



Mating Flights

Common Raven pairs fly together to cement their bonds in springtime. This is in Alaska, so springtime still has lots of snow.



The pair also grasps each other's talons as they "bond" in flight.

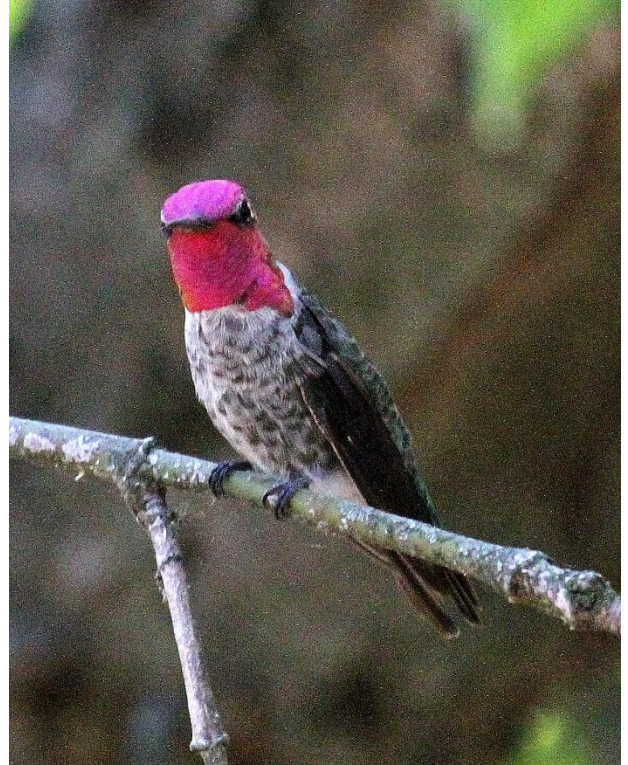


They tumble together, seeming to attack one another as they fall.

Many raptors perform this same kind of mutual flight together to form their union.

Flights to Impress

The male Anna’s Hummingbird (here in Ben Lomond, CA) performs a high-speed dive and uses its tail to create a sonic “chirp” at the bottom to dazzle a female.



The male stretches his wing, preparing to fly. His gorget has shifted in the light, causing the reflected red seen above to disappear.

The Mourning Dove impresses a possible mate by gliding down in circles on stiff wings and narrow tail, resembling the flight of a hawk.

You can tell he’s a male by the gray on the top of his head.





Another mimic is the Gray Catbird, also with a variety of song phrases to impress.

Singing for a Mate

Many, many male birds sing to wow a female and/or to establish a territory for a mated pair. The master is the mockingbird, whose duration, singing quality, or quantity of phrases can woo a mate.



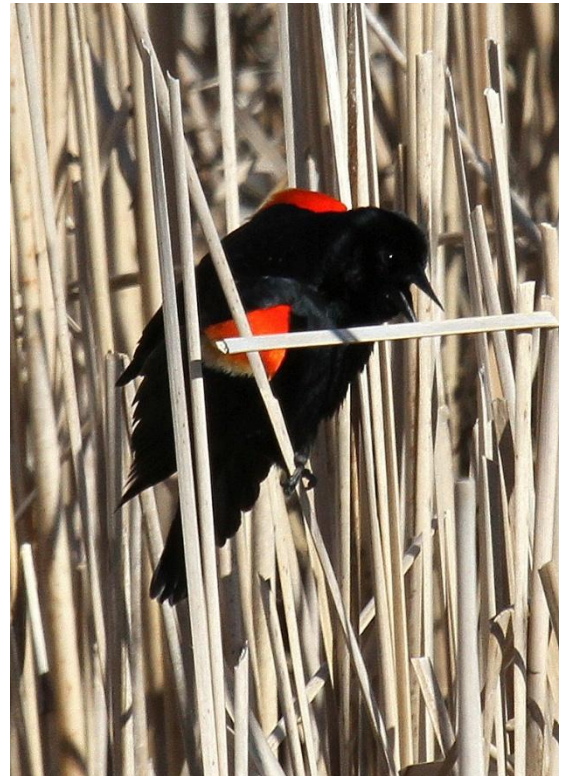
The Wood Thrush (left) can sing to entertain a female or a birder.

