

Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*)

Considered by many to be one of the most beautiful of our North American birds, the black-masked, crested Cedar Waxwing takes its name from the red waxy projections found on their secondary wing feathers. The number of projections may vary with the age and sex of the bird and are suspected to be of value for attracting a mate. Older males have more of them, while females have fewer.

When courting, a waxwing pair perches side by side touching bills and passing food such as berries between each other. Nesting does not begin until mid summer when both birds participate in nest building. 3-5 eggs are incubated mostly by the female. Both parents feed the young.

With a diet that is very rich in berries and small fruits, they sometimes ingest overripe berries that are beginning to ferment and produce alcohol. The result is intoxication and they are forced to sleep off the effects. In extreme cases they can die from alcohol poisoning. Waxwings are also proficient aerial forgers and often fly from a perch to catch insects on the wing.

Waxwings are very sociable birds and are not usually found alone.