

Brainy Birds

Can you solve some puzzles used to determine a Crow's intelligence?



Can you solve some of the tests scientists use to determine crows' intelligence?

Crows are really incredible animals, using their intelligence to solve problems like you and I do.

They can make and use tools and they are considered as intelligent as an 8-year-old human!

They can even distinguish between different human faces and plan ahead like people do.

Scientists use a series of tests to figure out how smart animals are, and crows are great at figuring out these different types of puzzles.

1. Water Displacement: Crows understand how to get to something they can't reach in a tube of water

Setup: Have a narrow cup with some water in it and a floating object. Give kids a pile of small stones and invite them to try to lift the object to the top of the cup using only the stones. To succeed, kids will drop stones into cup to raise the water level.

*People tend to understand this principle, called water displacement, when they are about 7-10 years old, but crows can figure it out with no help.

2. Using Tools: Crows use tools to get things they can't reach

Setup: Put a small, lightweight object (like an acorn) into a jar on its side. Give the kids a small stick and have them try to get the object out of the jar using only the stick and not moving the jar.

Crows use sticks as tools to get things they can't reach with just their beaks.

3. Two string test: Crows can tell when a string is attached to something they want

Setup: Take two long pieces of string, tie a small object like a paperclip to the end of one. Tangle up the strings and lay them flat on the table. Have the kids follow the string from the object back to the other end and try to pick up the string connected to the object to see if they were correct.

*Crows understand when a string is or isn't attached to something they want to eat and they know that pulling on a string tied to a piece of food can help them get to the food.

4. Matching: Crows can remember what they saw and pick it out of several options

Setup: Show kids a simple picture (such as five dots drawn on a notecard), then show two similar pictures (the original five dots vs. a card with six dots) and have the child pick one that most closely matches original picture. (Best for younger kids)

*Crows have a great memory for things they've seen in the past.

5. Ball under cup: Crows can remember where they've hidden food

Setup: Turn three cups over so they are sitting upside down on the table. Show kids that you're putting a small object under one of them and ask them to watch closely as you move the cups around and mix them up. After you're done, ask them to pick out which cup has the object under it.

*Crows can't solve this exact test, but they have a great memory for where they've hidden food and can come back to it after a long time.