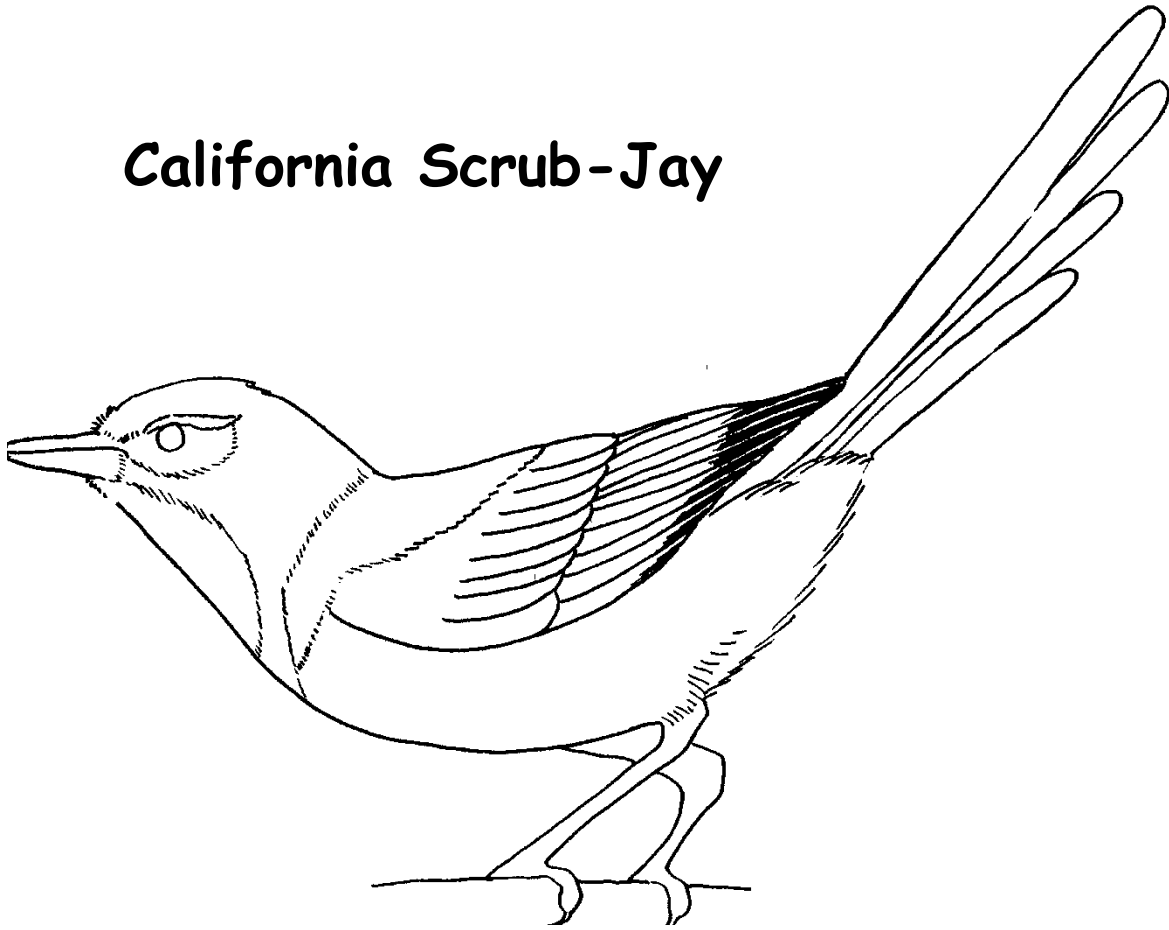


California Scrub-Jay



Coloring Instructions:

Bright blue - the crown, nape, breast band, wings, rump, and tail

Gray - the back and the shoulder on the wing

White - the throat, breast, belly, thigh, and eye stripe

Black - the bill, eye, legs, and ear patch

California Scrub-Jay

Length: 10"

Habitat: Abundant, noisy resident of oak woodlands

Field marks: Medium-sized blue jay with a white belly and no crest

One of the most common birds in our area is the California Scrub-Jay. Many people mistakenly call it a Blue Jay. The Blue Jay is a different species that lives in eastern North America. Another species called the Steller's Jay, with its dark blue body and black crested head, is found in surrounding mountains such as Lassen Volcanic National Park.

California Scrub-Jays are year-round **residents**. They do not leave in the winter like orioles or leave in the summer like most of our robins. Scrub jays also have a territory that they stay within. If you put out a bird bath or a feeder, the jays you see will be the same birds day after day. Watch these jays carefully so you can tell them apart and identify them as individuals. What kind of personality does each of your jays have?

It is good to learn the raucous calls of the scrub jays because they tend to be the sentries of the neighborhood. If they see a coyote or a

Cooper's Hawk, they will give a warning call. Often you will hear all the birds in your area become still when a jay warns of a Cooper's Hawk, which eats other birds.

An interesting thing to watch out for is a scrub jay burying an acorn. California Scrub-Jays are most common where oak trees are common because acorns are a significant part of the jay's diet in the fall and winter. When acorns are plentiful, the jays will hide them in the soil or under leaves. The jays will return and find some of these hidden nuts but not all of them. Many of the hidden nuts will grow into trees. By "planting" acorns, scrub jays help oaks spread their range. So, both the oak trees and the jays help one another.

Each animal does not live in isolation. All the time, each animal is having an influence on plants and other animals. The relationship between scrub jays and oak trees happens to be helpful to them both.

California Scrub-Jay Challenges

Put a check mark in the box when you have completed the challenge.

- Identify a California Scrub-Jay.
- See the distinctive gliding pattern of the California Scrub-Jay where it dives very steeply and then levels out and glides very slowly.
- See a scrub jay with an acorn in its mouth.
- See a scrub jay bury an acorn.
- Hear a group of scrub jays mobbing an intruder.
- Once you are familiar with the calls of the scrub jay, notice how little you hear them in the spring during nesting time. Scrub jays tend to be very quiet and secretive during that time.

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