



Wildlife Window: Blue Jay & Florida Scrub Jay



Let's Explore These Jays and their Differences

By the Rivendell Ponds & Preserves Committee

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June is a “J” month and the perfect time to explore our “J’s” – the **Blue Jay** and the **Florida Scrub Jay**. Both of these birds are members of the Crows, Magpies, & Jays family, have blue coloring, and share “Jay” in their name. However, most of the similarities between these blue birds end there. Let’s learn more about these fascinating Jays.

Blue Jay <i>(Cyanocitta cristata)</i>	Meet Our Jay Birds	Florida Scrub Jay <i>(Aphelocoma coerulescens)</i>
	<p>Which Jay Is Which?</p>	
<p>Blue above, white breast with prominent crested head and bold black necklace. Wings & tail are barred with black & bold white wingbars. Eastern & central US.</p>	<p>Appearance</p>	<p>Long tailed with round-heads, Scrub Jays are blue and gray without black wingbars. Florida Scrub Jays are the only bird species that live exclusively in FL. They are endangered.</p>
<p>Favors habitat with many oak, beech trees, pine woods, & well-wooded suburban gardens. Omnivore – both seeds & insects. Intelligent & adaptable, it may feed on almost anything. A persistent visitor at backyard bird feeders. Migratory birds.</p>	<p>Habitat</p>	<p>Florida Scrub Jays are entirely dependent on low-growing oak shrub areas. Omnivores – they feed on acorns & arthropods. Harvest large numbers of acorns & bury them - to retrieve and eat later. Also eat berries & seeds. “Homebody” - not migratory.</p>
<p>Very colorful, distinctive & unmistakable. Often seen flittering about in the trees. Territorial; aggressive to other birds, will raid nests. <u>Song & calls:</u> has a raucous “Jay!-Jay!” & harsh cries and other musical calls.</p>	<p>Unique Trait</p>	<p>Cooperative social system – breeds & feeds young in flocks. Each nesting group is occupied by an adult pair, plus one - six “helpers,” typically previous offspring. <u>Song & calls:</u> trills & high warbles, loud harsh shreep.</p>
<p>One of the loudest birds, they can do a remarkable imitation of the scream of a Red-shouldered Hawk – they call to see if a real Hawk (a predator) is in the area to warn others.</p>	<p>Fun Fact</p>	<p>Endangered species & habitat: populations reduced by urban growth. Oscar Scherer State Park is playing a critical role in preserving an essential Florida Scrub Jay habitat. Check it out - it’s just next door!</p>

(Bob Frank photos.)

Protect their Habitats. Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation due to Florida’s heavy urban, suburban, and agricultural development continues to threaten precious wildlife habitats. Let’s keep our ponds and preserves healthy and attractive for these wonderful Jays and other wildlife friends. We can enjoy their beauty, enhance our quality of life, and keep our property values strong. We remind you to view the amazing P&P Wildlife Photo Gallery. (Visit: rivendellcommunity.com/ponds & scroll down to the Gallery.)