



ABOVE: Crows flood the University of Pittsburgh campus, near the Cathedral of Learning

## Dial M for a Murder (of crows)

In the city of Pittsburgh, there are many places you might find a rowdy roost of crows. Crows gather to spend the night in areas with big trees and some source of light. Most people wouldn't want to sleep with the lights on, but for crows, lights let them keep an eye out for possible predators like the fearsome great horned owl.

### Duck, Duck... Crow?

Throughout winter, roosts of crows will shift around the city of Pittsburgh. This means that you could spot a group of crows in one place and then three months later observe the same exact "murder" in another area of the city!

### A Murder?

They're not *really* that vicious, but a group of crows is often referred to as a "murder." Spooky, right?

One reason for the term "murder" could be that, as scavengers, crows are often associated with cemeteries or battlefields.



LEFT: American Crow (*Corvus Brachyrhynchos*)

### Where can I find crows?

Here are some of the places in Pittsburgh where you might have seen a crow (or a thousand!) in past years:

- Flagstaff Hill
- Homewood Cemetery (in October)
- Allegheny Cemetery (in October)
- By Bigelow Boulevard in the Hill District
- Next to the Cathedral of Learning

In fact, the University of Pittsburgh **has started blasting predatory bird calls** from the Cathedral of Learning to try and scare crows away. Do you think this is working? If you're riding through Oakland keep both your eyes and ears open!

### I Spy with My Little Eye...

Next time the sun starts to set, go outside and see what sorts of things you notice. Do you observe anything unusual happening with the birds in your area? You can even take along a camera or notepad to write down your observations. Make a note of anything fun or interesting that stands out to you!