was part of the bird's body was, in fact, the nest itself."*

*Winter Resident*

Anna's Hummingbirds are a welcome sight in Vancouver, even in winter. As spring approached, I began to see Rufous Hummingbirds too. Sometimes, I watched the two species chase each other, seemingly in disputes over territory.

I also often see Anna's Hummingbirds perched on the highest branches. Even after all the leaves have fallen, a single hummingbird sometimes sits at the very top of a bare tree. To me, it looks like the last small rice cake left on a skewer of dango.





*Everett Crowley Park, BC*
*March 2026*

*"Even after all the leaves have fallen, a single hummingbird can often be found perched on the highest branch."*





# Afterword

One of the reasons I enjoy watching birds is their small gestures. I find myself drawn to the way they move while singing, lean into the wind on a branch, or hop across the ground. I don't always know what these movements and sounds mean. Sometimes, I imagine stories of my own to go with them.

To me, birdwatching is like receiving a small invitation. I don't always find the bird I hope to see, but when I let go of the need to find something and simply wait, unexpected moments sometimes appear. At those times, I feel briefly invited into their world. For a bird and me to be in the same place at the same moment is a small encounter made possible by countless coincidences.

Perhaps meeting you through these pages is something similar. I hope you find a moment to smile, or remember a bird you once met. May that memory be the beginning of another story or encounter, filled with joy and happiness.