

OWL RESCUE



BE A VET TECH



DOG HUGS

kids speaking for animals Vol. 15 • No. 4

BCSPCA

# Bark!

**ARE RAVENS  
AND CROWS  
SMARTER  
THAN YOU?**



# High Paws

KIDS HELPING ANIMALS!



Cedar, Liv, Niki and Bianca organized a fundraiser together at school. Their project, called "Taking Action for Animals," raised \$453.15 for the West Vancouver SPCA!

Send us drawings!

Anya, 10, planned a lemonade and freezie sale to benefit the Cowichan SPCA. She invited friends Kenzie, Maddy, Joey, Brenden and Jocelyn to join her. Together they raised \$141.95!



Five-year-old Aubrey collected toonies at her birthday party! Her generous guests brought a total of \$54, which Aubrey chose to give to the Richmond SPCA.

Email your photos!  
kids@spca.bc.ca



Ethan, 10, sold cookies and lemonade at his family's garage sale, raising \$100 for the West Vancouver SPCA!



Thanks to Erin, animals at the Kelowna SPCA have a reason to celebrate. She donated \$36.45 in birthday money to the shelter.



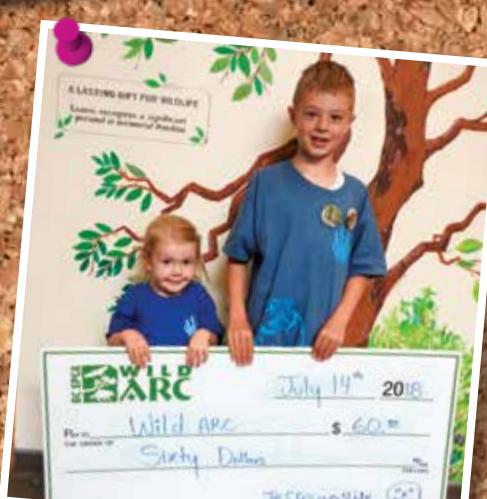
For her eighth birthday, Kids Club member and summer camper Teagan asked her friends and their families for donations to the Vancouver SPCA instead of presents for herself. She collected blankets, toys, food and treats plus \$150 for the animals. Teagan also fundraised for her seventh birthday last year.



After attending summer camp at the Penticton SPCA, eight-year-old Anna was inspired to make a difference for animals in her community. So she sold homemade bracelets and iced tea by donation to the shelter! In the past, Anna has also sold her artwork to raise funds for the animals.



Jackson celebrated his ninth birthday by helping animals in need. He donated \$350 in birthday money to the Coquitlam SPCA!



Jesse and Cassidy stopped by Wild ARC in Metchosin with a donation of \$60.50! Jesse turned eight and used his birthday party as a chance to help injured and orphaned wildlife.



Payton was busy helping cats this summer - first by making her own cat more comfortable, then by creating a slideshow to raise awareness about how awesome cats are!



Riley, 10, held a lemonade stand with her cousins during their family visit. Together they made \$53.85, which they donated to the Campbell River SPCA!



My name is Payton and I'm 10 years old. I'm from Kamloops, B.C. I made my cat Spark a mini cat home! It contains kibbles, her favourite cat toys and some bedding! In the photos, we caught Spark eating her kibbles!

I love cats so much so I figured I'd send you this slideshow. I gathered up some cat facts and made this. I hope you like it!



# Want to be a veterinary technician

## when you grow up?



We spoke to **Nicole McClelland**, a veterinary technician and BC SPCA volunteer, all about her career helping sick and injured animals.

When did you decide you wanted to be a veterinary technician?

I had always wanted to work with animals. But it wasn't until a local veterinary technician program opened up at Douglas College that I decided it was what I wanted to do. Before that, there was no such program in the Lower Mainland – just in Kamloops.



Can you tell us about one memory that sticks out for you of the pets you had growing up?

My first dog, George, was as unique as they come. She taught me so much about dog behaviour and made me truly realize the value of senior animals.

Can you share with us a little bit about your professional background?

I'd been a volunteer at SAINTS, a sanctuary for senior and special needs animals, for two years before starting the veterinary technician program

As a veterinary technician, Nicole monitors animals during surgery.

at Douglas. I also spent some time volunteering in a veterinary clinic once a week.

