

COMMON RAVEN

Corvus corax

The Common Raven is found throughout North America, Central American and northern Africa. Perhaps the smartest of all the birds, the raven can survive in Arctic, temperate, and desert environments.

The Common Raven had nearly disappeared from the northeastern United States in the early part of the 20th century. Because of small population sizes in much of the East, it is listed as endangered or threatened in a number of states. Populations have been increasing all across the range, especially in the West where it has taken advantage of human-modified habitats.

The Raven is a very large and black. They stand about 22-27 inches tall. Their wingspan is between 40-46 inches and they weight about 24-58 ounces. Ravens have a wedge-shaped tail and a very robust bill. They have a well-developed ruff of feathers on the throat, which are called “hackles” and are used often for social communication. They have the tendency to soar and glide and their frequent harsh croaking calls. The sexes are alike in plumage with male slightly larger on average.

The call of a raven is a deep croak or hoarse “rrronk.” Also a variety of sounds, including knocks and bell-like notes; 15-33 categories of vocalizations have been

described in this species. They also communicate with physical displays of either threat or appeasement to subordinate and dominant ravens.

Ravens prefer open landscapes, such as treeless tundra, seacoasts, open riverbanks, rocky cliffs, mountain forests, plains, deserts and scrubby woodlands.

Ravens are known for their intelligence and complex social dynamics. They seem capable of learning innovative solutions to newly encountered problems. Ravens forage in larger groups in areas where resources are concentrated, and non-breeding individuals may occupy communal roosts but most commonly ravens occur alone or in pairs. Ravens generally roost on cliff ledges or in large trees.

Breeding season is between mid-February to late May. Female lays 3-7 eggs and are incubated for 20-25 days. Female incubates the eggs but both parents care for the young once they have hatched. Young leave the nest between 5-7 weeks of age. They reach sexual maturity in about 3 years of age. Average life span in the wild is about 17 years.

Ravens are mainly scavengers. They eat a wide array of animal foods, including amphibians, small mammals, birds, and carrion. They are attracted to carrion and eat also the insects that feed on carrion. Adults are wary of approaching carrion and new situations and will only approach

after the presence of blue jays and crow makes it clear that no danger is near.

Predators on nestlings may include large hawks and eagles, other ravens, and owls. Adults are usually successful at defending their young and will vigorously chase predators away.

Common Ravens are very important in native cultures throughout their range. Raven is common and important mythical creature in western Native American traditions.



COOL FACTS

- The Raven is an acrobatic flyer. It is frequently seen to make rolls and somersaults in the air. It has been observed flying upside down as far as one kilometer (0.62 mi).
- In winter; young ravens finding a carcass will call other ravens to the prize.
- Raven will line their nest with something soft and/or warm; so if the female has to leave the nest she can cover the eggs to keep them warm for a short period of time. (ex: sheep wool)

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In any State, you can call your local Game & Inland Fisheries, local Veterinarian, or animal shelter and they should have some phone numbers for local Wildlife Rehabilitators.

If you have any questions you may call Pearl Beamer, State & Federally licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator within the state of Virginia about wildlife. Pearl specializes in Raptors, Crows and Loons. 757-855-2922 (7am-7pm)

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