The Indigo Bunting's (right) complicated melody is a delight for female and human listeners. His bright blue plumage adds to his appeal.



More Singers

The Red-winged Blackbird has his “Song Flights” and his distinctive red epaulets to attract females.



Springtime in Alaska may have snow flurries (taken on May 31), but a Bluethroat will sing for a mate in spite of the weather.

Other singers seeking mates are the Chipping Sparrow in a fir tree (their favorite tree), or a rare Western PA visitor, a Dickcissel atop a fence post.



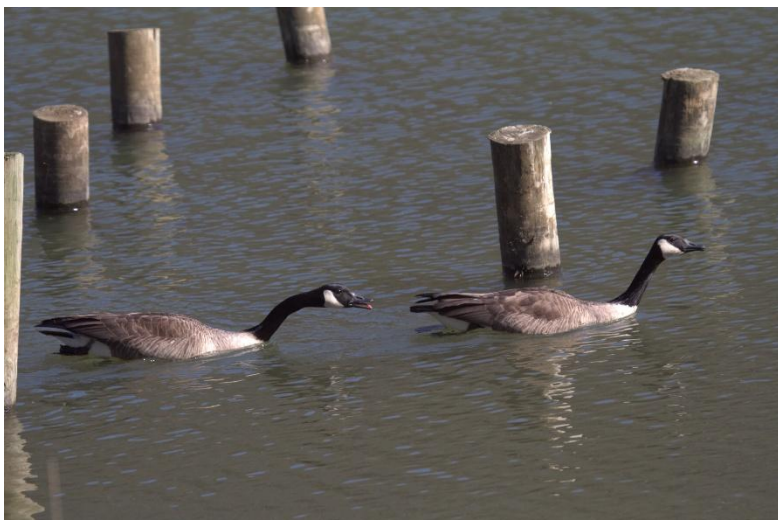


Dancing Together

Hawaii's Laysan Albatrosses perform an elaborate dance as they bond together. Facing each other, they raise their heads, stretch out their wings, raise one foot at a time, and even seem to kiss.

Female

Canada Geese honk a lot, dip their heads, and stretch out their necks as they swim together, here on North Park Lake..

