



resource room

# Raucous Ravens



## Check out these clever corvids!

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**Common Ravens (*Corvus corax*) are the largest perching (passerine) songbirds in the world and are legendary for their intelligence.**

**They're gregarious, playful, noisy, bold, and resourceful corvids related to crows, magpies, and jays.**

These ravens are all black with big bills, shaggy throat feathers and pointy, wedge-shaped tails. Ravens love to do acrobatics and soar. Their wide wingspans allow them to glide high in the air like hawks. They playfully do loops, barrel-rolls, and dives. They can be seen interlocking talons with other ravens in mid-air and tumbling together!

Ravens are great talkers with a complexity of sounds; hoarse croaks, gurgling notes, imitations of other birds, and sounds like water dripping. They have raucous voices rather than melodious songs.

## Raven or Crow?



**Common Raven**  
*Corvus corax*

**Size:** About 30% larger than a crow. Wingspan is 100 - 150 cm.

**Voice:** Common call is a deep, croaking *brronk*.

**Bill:** Long, thick, with a hooked tip.

**Tail:** (below) Long, diamond-shaped tail.



**American Crow**  
*Corvus brachyrhynchos*

**Size:** Smaller wing and body size. Wingspan is 85 - 100 cm

**Voice:** Common call is a full-voiced *caaw*.

**Bill:** Long, narrower, tapering to a point.

**Tail:** (below) Short, rounded tail.



Common Ravens are year-round residents of BC that inhabit a wide variety of climatic extremes from arid deserts to soggy rainforests, and from tundra to mountains. They can be found in wilderness, rural, and urban areas.

Monogamous raven pairs remain in the same territory year after year, living to about 40 years. Their courtship rituals in February to March involve dazzling aerial antics.

Huge stick nests lined with grass, moss and hair are built on cliff edges or in large trees. A clutch usually contains four to six light green eggs with brown blotches.

Ravens are highly effective and resourceful predators, catching rodents, reptiles, baby birds, and more. Working alone or in groups, they will also steal food from other predators such as wolves and bears.

In human populated areas, ravens will often scavenge from landfills, dumpsters, camps, hunters, and road kills. They figure out the rhythms of human activities. You can often spot ravens gathering at parking lots after summer events or winter ski days, scrounging for food.

Watch for ravens in the afternoons when they glide and play in the updrafts racing, chasing and catching each other. They've been known to pass snowballs back and forth, play tag with feathers and steal golf balls. So keep an eye out for ravens and their antics while you're out and about!

### Here are some of my memorable raven experiences:

- Years ago I watched a raven fly off from a ski hill restaurant with a pancake. It dropped the pancake on the roof of a nearby school bus and began to eat. Moments later the bus started up and the startled raven flew off. I wonder if that bus driver ever discovered the pancake stuck to the roof of their bus?
- Once, I was up on a mountain ridge watching ravens boisterously swooping around in an updraft of air, having fun. I started imitating their calls. They then started flying closer and closer to me until I could feel the *whoosh-whoosh* of their wings. Yikes! That was close enough! I headed back down the trail and was careful about playing with ravens after that.
- One sunny spring day, I was excited to hear the distinctive *hook-hook* of a Pygmy owl in the trees. Instead, it turned out to be a raven imitating the owl's call. Why was it doing that, I wonder?

Have you had an interesting raven adventure? Share your story with others and you may find that they have an interesting raven story to share with you too! Ravens sure are smart and they know how to have fun!