



**Transcript for *As the Crow Flies* by Sheila Keenan (Feiwel and Friends, an Imprint of Macmillan)**

**Introduction (approximately 0:00 – 3:58)**

Hi everyone! It's Colleen from the KU Natural History Museum, and I'm so excited that you are here for today's Story Book Science! I'm so excited to read the book *As the Crow Flies*, but I do want to give an opportunity for some folks to join us. So while we wait for folks to join us, I want to talk a little bit about the book and ask you a question about the book as well.

Now, in the title, it mentions the animal crows. And crows are a member of a family called Family Corvidae. So, there are lots of different members of this family, but we're going to talk about American Crows and their behavior. So how they interact with other crows.

One of the things that people notice about crows and use to identify crows and better understand their behavior is their call. And they make a very distinct cawing noise. So if you've ever heard a bird make a noise and it sounded like a caw, it's very likely you heard a crow.

Now, I want you to imagine a lot of crows making that noise. So I want you to imagine all of these crows making a cawing noise together. What does that sound like? Is it loud? Is it quiet? Does the sound carry very well? What is it like when you imagine all of those crows making that noise together? So I want you to think about that as we read this book and we talk about American Crows after the reading.

But, let's go ahead and get started!

First and foremost, we need to discuss our Story Book Science guidelines. We are not in the museum, but we are going to make sure to follow museum rules. So what that means is if you have a question or a comment, you should feel free to ask that question. You should feel free to write that comment. But you need to make sure to use kind and considerate words. If you respond to someone's question or write a comment, you also need to make sure to use kind and considerate words.

Can you do that for me? Can you use those kind and considerate words? Excellent! Thank you so much! It's very important that we make sure that this space is welcome and inclusive for all. And we can do that, together, by using those kind and considerate words.

Alright!

So welcome to Story Book Science. Today, we are reading the book *As the Crow Flies*. This book is written by Sheila Keenan and illustrated by Kevin Duggan. And it's being read with permission from Feiwel and Friends, which is an imprint of Macmillan. Now, I'm excited for this book because it talks about one of my favorite animals, which is the American Crow. So we're going to talk about this specific species of a bird family called Family Corvidae. And we're going to talk a little bit about their behavior, especially behaviors that they show during the fall and winter months.

Now if you have a question, please feel free to ask! Just know I may not be able to see it until the very end, and only if there is time. And lastly, I want to let you know that if you need a transcript of this reading, a partial transcript will be made available a little later today or early tomorrow morning. Alright? So let's go ahead and get started!

*As the Crow Flies.*

### **Reading from *As the Crow Flies* (approximately 3:59 – 10:30)**

*As the Crow Flies includes copyrighted materials, and we do not have permission to include the written text of the book in this transcript.*

### **Conclusion (approximately 10:31 – 21:18)**

The end.

Alright. I am so glad that we got to read about my favorite animal, the American Crow. Now, American Crows, they are a member of a family of birds known as Family Corvidae. And there are lots of birds in this family. Members of Family Corvidae include ravens, they include jays and magpies, and of course, they include crows!

Now, we're going to talk about one type of bird in that family, specifically, the American Crow. And we're going to talk about things that we can use to identify the American Crow from all of those other members of Family Corvidae.

Now, we, when we talk about American Crows, just like all members of Family Corvidae, they are extremely intelligent. They are very, very smart birds! But we are going to look for those identifying features, those things that we can look for to better identify them from all of those other members of Family Corvidae. So to do that, we are going to use a museum specimen of an American Crow. So I'm going to grab that, and we can make some observations together.

Alright! Now this is a museum specimen of an American Crow. And I'm going to make sure it can be in the camera. What I want you to do is look at this crow and make observations about it. What do you notice about its features and what it looks like? What are things that stick out to you?

Well, the first thing I notice when I look at this museum specimen of an American Crow is just how big it is! American Crows are very large birds, especially when we look at them from the tail feather, all the way to their bill, or their beak.

Now, this American Crow is about 16 inches in length.

So I'm going to set this down for just a moment. Sixteen inches is about from my elbow, all the way to the tips of my fingers. So that's how big this crow is in length. And American Crows can be anywhere from 15.8 to 20.9 inches in length, and that is about 40 to 53 centimeters. So, American Crows are quite large birds!

I'm going to grab this specimen again, and I want you to look for another feature of this American Crow. What do you notice?

