

= Hooded crow =

The hooded crow (*Corvus cornix*) (also called hoodie) is a Eurasian bird species in the *Corvus* genus . Widely distributed , it is also known locally as Scotch crow , Danish crow , and grey crow (in Slavic languages , Ireland and Denmark) . Found across Northern , Eastern , and Southeastern Europe , as well as parts of the Middle East , it is an ashy grey bird with black head , throat , wings , tail , and thigh feathers , as well as a black bill , eyes , and feet . Like other corvids , it is an omnivorous and opportunistic forager and feeder .

It is so similar in morphology and habits to the carrion crow (*Corvus corone*) , for many years they were considered by most authorities to be geographical races of one species . Hybridization observed where their ranges overlapped added weight to this view . However , since 2002 , the hooded crow has been elevated to full species status after closer observation ; the hybridisation was less than expected and hybrids had decreased vigour . Within the hooded crow species , four subspecies are recognized , with one , the Mesopotamian crow , possibly distinct enough to warrant species status itself .

= = Taxonomy = =

The hooded crow was one of the many species originally described by Linnaeus in his 18th @-@ century work *Systema Naturae* and it bears its original name of *Corvus cornix* . The binomial name is derived from the Latin words *Corvus* , " raven " , and *cornix* , " crow " . It was subsequently considered a subspecies of the carrion crow for many years , hence known as *Corvus corone cornix* , due to similarities in structure and habits .

It is locally known as a hoodie in Scotland and Northern Ireland .

= = Subspecies = =

Four subspecies of the hooded crow are now recognised ; previously , all were considered subspecies of *Corvus corone* . A fifth , *C. c. sardonius* (Trischitta , 1939) has been listed though it has been alternately partitioned between *C. c. sharpii* (most populations) , *C. c. cornix* (Corsican population) , and the Middle Eastern *C. c. pallescens* .

C. c. cornix , the nominate race , occurs in the British Isles (principally Scotland and Ireland) and Europe , south to Corsica .

C. c. pallescens (Madarász , 1904) is found in Turkey and Egypt , and is a paler form as its name suggests .

C. c. sharpii (Oates , 1889) is named for English zoologist Richard Bowdler Sharpe . This is a paler grey form found from western Siberia through to the Caucasus region and Iran .

C. c. capellanus (P.L. Sclater , 1877) is known as the Mesopotamian crow or Iraqi pied crow . This distinctive form occurs in Iraq and southwestern Iran . It has very pale grey plumage which looks almost white from a distance . It is possibly distinct enough to be considered a separate species .

= = Genetic difference from carrion crows = =

The hooded crow (*Corvus cornix*) and carrion crow (*Corvus corone*) are two closely related species whose geographical distribution across Europe is illustrated in the accompanying diagram . It is believed that this distribution might have resulted from the glaciation cycles during the Pleistocene , which caused the parent population to split into isolates which subsequently re @-@ expanded their ranges when the climate warmed causing secondary contact . Poelstra and coworkers sequenced almost the entire genomes of both species in populations at varying distances from the contact zone to find that the two species were genetically identical , both in their DNA and in its expression (in the form of RNA) , except for the lack of expression of a small portion (< 0 @. @ 28 %) of the genome (situated on avian chromosome 18) in the hooded crow , which imparts the lighter plumage colouration on its torso . Thus the two species can viably hybridize , and

occasionally do so at the contact zone , but the all @-@ black carrion crows on the one side of the contact zone mate almost exclusively with other all @-@ black carrion crows , while the same occurs among the hooded crows on the other side of the contact zone . It is therefore clear that it is only the outward appearance of the two species that inhibits hybridization . The authors attribute this to assortative mating (rather than to ecological selection) , the advantage of which is not clear , and it would lead to the rapid appearance of streams of new lineages , and possibly even species , through mutual attraction between mutants . Unnikrishnan and Akhila propose , instead , that koinophilia is a more parsimonious explanation for the resistance to hybridization across the contact zone , despite the absence of physiological , anatomical or genetic barriers to such hybridization .

= = Description = =

Except for the head , throat , wings , tail , and thigh feathers , which are black and mostly glossy , the plumage is ash @-@ grey , the dark shafts giving it a streaky appearance . The bill and legs are black ; the iris dark brown . Only one moult occurs , in autumn , as in other crow species . The male is the larger bird , otherwise the sexes are alike . Their flight is slow and heavy and usually straight . Their length varies from 48 to 52 cm (19 to 20 in) . When first hatched , the young are much blacker than the parents . Juveniles have duller plumage with bluish or greyish eyes and initially a red mouth . Wingspan is 98 cm (39 in) and weight is on average 510 g .

The hooded crow , with its contrasted greys and blacks , cannot be confused with either the carrion crow or rook , but the kraa call notes of the two are almost indistinguishable .

