



# Newsletter

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## Ravens and Crows - By Liz Rocco

Do you know the difference between crows and ravens? They are both large black birds, so if there's a difference, what does it matter? I think you should care simply for the expansion of brain particles that you will receive when you commit new facts to memory, but they also are part of our ecosystem. Crows and ravens are both pretty common throughout the United States, so it's cool to know the difference in two birds that you see in your everyday life.

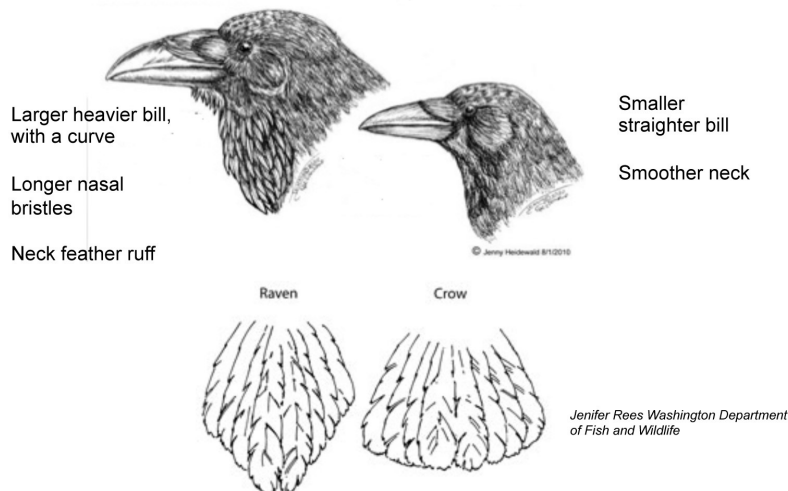
Crows and Ravens are in the same genus (*Corvus*), are entirely black, (down to their legs beaks and eyes), relatively large birds, and smart. Here are a few differences to think about when you start your crow vs. raven identification. First off, their size; ravens can weigh more than twice that of crows (2.6lbs vs. 1lb). In part to their weight, ravens have much larger and stronger beaks and also have a larger wingspan with more defined "finger" feathers, like a hawk. The larger raven spends more time soaring, coasting, and doing acrobatic tricks, while the crow beats its wings much more often and is not likely seen coasting for more than a few seconds. Their respective tail feathers can also help to I.D. the two birds; ravens have a wedge-shape while crows have a fan-shape tail.

One of the best ways to differentiate the two birds is by their sounds. The crow makes a very recognizable caw sound while the raven makes a "croooooaa," "cr-r-ruck," "wonk-wonk", and more throaty gurgling noises. Common ravens are often seen in pairs or solitary, while crows can frequently be seen in large groups. Groups of crows are called a "murder", what's that about right? With a little research, it seems that only poets call large groups of crows a murder, while a scientist will use the term "flock."

Both crows and ravens are native to North America, but at some point most of us have had a little trouble getting along with them, maybe because they are so smart. They are most interested in our waste cans and fruit trees or garden. Well, some equally smart people at [WildAwareUtah.org](http://WildAwareUtah.org) have figured out some helpful tips. If you like learning about birds and viewing them in the wild, think about attending some Alta birding events. [Monthly bird surveys](#), hawk watches, owl prowls and more! View all these events and more on [Facebook](#), [Google+](#), and AEC's [sustainability calendar](#).

### Common Raven

### American Crow



## Rose Rust - By Liz Rocco

Who spray-painted all the rose bushes with orange highlights? If you are like me, you're wondering what the unnaturally bright orange powdery substance is on the wild roses throughout the Wasatch. The orange pustules on the stems and leaves of rose bushes is caused by a parasitic fungus. This fungus is a biotroph; meaning it infects the host tissues for extended periods without killing them, feeding on the living cells. The likely fungus, *Phragmidium tuberculatum*, only attacks roses and passes the winter in a resting spore stage. According to the Royal Horticulture Society, "the first formed spores (spring spores) infect young stems, causing distortion and the production of bright orange pustules. These in turn infects the leaves to produce dusty orange spores (summer spores) which are spread by wind and initiate further infections. In late summer, the pustule producing summer spores switch over to produce the

dark, tough resting spores. These spores survive the winter often adhering to stems." Rose rust infections in the wild are within the normal range of pests and diseases which are part of normal ecological pressures. There are many resources available for controlling this rust in your own garden, but in the wild, let nature takes its own course!



“Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads.”

Thoreau

## Weed Warriors - By Liz Rocco

The Alta Environmental Center crew are weed warriors! Each week we spend time pulling invasive weeds from areas in and around Alta Ski Area. This effort takes time, dedication, and elbow grease. At times the weeds can be as tall as we are with stems as thick as small trees. Are you wondering why we spend the time and effort to pull plants from the ground? Noxious or invasive weeds are non-native plants that can aggressively take over native plant habitat, drain water resources, and some are even toxic to animals and humans. Weeds can spread naturally (wind, water, and wildlife), but they can also be spread by human activities and pet traffic. So in order to keep our native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers happy and healthy we take the time to uproot and properly dispose of invasive plant species. You too can be a weed warrior! Every month we hold a weed-pulling get together. Partnering with [Cottonwood Canyons Foundation](#) and [Friends of Alta](#), the team is teaches volunteers the nuances of proper weed pulling techniques. With all of us together we can make a significant impact on the amount of invasive weeds in upper Little Cottonwood Canyon. Our next weed pull is September 15<sup>th</sup>, followed by a Social Stewardship Party put on by [Alta Community Enrichment](#); it will be an evening not to miss!



## September - October Sustainability Events



If these highlighted sustainability events catch your eye, check out our full sustainability calendar at [alta.com/alta-environmental-center/resources#sustainability-events](https://alta.com/alta-environmental-center/resources#sustainability-events).

- **September - 1 Million Cups:** Sustainable Startups is proud to host the Salt Lake 1MC community—a free national program designed to educate, engage and connect entrepreneurs. Every Wednesday from 9-10am, always open to the public. For more info visit: [greetowncollective.com](https://greetowncollective.com)
- **Sept 15 - Weed Pull and Alta Social:** Cap off the summer season with a final weed pull and Alta Social event afterwards. More info and registration: [volunteer@cottonwoodcanyons.org](mailto:volunteer@cottonwoodcanyons.org) or [altaarts.org/events](https://altaarts.org/events)
- **Sept 18 - 2nd Annual Aqua Fair:** Join Recycle Utah for a “blue tie” gala to raise awareness for water conservation. For more info visit: [recycleutah.org](https://recycleutah.org)
- **Sept 20 - Good JUJU Bag:** An Alta Community Enrichment event, making a juju bag containing various items of spiritual power. Visit: [altaarts.org](https://altaarts.org)
- **Sept 23 - Star Party:** Join the Ogden Astronomical Society at the Ogden Nature Center for a night under the stars. Catch a short presentation about our solar system before heading out to the meadow to explore the night sky by telescope. For more info visit: [ogdennaturecenter.org](https://ogdennaturecenter.org)
- **Oct 1 - Project Learning Tree Workshop:** Take a fall day and get to know some great environmental education opportunities and Alta’s ecology. More information at [usee.org](https://usee.org) or contact [Jackie@usee.org](mailto:Jackie@usee.org).
- **Oct 3 - Penguin Feeding:** Did you know Gentoo penguins eat 10% of their body weight every day? Learn more fun with the [thelivingplanet.com](https://thelivingplanet.com)