

BIRD EXPLORER

The Raven

BY PETER J. THIEMANN



The Raven is a very charismatic species and may be the most successful bird on the planet. Common in the West, it can be found in cities, the country, and wild places from the Mexican border to the arctic. In places like Yellowstone National Park, Ravens sometimes gather on carrion in large numbers, alerting bears, wolves, coyotes, and foxes that easily obtainable

food, such as roadkills or large mammal carcasses, is available.

In old Norse mythology Ravens appear as mystical birds transcending natural boundaries. Odin, one of the principal Norse gods, had a pair of Ravens, described as very intelligent. Their existence in these tales of the far north illustrates the success of this species to live in almost any environment. However, Ravens have now become rare in Europe.

Here in the Applegate Valley, Ravens are everywhere. I have a pair nesting in a large Douglas fir tree on my land. During courtship they have been performing spectacular aerial displays; now they are often patrolling their home territory. With all the Raven activity in the air over my land, I am somewhat concerned about

the nesting songbirds there, as Ravens are known to raid the songbirds' nests.

So it is important not to encourage the Raven species to overpopulate our environments by controlling garbage stored outside and reducing litter on our roadways and in city parking lots. Birds thrive best when living on natural food sources, and that includes the beautiful black Common Raven.

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Photo courtesy of peterjthiemann flickr photo stream.



Peter J. Thiemann

A tale of two tigers

BY LINDA KAPPEN

Western Tiger Swallowtail

The Western Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio rutulus*) is in the butterfly family Papilionidae. It is a large butterfly with a wingspread of up to 3.5 inches.

The *Papilio rutulus* is bright yellow with a broad black border, black tiger stripes on its wings, and two large tails. With its wings open it displays metallic blue spots with orange crescents on the margin above the tails.

This butterfly can be seen, gliding and flying swiftly, on roadways next to creeks and rivers from mid-April through September. During this time it is fun to walk on country roads that follow creeks in wooded areas and watch the males patrol up and down the corridors looking for females, who fly higher in the wooded canopies. Some favorite habitats are flower gardens, parks, and canyons. Its range is western North America, from British Columbia to Baja California and east to New Mexico and Colorado.

In southern Oregon two or more broods per season are possible. Host plants are broad-leaved trees such as big-leaf maples, willows, aspens, and black cottonwoods. Females lay eggs singly on host plants. The caterpillars feed on the leaves. The pupae overwinter and emerge in the spring.

Adults seek nectar from blackberries, sweet William, rhododendron, native

thistle, phlox, and many other native species of plants. Males will mud-puddle to gather important nutrients.

I have fond memories of a time a friend and I tried to outsmart this species of swallowtail while trying to net some for observation. They were so fast we tried driving ahead of them as they flew down the roads. Then we would stop, jump out of the car, and try to net them as they flew past us. Although it was challenging and fun and might have worked a time or two, it wasn't a practice we kept doing.

Enjoy these beauties this summer even on a shady creek road!

Pale Tiger Swallowtail

The Pale Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio eurymedon*) is also in the Papilionidae family of butterflies. It is a large butterfly with a wingspread of up to three inches. It is very white to creamy white with black stripes and a broad black border with blue and red-orange caudal (near the tail) markings.

The Pale Tiger Swallowtail can be seen in flight from mid-April to October, with the peak of its flight period April through July. It frequents open woodlands, foothills, chaparral, streamsides, ocean habitats, canyons, or any other spot with flowering shrubs and plants from sea level to higher mountains. Its range is from British Columbia to Baja California and mountain regions to New Mexico.

Host plants for this swallowtail are mainly buckbrush (*Ceanothus cuneatus*), snowbrush (*Ceanothus velutinus*), and other mountain shrubs.

Males perch in trees on the lookout for females. Females lay eggs singly on the host plant's leaves. This species will produce one generation. The pupae hibernate over winter months.

Adults will nectar on flowers of yerba santa, Columbia lily, chokecherry, penstemons, and many other native plants. They will use garden favorites such as zinnias and sweet Williams, and they will visit sprinklers for waterdrops. Males will mud-puddle, often with other species of swallowtails.

Once while scouting in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness for a route for the Siskiyou Field Institute butterfly class, I saw a Pale Tiger Swallowtail on a ceanothus plant next to the road. It stayed there only briefly, but long enough for me to walk almost right up to it to get a look. That was when I discovered why it was allowing me to approach for a couple of seconds: she was laying an egg.

Pale Tiger Swallowtails are wonderful butterflies. Though they are large, their flight is graceful and strong.

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Western Tiger Swallowtail



Pale Tiger Swallowtail

Note: If you would like to learn more about our region's butterflies and moths, Siskiyou Field Institute is offering a course, *Introduction to Butterflies and Moths of the Siskiyou*, on June 14 - 16. For more information, call 541-597-8530 or visit thesfi.org.

Photos by Linda Kappen.

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BBQ & BIO-CHAR DEMO

Weds., June 19th from 6-8pm
Join us for a demonstration/talk and BBQ in June.

Feed your garden, especially your trees, with charred biomass (biochar). Learn how biochar can increase soil productivity, reduce wildfire risk, and slow climate change. Kelpie Wilson of Wilson Biochar Associates will provide the history and science of biochar production as well as hands-on learning demonstrations of how to make biochar in simple kilns.

Summer Film: Beaver Believer
Stay tuned for more information on our 6th Annual Summer Film at Red Lily Vineyard in early August.

www.apwpc.info/news-events

"promoting ecological, economic and community well-being in the Applegate watershed through on-the-ground projects and strategic collaborations."