

## Crows versus Ravens: The Differences between Murders and Unkindnesses

Based on an Anza Borrego Desert State Park Lecture by  
Naturalist Jeff Salton, 22 January 2023; Notes by Dr. John V. Richardson Jr.



The *Corvus* genus includes American crows and common ravens.

More ravens than crows (the count of 7 crows in Borrego Springs in the last five-year average—none in 2021)—crows do seem to follow people (for our garbage). As Tavener (1926, p. 259) says: “Yet for some unexplained reason, the Crow increases and the Raven disappears when settlement advances.”

In physical appearance, ravens are twice the size of a crow. Males and female crows are the same size, but the female raven is smaller (slimmer) than the male (bulkier) raven. Two ravens together are a mated pair. Ravens have a curved beak versus a crow’s pointed beak. Crow tail feathers are a rounded fan versus raven’s pointed spade. Raven’s five primary feathers are pointed apart and forward versus crow’s closer together. Crows seem to row as they fly. Crows rarely soar, but ravens often pause to circle and soar. Overall, crows are sleeker, and ravens are scruffy. Ravens show their hackles under their chin. On the ground, both birds will walk, but ravens will occasionally take two-footed hops while crows traditionally walk. Nesting, crows like the crown of a tree while the raven prefers mid-height or a cliff.

Images: Courtesy of Wikipedia, “[American Crow](#)” and “[Common raven](#)”

**Source of Reference:** Percy A. Tavener, *Birds of Western Canada* (1926).