



## **My Drift**

**Title: Intelligent Birds**

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When you think about all of the animals in the world, you quickly realize that birds are, in fact, amongst some of the most intelligent creatures we have on Earth. Although there are more than 10,000 bird species worldwide, only a handful of them have made the list for extremely talented and incredibly intelligent. So, who are these super intelligent feathered friends?

Well, bird experts and scientific studies have concluded that the smartest birds in the world are in the Crow and Parrot Families.

Corvidae (better known as the Crow) is the family of birds that contains crows, ravens, rooks, jackdaws, jays, magpies, treepies and nutcrackers.

Psittaciformes (better known as the Parrot) is the family which includes more than 350 bird species such as parrots, keas, parakeets, macaws, cockatiels, and cockatoos.

However, the experts can't seem to agree on what specific bird is the most intelligent. Most said it was the Crow, but many thought it was the African Grey Parrot and even a few said it was the Kea Parrot. They did conclude that it is one of the 10 birds that I have listed in the following table:

<u>Crow Family</u>	<u>Parrot Family</u>
Crows (1)	African Grey (2)
Ravens (4)	Kea (3)
Magpies (5)	Macaws
Jays	Cockatoos
Rooks	Amazon

So, I Googled “most intelligent birds in the world” and did my own research. I looked at more than 20 websites and confirmed that the experts were mostly right. The Crow is the smartest bird with the African Grey Parrot a close second. The Kea Parrot is third, the Raven fourth, and with the Magpie fifth.

## **CROW FAMILY**



**Crow**

## **PARROT FAMILY**



**African Grey**



**Raven**



**Magpie**



**Kea**



**Macaw**



**Jay**



**Rook**



**Cockatoo**



**Amazon**

**“Hey Bird-Brain!”**

**Have you heard this expression? Do you know what it means?**

**It refers to an annoyingly stupid and shallow person. In the past, people thought that birds had small brains and were dumb. Well, as we are going to learn in this article, many birds are very smart. Their brains may be small but are wired differently and can be quite powerful. You might have noticed - birds like to fly! If they had big heavy brains, flying would be more difficult.**

## **CROWS**



**Crow in Flight**

**When it comes to intelligence, Crows should probably be at the top of the list for birds and close to the top for all animals (land, birds, and marine life) on earth. This high intelligent rating is based on their ability to solve problems, make tools, reason, plan for the future, remember human faces and they love to play.**



**Crow makes tool to get food out of a tree stump**

**Crows can solve complex problems. In the following YouTube video, the crow figures out how to perform the 8 required steps (in the correct order) to get the tasty treat. The crow is the only bird able to do this – so far. I think you will be impressed!**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbSu2PXOTOc>**



## **African Grey Parrot**



Their best-known party trick, of course, is mimicking human speech. But it seems these parrots have other, less obvious intelligence that can rival 5-year-old children. The African Grey are always thinking, and a study has found that these creatures are capable of cool intelligent reasoning. Tests also showed that an African grey was capable working out the location of hidden food by using the kind of deduction and elimination skills previously seen only in humans and apes. And as you probably have herd, they are exceptional talkers.

**Have you ever talked to a parrot? Ever listen to one talk?**

**Meet Einstein the African Grey Parrot.**

**Listen to Einstein talk on the following YouTube video:**

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQ\\_wO0r16ww](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQ_wO0r16ww)**



## **Kea Parrot**



**Kea is native to and is found in the alpine forested regions of the South Island in New Zealand. It is remarkable for its problem-solving skills and its curiosity. In various studies, Kea birds had different problems to solve, one of these being the trap-tube test. In this test, the bird had to use a stick and perform certain movements in order to reach a treat. Watch the following video to see the Kea in action:**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7W7hEUGtv4U>**

**Apart from the problem-solving skills, keas are also very curious by nature and love to investigate manmade objects, from cameras to luggage. The downside is that they tend to be overzealous in learning what the item is made of and can tear it to pieces.**

