

## COMMON RAVEN CATCHING TROUT

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On 22 June 1994, I was walking on the trail to the west along the south shore of Lake O'Hara, Yoho National Park, British Columbia with Joe Jazvac, a seasonal interpreter with the Canadian Parks Service. At 14:10, as we crossed the bridge across the small creek that flows north into Lake O'Hara from Mary Lake, we saw a Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) run down a low, moss-covered bank into a pool in the creek and emerge with a trout. We estimated that the trout was about 20 cm. long. The bird perched on the rocky lip of the pool while the fish struggled vigorously in its beak; after a few seconds, the bird dropped the fish back into the pool.

The raven then hopped a short distance to a small log by the stream, shook the water out of its plumage and wiped its bill, once on each side, on the log. Presumably this was to rid itself of fish scales and/or slime. It remained by the stream for a further 4 minutes, occasionally looking down into the water, then flew off about 3 m. to a stump west of the stream to dry off and preen.

At 14:19, the raven returned to the log by the stream and continued to watch the water closely, presumably looking for trout passing up the stream from Lake O'Hara to Mary Lake. After one minute, it quickly jumped into the pool and emerged with a 10 cm. trout which it immediately carried to the west bank, where the fish was dropped. The raven pecked at the fish on the ground, sometimes holding it down with one claw. After a short period, the bird walked briefly away from the fish towards the stream, then returned and after pecking at the fish a few more times, picked it up in its beak and swallowed it, head first. The raven immediately returned to the stream slightly above where the fish had been caught and resumed its search for more fish.

At 14:25, the raven perched on a small log-jam upstream, where it vigorously shook its feathers, and wiped its beak on a log twice on each side. This beak-wipe was then repeated, again twice on each side.

At 14:27, the bird continued upstream, peering into each pool as it progressed, until we could no longer see it from the trail.

During the next week I passed over the bridge on several occasions but did not see the raven again. Joe Jazvac, however, returned to the bridge on 28 July and reported that he again saw the raven systematically working its way up the stream looking for fish. Although no fish were caught while he watched, the whole area smelled strongly of fish, suggesting that several had been caught in the vicinity.

Although ravens exploit a wide range of foods (Bent 1946; Goodwin 1976), I am unaware of any reference to them systematically catching live fish. Samuel S. Dickey (*in* Bent 1946) reported ravens "taking" minnows along a Pennsylvania stream, but implied that these were scavenged. In a summary of known foods of corvids that occur in Great Britain, Holyoak (1968) listed fish carrion, but not live fish. Goodwin (1976) did not mention fishing among foraging methods of corvids; nor were fish or fishing mentioned in any of eight papers and notes on raven food and foraging methods checked by M. K. McNicholl (pers. comm. 1 July 1995). It will be interesting to see if this behaviour is learned and adopted by other ravens in the area. I would be very interested in receiving reports of similar behaviour.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## LITERATURE CITED

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