

by Diana Lynn

## GABI MANN

FRIEND OF BIRDS

**When Gabi Mann was four years old,** she dropped some of her lunch on the ground. Before she could say, "Oops!" a crow flew in and grabbed it. After that, Gabi started sharing her lunch with crows on her way to school. Then she and her family began filling a backyard bird feeder with peanuts and dog food. And that's when something very, very odd happened. Crows started leaving her special little objects. It seemed like they were thank-you gifts!



**HOW DID IT FEEL WHEN YOU REALIZED CROWS WERE LEAVING GIFTS?**

I was surprised and happy!

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**WHICH GIFT IS YOUR FAVORITE?**

I have two favorites. One of them is a charm that reads “BEST” and the other is a heart pendant. They are the prettiest and represent the friendship and love I share with the crows.

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**WHICH GIFT IS MOST UNUSUAL?**

I received a toy squid, which was fairly large for a crow to carry. He carried the toy in his beak for a long time before he dropped it at my feet from the telephone wire above my head.

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**ARE THERE ANY GIFTS THEY BRING IN GREATER NUMBERS?**

I have lots of small, shiny rocks as well as buttons and sea glass.

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**HOW MANY TOTAL GIFTS DO YOU HAVE?**

I’ve kept over 200 gifts.

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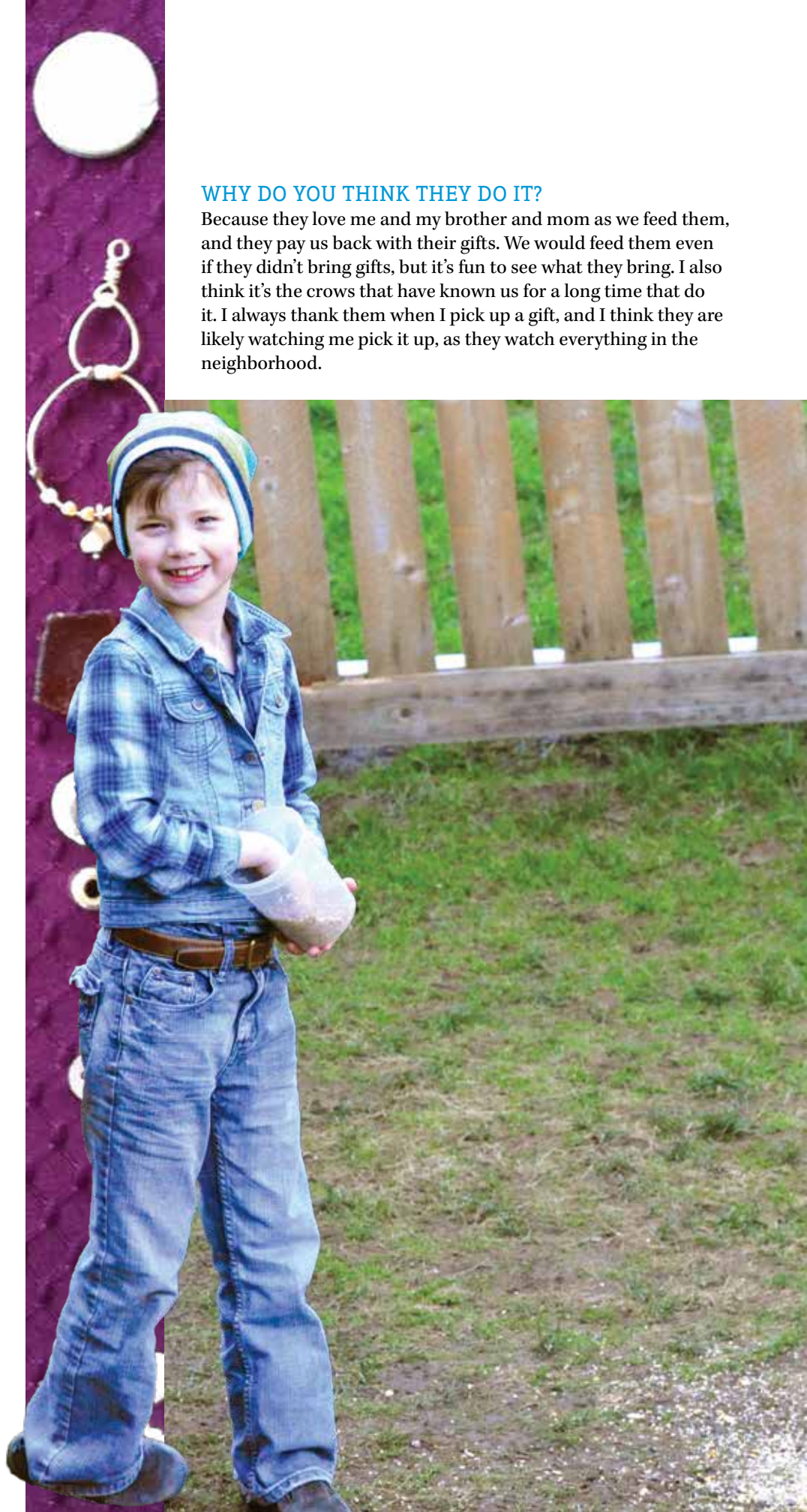
**DO YOU KNOW IF THEY CARRY THE OBJECTS IN THEIR BEAKS OR THEIR CLAWS?**