**Being called "bird-brained" isn't much of an insult when you're being compared to the highly intelligent Kiwi Parrot, the Kea. Keas are the first animals outside the great apes to show they understand probability. They can also combine different sorts of information to make judgements.**



**To see if kea could understand probability and use this knowledge to their advantage, the kea was shown two jars containing black and orange tokens. One jar contained 90% black tokens and the other 90% orange tokens. The birds were taught the black tokens could be exchanged for a food reward.**

**The kea had to pick the jar they thought would give them the best chance of getting a reward. After a researcher pulled a token out of each jar with a closed hand, the kea had to tap on the hand they thought would give them the best chance of getting the food reward.**

**The kea picked the hand that got the token from the jar with the most black ones every time.**

## **RAVENS**



This beautiful bird is in the same genus (Corvus) as crows and are about equally smart. They're known for their ability to understand cause and how to solve complicated problems. Although crows have a reputation for having a playful behavior, ravens are also playful. They're also very smart and cooperative hunters that often work in pairs — one used to distract their prey while the other grabs an egg or newborn animal.



A couple of ravens demonstrate just how smart they are in the following video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEIDJKKnRRs>

## **MAGPIES**

Magpies are birds known for their bold personality and intelligence. They are also well-known for their calls and songs. Many birds have a song or a few calls, but magpies chatter, whistle, trill, and warble. These birds have even been known to mimic sounds around them such as wind chimes or a dog's barking.

The magpie is one of the most intelligent birds—and one of the most intelligent animals to exist. Their brain-to-body-mass ratio is outmatched only by that of humans, dolphins, and great apes.



**Magpies have shown the ability to make and use tools, imitate human speech, grieve, play games, and work in teams. When one of their own kind dies, a grouping will form around the body for a “funeral” of squawks and cries. To portion food to their young, magpies will use self-made utensils to cut meals into proper sizes.**

**Magpies are also capable of passing a cognitive experiment called the “mirror test,” which proves an organism’s ability to recognize itself in a reflection. To perform this test, a colored dot is placed on animals, or humans, in a place that they will be able to see only by looking into a mirror. Subjects pass if they can look at their reflection and recognize that the mark is on themselves and not another, often by attempting to reach and remove it. Passing the mirror test is a feat of intelligence that only four other animal species can accomplish. Watch the Magpie pass the mirror test in the following video:**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRVGA9zxXzk>**

## **MACAWS**



**Macaws are large intelligent parrots that come in a variety of beautiful colors. They are found mostly in the forests and woodlands of northern and central South America. The most common macaws are the “Red and Green” and “Blue and Gold macaws, both are fun-loving, playful, and full of personality.**

**Macaws are intelligent, social birds that often gather in flocks of 10 to 30 individuals. Their loud calls, squawks, and screams echo through the forest canopy. Macaws vocalize to communicate within the flock, mark territory, and identify one another. Some species can even mimic human speech. However, Macaws do not make good pets for the “faint of heart.” They are extremely loud and destructive; they require a lot of space and constant attention.**



## **JAYS**

Jays are boisterous, energetic, and noticeably intelligent and a favorite with many backyard birdwatchers. Scrub-jays are the only animal besides humans who actually plan their actions based on how they may feel in the future. For instance, studies have shown they will plan what kind of food they'll want for breakfast the next morning, how much and where they will get it. Then they store away the right amount, in the right place. Another example of their superb intelligence was with a captive Blue Jay who used paper from the bottom of his cage as a tool to reach food outside of his cage. When other jays saw this, they soon were using the same method. There are around 40 species of jays in the world. Eight inhabit the US.



## **Cockatoo**



Cockatoos are recognizable by the showy crests and curved bills. These extremely social birds have endearing personalities and great speaking abilities. As a part of their extreme intelligence, is their ability to imitate a wide variety of sounds and speech. But more than that, when scientists performed intelligent tests with the captive bred Goffin's Cockatoo, they learned they are able to actually resist the temptation of eating a food item put in front of them in order to trade it for a better reward later.

In general, cockatoos do not make good pets for a first-time bird owner because of their constant need for attention, need for large amounts of time outside of their cages and tendency to squawk and scream.