I've been a registered veterinary technician for over nine years now. I've been lucky enough to work in a 24-hour emergency clinic and a general practice clinic that sees a wide variety of animals like cats, dogs, turtles, rats, rabbits, guinea pigs and birds.

You volunteer for the BC SPCA. How do you help out?

I volunteer with Charlie's Pet Food Bank. We provide basic veterinary care to pets whose guardians are homeless or need extra help caring for them. I help the vets with exams, nail trims and vaccines.



Veterinary technicians like Nicole work with a variety of animals.

treated a baby raccoon who fell out of a tree and looked after dogs hit by cars. Being a veterinary technician means getting to work with lots of different animals.

#### What's the most unusual animal you've helped?

We have a regular chicken patient – not the most unusual animal but rare for a veterinary clinic! She's a valued member of her family and I love seeing how devoted they are to her.

#### What keeps you excited to do your job every day?

I love that there is always

#### Your career path... to becoming a veterinary technician

- ✓ Graduate high school
- ✓ Volunteer experience with a variety of animals in different settings (for example, veterinary clinic, animal shelter, farm, wildlife rehabilitation centre)
- ✓ Good communication and organizational skills
- ✓ Two-year veterinary technician (also called animal health technologist) diploma
- ✓ Pass Veterinary Technician National Exam (VTNE)

Nicole's career has taken her all over North America! Here she is at a spay/neuter clinic in Washington.



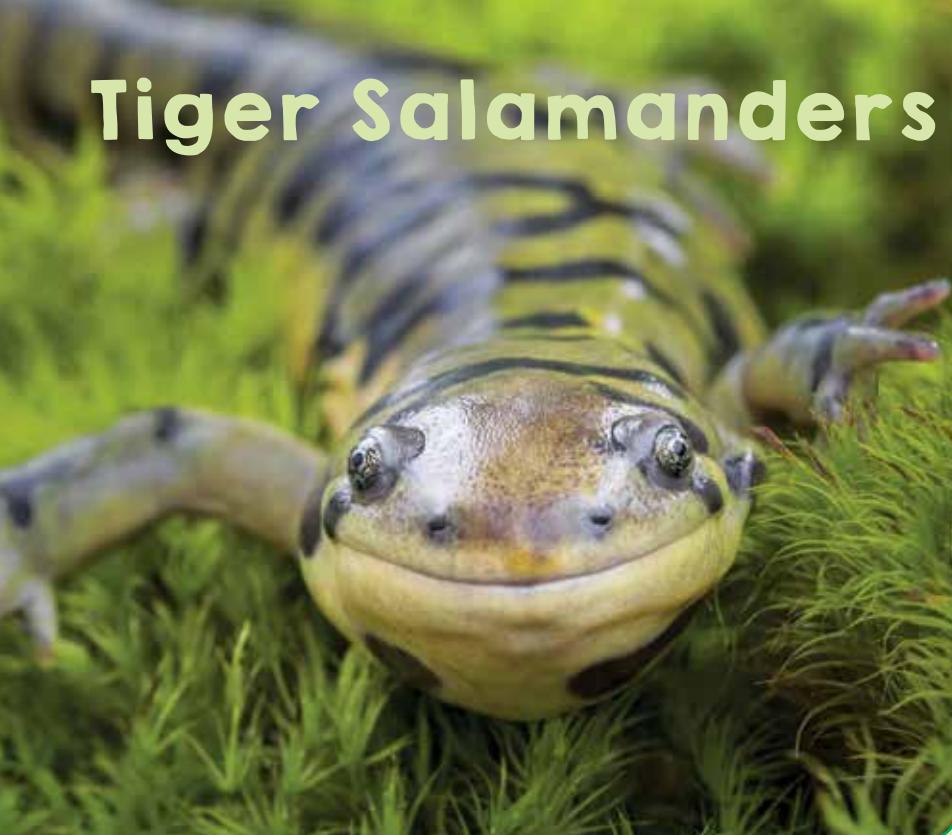
something new to learn in veterinary medicine. We are constantly improving our standards of care and how we interact with animals.

#### What's one piece of advice you would give kids who want to make a difference for animals?

You're never too young! You might not be old enough to volunteer yet, but you can start small – walking your neighbour's dog or just caring for your own pets the best you can. It all makes a difference and helps you build the skills and confidence you'll need to work with animals someday.



