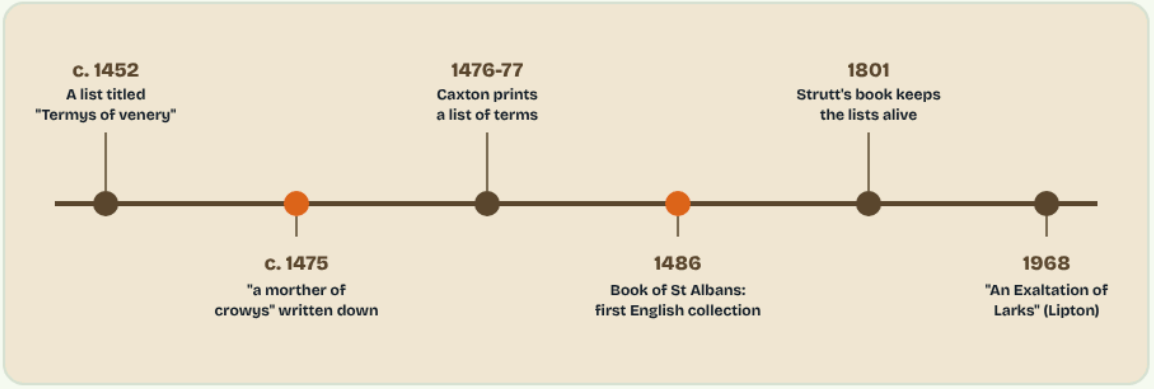
That is why

Where do strange animal group names come from?

Most began as a medieval word game: lists of clever terms meant to sound courtly. A few stuck for good.

A A word game that outlived its players



A game, not science

The lists were a way to sound courtly and show off vocabulary. One manuscript has 106 terms. Most were never used in everyday life and were forgotten.

The crow case

"Murder" first shows up around 1475. Stories about battlefields and gallows came later. Word historians suspect it was wordplay, not a description of what crows do.

B Four kinds of names

1. **Real observations**
   Parliament of rooks: noisy crowds in tall trees. Spring of teal.
2. **Poetic inventions**
   Business of ferrets: apparently never used in real life.
3. **Jokes about people**
   A drunkship of cobblers.
4. **Everyday words**
   A pride of lions, a flock of birds.

A few names describe animals; many began as clever medieval wordplay.

Free for learning thatiswhy.com

Free for learning, teaching and research. Please credit: That Is Why, thatiswhy.com

Diagram: https://thatiswhy.com/diagrams/why-animal-group-names/ · Full guide: https://thatiswhy.com/why-animals-have-strange-collective-names/