## **Amazon Parrots**

When it comes to being a smart bird, the amazon parrot is near the top. There are many varieties, but they all share equal intellectual capabilities. For hundreds of years, Amazon Parrots have been kept as pets, primarily because of their supreme intelligence and talking ability. These birds are extremely vocally talented, playful and affectionate. Amazons have the ability to learn to mimic speech so clearly that their words can barely be discerned from those of an actual human. In addition to speech, Amazon parrots can also be trained to perform a variety of complex tricks and tasks. It's easy to see why these impressive birds are so sought after as pets and have been companions to humans for centuries.



There are 27 species of Amazon Parrots. Most Amazons are mostly green, but some species come in other beautiful colors.

**WARNING:** Amazon Parrots are not for everyone. In fact, parrots are not for most people. Be prepared for a long-term commitment. Amazon parrots can live for more than 50 years. Parrots are not easy to care for – they require constant attention. Parrots can be very destructive to your home, and they can bite really hard! Not only do Amazon parrots bite hard, they know how to inflict maximum damage – by twisting the skin! The Amazon parrot does this extremely swiftly and quickly, so much so that you may not even realize you have been bitten until you see the wound or start to feel the pain.

So, before you run out and buy a parrot, recommend you watch the following video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wShFbORLYvI>

## **ROOKS**



**Corvids—crows, ravens, rooks, and their relatives—are especially intelligent. They're adept at modifying and using tools, can plan ahead and solve puzzles. Crows, ravens, and rooks are the only all black members of the corvid (crow) family of birds and they have much in common. We talked about crows and ravens already.**

### **Rook Information and Facts:**

- **Here in North America we have no rooks. They live throughout most of Europe and parts of Asia.**
- **Rooks prefer tall trees for breeding and nesting. They like to live near agricultural farms and seashores where they find a good amount of food.**
- **In folklore, rooks are said to be able to forecast weather and to sense the approach of death.**
- **Rooks feed on the ground, feeding on earthworms and insect larvae, which the bird finds by probing the soil with its strong bill. It also eats cultivated cereal grain, smaller amounts of fruit, acorns, small mammals such as voles, and the eggs of ground-nesting birds.**
- **The rook's voice is similar to that of the crow usually described as a "kaah-kaah-kaah" noise. Rooks often "sing" apparently to themselves, uttering strange clicks, wheezes, and almost human sounding notes.**

**Last but not least - I love the trick-taking game of ROOK usually played with a specialized deck of cards. Rook playing cards were introduced by Parker Brothers in 1906 to provide an alternative to standard playing cards for those in the Puritan tradition.**



### **Summary – What did we learn about intelligent birds?**

**We learned that being called, “Bird Brain” might not be so bad after all. Birds are remarkably intelligent, although their brains are small. Corvids and some parrots are capable of cognitive feats comparable to those of great apes. How do birds achieve impressive cognitive prowess with walnut-sized brains?**

**Scientists investigated the cellular composition of the brains of several bird species, uncovering a straightforward solution to the puzzle: brains of corvids (crow family) and parrots contain very large numbers of neurons, at neuronal densities considerably exceeding those found in most mammals. Because these “extra” neurons are predominantly located in the forebrain, large parrots and corvids have the same or greater forebrain neuron counts as monkeys with much larger brains. Thus, these birds have the potential to provide much higher “cognitive power” per unit mass than do most other animal brains.**

**Do crows make good pets? Crows don't make good pets under any circumstances. They're just not built for life in captivity. Crows are too intelligent to be cooped up and they need a lot of room to move around. In captivity, a crow's life expectancy is significantly reduced versus living in the wild. Same goes for Ravens and Rooks.**

**Do parrots make good pets? For most people the answer is a hard “NO!” Parrots are loud, destructive, and they can bite really hard. They need constant attention. However, parrots can be very rewarding pets to the right owners, due to their intelligence and desire to interact with people. Many parrots are very affectionate, even cuddly with trusted people, but require a lot of attention from their owners.**

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