



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Species Profile

Environmental Conservation Online System

Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*)

Kingdom: Animalia **Class:** Aves **Order:** Passeriformes **Family:** Corvidae**Listing Status:** **Threatened****Where Listed:** **WHEREVER FOUND****Quick links:** [Federal Register](#) [Action Plans](#) [Recovery](#) [Critical Habitat](#)
[Conservation Plans](#) [Petitions](#) [Life History](#) [Other Resources](#)

General Information

The plumage of adult males and females looks alike, but males are slightly larger than females. The head, nape, wings, and tail are pale blue. The back and belly are pale gray. The throat and chest are white and bordered by a blue gray bib. Juveniles differ in appearance from adults in that they have dull or dark brown upperparts. Florida scrub jays look similar to other jays (*Cyanocitta*), but do not have a crest, white-tipped wings or tail feathers, or black barring.

This species is listed wherever it is found, but

States/US**Territories** in

which the

Florida scrub-jay is known to or is believed to occur:

[Florida](#)**US Counties**

in which the

Florida scrub-jay is known to or is believed to occur: [View](#)[All](#)**USFWS**

Refuges in

which the
Florida scrub-

jay is known to occur: HOBE SOUND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, LAKE WALES RIDGE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, MERRITT ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

For more information: <http://www.fws.gov/northflorida/Species-Accounts/SpeciesInfo.htm>

Current Listing Status Summary

Status	Date Listed	Lead Region	Where Listed
Threatened	06/03/1987	Southeast Region (Region 4)	

» **Federal Register Documents****Most Recent Federal Register Documents (Showing 5 of 9: [view all](#))**

Date	Citation Page	Title
11/23/2007	72 FR 65763 65764	Receipt of an Application and Availability of an Environmental Assessment for an Incidental Take Permit for Capital Improvement Projects within Charlotte County, FL
02/15/2006	71 FR 7993 7994	Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Notice 5-Year Review of Florida Scrub-Jay
01/25/2006	71 FR 4092 4097	Petitions To Reclassify the Florida Scrub-Jay From Threatened to Endangered: Notice of 90-day petition finding.
08/16/2005	70 FR 48189 48190	Receipt of an Application for an Incidental Take Permit for the Florida Scrub-Jay Resulting From the Proposed Construction of a Single-Family Home in Sarasota County, FL.
06/03/1987	52 FR 20715 20719	Thr. Status for Florida Scrub Jay; 52 FR 20715-20719

» **Action Plans****Action Plans (Showing 1 of 1)**

Date	Title
10/01/2009	Florida scrub-jay Spotlight Species Action Plan

» **Recovery**[Recovery Plan Information Search](#)

- [Information Search FAQs](#)

Current Recovery Plan(s)

Date	Title	Plan Action Status	Plan Status
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05/09/1990	Florida Scrub Jay	View Implementation Progress	Final
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Other Recovery Documents (Showing 1 of 1)

Date	Citation Page	Title	Document Type
02/15/2006	71 FR 7993 7994	Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants: Notice 5-Year Review of Florida Scrub-Jay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice 5-year Review

Five Year Review

Date	Title
09/28/2007	Florida Scrub Jay 5-Year Review

» Critical Habitat

No critical habitat rules have been published for the Florida scrub-jay.

» Conservation Plans

Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP) ([learn more](#)) (Showing 5 of 138: [view all](#))

HCP Plan Summaries
America's First Home
Athanas, Paul SFL
Atlantis at Tequesta
Aulbach SFL
Balmoral (O.C. Mendes)

» Petitions

Most Recent Petition Findings (Showing 3 of 3)

Date	Citation Page	Title	Finding
01/25/2006	71 FR 4092 4097	Petitions To Reclassify the Florida Scrub-Jay From Threatened to Endangered: Notice of 90-day petition finding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice 90-day Petition Finding, Not substantial
07/18/1985	50 FR 29238	Findings on Petitions & Initiation of Status Review: 50 FR 29238	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice 12 month petition finding, Warranted but precluded
07/13/1984	49 FR 28583 28585	Notice of Finding on 6 Petitions: 49 FR 28583-28585	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice 90-day Petition Finding, Substantial

