

## In Vancouver, crows fascinate as much as they frighten.

Having become one of the city's symbols, the corvids have won the sympathy of the inhabitants with their intelligence. But they also frighten people, not hesitating to swoop down on passersby, especially in the spring during the nesting season.

By [Elliott Dumoulin](#) (Vancouver, special correspondent)

Published on May 5, 2026 at 3:00 AM, modified on May 5, 2026 at 11:24 AM



Crows on a balcony in Vancouver, October 2023. IRINA ANTONENKO/FACEBOOK

On paper, the quest seemed daunting: to find someone in Vancouver, British Columbia, who had ever been attacked by a crow. In reality, it was solved in minutes. Here, the corvids' unpredictable moods are almost commonplace.

Take Vishu (who did not give her last name, like other interviewees quoted), 27 years old, employed at the reception of a hostel in the city center, is still marked by an episode from the spring of 2025, on returning from a walk with friends: *"A crow swooped down on me, cawing: I was terrified. Now, I take detours when I see them..."*

A few hundred meters below, Martin enjoys a gentle, peaceful breeze on his bench in Stanley Park, an urban forest bordering the Strait of Georgia. The septuagenarian, sporting aviator-style glasses, seems to wear a permanent smile... which he only abandons when the subject of crows comes up. *"Once, one of*

*them was waiting for me in the tree across from my house and swooped down on me... The next day, the same thing!"*

Read also | This article is for subscribers only. [Crows, in order to find carrion, do not follow predators, but their memory](#)

Lire plus tard

Loren, a 23-year-old sociology student, even felt the bird's wings flap in her hair, the climax of a furtive sideways attack: *"I used to like them. Now they terrify me."* No stitches were needed for any of them, but they were either blue or black with fear, depending on the angle of the sun's rays on their feathers.

### **A resentful bird**

In Vancouver, crows are part of the scenery. Hidden in a palm tree, perched on a traffic light, tearing apart a taco on the ground. If you anticipate encountering them around a street corner, you're almost never wrong. Every year, the press offers advice on how to avoid attacks. Recently, CBC News recommended carrying an umbrella, just in case...

*"The interactions seem more frequent, due to the increase in both human and crow populations. But I don't think the crows are more aggressive in Vancouver than elsewhere,"* says John Marzluff, a professor of environmental and forest sciences at Washington State University in Seattle. He notes that the attacks are concentrated in the spring, the nesting season when crows are vulnerable : *"It's their way of saying, 'Go away, my chicks are here!'"*

Parents with exceptional memories: crows never forget faces. *"In one experiment, a bird recognized the person who captured it for sixteen years. If it considered you a threat during a first encounter, it will do so for a long time ,"* warns John Marzluff.



An American crow in Stanley Park, Vancouver, Canada. SYLVAIN CORDIER/BIOSPOTO

The difference with crows in other cities is that in Vancouver, their protective elk attacks are meticulously documented. Since 2016, Jim O'Leary, a geographic information systems expert, has been running the [CrowTrax](#) website, which maps their attacks. Nearly 9,000 have been reported in ten years. Victims indicate the location of the incident and rate the bird's aggressiveness on a scale of 1 to 5.

*"People usually post the day after the incident. But someone once reported an attack that happened ten years ago. For some, it remains a trauma."* Jim O'Leary sometimes smiles at certain accounts: *"There was one guy who wrote that a crow flew away with his girlfriend... I didn't keep that one!"*

### **Canuck, unofficial symbol of the city**

The relationship between Vancouverites and these birds isn't just one of fear. It often leans towards a kind of tenderness. Once a year, for example, about a hundred cyclists participate in the "[Crow Roost Twilight Bike Ride](#)," a ride that follows the immense flocks of crows—more than 15,000—as they head to their roosting area southeast of the city. *"It started out of curiosity. We wondered, 'Where do they go at night?' And we realized that many people were asking the same question,"* says Carmen Rosen, co-organizer of the ride. *"This spectacle creates a kind of poetry in the daytime; some Vancouverites have incorporated observing the flock into their daily lives as a ritual,"* explains Laura Adams, a psychology professor at Langara College in Vancouver and author of a [study on the connection between these birds and her city](#).

If you had to name the one who shifted the relationship between Vancouver and its corvids toward affection, many would point to Canuck. In 2018, this crow was chosen as the city's unofficial symbol [in a poll](#)—with over 300,000 votes—organized by CBC News, beating out actors Michael J. Fox and Seth Rogen. Found as a baby by a resident in the city's east end and then released, Canuck, with his friendly behavior around humans, became a local celebrity. The mischievous bird was filmed wandering around the subway and even grabbed a knife at a crime scene. His adventures, shared online, [have garnered him over 120,000 followers on Facebook](#).

The fascination with Canuck has helped shift the perception of the species, says Laura Adams. *"He helped Vancouverites see these birds as individuals, with their own personalities. Gulls don't have that opportunity..."* Even though Canuck disappeared in 2019—some [suggest he was kidnapped](#)—every video posted by his rescuer, Shawn Bergman, continues to garner hundreds of likes daily. Bergman is also trying to get the attention of Vancouver native Ryan Reynolds to adapt Canuck's story into a film. The appeal has been made, so far without success. If the actor takes too long to respond, it's best to hope the crows don't hold it against him.