

Common Raven

Corvus corax

The intriguing Common Raven has accompanied people around the Northern Hemisphere for centuries, following their wagons, sleds, sleighs, and hunting parties in hopes of a quick meal. Ravens are among the smartest of all birds, gaining a reputation for solving ever more complicated problems invented by ever more creative scientists. These big, sooty birds thrive among humans and in the back of beyond, stretching across the sky on easy, flowing wingbeats and filling the empty spaces with an echoing croak.

Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

Not just large but massive, with a thick neck, shaggy throat feathers, and a Bowie knife of a beak. In flight, ravens have long, wedge-shaped tails. They're more slender than crows, with longer, narrower wings, and longer, thinner "fingers" at the wingtips.

Color Pattern

Common Ravens are entirely black, right down to the legs, eyes, and beak.

Behavior

Common Ravens aren't as social as crows; you tend to see them alone or in pairs except at food sources like landfills. Ravens are confident, inquisitive birds that strut around or occasionally bound forward with light, two-footed hops. In flight they are buoyant and graceful, interspersing soaring, gliding, and slow flaps.

Habitat

Common Ravens live in open and forest habitats across western and northern North America. This includes deciduous and evergreen forests up to treeline, as well as high desert, sea coast, sagebrush, tundra, and grasslands. They do well around people, particularly rural settlements but also some towns and cities.

Cool Facts

- The Common 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, then diving to catch them in midair.
- They also 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 but harmless, such as an airhorn or a car door slamming.

Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 22.0 - 27.2 inches
- Wingspan - 45.7 - 46.5 inches
- Weight - 24.3 - 53.7 ounces

