

BLUE JAY

Cyancitta cristata



Range

Bright and bold, blue jays often travel in noisy family groups in late summer and fall. Their arrival at a bird feeder tends to clear the area of smaller birds. Blue jays are known to eat the eggs and young of other birds and often frighten the adults off the nest by imitating the call of a hawk.



Birds

BLUE JAY

Cyanocitta cristata



Appearance

Length: 11 inches
Wing span: 16 inches
Weight: 3 1/4 ounces

Blue jays are bright blue medium sized birds with blue head crests, black wing markings and black necklaces.

Behavior

Habit: Diurnal, altricial, omnivores

Diet: Insects and other invertebrates, small vertebrates including nestlings of other species, carrion, eggs, fruits and seeds

Breeding territory: 1 pair per 14.5 acres

Blue jays use a number of behaviors to obtain food and defend themselves. In late summer, fall and winter they travel in large aggressive flocks that frighten other birds off of feeding areas and make predators think twice about bothering them. They use the call of hawks to frighten other birds. Females rarely leave the nest while incubating or rearing young. Males bring them food during this time.

Habitat

Blue jays are generally nonmigratory and are found throughout the eastern half of Texas, the U.S. and Canada. They have been expanding their range westward in urban and suburban areas due to habitat modification by humans.

Now You Know!

- › Blue jays are one of the few birds that store food for use at another time.
- › Groups of Blue jays often attack owls which they consider a threat.
- › Blue jays received their name from their color and call, a loud "Jaaaay". They can also mimic the calls of other birds especially hawks.

Life Cycle

Sexual maturity: Less than a year

Mating season: Spring and summer. Blue jays usually nest 2 or 3 times a year.

Gestation: Eggs hatch in 16-18 days, young fledge 17-21 days after that.

No. of young: 3-7 usually 4-5. Eggs are greenish, bluish or cream colored with brown spots.

Legend Has It ...

In addition to their raucous, shrill side, jays can also emit a soft, low song and are unusually tame around humans. Early Texas folklore relates a tale of the Blue jay being yoked to a plow by a sparrow. The mark left by the yoke can still be seen on the Blue jay's breast.



Bluejay & Man

Blue jays are generally unafraid of humans. In fact they have used human settlements in the west, with their resulting increase in food, water and vegetation, to expand their range.

Most birdwatchers have mixed feelings about Blue jays. They dislike their noisy aggressive behavior but appreciate their bold bright colors and cocky self assurance.