# Tiger Salamanders in Trouble



**O**n your list of awesome amphibians, the blotched tiger salamander should definitely be in the top five.

And why not? These mouse-eating amphibians are one of the largest land-dwelling salamanders in the world. They breathe and drink through their thin, wet skin, which is covered in stripes like a tiger. They belong to the “mole salamander” family because they burrow underground. And, unlike most salamanders, they are adapted to live in desert-like conditions. How awesome is that?

Sadly, though, the blotched tiger salamander is endangered. Human activities are damaging their habitat. But you can help!

## Save Our Salamanders!

Right now, the provincial government is working on a law to protect tiger salamanders and other endangered animals like them. They need to hear from you!

Let the government know that endangered species are important to you with this handmade postcard.

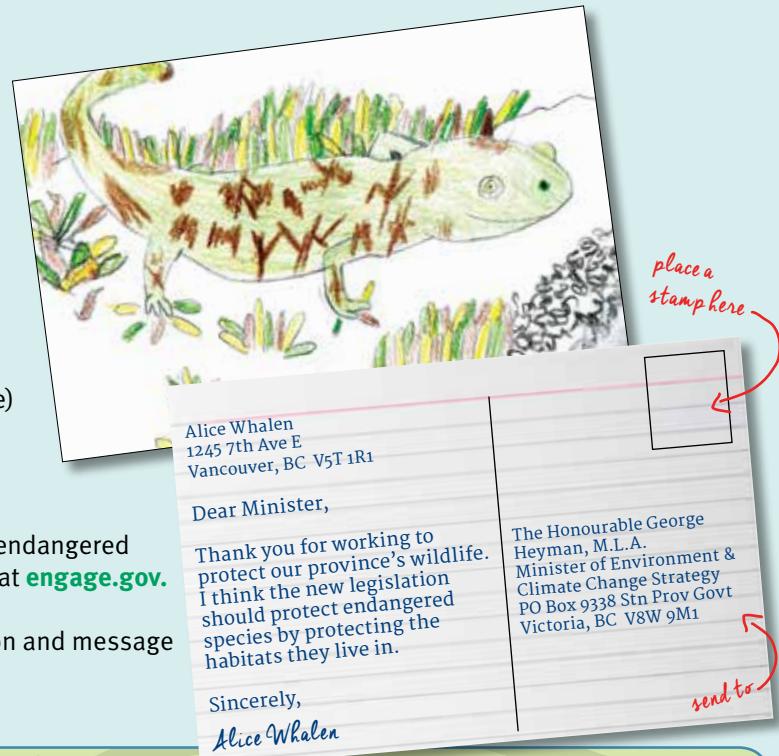


### Supplies:

- 4-inch x 6-inch index card (blank on one side)
- felt pens, pencil crayons or crayons
- pen

### Directions:

1. On the blank side, draw a picture of your favourite endangered species. (For inspiration, check out the photo gallery at [engage.gov.bc.ca/bcspeciesatrisk](http://engage.gov.bc.ca/bcspeciesatrisk).)
2. On the ruled side, write out your mailing information and message to the government.
3. Add a stamp, and put your postcard in the mail.



## Tiger Salamander Tidbits

**Colour:** Golden yellow or olive green with black or dark grey stripes or blotches

**Length:** Up to 33 centimetres

**Diet:** Beetles, earthworms, frogs, snails, slugs and mice

**Habitat:** Hot, dry grasslands of the Okanagan, Similkameen and Kettle River Valleys

**Habits:** Emerge from underground burrows to feed at night. Migrate to nearby lakes and ponds to breed in spring. Hibernate underground through winter.

**Predators:** Dragonflies, fish, coyotes, garter snakes and burrowing owls

**Lifespan:** Up to 25 years



JARED HOBBS

## Window blinds

It's no secret that cats – especially kittens – love to climb! Window blinds can be especially tempting, but this isn't without risks. Becoming tangled in the cord used to raise and lower the blinds can lead to serious injuries.

# Avoid a CATastrophe!

Keep your fluffy family members safe! Watch out for these common household dangers for cats.