» Life History

Habitat Requirements

The Florida scrub-jay lives only in the scrub and scrubby flatwoods habitats of Florida. This type of habitat grows only on nearly pure, excessively well-drained sandy soils, and occurs along present coastlines in Florida, on paleodunes of the high central ridges and other ancient shorelines of the Florida Peninsula, and inland on scattered alluvial deposits bordering several major rivers. This species' habitat is dominated by a layer of evergreen oaks [myrtle oak (*Quercus myrtifolia*) and/or Archbold oak (*Q. inopina*), sand live oak (*Q. geminata*), Chapman oak (*Q. chapmanii*), and runner oak (*Q. minima*)], rusty lyonia (*Lyonia ferruginea*), and Florida rosemary (*Ceratiola ericoides*). This layer is rarely greater than two meters in height, except where fire has been suppressed. Ground cover is sparse, dominated by saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) and sand palmetto (*Sabal etonia*). Bare sand patches are essential for foraging and acorn-caching. Slash pines (*Pinus elliottii*) and sand pines (*P. clausa*) are widely scattered with usually less than 15 percent cover (Woolfenden and Fitzpatrick 1996a).

Food Habits

Scrub-jays are omnivorous, eating almost anything they can catch. Insects comprise the majority of the animal diet throughout most of the year (Woolfenden and Fitzpatrick 1984). Acorns are by far the most important plant food (Fitzpatrick et al. 1991); surplus acorns are frequently cached in the ground (DeGange et al. 1989).

Movement / Home Range

The Florida scrub jay is endemic to peninsular Florida. The estimated population is between 7,000 to 11,000 individuals (Breininger 1989; Fitzpatrick et al. 1991; Fitzpatrick et al. 1994). Scrub has been significantly reduced by development activity and now typically occurs only in scattered and often small patches in peninsular Florida (Fitzpatrick et al. 1991). Florida scrub-jay populations formerly inhabited 39 of 40 peninsular Florida counties, from Levy, Gilchrist, Alachua, Clay, and Duval Counties southward. Its range currently occurs from Flagler, Marion, and Citrus counties south to Collier, Glades, and Palm Beach Counties, with the largest remaining populations in Brevard County (especially coastal scrubs of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and Kennedy Space Center), Highlands County (near Sebring, Lake Placid, and Venus, and on Avon Park Air Force Range), and in Marion County (at Ocala National Forest).

Reproductive Strategy

Florida scrub-jays have a social structure that involves cooperative breeding, a trait that the western North American species of scrub-jays do not exhibit (Woolfenden and Fitzpatrick 1984). Florida scrub-jays live in groups ranging from two (a single mated pair) up to large extended families of eight adults and one to four juveniles. Fledgling scrub-jays remain with the breeding pair in their natal territory as "helpers," forming a closely-knit cooperative family group. Pre-breeding numbers are generally reduced to either a pair with no helpers or families of three or four individuals (a pair plus one or two helpers). To become a breeder, a scrub-jay must acquire a territory and mate. Evidence presented by Woolfenden and Fitzpatrick (1984) suggests that Florida scrub-jays are permanently monogamous. The pair retains ownership and sole breeding privileges in their particular territory year after year. Courtship to form the pair is lengthy and ritualized, and involves posturing and vocalizations made by the male to the female (Woolfenden and Fitzpatrick 1996a). Copulation between the pair is generally out of sight of other jays (Woolfenden and Fitzpatrick 1984). Age at first breeding varies from 1 to 7 years, although most individuals become breeders between 2 and 4 years of age (Fitzpatrick and Woolfenden 1988). Persistent breeding populations of Florida scrub-jays exist only where there are scrub oaks in sufficient quantity to provide an ample winter acorn supply, cover from predators, and nest sites during the spring (Woolfenden and Fitzpatrick 1996a). They typically nest at the edge of an oak thicket, near an open area. During the breeding season, which runs from March through June, average production of young is two fledglings per pair, per year (Woolfenden and Fitzpatrick 1990; Fitzpatrick et al. 1994), and the presence of helpers improves fledgling success (Mumme 1992). Annual productivity must average at least two young fledged per pair for a population of scrub-jays to

maintain long-term stability (Fitzpatrick et al. 1991).

» Other Resources

[NatureServe Explorer Species Reports](#) -- NatureServe Explorer is a source for authoritative conservation information on more than 50,000 plants, animals and ecological communities of the U.S and Canada. NatureServe Explorer provides in-depth information on rare and endangered species, but includes common plants and animals too. NatureServe Explorer is a product of NatureServe in collaboration with the Natural Heritage Network.

[ITIS Reports](#) -- ITIS (the Integrated Taxonomic Information System) is a source for authoritative taxonomic information on plants, animals, fungi, and microbes of North America and the world.

Last updated: March 21, 2012

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