

BLUE JAY

updated March 2017



Range	Eastern and central United States and southern Canada
Habitat	Forest edges. A favorite food is acorns, and they are often found near oaks in forests, woodlots, towns, cities, parks
Diet (wild)	Mainly nuts and seeds, soft fruits, arthropods, and occasionally small vertebrates
Diet (captivity)	Mazuri softball, Zupreem parakeet fruit blend, produce and insects
Description	Length: 12 inches; wingspan: 13–17 inches; weight: 2½–3½ ounces. Smaller than crows, larger than robins. Bright blue above with much white and black in the wings and tail; dingy white below; black facial markings; prominent crest. Males are usually a little larger than females.
Lifespan	Wild: 7 years. Captivity: 20 years
Reproduction	The female lays 3–6 eggs which are incubated for 16–18 days. Blue jays typically form lifetime monogamous pair bonds and both will care for the young. Young fledge between 17–21 days after hatching. Sexual maturity is reached at one year. Mating season begins in mid-March and extends into July. Any suitable tree or large bush may be used for nesting though an evergreen is preferred. The cup-shaped nest is built 9–32 feet (3–10 meters) off the ground and is made of twigs, moss, paper, cloth, and plant material.
Behavior	Blue jays are noisy, bold, and sometimes aggressive birds. Blue jays migrate during the daytime in loose flocks of 5–250 birds, although much about their migratory behavior is unknown. They will sound an alarm when predators are near, which is their most recognized call. Blue jays are very territorial and intelligent. They can copy the calls of hawks and sometimes even human voices. When caching food, if a blue jay thinks it's being watched, the bird will pretend to hide the food and then hide it somewhere else when it's safe.
Our animals	1 male. Born: 2012. Wild born but hand-reared and imprinted on humans (cannot be released)
Cool stuff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue jays are known for their intelligence and complex social systems with tight family bonds. The black bridle across the face, nape, and throat varies extensively and may help blue jays recognize one another. • Their fondness for acorns is credited with helping spread oak trees after the last glacial period. Blue jays may carry 2–3 acorns in their throat pouch, another one in their mouth, and one more in the tip of the bill. In this way they can carry off five acorns at a time to store for later feeding. Six birds with radio transmitters each cached 3,000–5,000 acorns in one autumn. • The pigment in blue jay feathers isn't actually blue. The blue color is caused by scattering light through modified cells on the surface of the feather barbs. When viewed in different light, the feathers are brown. • Despite being common, conspicuous birds, much about blue jays remains a mystery. This is the only New World jay that migrates north and south, and large flocks are observed flying over many spots along shorelines and at other migration overlooks, but their migration is poorly understood. • Blue jays have a wide variety of vocalizations with an immense vocabulary. Blue jays are also excellent mimics. Captive birds sometimes learn to imitate human speech and meowing cats. Blue jays often mimic hawks when approaching feeders. This may deceive other birds into scattering, allowing the blue jay to take over the feeder (but most birds quickly return after the jays starts feeding.)

Phylum
ChordataClass
AvesOrder
PasseriformesFamily
CorvidaeGenus
Cyanocittaspecies
C. cristata