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Ability of Grey-necked Crow (*Corvus splendens*) in Human face recognition from Kohat, KPK, Pakistan

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Abstract

In this study it was revealed that Grey-necked crow (*Corvus splendens*) can recognize human face, they can distinguish a specific human face even when human changes his dress. If crows target a person as their potential enemy, they call their entire member and start cawing in louder voice. Most of them also attack humans from back side on neck when human is not seeing him. *Corvus splendens* are more possessive about their chicks as compare to other birds but this study revealed that they do not come closer to their chicks if they are handled by humans. In current study it was observed that the Grey-necked baby crow died of a disease with the symptoms of bending his neck, which is considered to be a viral disease called Newcastle disease.

Keywords: Crow, *Corvus splendens*, Human Face Recognition

Introduction

Corvus splendens is also called house crow or Colombo crow is a common bird of Asian origin belong to order Passeriformes, family Corvidae and genus *Corvus* [1]. It is of black color but the breast area and the neck is consisting of lighter grey in colour [1]. Crows are worldwide distributed with the "least concern" conservation status [2]. Maximum flight of crows is recorded up to 20 kilometres from their nesting place. Crows are considered to be most intelligent birds among all the birds. They can interact any predator to find their food that is left from that predator. They can also coordinate to warn each other about a danger over an area. They are also considered to be well skilled in human face recognition [3-5].

Observations

An injured Grey-necked baby crow (*Corvus splendens*) was rescued by researcher on 6th August 2016 at Sector 7 KDA district Kohat, Pakistan (Figure-1). That baby crow was fallen from his nest, that time it was being protected by only a single parent which was not allowing that researcher to come closer. As it was evening time and there were chances of that baby to be eaten by cats or any other predator, researcher put that baby and brought it in his home located about 500km from nest-tree of that crow. That was the first time when the parent crow recognized that researcher. It attacked thrice to get its baby back, but for the treatment purpose it was necessary to take that baby away from that place. The injuries of the baby crow were treated and were fed with syringe.

Next day morning the baby crow was left on the roof of researcher's house in this hope that it will be able to fly and parents will take him away. But the baby crow was unable to fly, might be due to internal injuries in his wings while falling from the nest. Within 2 or 3 minutes both of the parents reached that roof and started cawing. This sound was aimed to call other crows for help. Meanwhile about 50-60 crows were gathered in the air over the researcher's house. Cawing with a loud voice, attacking the researcher, they were in fact unaware of the researcher's intentions. Researcher left the baby crow and hide behind the door, but still they were feeling that someone is there behind the door. They started attacking the door and cawing louder. When researcher realized that they are not going to leave him it any cost, he put a CCTV camera and focused the baby crow and came downstairs watching the whole scenario on at screen. All the crows stopped cawing and sat on nearby walls. No one came closer to the baby crow. Even parents were not daring to come closer to their baby. All the crows were

sitting on trees, electricity lines and water tanks nearby houses. All of them surrounded the house of the researcher, where there was baby crow. (Figure-2)



Fig 1: Rescued Baby Crow

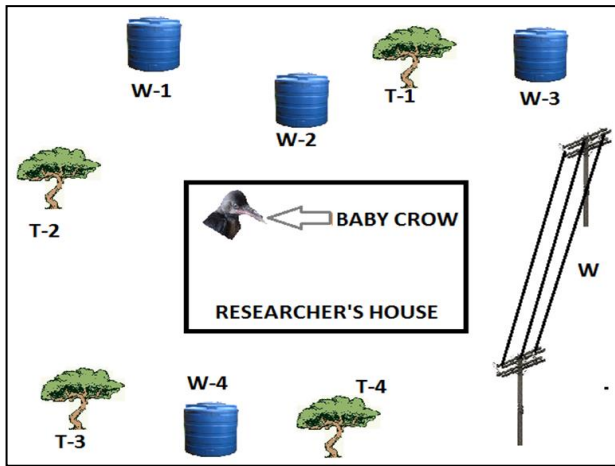


Fig 2: Positions of crows around researcher's house T-1, T-2, T-3, T-4=Trees, W1, W-2, W-3, W-4=Water Tanks, W=wires/ Electric lines

This might be due to human scent on baby or physical contact of that baby with human. This scenario last about an hour, crows were neither accepting him nor leaving him with humans. Later on researcher put that baby crow in captivity. Again all the crows started cawing and diving over the head of researcher. In next 5 days the behavior of the crows was entirely antagonistic to that researcher. Whenever researcher went outside his home, he was under attack of all the crows. Every time they started cawing and attacking the researcher, even they follow that researcher up to a couple of kilometres. Crows didn't want that person to be in their area. Unfortunately, that baby crow died in captivity at 5th day of its rescuing due to Newcastle disease with symptoms of bending his neck. But still whenever that researcher went upstairs on the roof, all crows gathered daily and started attacking him. In an experiment researcher completely changed his clothes (different colors) and went outside his house, very soon crows again recognized him and started attacking. Till 10th day of rescuing the baby crow, researcher performed different experiments to investigate the cognitive quality of the crows. Every time the crows recognized that researcher in all sort of dresses and started cawing and attacking. They followed that researcher even when he was

on the bike or in a car.

Conclusions and discussions

In this study it was revealed that Grey-necked crow (*Corvus splendens*) can recognize human face, they can distinguish a specific human face even when human changes his dress. This observation is parallel to the study of Hunt *et al* [3] who reported that crows can recognize human faces. If crows target a person as their potential enemy, they call their entire members and start cawing in louder voice. Kenward *et al* [4] and Taylor *et al* [5] also highlighted that crows can coordinate and communicate danger to all their members in a crow community. Most of them also attack humans from back side on neck when human is not seeing him. *Corvus splendens* are more possessive about their chicks as compare to other birds but this study revealed that they do not come closer to their chicks if they are handled by humans. In current study it was observed that the Grey-necked baby crow died of a disease with the symptoms of bending his neck, which is considered to be a viral disease, this is also observed by the study of Roy *et al* [6] who detailed that Paramyxoviruses is the major cause of Newcastle disease and mortalities in crow population.

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