

Rescued Crow Becomes Rainier Man's Lifesaver

BY DANIEL WARN

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Crows: Spooky? Check. Clever? Check. Capable of unlikely and healing friendships? Check, check, check.

Jonny Snow the Crow, affectionately nicknamed "Mr. Snow" by his rescuer, spent five days in the loving hands of Rainier-resident John Wilson. Wilson chronicled his time with the bird on Facebook, which ended with the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife stepping in to make sure the animal would make a healthy transition back into nature.

Wilson was on a call for his business, Wilson's Tree Expert Company and Sunrise Farm, when he came across the crow, immobile and abandoned in the middle of a roadway near Lake Lawrence late last month.

"As I was out there, I noticed there was a bird, medium sized, (which) appeared to be black," Wilson said in an interview with the Nisqually Valley News. "It was in the roadway, right in a lane of traffic. I hit a branch and

I backed up. Nobody was coming and I looked down there and I said, 'What's the matter with you, little fella?', and it just stood there. It wasn't going to move."

So Wilson got out of his truck and looked around for the crow's parents. Finding none, he bent down to pick the bird up, who allowed Wilson to transport him into the vehicle's passenger side.

Like a loving father, Wilson took the bird home and set up a makeshift nest for it in a large crate in a warm greenhouse that was kept open for the crow to leave when he gained the strength to fly.

After calling the Yelm Veterinary Clinic and finding out the place was full, Wilson set out on a journey to heal the crow.

"I tried to give it some water and it wouldn't take water, nor food, for two days, and I was really concerned about the thing," Wilson said.

The crow needed nourishment, so Wilson decided to take action.

"On the third day, I got a syringe out, and I force-fed him water, just not a lot," he said. "And

then, all of a sudden, it just got a lot of energy. And then I put a bowl of mixed fruit that I read that they like to eat in front of it, with a little cat food."

Wilson used a small, black straw to feed the bird, which looked enough like a crow's beak for the bird to accept the offerings.

"Update on Mr. Snow the Crow," Wilson posted for his 603 Facebook followers on June 25. "This guy is eating and drinking like crazy. Seems to like a mixture of banana and mealworms. He is eating and drinking on his own. ... He is given freedom to come and go. So far he elects to stay. He gets a few hours of wing exercise by holding him in my hand moving him up then down quickly. This forces him to extend his wings with a flap motion."

As the bird gained strength, Wilson set up a perch near his deck, and the crow took to it, accompanying Wilson and his dog in the afternoon sun each day.

And the three forged an unlikely friendship.

"When I came home from work, Mr. Snow would come promptly over and I would sit on the deck and have an ice water or a cold beer, and Mr. Snow would come over and sit next to me," Wilson said. "We have a Rottweiler/lab mixed dog named Hank the Tank. And Hank took a liking to this bird. He watched it. Wherever Mr. Snow went, so did Hank. He guarded this bird like it was his best buddy."

During the five days the bird stayed with Wilson and his dog, he made an imprint on their lives while making a remarkable recovery, Wilson said.

Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife learned of Wilson's efforts, and removed the bird from the man's care while Wilson was at work.

"Mr. Snow was able to fly three or four times and then it was a Monday morning," Wilson said. "I went off to work to go look at another job. Fish and Wildlife came and took Mr. Snow. It really upset me, because they didn't call or nothing. I never got a call or nothing."

Distraught, Wilson said he called the department.

"I said, 'The worst thing that happened today was Mr. Snow came to this property without a cage and he left in a cage,'" Wilson said

Wilson was then contacted by the department's captain, he said,



Courtesy photos

"Mr. Snow," the crow, perches atop rescuer John Wilson's hand at the man's residence in Rainier.

who explained humans often create a harmful imprint on a wild animal, causing it to be too trusting and leaving it open to injury.

"Well, it's against the law to keep wildlife," Wilson said, of his conversations with Fish and Wildlife, though he couldn't hide his frustration. "Well, what are you supposed to do? Leave him in the road? This bird doesn't come attached with a tag that says, 'Don't pick me up. It's against the law.'"

A little while later, the department called back and explained to a still disgruntled Wilson that if it called first in these types of situations, people generally hide the animal in question, which would be even more damaging, he said.