One of the things I notice after its length is the color of its feathers. American Crows have beautiful, beautiful black feathers. And for a lot of American Crows, their feathers have a shine to them. Or they look a little

glossy. It's a little hard to see it on this specimen, especially in this light. But American Crows can be identified by their beautiful black feathers that shine and have a bit of a gloss to them.

Alright. Now the last thing I'm going to do is show you a close up of the crow's head because I want you to focus on a feature there. Any guess of what I want you to focus on? Well, if you are focusing on the beak or think that's what we're going to talk about, you are correct! The beak or the bill, either word is appropriate, for the American Crow is quite large. It's very wide. So you can see that in the camera from the side, and also from the front. Alright? So that is another identifying feature of the American Crow.

So just take a couple more moments to look at this museum specimen. Make sure you notice those features we talked about: the length from the tail feathers, all the way to the tip of its beak, or its bill. Make sure you look at those beautiful black feathers. See if you can notice a shine or a gloss to those feathers. And take one last opportunity to look at the bill or the beak.

Alright. So I'm going to put this specimen down.

Now, that was an amazing job that we did looking for those identifying features of the American Crow. But we can not only just look for these features, we can also listen for some of the identifying features of the American Crow.

One of the things I always think of when I think of crows is their call. Now they have lots of different calls, but the call I think of is their caw. So I have a recording of a American Crow making that cawing noise. So I want us to listen to it together. So I'm going to take my phone, and I'm going to play that call for you.

Caw, caw, caw, caw, caw, caw. Caw, caw, caw, caw, caw, caw, caw.

Alright. Now, have you ever heard that noise before? If you've heard that cawing noise, then it is most likely that you have, in fact, heard an American Crow!

Now, what I want you to do is I want you to think of that cawing noise, which what we just heard was only one American Crow making that noise, and I want you to imagine hundreds and thousands of crows making that noise together! So take a moment to think about that. What would it sound like?

When I think of hundreds and thousands of crows making that cawing noise, all at the same time, I think it would be really loud. And in some places where the American Crow lives, so in North America, people don't have to imagine what that sounds like. They can hear it. Because in certain places, during the nonbreeding season, so in the fall and winter months, people live in areas where crows gather in roosts. So in these roosts at nighttime, crows in the hundreds and the thousands gather together in the fall and winter months.

Now I'm going to put the word roost on the wall. It's a very important vocabulary word. So let's put that right there. And I want you to think for a moment. Why do crows in the nonbreeding season in the months of November through March, so in the fall and winter months, why do they need to gather together in roosts? Why do there need to be hundreds and thousands of crows all together in roosts. What do you think?

Maybe you think the crows need to be warm. In North America, in the months of November through March in the fall and winter, it can be pretty cold! So maybe the crows need to stay warm.

Maybe they want to protect themselves from predators. So, maybe having hundreds and thousands of crows all gathered together, maybe having that many crows in one spot is a strength! And so predators are going to leave the crows alone. So it could be for protection.

Maybe crows want to find a mate for the breeding season. So they gather together in these big groups of crows, and maybe they find a mate.

Additionally, maybe they gather together to find resources like food.

So there are all these reasons why scientists think that crows gather in roosts. But I want to know what reasons you think crows gather in roosts.

Now the last thing I want to show you is a photo of a roost. So when we look at this photo, at first, you think all of these little spots, those are just leaves on the tree. They're not leaves on the tree. Those are crows! So at nighttime, in the fall and winter months, they gather together, just like we saw in the book! And they sit in these roosts on the tree branches. And they do so for many different reasons, just like we talked about. So take a moment to look at that photo.

Alright. I'm going to put this down.

So we not only got to read an awesome book about American Crows and their roosting behavior in the fall and winter months, but we also talked about that roosting behavior. And we talked about how these crows interact with one another in these huge groups. Alright?

Now, because you know some of those identifying features of crows, I challenge you to look for crows. I challenge you to look for those very large birds with those beautiful black feathers and the large beaks and bills. And remember to listen for that cawing noise. And hopefully you'll be able to identify an American Crow!

Now, I do hope you join me next week for Story Book Science. We're going to continue talking a little bit more about animals in the winter months. And we're going to read the book *Tracks in the Snow*, which is by Wong Herbert Yee. So I hope you join me next week so we can continue talking about animals in the winter with the book *Tracks in the Snow*. I'll see you then! Bye!