### People food

Certain foods that we keep in our kitchens are unhealthy or even toxic for cats. Ones to avoid include onions and garlic, chocolate and caffeine, grapes and raisins, raw eggs and meat and – this one may surprise you – milk.

### Balconies

Cats like to leap. But they don't always realize how high up they are, or land on their feet. If your home has a balcony, be mindful of letting your kitty play out there. Many families choose to enclose their patios so their feline friends can enjoy the fresh air without the danger.

### String, yarn and hair elastics

We've all seen adorable pictures of kittens playing with balls of yarn... but that doesn't mean it's safe for the kitten! While many seemingly harmless "toys" can lead to choking or an internal blockage. Yikes!



### Poison plants

Lots of homes and gardens are brightened by beautiful plants and flowers. In some cases, though, those pretty petals are poisonous for cats. Lilies, azaleas and tulips are among those listed as especially toxic.



### Plastic bags

Here's another reason to choose paper over plastic! A cat with his head caught in the handle of a bag is no laughing matter. Any plastic bags in the house should be stored safely away from pets.

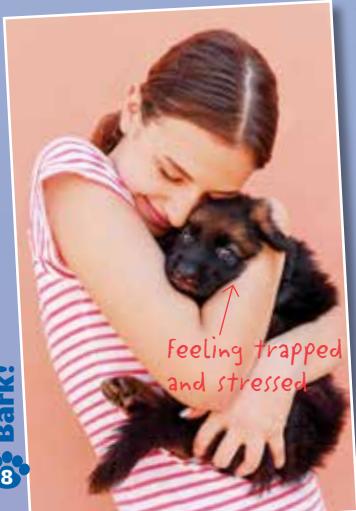
? Want to learn more about the different plants, foods and household products that are dangerous for pets – and why? Visit [aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control](http://aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control).

# "PLEASE DON'T HUG ME!"

Hugs make us feel good. So it's easy to assume dogs would like hugs too. They don't. Believe it or not, hugs make them stressed!

Look at this picture of a girl hugging her dog. Notice the dog's eyes are open wide. Her body is stiff and she's leaning away from the girl. These are stress signals. This dog is saying with her body language that she doesn't want to be held.

Many dogs will tolerate a hug. But, unlike people, they aren't comfortable feeling trapped in our arms. Kind of like you might feel being hugged by that unfamiliar aunt who smothers you in her arms and won't let go.



There's another good reason not to hug a dog. Dogs, especially ones with anxious or fearful personalities, are much more likely to bite if hugged. Any animal who feels worried and trapped may bite. It is called the **flight-or-fight** response. If you can't run away (**flight**), then you fight (**bite**).

Every year, kids like you are bitten by dogs they were trying to comfort with a hug. Resist the urge. Dogs aren't like people. They don't need hugs!

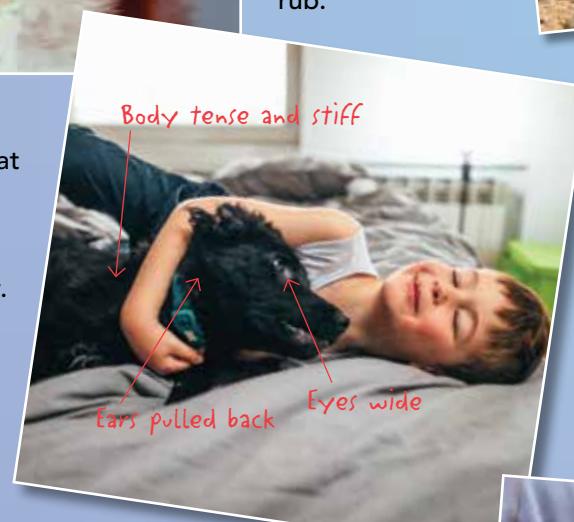
## So how should you show love to your dog?

When dogs feel relaxed, they will choose to come to you. When they do, give a gentle scratch behind their ears or along their backs. Often dogs will return the affection by leaning into you or licking your hand to signal they like the contact. When super relaxed, they may even flop down and invite you to give a tummy rub.



Another great way to show your dog affection is through play. Dogs play throughout their lives, though they slow down when they get older.

Try a game of fetch or chase.



Games, gentle touch, treats and a soft voice build trust and friendship. Resist the urge to hug or even pet every dog you see!

