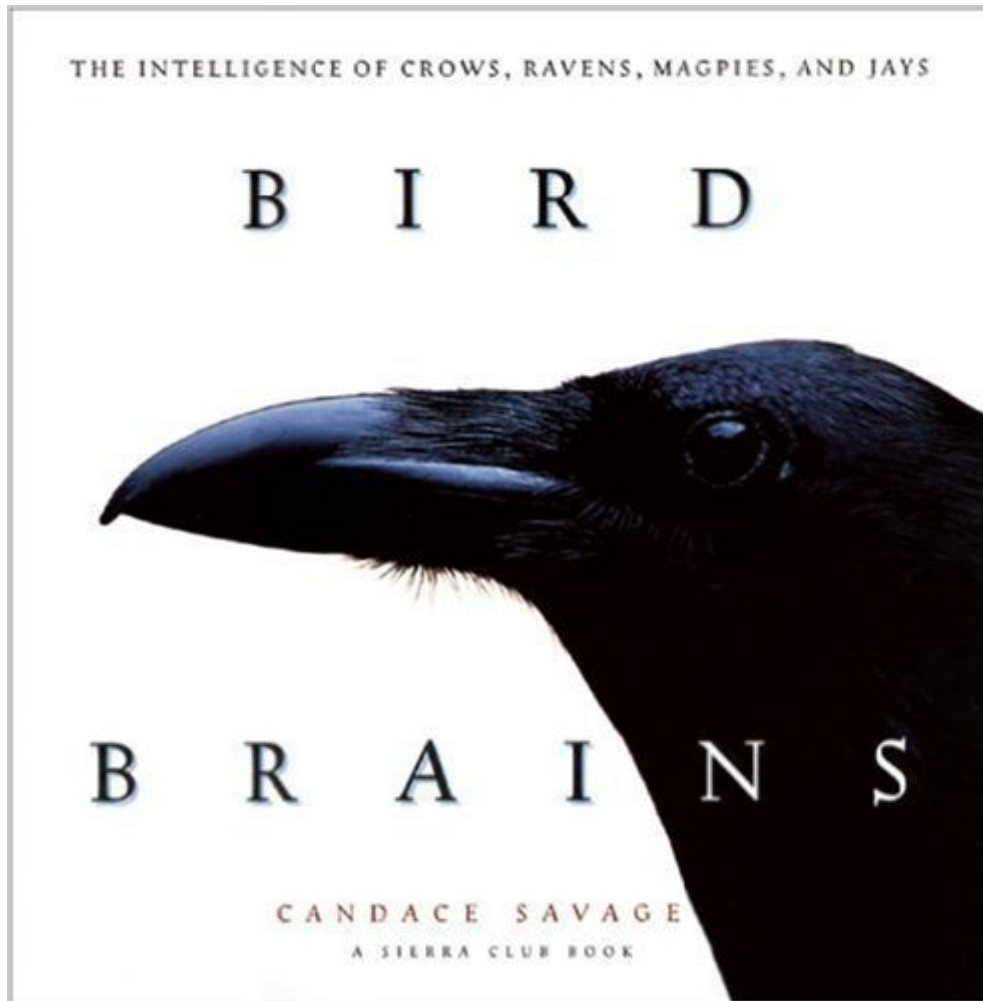


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# Bird Brains: The Intelligence Of Crows, Ravens, Magpies, And Jays



## Synopsis

Birds have long been viewed as the archetypal featherbrains—beautiful but dumb. But according to naturalist Candace Savage, “bird brain,” as a pejorative expression, should be rendered obsolete by new research on the family of corvids: crows and their close relations. The ancients who regarded these remarkable birds as oracles, bringers of wisdom, or agents of vengeance were on the right track, for corvids appear to have powers of abstraction, memory, and creativity that put them on a par with many mammals, even higher primates. *Bird Brains* presents these bright, brassy, and surprisingly colorful birds in a remarkable collection of full-color, close-up photographs by some two dozen of the world’s best wildlife photographers. Savage’s lively, authoritative text describes the life and behavior of sixteen representative corvid species that inhabit North America and Europe. Drawing on recent research, she describes birds that recognize each other as individuals, call one another by name, remember and relocate thousands of hidden food caches, engage in true teamwork and purposeful play, and generally exhibit an extraordinary degree of sophistication.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book has some interesting anecdotes on Crows, Ravens & Jays, and it does also describe much of the day to day life of these birds. The book is more than 50% full page photographs, and the photography is excellent. There are a few Brandenburg photos that have the Brandenburg touch, an animal filmed intimately close. But if you are trying to do research on animal intelligence,

