

School-to-Nature



Differences Between Crows and Ravens

Ravens and Crows are both members of the Corvus family of birds that includes Jackdaws and Rooks, solid black birds not found in the U.S. There are 9 species called Raven, 30 species called Crow, and a number of subspecies of each. This means there are many black or almost-black birds to study. Even Blue Jays are in the Corvus family. Both of these are highly intelligent and have large brains for their body size and weight, but Ravens are the smarter of the two.

Crows and Ravens thrive in a variety of habitats, including Conservancy lands, and are found in forests, mountains, deserts, and even tundra. Ravens prefer quieter rural areas, but crows do well in both country and city settings. Both are scavengers with a varied diet including seeds, fresh or decaying fish, meat, and fruits, and sometimes the eggs of other birds. They have been seen tricking other animals out of their food! They have few predators, and they live a long time: ravens 10-15 years, crows 7-8 years.

The Raven is huge compared to a Crow, beak to tail. The Raven is the size of a red-tailed hawk, 18 to 31 inches long. The Crow is closer to the size of a pigeon, 16 to 21 inches long. The raven has a more wedged shape tail while the crow has a tail that appears straight across, which can be seen when the birds are in flight. Ravens soar longer than crows do, and you can see through their wing feathers when they fly. Ravens have shaggy feathers on their necks and hairy feathers on their beaks; crows do not.

Crows make a caw-caw sound, but Ravens have a deep reverberating croak or gonk – gonk sound that can sound like an echo. Ravens and Crows mate for life. Both have a family society that may help with the feeding and protection of chicks. Crows are more social and tend to enjoy being with an extended flock. They have a tendency to be louder, as well, while ravens are quieter and more introverted.

March 2022 BH / DL

Caledonia Conservancy | P.O. Box 044714 | Racine, WI | 53404
262-498-4993 | www.CaledoniaConservancy.org