They’ve always carried things in their beaks whenever I’ve seen them.

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**WHY DO YOU THINK THEY DO IT?**

Because they love me and my brother and mom as we feed them, and they pay us back with their gifts. We would feed them even if they didn’t bring gifts, but it’s fun to see what they bring. I also think it’s the crows that have known us for a long time that do it. I always thank them when I pick up a gift, and I think they are likely watching me pick it up, as they watch everything in the neighborhood.





### DO YOU EVER NAME ANY OF THEM?

My brother and I have named many of them. We each had a crow that we'd named and then those crows had babies, which we also named. My brother's crow had more babies than mine, so he got to name a lot of crows.

### WHAT'S IN THE FUTURE FOR YOU AND CROWS?

We moved from Seattle, Washington, and now live in Ithaca, New York, where there are fewer crows. We still visit our crows back in Seattle, and they remember us. It's like visiting old friends when we go back.

We have a small family of crows in Ithaca that visit us every day, but they don't bring gifts, which is OK as they have lots of other things to do each day.



## 5 WAYS TO ATTRACT CROWS AND RAVENS

- 1** Make sure your yard is friendly and safe.  
Crows and ravens are spooked by pets and loud noises and by flashy surfaces that move in the breeze.
- 2** Provide water.  
They like to dunk food in water to soften it. They also like bigger-sized bird baths.
- 3** Open a crow cafeteria! The fastest way to a crow's heart is through its stomach.  
Start with treats they can easily see, like unsalted peanuts in the shell. Scatter food or put it on a flat feeder at the same time—preferably early or late—each day. Counting on a regular meal is important to them. Crows and ravens also enjoy cracked corn, sunflower seeds, dry cat and dog food, fruits and veggies, bird seed, and bread. (Tip: Don't leave food out overnight or it could attract rats.)
- 4** Put out small, shiny objects.  
These birds love getting gifts as much as giving them.
- 5** Be patient.  
At first, you may attract only small birds or squirrels. After a while, crows or ravens will probably follow other birds in. Remember, you can be their best friend by never touching them. They are wise and wild creatures.

# CROWS **VS.** RAVENS

## DO YOU HAVE PETS? HOW DO THEY REACT TO THE CROWS?

We have one cat. He hisses at them if they get too close to his favorite window spot.

## COULD THESE CROWS BECOME TOO TRUSTING OF HUMANS?

I don't know. In our neighborhood, there were people who loved the crows like we did and there were people who did not like them and were not nice to them. I think the crows learned to stay away from the people who yelled at them.

## HOW CAN KIDS HELP CROWS?

Treat them like you would treat other birds that come to feeders. Some people drive off crows when they come to their feeders. Our crows always chased away Cooper's hawks, which would eat the small birds, so we said the crows were like the neighborhood bird police. They made sure all the smaller birds were safe.

## WHAT CAREERS ARE YOU CONSIDERING?

I hope to become an ornithologist and study wild birds, or a wildlife veterinarian who helps wild birds.

**Diana Lynn** is a writer in Northern California. She enjoyed talking about a group of smart birds with one very smart human.



**CROWS AND RAVENS** belong to the same family, the genus *Corvus*, but does that make them BFFs? No way! And surprise—it's not the big ravens that bully the smaller crows. It's crows that gang up on lone ravens. Groups of crows drive away ravens to protect their nests and food sources.

What's that big black bird? It's a crow. No, wait, it's a raven! Unless it's a crow . . . ?

How can you tell the difference?



## CROWS

- » Smaller
- » Cawing sound
- » Travel in larger groups
- » Slim beak
- » Tail is fan-shaped in flight

## RAVENS

- » Larger
- » Croaking sound
- » Travel in pairs
- » Chunky beak
- » Tail is wedge-shaped in flight