

Clark's Nutcracker: Weather change curtails habitat

BY BRUCE MCCAMMON

Clark's Nutcrackers inhabit higher elevation, mountaintop areas so you won't see them in the lower valley zones.

They are worth the short drive to the top of Badger Mountain if you want to watch their antics.

With a wingspan of 18 inches and a length of 12.5 inches, the Clark's Nutcracker is slightly larger than an American Robin.

Their gray body and size can be confused with Canada Jays at higher elevations.

The Clark's Nutcracker is distinguished by its long, black bill, a black tail with white edges and black wings with white patches. The Canada Jay (aka, Camp Robber) is slimmer and lacks white on the wings.

The Clark's Nutcracker is a



Bruce McCammon is retired, color-blind and enjoys photographing the birds in north central Washington.



species that may be adversely affected by climate change. As temperatures warm, the Nutcracker will find that its habitat has gotten a lot smaller. Going higher may not be an option since the bird needs coniferous forests in which to nest.

Groups like the National Audubon Society (www.audubon.org) and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (www.birds.cornell.edu) are studying the effects of climate change on birds. You can visit their websites to read more or find out how to contrib-

ute your valuable sightings.

The photo in this article was taken on Badger Mountain in January 2018.

If you are prepared for winter travel and want a chance to see these great birds sweep through the canopy, head up to the top of the Badger Mountain Road and explore some of the lesser traveled roads in the area. Be prepared for snow and winter conditions.

Private land is common on Badger Mountain so viewing from the roads or using snowshoes or skis to travel down roads might be a good option.

Some people who live on Badger Mountain feed birds. If you can locate some feeders you have a great chance to see these birds gathering seeds or dining on suet.

Don't forget your binoculars. Good luck.