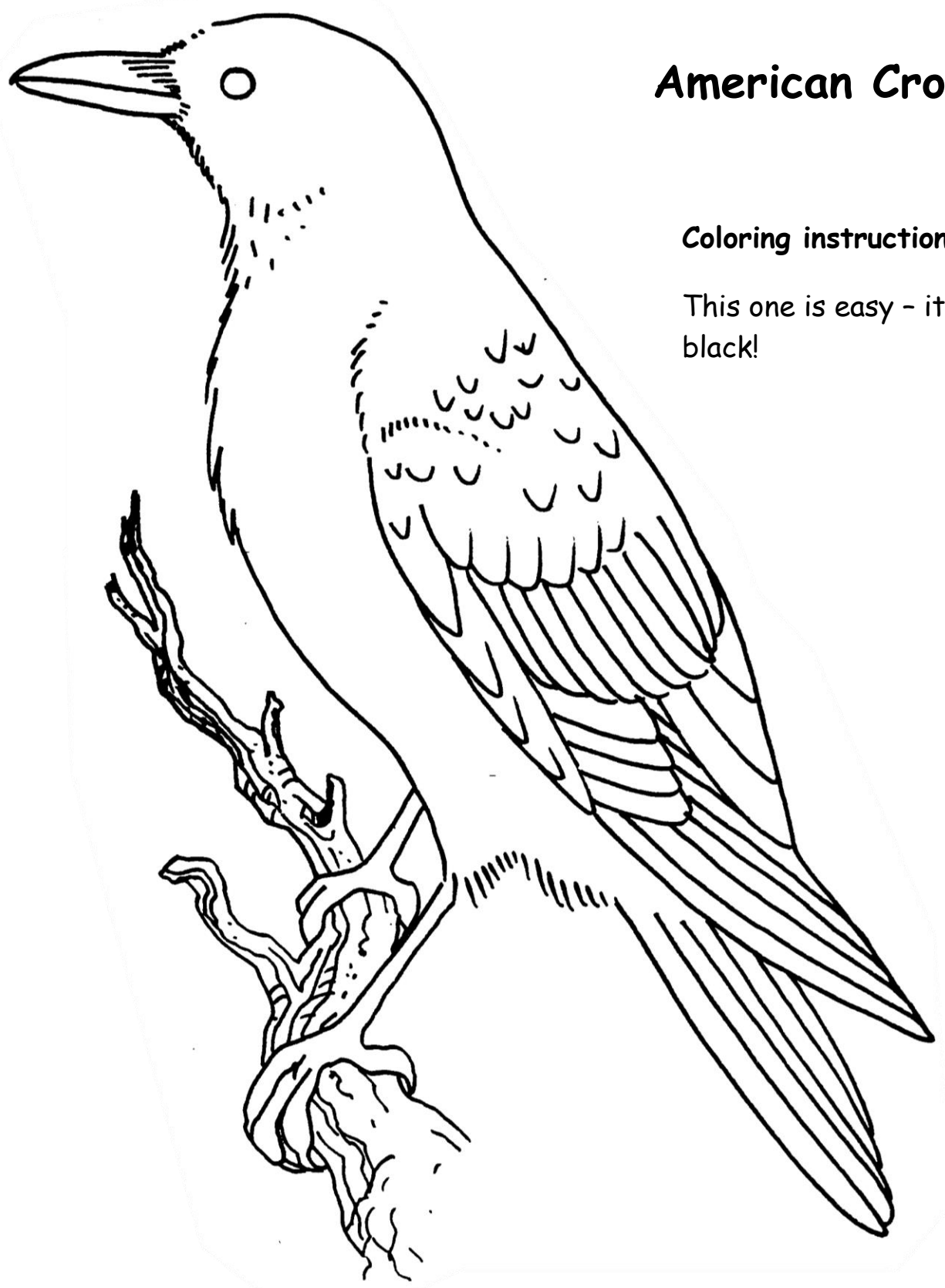


American Crow

Coloring instructions:

This one is easy - it's all black!



American Crow

Length: 17"

Habitat: Resident of open woodlands, fields and cities

Field marks: Large black bird.

Crows are almost always in flocks. If you see a large black bird by itself or in a pair, you are probably seeing a raven, another member of the Corvidae family. Ornithologists group birds by relationships and similarities. A screech owl and a great horned owl are obviously more closely related than a vulture and a hummingbird.

In the next few weeks, we will study three birds that are closely related. Jays, crows and magpies are all members of a group named Corvidae. They share many characteristics. Here are six:

1. They have thick, heavy beaks.
2. They tend to be gregarious. They often occur in groups.
3. Their calls and songs are loud, raucous and unmusical.
4. The male and the female are similar.
5. They tend to be omnivorous. They eat a variety of plants, insects, eggs, carrion, garbage, etc. More than 700 food items have been recorded for crows.
6. They tend to be one of the most intelligent groups of birds. This last characteristic makes the Corvidae family a very interesting family to watch.

Some scientists have created tests to measure animal intelligence and some members of the Corvidae family have the same level of intelligence as dogs. Watch these birds closely and they will occasionally amaze you with some fascinating behavior.

In winter you will see large flocks of crows. Large numbers of them **roost** together in trees. In the spring, these large flocks break up into smaller nesting groups. Studies indicate that these nesting groups are parent birds accompanied by their children from earlier seasons. These older "children" help defend the nest and feed the mother who does all the incubation. Like California Scrub Jays, these normally loud, raucous birds become very quiet during the nesting season. In the fall, family groups start gathering into large, noisy flocks once again.

American Crow Challenges

- Identify an American Crow.
- Watch a flock of crows. Can you find at least one sentry crow up on a tree or post while the rest feed?
- See crows mobbing an intruder that offends them. They especially dislike owls.
- In the evening, see lines of crows flying toward their roost. Crows tend to use the same route evening after evening.
- See a crow's two-foot diameter stick nest high in a tree.
- The slower wingbeats of crows allow you to see how wings move through the air. From the side, notice the wings do not go straight up and down. From the front or back, notice that most of the flapping happens out at the wingtips.

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