Dogs "speak" to people and other dogs through body language. They express their emotions using their eyes, mouths, ears, tails and body positions, as well as a number of different barks and growls.



## READING A DOG'S STRESS



### The nervous dog

Some of us have trouble recognizing when a dog is nervous or afraid. Anxious or worried dogs usually give you clear signals to tell you (and other dogs) when they are feeling unsure or afraid. You just need to spot them.

If feeling uneasy or fearful, dogs will lower their heads and drop their tails. They will also likely turn their heads and look away.

Other signals include licking lips or yawning. If they pull their ears back, they are worried or afraid. Really nervous dogs will turn their bodies sideways or even face the opposite direction to avoid what is worrying them.

Anxious dogs are hesitant when anything around them changes – like when a visitor arrives at your house, they hear a strange noise or they meet a new dog.



If you see a dog displaying these signals, or if he starts to growl or bark, move away and give the dog some space. Growling and barking are clear signals the dog is feeling threatened and may bite. Just back away and watch how the dog's

behaviour changes. He will likely calm down and feel less afraid.

### How should you comfort your shy, scared dog?

If your dog has an anxious personality, first off, never hug her. It will make her more stressed. Dogs with anxious personalities need you to be very patient and calm around them. Allow her to hang out with you on her own terms – don't force affection.

**Build her confidence.** Always speak confidently yet calmly to her, "It's okay, Molly." If she seems upset over something, distract her by tossing some treats on the floor. This can help change her mood from worried to happy. It will also build her trust in you.

When she's scared, never scold her or give her commands like sit or lie down. Instead, lead her away from what is upsetting her. This will help make her less worried. Remember, she can't help it that she feels uneasy. It's just how she is. Same as how some people are shyer than others.

### The relaxed pooch

By contrast, a dog with a relaxed personality will have her head up. Her ears and body will be loose, not tense. She may have her mouth open slightly, almost in a smile. She may squint, a sign she is feeling content and happy. Relaxed dogs' tails are usually not stiff but swaying loosely from side-to-side. These easy-going dogs enjoy hanging out with people and other dogs.





# LET'S GO SHOPPING!

Your guide to buying small animal supplies

## Don't forget the FIVE FREEDOMS!

Take a moment to think about the Five Freedoms before you make a purchase:

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst
2. Freedom from pain, injury and disease
3. Freedom from distress
4. Freedom from discomfort
5. Freedom to express behaviours that promote well-being

Ask yourself questions like: Could this product **hurt** my pet or make him **uncomfortable** in any way?

Does this product allow my pet to express herself, or will it just make her **nervous**?

If you're at all unsure, **skip it!** You might need to do more research to make sure it's right for your furry friend.

## STAY AWAY!

### Yogurt drops

These sweet treats have way more sugar than small animals need!



For a healthier snack, try small pieces of banana instead.

### Wire wheels

Tails and toes can easily get caught between the rungs. Ouch!



Stick with wheels that have solid surfaces – like ones made of plastic. They're safer and more comfortable.

### Cotton fluff

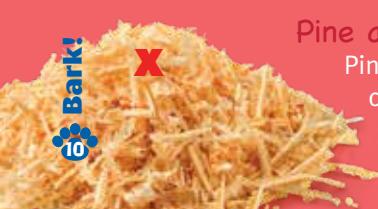
Hamsters, rats, mice and gerbils love to make nests. But cotton fluff has small threads that can wrap around and seriously injure their legs and feet.



Toilet paper and strips of newspaper are a safer option for nesting materials.

### Pine and cedar shavings

Pine and cedar smell nice to us, but they can cause breathing issues in small animals.



Recycled paper bedding and aspen shavings are good alternatives.



### Exercise balls

Not all hamsters enjoy running around in a ball. Plus, it's easy for them to get stuck in a corner and forgotten – or accidentally kicked!



A better choice? Set up an exercise area where small animals can roam around freely and safely.



## BE CAREFUL!

### Chew toys

Small animals can enjoy gnawing on toys made from a variety of materials such as wood and dried hay. But remember: any toy can become dangerous when too much of it gets eaten or it falls apart!



Be sure to check toys for damage, and throw them out when they're no longer safe.

Cardboard – like toilet paper and paper towel rolls – makes a great, safe (and free!) chew item for small animals.