this book is too shallow for that. It glosses over some research and incidents that I've read about more thoroughly in other sources. I wanted to say but but there's more... or yes but that has only been observed in two locations. If you are looking for photography and some general knowledge on corvids, this is the book. If you are researching animal intelligence, try George Page for a solid introduction. I think the title is Animal Minds. And if you already know quite a bit about this subject, you know where to look better than I do.

I loved this book, simple as that. Yes, it is a coffee table-type book, but it's a great coffee table-type book. I became interested in corvids when a very young blue jay flew into my house one day only to discover that in flying into a human's home, there might be fat cats waiting to pounce. The Blue Jay ("Sky") learned quickly and never flew in again. He also learned which cat was the Hunter and which cat was the lazy cat. He avoids the Hunter at all costs, but knows the lazy one's habits so well, that he will brazenly drop down next to the comatose cat and hide his peanuts in the grass, just inches from the feline. Amazing. That's a form of identity branding, which means Sky has a mind. I also learned more about my neighborhood crows and why they'll engage in conversation with me every morning. Thanks to this book, I am indeed wiser regarding my local flying friends and will treat them with the respect they deserve.

This book consists of about half text and half glossy pictures of corvids (ravens, crows, magpies, and jays). The pictures are beautiful, and range from "posed" shots of individual birds to some action shots of corvids interacting with other animals. Savage is from Saskatchewan, so the pictures show these birds in all four seasons. Some additional pictures come from Europe or Siberia. The text holds the book together but is not the focus of the book. Her central argument is that corvids are really smart, and she provides some anecdotes to that effect. The evidence is one-sided, but it's nonetheless true that corvids are smart. That said, the text is really beside the point in this beautiful book. If you want to know more about how smart these birds are, read Bernd Heinrich. In short, it's a coffee-table book in soft cover. The pictures really are beautiful, and the text is beside the point. It seems unfair to criticize it, as some other reviewers do, for being superficial.

A good part of my childhood was spent on an upstate New York farm. We had lots of corn and many other vegetables; many birds - and one extra-special crow. He quickly adopted us and often spoke to my uncle and me by name in my aunt's voice and exact intonations. The vegetable farm, barn, shop-garage, and chicken coop were at the top of a fairly steep hill and the house was at the

bottom. Aunt Rose ruled the household; the crow ruled the farm area. Sometimes he would deliver small things up or down the hill. My uncle and I never tired of his antics and wisdom. We were happy to do the work orchestrated by the crow and I was ready for J. Allen Boone's work years in advance. Bird Brains may not be the most scientific or even accurate book, but I bring it out any time I find a potentially interested visitor. Even now where I live in a fairly rural area of New York City - there are crows among my friends. They live in close quarters with several Cardinal families, near blue jays, and many smaller birds in a huge oak tree and smaller peripheral trees. Crows are gregarious and adjustable. They would no doubt be pleased with this book and see no reason to find fault. If the book were about humans, would be as picky as we are about crows being correctly represented? Do we expect all humans to be alike? Equally smart with similar talents?

This book has some of the most spectacular images of crows, ravens, and magpies that I've ever seen. Some may come across this book searching for a scientific tome rather than a beautifully constructed photo oriented coffee table book. But even the most staunch scientific mind will appreciate the beauty of these pictures. Buy it, you won't regret anything.

I have long enjoyed watching crows. This book is helpful to show other people why I have found crows so fascinating. This not a heavy scientific read. It is lite but very enjoyable. If you like crows or want to know more about crows this is a good starting place. I have also found that kids enjoy this book.

Absolutely fascinating with both pictures and text. Leaves you wanting more. Shows concrete proof that corvids (especially ravens) are possibly one of the top three most intelligent species on the planet. Even if you can't possibly bring it in yourself to believe that, it's still a great book to read and use as a reference, especially if you are interested in drawing birds. The glimpses of the significance of corvids in religions, folklore and literature are eye-opening, but they are glimpses and not really fleshed out. It's a small quibble--this is one of the most beautiful AND thought-provoking books I own

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