

African Pied Crow



Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Subphylum: Vertebrata
Class: Aves
Order: Passeriformes
Family: Corvidae
Genus: *Corvus*
Species: *albus*



Photo courtesy of Jane Patrick

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** The pied crow is found in open mountainous habitats, as well as in urban areas near humans. They are native to eastern and southern Africa, south of the Sahara Desert. They are also found in Madagascar, the Comoro Islands and the Assumption Islands. They are rarely seen in the drier parts of southwest Africa and the Congo Forest.
- **Exhibit Location:** Propagation Unit and used in “In the Wings” Bird Show

Characteristics

- Height: about 18 inches
- *Corvus albus* has black feathers with a distinctive white breast and collar. The bill is black with a white or yellow-white tip. The iris is dark brown and the legs and feet are black.
- Both sexes look alike.
- The juvenile pied crow looks much like the adult, but is duller in color, with very woolly-textured contour feathers on its under parts, and often with many white or partly-white feathers forming a band across the lower breast.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** 6-10 years; **In Captivity:** up to 20 years

Behaviors

- The pied crow is a highly social bird, commonly found in pairs or small groups. They sometimes gather in large flocks of hundreds of birds and will circle high on the thermals (high, warm winds).
- The pied crow is highly adaptable to many sorts of environments including the human where it scavenges.
- Pied crows are known for mobbing birds of prey.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** Food or insects are put into a container, carton or tube so that the bird must find a way to get out the treats.

Reproduction

- Pied crows can breed throughout the year. Both sexes help build the nest which are made of sticks and lined with soft materials including fibers, hair, wool, rags, paper or fibrous bark. The nest is placed either in trees or niches in rocks or on the cross supports of telephone poles.
- The female incubates the 3-6 greenish-blue eggs, and the male hunts for food and feeds her during the 18-19 day incubation period. Both parents care for and feed the young, which fledge in approximately 43 days.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** insects, maize, peanuts, fruit, seeds, carrion, small mammals, bird eggs, tortoises, lizards, mollusks, and sometimes humans’ garbage
- **At the Zoo:** insects (crickets, superworms, mealworms), meatballs made from canine diet and feline diet, mixed vegetables, pigeon pellets, apples, mice

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:** not listed; **CITES Appendix:** not listed
- The pied crow is a common bird, widespread throughout southern Africa, and is not endangered.
- Predators: larger birds of prey such as owls and hawks; sometimes humans

Sources:

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