## GO FOR IT!

### Treat balls

Rats, guinea pigs and rabbits can quickly learn to roll these balls around and gobble up the food that falls out. This keeps their minds and bodies active!

### Exercise pens

Exercise pens made just for small animals have narrow bars to prevent escape (or no bars at all!). Fill a pen with lots of objects for them to crawl over, under and through. This lets them safely explore the world outside their cage. They'll still need supervision, of course.



### Seed mixes

Rats, mice, gerbils and hamsters are huge seed fans.

But feed them too many and they'll end up fat and unhealthy! High quality pellets should make up most of their diet.



Seeds can be given in small amounts as treats.



## Know before you go

When shopping for small animal supplies, keep these two things in mind:

1. Just because a store sells a product doesn't mean that product is safe for animals.

Sadly, some products are downright dangerous for our pets. That's why it's important to do your research first. Talk to people who have the same type of pet as you. Read product reviews online to learn about potential safety concerns.

2. Products are marketed to people, not pets.

After all, we're the ones buying them! We're often drawn to a product because the label catches our eye or we like the colours it comes in. But just because we want it doesn't mean our pets need it.



# owl in a day's work

**I**magine walking into your backyard and discovering a baby owl on the ground. That's what happened to one person on Vancouver Island. She found a young barred owl huddled at the base of a tree with his eyes closed. Right away she knew something was wrong. She called the BC SPCA Wild Animal Rehabilitation Centre (Wild ARC) for help.

**The owlet most likely fell** from the nest that his parents had moved into – a home left behind by an eagle or a hawk. Owls are clever finders. They seek out abandoned nests from other birds. The trouble is, these old nests are no longer as stable as they could be and – whoops! – babies can fall out.

**It isn't known** how long the owlet was on the ground, but he arrived at Wild ARC dehydrated and underweight. His feathers were infested with parasites and his ears were full of maggots. His left wing was drooping, but thankfully not broken.

**For two weeks Wild ARC staff** cared for the owlet. They wrapped his injured wing for support and it improved within days. Medication eliminated the parasites and prevented infection in his ears. To help him rehydrate and reach a healthy weight, staff needed to get him to eat. The stress of being away from his parents made him unwilling to feed himself. Even tricks like playing owl calls and providing an owl stuffy as a friend



PHOTOS: ADVENTURES BY HIP

didn't help. In the end staff had to feed the young owl by hand. But they knew a quick reunion with his parents would be his best chance at long-term survival.

**Once ready,** Wild ARC called on friend Jeff Krieger at Alternative Wildlife Solutions. Jeff works to solve wildlife issues humanely, and has some creative techniques! Jeff brought the owlet back to the original nest site. Then, under the watchful eye of the mother owl, he secured a laundry basket to the tree. Once the basket was in place, Jeff lifted the owlet into the new "nest" and stood back to see if mom would return to her baby. Almost immediately, she flew over and began preening her baby's feathers!

**For weeks after this happy reunion,** the owlet's parents continued to care for and prepare him for life in the wild. Wild ARC staff and their friend Jeff had done their job!



## MOVE OVER, DOGS!

Our canine companions are not the only animals in our lives who can read our facial expressions. Now scientists have discovered that horses can do this too.

### **WHOA, THERE**

When the horses saw the angry faces, their heart rates increased. Some also displayed behaviours such as head bobbing, tail swishing, licking and chewing. These are all signs of stress.



In an experiment, horses were shown photos of human faces with different expressions – some **angry** and some **happy**. Scientists then recorded their reactions.



## Why the long faces?

### **EYE SPY**

Even more telling was the way in which the horses looked at the angry faces. They tended to turn their heads to stare at the photos with their left eye. The left eye sends information to the right side of the brain. This is where the brain evaluates potential threats.

### **YAY OR NEIGH?**

The horses did not react negatively at all to the happy faces. Only the angry faces seemed threatening to them. Scientists concluded that horses can recognize human emotions. Impressive!



### **HUMAN WHISPERERS**

Few animals are capable of reading human facial expressions, which makes horses rather unique.

Because they are so sensitive to our feelings, it is important to remember how our behaviour affects them. Handle horses roughly, and they will be wary of people (think of the angry faces!).

