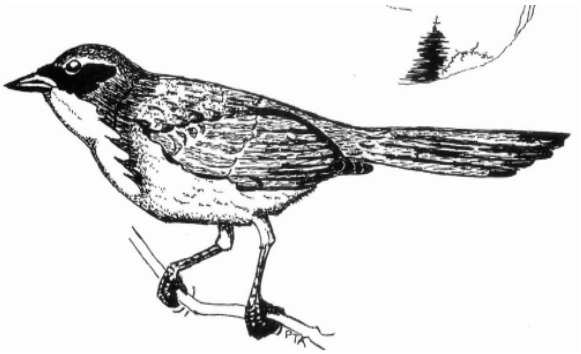
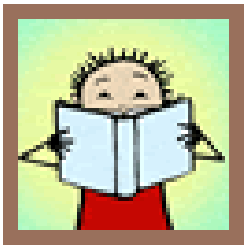
BIOLOGY, LEGAL STATUS, CONTROL MATERIALS AND DIRECTIONS FOR USE

Jay (Scrub or California Jay)

Aphelocoma coerulescens

Family: Corvidae





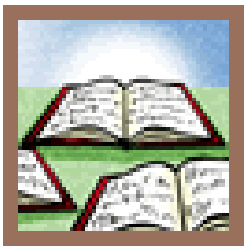
Introduction: The California Western scrub jay (blue jay) is one of the most colorful members of the crow (Corvid) family. Blue Jays are famous for their ability to learn quickly and often are featured in textbook descriptions about finding food. Blue Jays will imitate the calls of hawks, especially the Red-shouldered Hawk. It has been suggested that these calls provide information to other jays that a hawk is around, or that they are used to deceive other species into believing a hawk is present. Blue Jays were probably one of the first North American birds that became well-known in Europe.

Identification: The California Western scrub jay is larger than an American Robin, but smaller than a crow. Both sexes are similar with their upper parts being various shades of blue to bluish gray with bold black and white markings on the face and tail, off-white belly, and black beak, legs, and eyes. They have a black eyeline and breast band.

Further information is available at:

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds



Legal Status: Jays are classed as migratory nongame birds in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations. They may be controlled only under a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

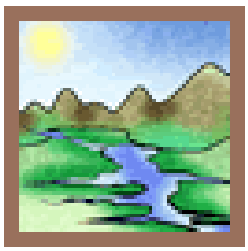
Damage: Almonds, walnuts, pecans, pistachios, apples, pears, grapes, cherries, plums, prunes, figs, berries, peas, corn, and grain.

They also take insects, small mammals, reptiles, and eggs of young game and song birds. They have a distinct preference for fruits.

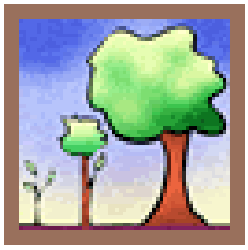
Range: Resident throughout California except the higher mountains and the desert regions. There is no migration, although downward movement from the higher portions of the range occurs in winter. Poor acorn crops in some areas may cause jays to move to more fruitful adjacent areas in the same year.

Island Scrub Jay

Western Scrub Jay



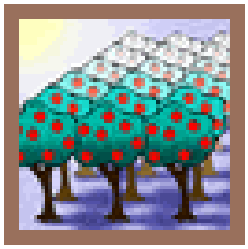
Habitat: Urban areas, foothills, oaks, oak chaparral, brush, riparian woodlands, pinons (pine nuts), and junipers.



Biology: The scrub jay's nest is usually well hidden in brush or shrubbery within 6 feet of the ground. Egg laying occurs from early March through early June with the peak being in April. Usually four to six eggs are laid with as few as two or as many as seven. The incubation period is 14 to 16 days and the young are able to leave the nest after another 18 days.

Scrub jays do not flock to the degree noted in crows or blackbirds. Jays usually feed individually, but where the population is dense they may form almost continuous lines when moving to and from the food source.

Beal's food study of the California (or scrub) jay in 1910 showed a diet of 73 percent vegetable and 27 percent animal matter. The animal matter varied greatly and included insects, spiders, snails, bird eggs, and small vertebrates including nestlings. The vegetable food was about one-third fruits and berries, and two-thirds acorns, nuts, and grain. Nuts and acorns are stored or hidden for later use, though it is debatable whether jays remember the hiding place.



Damage Prevention and Control Methods

Exclusion: Place bird netting over fruit and nut trees, vines, and gardens to exclude jays from the immediate area.

Frightening devices: Frightening devices are relatively ineffective in protecting crops from scrub jays. Almond and pistachio growers commonly use gas cannons and shooting to frighten or disperse jays.

Fumigants: None are registered.

Repellents: None are registered.

Toxic Bait: None are registered.

Trapping: Trapping can be done if a USFWS permit is obtained. The permit will specify what trapping methods and procedures can be used. Little success has been obtained in trapping jays with modified Australian crow traps. A limited number of jays can be taken by using conventional rat traps baited with a shelled or unshelled almond or the meat of half of an English walnut. An unshelled almond is probably less likely to attract other birds than are the exposed almond or nut meats. Acceptance of nut baits is not as good when there is an abundant supply of ripe fruit or nuts around.

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL READING

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