

American Common Crow

(Corvus brachyrhynchos)

Family: Corvinae



Physical Characteristics: Entirely black iridescent feathers all over. Legs, feet and bill likewise black. Approximately 16-20 inches long with the tail being 40% of the length. Wings are about 7-8 inches long. Strong, stout bill averages 2 inches. Distinguished from Common Raven by having a smaller size, rounded tails, and higher-pitched call.

Interesting Facts: Highly susceptible to West Nile Virus, they are monitored as an indicator species for the disease. Direct transmission from crows to humans is not recorded to date.

Lifespan is about 7-8 years. However, in captivity have lived up to 30 years. One of a few species of birds observed modifying and using tools to obtain food. They are monogamous and do not reach breeding age for at least 2 years and form large families of up to 15 individuals from several breeding seasons that remain together for several years.

Very social, inquisitive and sometimes mischievous, they are good learners and problem

solvers, but may also be aggressive towards larger birds such as hawks, owls, and herons.

Status: Permanent resident in most of the US. Populations estimated to have dropped by 45% since the introduction of West Nile Virus in 1999, but remain widespread and very common.

Habitat: All types of country from wilderness, farmland, parks, open woodland, to towns and major cities.

Nesting: Bulky stick nests lined with mud, moss, grass, and feathers are nearly always in trees, but sometimes in large bushes, and rarely, on the ground. Oaks are most often used. Three to six eggs are incubated 18 days with young fledging about 35 days after hatching. May start to incubate eggs by early April. Outside of nesting season may be found in large communal roosts at night.

Food Habits: Omnivorous. Will feed on invertebrates, carrion, food scraps, seeds, eggs, nestlings, stranded fish and various grains. Also will prey on mice, frogs, and other small animals. Harm to crops may be offset by eating of insect pests.

Song: Loud, short, rapid “caw, caw, caw”. Sometimes mimic sounds made by other animals and birds.

Range: From the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean in Canada and south through the US into northern Mexico.

Legal Status: Protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. Large populations and vast range are why the American Crow is not considered a threatened species.

Milam County: Permanent resident.

Sources: Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org>); Cornell Lab of Ornithology (www.allaboutbirds.org); Bird Web (<http://www.birdweb.org/birdweb/bird>); Answers.com (<http://www.answers.com/topic/american-crow>)