### **EXPRESSIVE EQUINES**

How many of us could tell what a horse is feeling just by looking at a photo? Like humans, horses use eye, lip, chin and nostril movements to communicate their emotions.

1. Which animal makes the most facial movements?  
a) **Chimpanzees** b) **Dogs** c) **Humans** d) **Horses**
2. Horses can smile. **True or false?**
3. What does it mean when horses show the whites of their eyes?  
a) **Fear** b) **Surprise** c) **Excitement** d) **Anger**
4. Unscramble this word to discover a body part that horses can use to communicate but humans cannot: **RAES**

1. C. Humans! People use 27 different facial movements, while horses use 17, dogs use 16 and chimpanzees use 13.

2. True. Horses pull the corners of their lips back in a "smile" to greet other horses.

3. d. Horses, like many other animals, widen their eyes when they are afraid.

4. Ears. Horses have very mobile ears. Each one can rotate around separately.

Which is the crow and which is the raven?



## Clever Crows, Resourceful Ravens

Can you tell the difference between a raven and a crow?

**Hints:** Ravens are larger – nearly double the size of crows. Ravens have a longer, sleeker head with a tuft of feathers on their bill. When crows fly, their tail feathers are fan-shaped while a raven's are long and straight. Also, if you hear them call, crows make a "caw, caw" sound, compared to ravens' deep, chortling song.



### Canuck: the celebrity crow

Crows, with their jet-black feathers and loud caws, are one of the most common neighbourhood birds. To some they are annoying, while others admire their cleverness. One Vancouver crow, named **Canuck**, has become an international celebrity. He was even voted the unofficial ambassador of the city!



Crows are social birds, usually hanging out with their extended crow families. Canuck, however, got used to being around people after he fell out of his nest as a chick and was rescued by a friendly human. When he was old enough, Canuck flew off with other crows, but he continues to return to visit his human friend, Shawn Bergman, and his old neighbourhood.

Canuck isn't afraid of people. Sometimes he even flies right onto the SkyTrain, or into the middle of baseball games. He likes to **mooch food** from people at neighbourhood restaurants. He was such a frequent visitor to the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE), they made him an honorary employee. Once, he even tried to steal a knife from a police crime scene, and he was on the **news around the world**.

Sometimes, Canuck's lack of fear gets him **into trouble**. He got in the way at a soccer game and someone hit him. He had to spend several days at a wildlife hospital. Last spring, during nesting season, Canuck tried to chase away a letter carrier and Canada Post refused to deliver mail on Canuck's entire street. Some people were so mad, they threatened to hurt Canuck. Luckily, Canuck and the letter carrier were able to work things out, and they're friends now.

This spring, Canuck and his mate Cassiar built their first nest together – near the tree Canuck fell from when he was a chick.



## Take the corvid quiz

- 1 T/F: Crows live twice as long as ravens.
- 2 T/F: A group of crows is called a murder.
- 3 T/F: Ravens and crows are protected by law in Canada.
- 4 T/F: Steller's jays and whiskey jacks are closely related to crows.
- 5 T/F: Huge numbers of ravens come together each night to sleep at a rookery.



## Amazing crow antics

Crows are very clever birds. Scientists now believe crows are smarter than many mammals, like dogs, and may be as intelligent as apes. They can even solve tasks that three- and four-year-old children have difficulty with. Here are a few examples of crow cleverness.

**Working for peanuts.** In a theme park in France, crows have been trained to pick up cigarette butts and other rubbish. When they put the trash in the can, they are rewarded with peanuts. Seeing the trained crows pick up litter has inspired park goers to dispose of their garbage properly.

**Vending challenge.** In Brooklyn, New York, researchers have trained crows to find coins and deposit them in vending machines in exchange for nuts.

**Worm food.** In a research study on crow intelligence, scientists were amazed to

see how quickly crows learned to drop stones into a vessel of water to bring a floating worm within reach.

**Teamwork pays.** Crows have been seen working together to lift nets covering garbage bins so that other crows can get to discarded food underneath.

**Schooled in tools.** Crows have been captured on video whittling twigs with their beaks to add a hook to the end. They then use the hooked stick to pull insects out of tree trunks. Only four species are known to craft tools in the wild: chimpanzees, orangutans, humans and now crows.

