

## Unexpected guest with a message

Written by Deb Egenberger  
Thursday, 26 August 2010 14:22 -

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Recognize your blessings.

That's an ordinary message transmitted over and over through a number of common venues: a Sunday sermon, a pep talk from a friend, a self-help book.

But what about a bird?

The railing on the second-level deck at my house has served as a perch to many winged creatures.

Robins, sparrows, blackbirds and even a few swallows have landed there for a short reprieve on what might be a long journey to or from the sandhills.

Last week, though, we received a visit from an unfamiliar guest.

Our bird expert friend determined our brown and tan feathered caller was an immature Swainson's hawk, a grassland species also known as a grasshopper hawk or locust hawk.

It had been sitting in the neighbor's yard when I got home from work and must have decided to get away from the rambunctious children by taking flight to higher ground.

It perched on the deck railing atop the string of garden lights and next to the grill for roughly 45 minutes while the cat chattered and twitched as she watched it through the sliding glass door.

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Despite a fear of birds that reaches back into my childhood, I caught myself mesmerized by this hook-billed raptor.

What would bring this creature to my door?

There are several possible answers, depending on your belief in animal symbolism and your level of connection to the universe.

Seeing a bear can be a sign of natural strength and primal power. Crossing paths with a coyote might be a message teaching balance between risk and safety. Owls are said to be messengers of secrets and omens.

The hawk represents many ideas in different cultures but most refer to this bird as a messenger of the spirit reminding us to take notice of our opportunities, our courage, our creativity and our blessings.

On the most ordinary of days in a most unorthodox way, I received a reminder.

I recognize the gift.

I am blessed.