

Winthrop Valley Life

[Appeared in the Methow Valley News 12.8.2021](#)

Two weeks ago my neighbor Kat texted to tell me that she'd just seen a raven fly out of my chicken pen with an egg in its beak. The raven flew across the road and deposited the egg in a nest of pine needles near another neighbor's house. It wasn't, Kat told me, the first time she'd seen the raven do that.

I figured the raven was spotting errant eggs in our yard, laid by a young hen who was not year clear on the location or purpose of the nesting boxes attached to our coop.

The next day, my husband called me over to the window in a whisper. "Look," he said, pointing to the chicken pen. A raven was perched on one of the fence posts, swiveling its head from side to side in a manner I can only refer to as "cheeky."

All us humans were inside at that moment, and after a few moments of surveillance the raven apparently deemed the coast clear. It was time to make her move.

The raven flew off the post, landing in the chicken pen in a manner I can only described as "practiced." This was clearly not her first touchdown in this particular landing zone.

At first the raven acted all casual, strolling around amidst the chickens as if she were simply just one of the flock. Had she been capable of pursing her nonexistent lips, I suspect she would have been whistling. In a manner I can only refer to as "conspicuously nonchalant," the raven strolled over to the ramp that leads up into the coop.

Suddenly she was all business, marching up the gangway and into the coop, a corvid on a clear mission. Suddenly I understood that the eggs my neighbor had been seeing in the raven's beak were not gleaned, but instead purloined, and straight out of the hopper. Suddenly the situation became clear; this was unambiguous, absolute, premeditated theft.

I was annoyed, of course. With all the grain we invest in those chickens, each egg is worth at least 50 cents. But I couldn't fail to be impressed, either, at this bold display of trespass and theft—fowl play at its most egregious.

Mark Pavelka, who studied ravens for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, said, "With other animals you can usually throw out 90 percent of the stories you hear about them as exaggerations. With ravens, it's the opposite. No matter how strange or amazing the story, chances are pretty good that at least some raven somewhere actually did that." Yes indeed.