

Bohemian Waxwings Eating Apples (in the company of one Cedar Waxwing):

Introduction: In February I had a wonderful opportunity to watch and photograph Bohemian Waxwings eating apples on my neighbour's tree. It was an opportunity I've wanted for a long time so I took a lot of photographs and was busy "looking" but perhaps not "seeing". Jim Saunders has spent some time "seeing" these photos and has made some interesting interpretations below. This actually is one of the joys of photography because it gives you time to see things that are happening so quickly or perhaps there is too much detail to take it all in at the time.
Peter Gadd

Jim's Observations:

#37 and #38 – getting the skin off and exposing as much meat as possible for foraging is possibly one of the main objectives of the flock. This seems to be what is happening here. In 37 there is a lot of apple meat exposed but the bird on the left doesn't go after exposed apple meat but lifts off more skin closer to the other Waxwing. Its position and the stability of the apple makes it easy for it to do this. After lifting the piece of skin off it backs off (38) and the Waxwing on the right is given the opportunity to get more meat with a vertical strike of its beak. In this case the apple is stabilized by the branch the Waxwings are perching on. I get the feeling that the birds are on the same page by the co-ordination of their activity.

37



38



#67 - The Cedar Waxwing is holding or stabilizing the apple with its feet while getting some apple meat and the Bohemian seems to be waiting its turn with its beak partially open or is it communicating with the Cedar?



67



68

#68 - the Cedar has moved its tail to the left and its right wing has opened some. This maneuver has not improved its advantage in getting apple meat. When I look at #69 I can see that the Cedar has moved its tail back to the right with the right wing open but it may be in the process of retracting it. Was the tail used as a lever by the Cedar to turn its body and the apple at the same time? Did the repositioning of the tail cause the exposed meat to be in a position that the Bohemian can get at easier? Is the opening of the wing acting as an air brake to reduce the speed of the spin?

69



Another Bohemian to the left of the Cedar looks eager to get in on the action in #71. In #72 it moves to its right behind the Cedar and at the same time the Cedar appears to be turning the apple to its right to accommodate the other Bohemian. The Bohemian facing the Cedar appears to be communicating displeasure with this turn of events and the Cedar turns the apple to accommodate it as in #73. In #75 the apple has changed position to favour the facing Bohemian. When #67 is compared with #75, I believe that the apple has been turned close to 180 degrees.

71



72



73



75



#121 to #123 – this sequence shows a frequent occurrence. If the Waxwing can get positioned on top of the apple and can hold on with its toes, it in a sense becomes part of the apple and its beak will be able to penetrate the meat of the apple easier. In this case added stability is provided by the apple being very close to a large stem as well as being backstopped by another apple. There is another Waxwing in the background that appears to be taking advantage of the easy pickings also (#122 and #123).

121



122



123



#104 – No help needed, thank you!



104

#41 – Is one Waxwing feeding another ? #16 – same as #41



41



#16