

Literacy This Week



Yukon Literacy
Coalition

We are a society of people dedicated to improving the quality of life of all Yukoners. We do this by building the foundational skills required for lifelong learning; acknowledging that we are all adapting to an everchanging world.



A bird and a tree

Have you ever wondered what kind of bird is thrashing your beautiful Mountain Ash tree with its abundance of berries and why?

The Bohemian Waxwing indicated by their beautiful orange and red mohawks and smokey grey bodies are drawn to the rapidly fermenting berries, like ice wine. These berries' potency increases upon the first true frosts.

Some believe the influx of Bohemian Waxwings marks the true start to the cold season of winter, supposedly these trees and their berries are an indicator of how the winter will progress. More berries produced mean a colder harsher winter is to come, and a leaner production means a mild season ahead.

The birds can be affected by these fermented berries putting them into an intoxicated state, causing them to do wild aerial performances and the odd window thud.

The tree that entices them is the Mountain Ash, or Rowan. It is deciduous and spans across much of Europe, Russia, China, and North America. They are a light coloured smooth-barked tree that as they age become fainter in tone. Their leaves are groups of leaflets with a long center stem and the sap as it ripens turns this orangey-red color often referred to as tree blood. In English lore, it is believed that a year of plentiful rowan fruit or mountain ash berry would have a good grain harvest but be followed by a harsh or severe winter.

I wonder how many berries were on the trees this year?



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