

Blue Jay

Blue Jay

Appearance

A large bird that is bright blue above and pale gray below. There is a blue crest and white flashes in the wings.
Sexually monomorphic: the male and female look the same except the female is slightly smaller.



Adult

A heavy, straight bill. Overall body plumage is blue above and pale gray below. There is white flashing in the wings and black barring in the wings and tail. A black collar circles the face and there is a pronounced blue crest.



Fledgling

Similar patterning as the adult, showing black barring in the wings and tail as well as the white flashes in the wing. The upper-parts and head are medium-gray rather than blue.

Blue Jay Sounds

From The Cornell Lab of Ornithology <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/>

SONGS

The Blue Jay vocalization most often considered a song is the “whisper song,” a soft, quiet conglomeration of clicks, chucks, whirrs, whines, liquid notes, and elements of other calls; a singing bout may last longer than two minutes.

CALLS

Blue Jays make a large variety of calls. The most often heard is a loud *jeer*, they also make clear whistled notes and gurgling sounds. Blue Jays frequently mimic hawks, especially Red-shouldered Hawks and Broad-winged Hawks.

Listen to the songs and calls at:

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Blue_Jay/sounds

Blue Jay

Diet

The Blue Jay's diet is quite varied. They will forage for acorns, utilize birdseed feeders, and hunt for berries and small insects. They will also raid the nests of other birds and take eggs or small chicks.



Blue Jays will tackle just about any type of seed. They are also a big fan of peanuts.



Blue jays will stuff food, such as acorns, in their throat pouch to cache elsewhere as a food source during the winter.

Blue Jay

Diet

Blue Jays are very dependent on acorns during the winter.
In years when there is little oak acorn production, Blue Jays will migrate out of the area to a more favorable region.



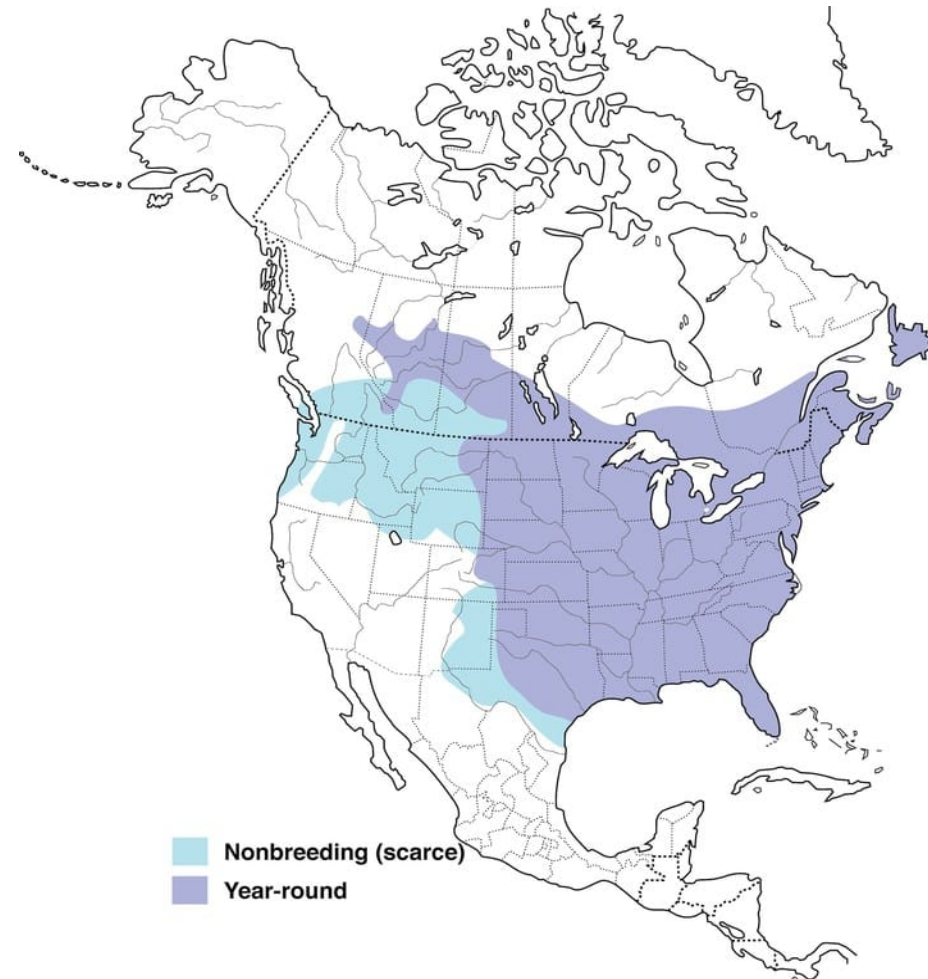
Blue Jays will move through woodlands in groups foraging in all layers from the ground all the way up into the canopy.



Blue Jays will gobble up acorns faster than you can blink.
Acorns are a main staple of their diet.

Blue Jay Range

Blue Jays are with us all year, although their numbers may fluctuate depending on food availability.



Blue Jay Habitat

Blue Jays are a woodland species and will nest in mature forests.



Blue Jays construct a bowl-shaped nest using small twigs and line the inside with finer materials, such as grasses and tree roots.



Blue Jay with nesting material.
The nest is built by both the male and female.

Blue Jay Behavior

Some might consider Blue Jays obnoxious members of the bird family. They are very secretive around their own nests, but at other times they can be quite noisy as they move through the forest.



They can be bold competitors at bird feeders.

Blue Jay Behavior

Blue Jays are not at all shy and will harass larger birds within their nesting area, such as owls and hawks.

Sometimes, when an animal discovers a predator, instead of hiding or fleeing, it does exactly the opposite: it makes itself conspicuous and moves towards the predator.

This type of anti-predator behavior is called “mobbing.” During mobbing, animals harass or even attack predators.

The Blue Jay belongs to the crow family, *Corvidae*.

“The crow family are some of the most frequent and most ardent mobbers of owls and they are capable of causing an owl to flee. The male Eastern Screech-Owl retreated into his roosting cavity when mobbed by Blue Jays (the female and large nestlings remained ensconced in the nesting cavity nearby).”¹

Photo: Christian Artuso

¹ CHRISTIAN ARTUSO: BIRDS, WILDLIFE BIRDING, CONSERVATION, ECOLOGY AND ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR
<http://artusobirds.blogspot.com/2015/02/on-mobbing-of-owls.html>



Blue Jay

Literature/Prose

Once you are not disturbed by the blue jays, the blue jay
will come right into your heart, and you will be a blue jay.

by Shunryu Suzuki



Blue Jay Feeders

Blue Jays will readily come to bird feeders of all shapes and sizes in order to supplement their diet.



Blue Jays will frequent bird feeders.



Blue Jays can be quite aggressive at feeders.

Blue Jay Names

Common name Blue Jay

Blue refers to its predominantly blue color.

The origin of *Jay* is unknown, but suggestions include:

- From Old French *jai*, for its gay (bright) plumage.
- Imitating the sound of bird's harsh warning cry.
- Influenced by Latin *Gaius*, a common Roman proper name.



Scientific name *Cyanocitta cristata*

Cyanocitta cristata is a passerine bird in the family Corvidae.

Cyanocitta is a combination of the Greek words:

- *kyanos*, meaning “blue,” and
- *kitta*, meaning “jay”

cristata is from Latin, meaning “crested.”

