

Factsheet

Ravens at the Tower of London

- The newest birds are a female raven called Pearl and a male raven named Rocky. They both came to us in June 2011 from a breeder in north Somerset and have been settling into the Tower since then, as well as being checked over and monitored by the vets at London Zoo. At the time of writing (Dec 2011) Pearl is about six months old and Rocky 3 years.
- The new arrivals can look forward to a good life at the Tower - the ravens are given 6oz of raw meat and bird formula biscuits soaked in blood each day. Once a week they enjoy an egg, plus the occasional rabbit, which is given to them whole because the fur is good for them! They are also rather partial to scraps from the mess kitchen at the Tower.
- There are now a total of seven ravens that reside at the Tower.
Hugine, Erin, Merlin, Munin, Rocky, Pearl and Porsha.
Porsha (female, light blue leg ring, Somerset, 2009)
Hugine (female, red ring, Somerset, 2008)
Pearl (female, gold ring, Somerset, 2011)
Erin (female, white ring, Somerset, 2006)
Merlin (female, pink ring, South Wales, 2005)
Rocky (male, brown ring, Somerset, 2009)
Munin (female, dark green ring, Scotland, 1995)
- It is not known when the ravens first came to the Tower of London but their presence is protected by legend. Traditionally with birds of ill omen, it is their absence rather than their presence that is feared at the Tower of London. There is debate as to when the legend dates from, but the legends say that if the ravens leave, the Tower would fall and the Kingdom would fall, so Charles II decreed that there must always be at least six here. To prevent the birds from flying away, their lifting feathers are trimmed by the Raven Master. This procedure does not hurt, nor does it harm them in any way, but by unbalancing their flight it merely ensures they don't stray far from the Tower.
- Tower Ravens enjoy a good life - as well as a good diet and veterinary care, their life expectancy is high unlike in the wild. The oldest raven to live at the Tower was called Jim Crow who died at the age of 44. At the time of writing (Dec 2011), the oldest Tower raven serving today is currently 17 years old.
- There has been the occasional raven escape. Munin escaped for 5 days in Oct 2010, only to be caught again by the Raven Master in Greenwich! Whilst she had been at the Tower for 16 years, she clearly felt she needed a holiday...
- Another raven, Grog, was last seen outside an East End pub called the Rose and Punchbowl in 1981.
- Occasionally ravens have to be dismissed for bad behaviour. This happened to George who received his marching orders in 1986 after he developed an unhealthy taste for TV aerials: "On Saturday, 13th September 1986, Raven George, enlisted 1975, was posted to the Welsh Mountain Zoo. Conduct unsatisfactory, services therefore no longer required." George was sent to a sanctuary in Wales where it transpired he was Georgina - who gave birth to Gwyllum, one of today's Tower ravens.

