**Phainopepla (PHAI)**

*Phainopepla nitens*

---

**Characteristics**

- Slender body with dark plumage, a ragged crest, red eyes, and a long tail that fans out in flight
- Length: 18-21 cm
- Weight: 18-28 g
- Wingspan: 29 cm
- **Males** have that shiny black plumage with white patches on their primary feathers. **Females** have dark grey feathers with white edges seen on the top side of their flight feathers.

---

**Behavior**

- Active throughout the daytime
- Tends to defecate on the same branch, which eventually creates a characteristic mound of droppings (see the photo below)
- Nesting season is between late February and April where monogamous pairs are formed
- Nests are a shallow cup that can be seen in the forks of trees or by a mistletoe cluster

---

**Habitat**

- In the Mojave, can be found on mesquite trees that have been infected with desert mistletoe
- Are also found in riparian woodlands and chaparral
- Where there are berries, there are likely Phainopepla!
Phainopepla

*Phainopepla nitens*

### Diet
- Fruits and insects
- Staple food are berries from the desert mistletoe
- During nesting season can be seen eating more insects

### Zzyzx-specific Information
- Often seen perched on the top of the mesquite trees behind Lake Tuendae and by the pool house
- Common around the Desert Studies Center and can be seen flying overhead from mesquite to mesquite

### Conservation Status
- IUCN Status: Least Concern
- Populations are stable

### Did You Know?!
- Main source of water is from mistletoe berries
- Can eat over 1,000 mistletoe berries a day
- Phainopepla help disperse the parasitic desert mistletoe by defecating a sticky mound of droppings that contain mistletoe seeds from the bird’s diet. The droppings attach to branches (usually mesquite) and germinate

### Range

*Photo By: Kerry Pfaltzgraff*
Phainopepla Overview, All About Birds, Cornell Lab of Ornithology. (n.d.).
https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Phainopepla
