

APRIL 1 - 14, 2021 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

AMERICAN CROW

Ubiquitous, Intelligent, Indignant



American Crow, Adult, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*,
© Henry Burton

There are four crow species in North America.

The **Tamaulipas Crow**, *Corvus imparatus* of Mexico. The **Northwestern Crow**, *Corvus caurinus*, found along the coast of Alaska, British Columbia and Washington state. The **Fish Crow**, *Corvus ossifragus*, found from New England along the eastern and southern U.S. and the **American Crow**, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*, found throughout the U.S. and Canada.

For this article I will focus on the **American Crow**, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*.

The American Crow can be found anywhere that has trees and an available food source. It doesn't have a problem with any form of human created habitats. It is happy whether the landscape includes farmland, towns, city parks, cemeteries, shores of seacoast or freshwater. That is why the American Crow is considered universal throughout the United States and Canada, except the Arctic. It does avoid the American areas that are desert or desert like.

Because of the cosmopolitan diet of the American Crow, it can get along on most of what is available either through its own hunting, its scavenging skills or from the messy, open dumping of food waste by humans.

For example, its diet can range from farm grains and fruit to insects and small animals whether they be worms or voles.



American Crow, adult, © ebird.jpeg

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As is known, every nesting season Crows will eat the eggs and young of nesting land birds such as warblers, sparrows, robins, jays, even terns and eiders or for that matter any birds eggs it can find unattended.

This doesn't rule-out the fact that crows will feast on garbage or a dead carcass.

An interesting habit of a single or family of crows is their recognition of whether a human is specifically friendly to one of them or to a family. When that occurs, they have a tendency to bring trinkets of appreciation and leave them in a specific place where the person will find them.

Crows have been known to use tools such as a stick in its beak to dig for grubs.

It should be noted that crows both generally and in family groups work together. During the nesting season family groups will stay unto themselves and will not tend to intrude on another crow family. However, if they find a predator such as a hawk or owl, either in their feeding territory or nesting area they will sound the alarm. The alarm will bring in other crows and they will work together to intimidate, harass and eventually drive off the predator.

As mentioned in the past we have here at EastView a family group of crows. A family group is usually made up of the breeding pair along with young birds of the previous two years.

The breeding pair of a family group is responsible for building the nest. A crow nest is usually hidden in the crotch of a tree or somewhere on a sturdy branch of an evergreen or in a deciduous tree if evergreens are not available.

Because of the crow's proclivity for social interaction they will gather in large flocks. This can be seen especially during the fall and winter when they move to and from a roost that can number in the hundreds to even thousands. We see these flocks at EastView over the South Meadow and along the trees beside the railroad tracks as they congregate and move toward their roosting area.



American Crow, Adult, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*, calling, backyard at EastView © Dick Harlow

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Month of APRIL 01-14, 2021

[All Measurements taken at solar noon \(1230 EST\).](#)

PRECIPITATION

Average APRIL Precipitation for Vermont = 2.83 inches.

Total precipitation for APRIL is 16.0 mm or 0.6 inches. This is a 2.23-inch deficit so far this month.

Overcast Days: We had 6 days, almost one week of overcast skies. Of those overcast skies only one day produced light precipitation. So far this month we definitely have seen an addition to the draught.