**Corvid in Covid-19**

By Lynn Hoffman 11.21.2020

Crows are Corvids and extremely intelligent. We see them daily in our New Mexico environment, cawing their territorial claims. They are very playful. Researchers observed them taking turns jumping into an air current off a cliff with broadleaf skateboards. They have language and use tools, invalidating the assumptions of social scientists meant to keep homo sapiens vastly superior to all other species.

A month or so ago, I saw a large black crow on its belly in the flower garden outside my window. It was near a large rock with a natural rain collecting basin. I was surprised not to see in standing on its legs. Observing, I saw that it was injured. At first, I thought it had a broken leg but later realized that its foot was injured. It managed with difficulty to fly from a belly start. The flight was low and apparently not very far.

The next day, I saw the crow on another side of our house lying in a bed of dry cedar greens about ten feet from a window. It had chosen a shady, secluded spot under a bird feeder where it could eat the seeds scattered by the feeding birds above. Again on its belly, it craned its head rapidly in all directions, panning for predators. These include coyotes, bobcats, owls, hawks and other raptors. The anxiety of this injured crow was palpable. It knew its vulnerabilities. At dusk, in again managed a low flight off the ground to cover somewhere safer.

That evening, I put containers of water and seeds where the crow had been. In the morning, they were tossed and flipped over, contents gone. This wasn’t the work of the crow but of the predators. Later that day, the crow returned to the same spot under the cedar, craning, panning, panicked. My husband and I watched day by day, longing and hoping for another return. For about ten days, he came. Attempts to stand or move were awkward and presumably painful, his foot unnaturally oriented. Each dusk, the crow miraculously managed his belly flight to near safety. Each morning we looked for his return with hope and expectation. I never intervened again, fearing my efforts to aid him would backfire, attracting the return of predators or causing more injury in his attempt to escape me. He was not wasting, apparently getting enough dropped seeds and rainwater to survive and perhaps grow stronger.

Flying off again at another dusk, he never returned. My husband and I chose to believe he made it. His ingenuity, self-defense strategies and grit enabled him to survive and his foot healed well enough to let him again perch in safety in trees at night. We think of him now as a survivor, a hero.

As I watched for these days, I thought of all of us, panning, scanning, anxious about the Covid-19 predator. Isolated, sometimes alone, uncertain. I think we too will be survivors and resume flight. Unfortunately, not all of us. The most vulnerable among us and the unlucky will fall victim. For the great majority of us survivors, we will be indelibly marked by the experience of fear, vulnerability, isolation, anxiety and the nearness of death. We will also be sounder, stronger, more grounded in the wisdom of the circle of life and the importance of human connection, kindness, resilience and love.

Like the crows playing on their broadleaf skateboards, we will experience elevated joy in the small, present moments of life and in our common humanity and decency. We celebrate and we remember with compassion and grace.