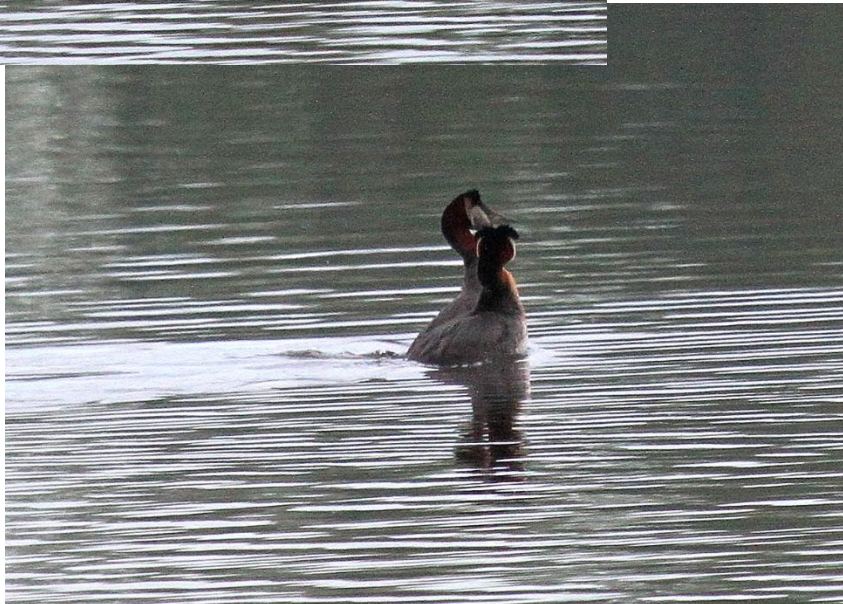


Male



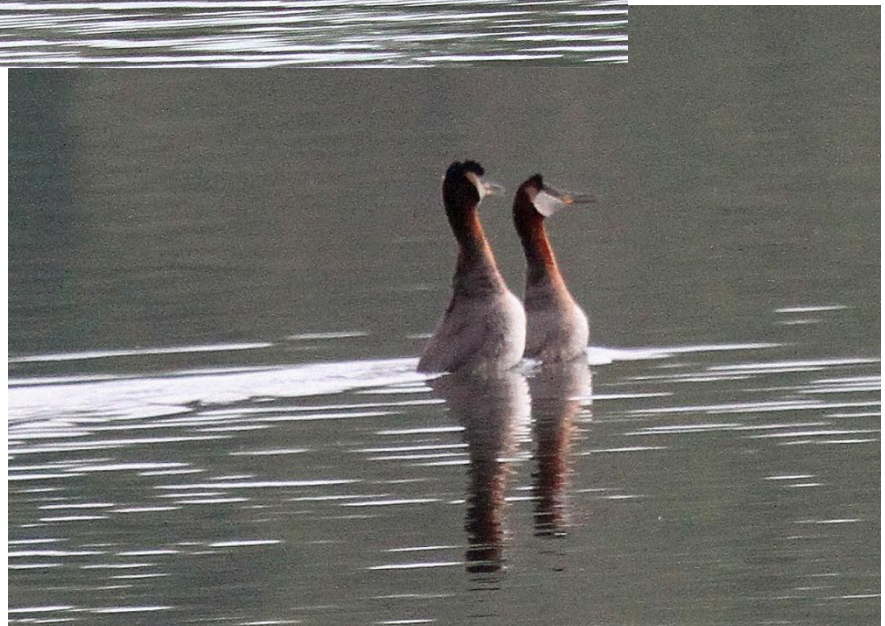
A Water Ballet

In Anchorage a pair of Red-necked Grebes met on a pond near my hotel. First, they faced each other, preparing to dance.



Next, they started to glide across the water, raising their bodies up in unison.

Finally, they reached a crescendo with heads erect, necks outstretched, all in perfect harmony.

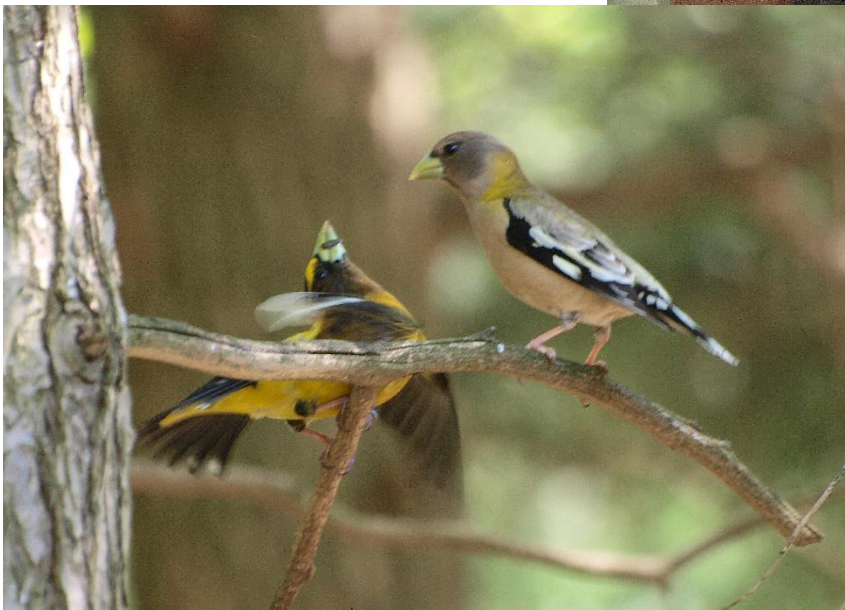




From the sublime to the ridiculous. Mallard drakes are among the few species that try to “rape” a hen duck. And it usually involves more than one attacking male. No mating ritual here...

