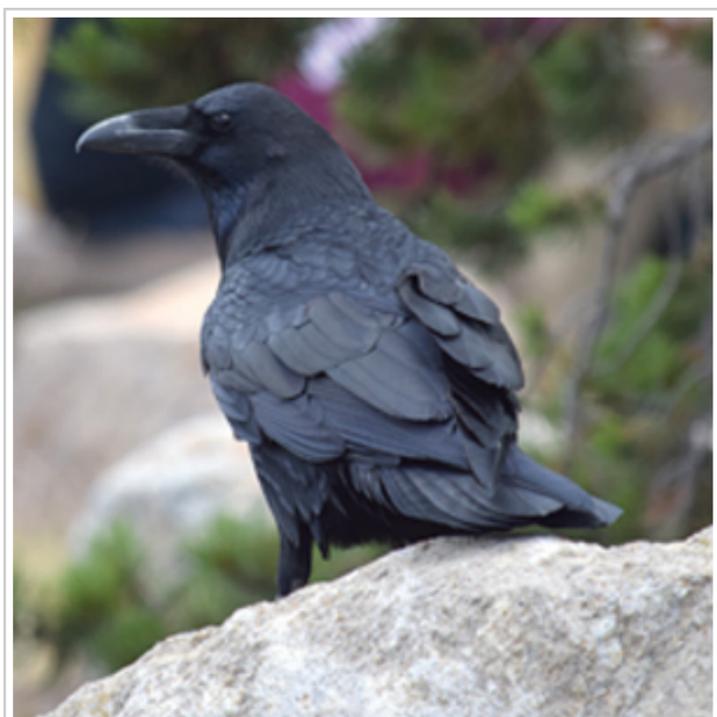


## Nature News ~ The Enchanting World Of Crows And Ravens



Ravens are bigger than crows with a larger, curvier beak and a throatier call.

Angela McLaughlin ~ The Journal • Oct 17, 2019 Oct 17, 2019

*"Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary. . ."*

Many of us can probably quote the opening lines of Edgar Allan Poe's famous poem "The Raven," and perhaps we can even picture it in our minds — a tapping noise on a bleak December day, and a stately, ebony raven perched just above the door.

It is images such as this that have given the birds a bit of a negative reputation. With their depictions in poems, stories and movies — often circling around on a dark and stormy night, perhaps witnesses to some supernatural event — it would make anyone question their intentions.

But common ravens and their close relative the American crow are anything but bad. In fact, they're quite fascinating, and the perfect critters to talk about as we approach a holiday where images of them are prevalent.

Crows and ravens are part of the family corvidae, also referred to as "corvids," which includes jays, magpies, nutcrackers and more. Corvids are known for their marked intelligence and are commonly acknowledged as one of the most intelligent families studied.

One way to determine intelligence in animals is with the mirror test, which looks for self-awareness and recognition in living creatures other than humans. While it is often said that corvids are "self-aware," there are many scientists who dispute this claim. Still, crows and ravens show their intellect in different ways.

A 2017 study published in the journal "Science" discusses the pre-planning capabilities of different birds in this family. It states, "Corvids are the only non hominid that have experimentally demonstrated planning beyond the current moment." The researchers performed a number of tests that allowed them to determine if ravens could make decisions for an event in the future, with the intent to determine their abilities to plan.

Crows, on the other hand, have been observed using tools to get what they need. And not just using a single tool, but actually making a tool out of multiple objects! They have also been known to solve complex, multistep puzzles.

These amazing animals bring more than their intelligence to the table. They are extraordinarily beneficial to

humans and the environment, keeping things healthy through their consumption of insects and carrion.

To the untrained eye, it might be easy to mistake one for the other, but there are a few key ways of telling ravens and crows apart.

According to the National Audubon Society, ravens are much larger than crows, closer to the size of a red-tailed hawk, with a bigger, curvier beak. Ravens often travel in pairs, while crows assemble in larger groups, referred to as a "murder" — which may be where those stereotypes come from!

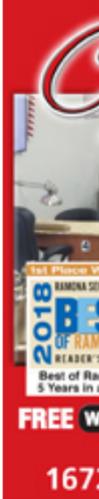
Other physical differences include their feathers, call and walk.

Crows' tail feathers are basically the same length, so they spread their tails like a fan. Ravens, however, have longer middle feathers in their tails, so their tails appear wedge-shaped when open.

Yet, it still may be difficult to determine what type of inky, black bird you're looking at from a distance. While a crow has a familiar "caw, caw" cry, common ravens exhibit a throatier, croakier call that has been likened to that of a bullfrog.

While history and mythology have depicted crows and ravens as harbingers of bad luck, the fascinating information we continue to glean from these animals is nothing short of amazing. To think that only a few decades ago we believed nothing with a brain that small could possibly harbor any intelligence tells us how much we still have to learn from the natural world.





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