Crows mate for life and build a new nest each year in a conifer or other tall tree. The female lays three to nine eggs, which hatch in less than three weeks. After a month or so, because they haven’t yet learned to fly, the young crows tumble out of the nest onto the ground. Young crows are about the same size as adults but have milky blue eyes. If you find a fledgling on the ground, leave it alone. Its family is likely nearby, ready to fend off predators during this especially vulnerable period.

Food
Roadkill provides the crow with much-needed fat and protein, but most of the bird’s diet comes from fruit, earthworms, grubs, nuts, grain, garbage, and baby birds of other species.

Voice
Scientists have identified over 250 different crow calls, including clicks, caws, rattles, and coos. Crows use a softer, gentler-sounding dialect when communicating closely with family members.

The raven, also an accomplished vocalist, often relies on a long, drawn-out croak that makes it sound like a crow with a sore throat.

Both species can mimic human speech.

Range
In Montana, crows live year-round in all but the northeastern corner of the state, which they abandon in winter for points south.

Intelligence
The crow’s use of different food sources and habitats, along with its complex social life, has required it to develop an impressive brain. Scientists often compare the crow’s intelligence to that of chimps or dolphins.

Conservation status
Like rats, squirrels, and white-tailed deer, crows do well around people. Their numbers worldwide have steadily increased alongside growing human populations and expanding urbanization. In the eastern United States, crows suffered heavy losses from West Nile virus, a mosquito-borne disease that arrived in this country in 1999. Initially the virus killed nearly 100 percent of the crows it infected. But as it spread westward, the disease became less lethal to crows.

In Montana, crow populations are considered healthy and at no risk.

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