Individual Dance

Evening Grosbeak males will dance before a female to bedazzle her. The ritual may also involve him feeding her.



Here a male raises his head and flairs his tail, while at the same time fluttering his outstretched wings to demonstrate his love for this female.

Presenting A Gift

A classic exchange of a gift that I have shown before. A male Northern Cardinal approaches a female with a seed in his beak.



He passes the seed to her as a token of his intentions. The pair seems to kiss as they exchange the seed.

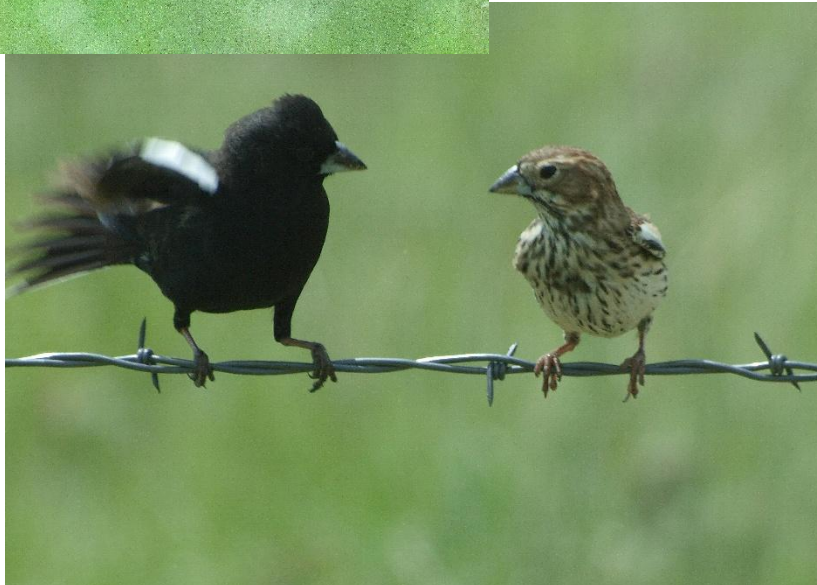


The female cardinal accepts the seed and his affection, as the male looks on approvingly.



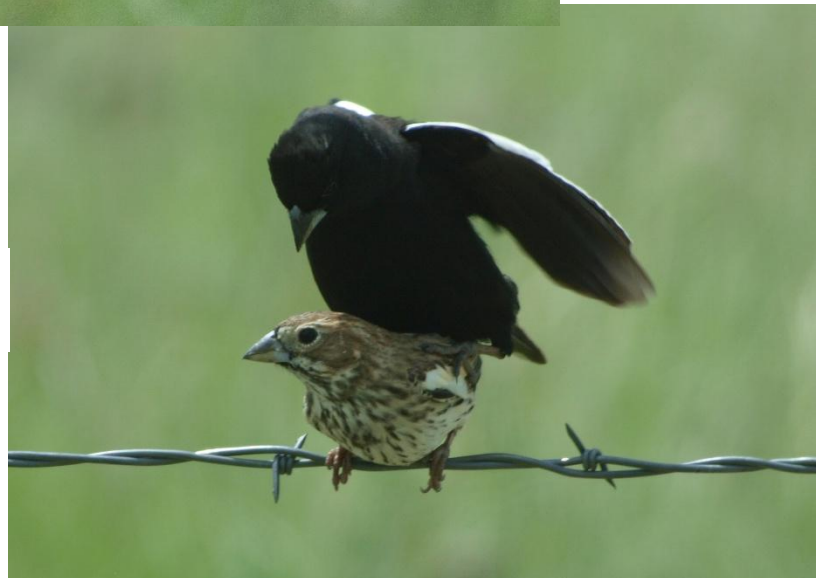


Another exchange of a gift went even further. In the Pawnee Grasslands of Colorado, I watched (and photographed) a male Lark Bunting present a sprig of grass to a female.



The female bunting accepted his advances, and he approached closer.

The male mounted the female, and their union was complete.



References:

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