In the end, Wilson gained a better understanding of how wildlife can safely be rehabilitated.

"If you see a wild animal that has been injured, know the resources. Give Fish and Wildlife a call," Wilson said, adding that he appreciated the work the department does, and the information it gave him was essential for his understanding of why the department stepped in. "This information was vital to know and we'd very much like to take part in rescuing animals. If anyone has any questions about rescuing animals, call Fish and Wildlife

right away and they'll send out resources."

Wilson may have worked to rehabilitate the bird, but the crow's work on the man was where the true healing happened, Wilson said.

He said his time with the bird healed him from a period of depression and anxiety brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Mr. Snow had become very partial to me, and running a business in Washington state is not easy, especially with this COVID thing," Wilson said. "We usually have some extra money to kind of have in case of emergencies. Right now, we really don't, and that's all to do with people and their struggles and everything. I was feeling a bit sorry for myself over this thing, over COVID, and then I realized that there's much more to life than just that."

"Bonding with an animal that was in need and sharing these needs together, sitting there on the front porch, watching this bird and Hank interact, showed me the blessings that are more than just monetary needs," Wilson continued. "There's a whole lot more to this world, than just monetary needs. And, man, I feel just so much better from that experience."



"Mr. Snow," the crow, perches above Rainier resident John Wilson's dog late last month. The two animals struck an unlikely friendship.

Heat Wave Sends Water Pouring off Mount Rainier, Exposing Glaciers to the Summer Heat Sooner

ELI FRANCOVICH

The Spokesman-Review

A torrent of melted snow has flooded rivers and streams near Mount Rainier following record-setting heat throughout Washington.

"We had a huge amount of snowmelt over a short period of time," said Kevin Bacher, a spokesman for Mount Rainier National Park. "Our snowpack, which had been running a little bit above average up until about a week or so ago, suddenly plummeted and now we are below average."

That influx of water led to murky rivers and washed out at least one foot-bridge near Carter Falls, Bacher said.

The park's weather monitoring station at Paradise, which is at 5,400 feet, recorded a peak temperature of 88 degrees Monday, June 28, setting a record for the month of June. Meanwhile, 10,100-foot Camp Muir hit 66 de-

grees.

With cooler weather later in the week, Bacher said streamflows are returning to normal.

But, the impact of the heat will be long lasting. Normally, Rainier's glaciers remain covered in snow late into the summer. That snow protects the glaciers from melting.

With an early heat event like this, that likely won't happen, Bacher said.

"The snow is what was melting and insulating the ice underneath," he said. "Now the ice is less protected. We will continue to lose glacial ice on the mountain."

Glaciers have been receding, in Washington and throughout the U.S., for the past century. For example, Rainier's Nisqually Glacier has lost 39 percent of its surface area in the past 119 years, Bacher said. All told, Mount Rainier's 29 named glaciers have lost one-third of their coverage and 45 percent of their thickness since 1900.

The quick melt will also im-

pact recreation.

For eager hikers, it means that some trails — like the Wonderland Trail — will be snow-free sooner, Bacher said.

For climbers, the dramatic loss of snow will make finding safe routes up the 14,411-foot mountain harder, as formerly ice-anchored rocks loosen and snow-covered glacial crevasses are exposed.

Finally, water can accumulate under the glaciers in chambers building up pressure until they release in one "big pulse," sending a torrent of water flooding down an otherwise calm stream or river, Bacher said.

Not much is known about the phenomenon, Bacher said. But, he urged hikers and other recreationists to be aware of the possibility. The pulse of water is

preceded by "what sounds like a freight train."

"If you are in one of the river valleys and you hear a freight train coming, you should get to high ground as quickly as possible and not stand by the river hoping to film it for your YouTube channel or whatever," he said.

Although above average snowmelt and engorged rivers were reported throughout western Washington, the Spokane River's flows continue to drop.

While Eastern Washington's river system is fed by snowmelt, much of that comes off in the spring or is held in reserve in Lake Coeur d'Alene.

In the past days, Lake Coeur d'Alene's elevation went up slightly, although Avista lists it at normal summer levels.



Lori Delong

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