

mockingbird

The

On a glorious summer afternoon, two crows land on a street light. The blue August sky behind them is dotted with clouds. A mockingbird swoops in, ending its dive right behind them with a snap of its wings. A second mockingbird glides in and lands in front, leaning forward from its balance point on the wire and flexing wings and tail. The crows only watch. One's beak is open as if a large dog gently panting. The standoff continues for several minutes; the mockingbirds take turns diving at the crows; the crows remain unphased and unflinching. A flock of house sparrows flutters in and perches along nearby wires watching the fight. After some time, the crows make a heavy, unhurried exit; still pursued by determined mockingbirds.

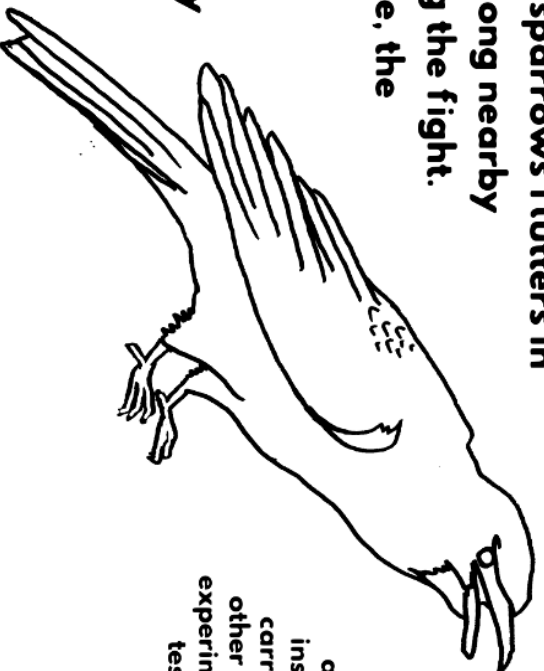
Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) lays 3-5 blue-green eggs spotted with brown in a nest that is a bulky cup of sticks and weed stems; sings most on moonlit nights in spring and is strongly territorial. The mockingbird will defend fruiting trees and shrubs from other birds. Part of their attack involves a distinctive snapping open of the wings and tail to flash white patches on the underside. I've seen one of these mockingbirds land on a low fence in my garden and perform the preliminary threatening action, tilting forward and spreading wings and tail just enough- like a tough guy flexing his muscles, but the crows are the real thugs in this story.



CROW

The

American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) is an all black bird. Crows are known for their intelligence; for example, they are able to recognize and remember people who have threatened them in the past, and to teach other crows who were never threatened who these people are. They eat anything from insects, seeds and fruit to garbage, carrion and chicks robbed from other birds' nests. More than a few experiments have been performed to test the nature of crows' intelligence.



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cumulus cloud

Cumulus clouds form low in the sky. They are dense clouds with upper bulges and clear edges. On clear days they form due to diurnal convection, a daily cycle of air and moisture driven by the sun warming the land. They appear in the morning, grow during the day and dissolve in the evening.