= = Distribution = =

The hooded crow breeds in northern and eastern Europe , and closely allied forms inhabit southern Europe and western Asia . Where its range overlaps with carrion crow , as in northern Britain , Germany , Denmark , northern Italy , and Siberia , their hybrids are fertile . However , the hybrids are less well @-@ adapted than purebred birds , and this is one of the reasons this species was split from the carrion crow . Little or no interbreeding occurs in some areas , such as Iran and central Russia .

In the British Isles , the hooded crow breeds regularly in Scotland , the Isle of Man , and the Scottish Islands . It also breeds widely in Ireland . In autumn , some migratory birds arrive on the east coast of Britain . In the past , this was a more common visitor .

= = Behaviour = =

= = = Diet = = =

The hooded crow is omnivorous , with a diet similar to that of the carrion crow , and is a constant scavenger . It drops molluscs and crabs to break them after the manner of the carrion crow , and an old Scottish name for empty sea urchin shells was " crow 's cups " . On coastal cliffs , the eggs of gulls , cormorants , and other birds are stolen when their owners are absent , and this crow will enter the burrow of the puffin to steal eggs . It will also feed on small mammals , scraps , smaller birds , and carrion . The crow has the habit of hiding food , especially meat or nuts , in places such as rain gutters , flower pots , or in the earth under bushes , to feed on it later , sometimes on the insects that have meanwhile developed on it . Other crows often watch if another one hides food and then search this place later when the other crow has left .

= = = Nesting = = =

Nesting occurs later in colder regions : mid @-@ May to mid @-@ June in northwest Russia , Shetland , and the Faroe Islands , and late February in the Persian Gulf region . In warmer parts of

the British Isles , the clutch is laid in April . The bulky , stick nest is normally placed in a tall tree , but cliff ledges , old buildings , and pylons may be used . Nests are occasionally placed on or near the ground . The nest resembles that of the carrion crow , but on the coast , seaweed is often interwoven in the structure , and animal bones and wire are also frequently incorporated . The four to six brown @-@ speckled blue eggs are 4 @.@ 3 cm × 3 @.@ 0 cm (1 @.@ 7 in × 1 @.@ 2 in) in size and weigh 19 @.@ 8 g (0 @.@ 70 oz) , of which 6 % is shell . The altricial young are incubated for 17 ? 19 days by the female alone , that is fed by the male . They fledge after 32 to 36 days . Incubating females have been reported to obtain most of their own food and later that for their young .

The typical lifespan is unknown , but that of the carrion crow is four years . The maximum recorded age for a hooded crow is 16 years , and 9 months .

This species is a secondary host of the parasitic great spotted cuckoo , the European magpie being the preferred host . However , in areas where the latter species is absent , such as Israel and Egypt , the hooded crow becomes the normal corvid host .

This species , like its relative , is seen regularly killed by farmers and on grouse estates . In County Cork , Ireland , the county 's gun clubs shot over 23 @,@ 000 hooded crows in two years in the early 1980s .

= = Status = =

The IUCN Red List does not distinguish the hooded crow from the carrion crow , but the two species together have an extensive range , estimated at 10 million km² (3 @.@ 8 million mi²) , and a large population , including an estimated 14 to 34 million individuals in Europe alone . They are not believed to approach the thresholds for the population decline criterion of the IUCN Red List (i.e. , declining more than 30 % in ten years or three generations) , so are evaluated as Least Concern . The carrion crow / hooded crow hybrid zone is slowly spreading northwest , but the hooded crow has on the order of three million territories in just Europe (excluding Russia) .

= = Cultural significance = =

In Celtic folklore , the bird appears on the shoulder of the dying Cú Chulainn , and could also be a manifestation of the Morrígan , the wife of Tethra , or the Cailleach . This idea has persisted , and the hooded crow is associated with fairies in the Scottish highlands and Ireland ; in the 18th century , Scottish shepherds would make offerings to them to keep them from attacking sheep . In Faroese folklore , a maiden would go out on Candlemas morn and throw a stone , then a bone , then a clump of turf at a hooded crow ? if it flew over the sea , her husband would be a foreigner ; if it landed on a farm or house , she would marry a man from there , but if it stayed put , she would remain unmarried .

The old name of Royston crow originates from the days when this bird was a common winter visitor to southern England , the sheep fields around Royston , Hertfordshire , providing carcasses on which the birds could feed . The local newspaper , founded in 1855 , is called The Royston Crow , and the hooded crow is also featured on the crest of the North Hertfordshire District Council .

The hooded crow is one of the 37 Norwegian birds depicted in the Bird Room of the Royal Palace in Oslo . Jethro Tull mentions the hooded crow on the song " Jack Frost and the hooded crow " as a bonus track on the digitally remastered version of Broadsword and the Beast and on their The Christmas Album .