

## Crows and Ravens

### *Compare & Contrast*

**Directions:** Read the following information and answer the questions.

Most people have difficulty telling crows and ravens apart. After all, they are both large, all-black birds. However, for a trained ornithologist, these two birds have unique, distinguishing characteristics.

**American Crows** make a “cawing” sound. They are found in North American treetops, fields, roadsides, and habitats ranging from rural to urban. They usually feed on the ground and eat almost anything – typically worms, insects, seeds, and fruit. They also feed on garbage, carrion, and chicks they rob from nests. Crows fly with a unique, methodical flapping that is rarely broken up with glides. They live together in large numbers during the winter, from a few hundred up to two million crows. Crows are highly social birds, more often seen in groups than alone. The whole family cooperates to raise their young, and may include up to 15 individuals. Crows sometimes make and use tools. In one experiment, a crow shaped a piece of wood and then stuck it into a fence post hole in search of food. They can work together to harass or drive off predators, a behavior known as mobbing. A crow's tail is shaped like a fan, while the raven's tail appears wedge-shaped. A captive crow in New York lived to be 59 years old.



**American Crow**  
*Corvus*  
*brachyrhynchos*



**Common Raven**  
*Corvus corax*

**Common Ravens** live in open and forest habitats across western and northern North America. They do well around people, particularly rural settlements but also some towns and cities. They thrive among humans, seek quick meal opportunities, and make a “croaking” sound. Ravens are not as social as crows; they tend to live alone or in pairs except at food sources like landfills. Ravens are confident, inquisitive birds that strut or bounce with two-footed hops. They fly gracefully by soaring, gliding, and slow flaps. Ravens cruise along roads looking for roadkill; crows do not typically do this. Therefore, if you see a bird flying right down the middle of a road, it is probably a raven. The raven is an acrobatic flier, often doing rolls and somersaults in the air. One bird was seen flying upside down for more than a half-mile. Young birds are fond of playing games with sticks, repeatedly dropping them, and then diving to catch them in midair. Ravens are among the smartest of all birds. They can use their intellect to put together cause and effect. A study in Wyoming discovered that during hunting season, the sound of a gunshot draws ravens in to investigate a presumed carcass, whereas the birds ignore sounds that are just as loud, such as an air horn or a car door slamming.

Source: Wikipedia.org, allaboutbirds.org

### Questions:

1. What do you think ornithologist means in the opening statement? (1 sentence) **It means a birdwatcher or bird expert.**
2. Compare crows and ravens. How are they the same? (≥3 sentences) **They both are large, all-black birds. Both birds live in a wide range of habitats, like rural and urban. Researchers find them both intelligent.**
3. Contrast crows and ravens. How are they different? (≥3 sentences) **Crows are more social than ravens. Young ravens have been documented to be playful. A crow's tail is more fan-like than wedge-like.**
4. Would you expect a crow or raven to live alone in a 100-acre forest? (1 sentence, use “because”) **It is most likely a raven because they are less social than crows.**
5. Quote two sentences from the text showing the birds’ intelligence. (2 sentences) **“A crow shaped a piece of wood and then stuck it into a fence post hole in search of food.” In addition, “the sound of a gunshot draws ravens in to investigate a presumed carcass, whereas the birds ignore sounds that are just as loud.”**
6. At school, you observe a bird that is either a crow or raven. How will you know which one? (2 sentences) **If it is social with other birds, it may be a crow. If it “caws”, it is likely a crow.**

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Source: *Wikipedia.org, allaboutbirds.org*

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