

9.20

Class #3-4: Konrad Lorenz' Jackdaws

Study questions:

1. Lorenz begins his story of jackdaws by describing a game these birds play. What was the game? What is the adaptive function of play? Which animals do it?
2. What property of jackdaws made them such interesting pets for the young Konrad Lorenz, beginning in 1925 when he was 22 years old? What other species that people keep as pets are similar in this regard?
3. "Like the stones of a mosaic, the inherited and acquired elements of a young bird's behaviour are pieced together to produce a perfect pattern. But, in a bird that has been reared by hand, the natural harmony of this design is necessarily somewhat disturbed." Describe examples of this (two or three).
4. Why should we expect care of young (brood tending) to be largely innate in many animal species? How could you look for learned components of this behavior?
5. How do young jackdaws come to recognize predators? Distinguish innate and acquired (learned) components.
6. Describe evidence for individual recognition among jackdaws of a colony (flock). How do we know that they can recognize individual humans?
7. The male jackdaw lacks colorful plumage for displaying towards a female. When a young male jackdaw falls in love, how does he try to get the attention of his favorite female and win a positive response? (p 155f)
8. How does the female jackdaw respond in the way that signals an engagement? This happens 12 months before sexual maturity and actual mating. (p 157)
9. Describe two behaviors that occur frequently between a betrothed or "married" pair of jackdaws. How long do such pairings last? (p 159)
10. Most conflicts among jackdaws are settled by posturing – postures that display aggressive or defensive intent. Defense of a nest site is done this way with the accompaniment of loud calling ("zick, zick") that becomes, in Altenberg, Germany, most intense and nearly continuous in a colony in February and March. What ensues if a defending jackdaw is actually attacked? (p 166-168)
11. Describe how an older jackdaw can entice a young one to return home. (p 168-169)

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