**Car crackers.** Urban crows often use road traffic to help crack chestnuts open. They fly high up and drop the nuts down on the road. Then they wait for cars to break them open before swooping down for lunch.

## Raven lore

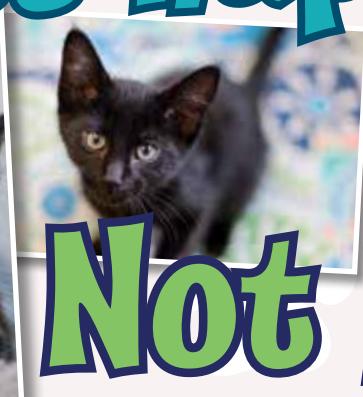
Ravens play a special role in stories and creation myths of many Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast. Raven is considered a smart, magical creature who can be both greedy and playful – a trickster – but also a great provider to people.

For example, in Haida mythology, Raven created the forests and islands known as Haida Gwaii. Raven also used his special powers to bring the sun, moon and stars to the world. Fresh water, trees, salmon and fire were all provided to people by Raven. Raven was the source of all creation. The symbol of the Raven is carved into many of the totem poles of the Haida and is considered a sacred creature.

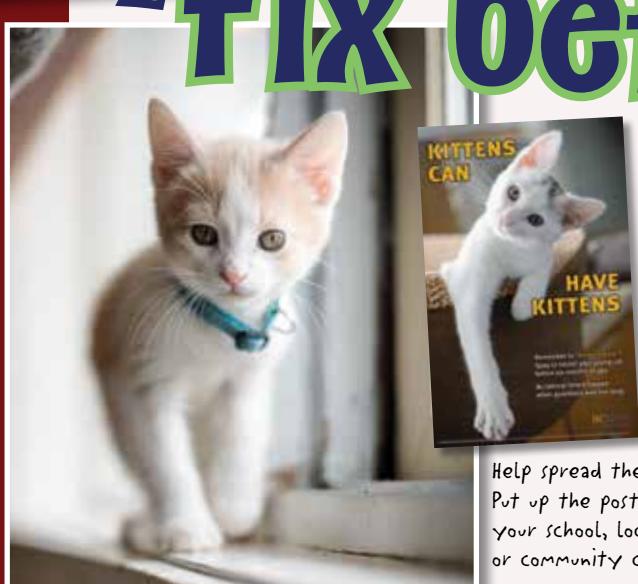


1. False. It is ravens who live twice as long – up to 30 years.
2. True. While a crow group is a murder, a group of ravens is a rookery.
3. Conspiracy! How sinister sounding!
4. True. Jays, magpies, crows and ravens are part of the same family of birds called corvids.
5. False. It is crows who sleep in rookeries – sometimes in thousands!

# Accidents happen?



## "fix before six"!



Help spread the word!  
Put up the poster at  
your school, local library  
or community centre.

Did your family adopt a kitten this past summer? Many of the litters that come into animal shelters are "accidents": a cat's guardian waited too long to **spay** or **neuter** – or "fix" – their pet. Chances are your kitten came from one of these accidental litters. While we can all agree that kittens are fun and adorable, there are still too many cats of all ages in shelters waiting for homes. Now you can help stop the cycle!

"**Fix before six**" is a great way to remember to have your kitten spayed or neutered before six months of age. Cats can get pregnant this young! Many vets will even "**fix before five**" so don't wait to make an appointment.

Name:

Telephone:

Birth Date:

Address:

City:

Province:

Postal Code:

School:

Email:

Yes, you can email me e-Kids Mews!letter and other BC SPCA Kids Club updates

**Savings!** Two-year membership (\$25)    One-year membership (\$15)    Cheque payable to BC SPCA

Or by credit card    Amex    Visa    Mastercard   Signature:

Number:

Expiry Date:

Name on Card:

Parent or Guardian's Name:



Join the **Kids Club**  
today! Fill out this  
form and mail it to:  
**BC SPCA Kids Club**  
**1245 East 7th Avenue**  
**Vancouver, BC**  
**V5T 1R1**  
or sign up online at  
[sPCA.bc.ca/kidsclub](http://sPCA.bc.ca/kidsclub).

## BCSPCA

### Who **cawed** and **chortled** to bring you this issue:

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