



blue jay

Cyanocitta cristata

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Passeriformes
Family: Corvidae

FEATURES

The blue jay averages 11 to 12 inches in length. It is a large, blue bird with a crest. White 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 is white or gray 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

- bottomland forests
- coniferous forest
- southern Illinois lowlands
- upland deciduous forest

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: statewide

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.

Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume 2: Woodland Habitats CD-ROM.