

blue jay *Cyanocitta cristata*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Corvidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The blue jay averages 11 to 12 inches in length. It is a large bird with blue feathers and a crest. White feather patches are present in the wings and tail. A black line behind the head extends from each side to form a black “necklace” on the throat. This bird has white or gray feathers underneath.

BEHAVIORS

The blue jay is a common, permanent resident statewide in Illinois. However, blue jays do migrate within Illinois, moving to southern Illinois from the northern sections of the state in the winter. The nesting season lasts from April through mid-July. The nest is built in a forest, residential area, orchard or other location where trees are present, from five to 50 feet above the ground. Both sexes construct the nest of twigs, bark, leaves, mosses and string and line it with rootlets. Four or five olive, tan or blue-green eggs with dark markings are laid. Both the male and female take turns incubating the eggs over a 17- to 18-day period. One brood is raised per year. This aggressive bird uses its loud calls (“jay,” “jeeah,” “queedle, queedle”) to alert others to possible danger. The blue jay can mimic some other birds, too. It may go to roost in mid-afternoon in the winter months. Found in woodlands and residential areas, the blue jay eats nuts, particularly acorns, corn, fruits, insects and dead animals.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie Habitats

None

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