

Eagles or Crows? God Only Knows

Recently the good news came that the road down to the catfish had been re-opened after several weeks of being heavily snowed in. I hadn't realized how salutary my daily visits to the river had been until I was deprived of them for a while and began to sense the onset of spiritual deprivation.

“What’s so spiritual about visiting a river?” one might ask. For me, a born fisherman and naturalist, if “a river runs through it,” God housed you close to it for more than just drinking water; if a river isn’t a major source of contemplation, it’s petty much going to waste.

One of the big things I used to observe in my visits to the riverside has been the inter-relationship between mink, otter, eagles and crows. It seems they are very much indebted to each other when most of the river is ice and only the spillways and rapids offer open water for wintering wildlife.

On my first visit after the opening of the trail in, I was amazed at the great number of crows gathered on the ice on the edge of the rapids. Usually only three or four are hanging around there looking for a chance to steal morsels of the fish the mink or otters fetch up and leave partially eaten, but the thirty or more that were gathered there was a real change. Something must have attracted them.

The next morning’s visit was also interesting. A good-sized carp lay up on the ice, but only two crows were visible, perched way back in the trees. Then I thought of the eagle. Maybe he was somewhere nearby. I took my binoculars and scanned the far side trees. My gaze rested upon a vertical brown shape standing out against the sprawl of the surrounding branches and that shape turned out to be the torso of an eagle. His white head was all but

invisible against the sky behind him. I marveled at how such a big spectacular bird could literally disappear into his surroundings.

No wonder the crows were hanging back. If yesterday's mob of thirty were there they would have mobbed that eagle unmercifully. But the "two corbies" eyeing that fish knew better than to go scavenging when the sultan of the sky was eyeing his lunch.

There are so many amazing facts about eagles, and I have space here for only a few. My renewed interest in them has come from having found them mentioned so often in the scriptures. Eagles are a magnificent symbol for all that is high, majestic, and mighty and free. Eagles also symbolize restoration and renewal. Notice this riveting word from Isaiah: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."(Is. 40:31)

And in Exodus 19:4 God reminds Moses, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself." And in the Book of Job, God chides Job with questions, "Doth the eagle mount up at thy command and make her nest on high? She dwells and abides on the crag of the rock on the highest place. From there she seeks her prey and her eyes behold far off."

Clearly, God had much in mind when He created the eagle, nor were our founders ignorant of this when they chose the eagle as our national symbol. Moreover His glorious constellation, "Aquila, the eagle" flies in the most spectacular region of The Milky Way, completing its trinity, with the lyre, and the northern cross --each jeweled by a brilliant 1st magnitude blue/white star. (See Altair, Vega, and Deneb.)

Down here, the crow is perhaps the eagle's most vocal and persistent enemy, and I think God chose this avian war as a picture of the never-ending war twixt good and evil. Shakespeare captured the tone of it in Macbeth, "Night thickens and the crow makes wing to the rooky wood. Good things of day begin to droop and drowse, whilst night's black agents to their prey do rouse." This speech came just before the murder of "the gracious king," Duncan.

Back in the 60's, a poet friend of mine, the late Rodney Nelson, dropped me a post card chiding me for my hunting: "What are you crows doing/ Out there among the gulls?/ Are you tired of scavenging the old dark hills? I walk bearing the one name the ocean tells,/ And the sand has got a sound/ And sunlight smells."

At the time he was wintering in a trailer on Waldport beach in Oregon, practicing Zen Buddhism, and the "one name" his poem referenced was his mantra. Later I chided him back that the "one name" the ocean tells is Jesus. And thereupon we parted company. I still miss his brilliant mind and rollicking fine wit as we "tilted" over wine and verse.

But "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. Blessed is the name of the Lord."

Gene Pinkney 23-01-18- For the Daily News