Steller's Jay Profile

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

This beautiful jay is a larger cousin of the Blue Jay that lives in the western part of the United States. The Steller's Jay, however, has a larger and darker-colored crest on its head than the Blue Jay. Its large size and impressive coloring make it very distinctive and easy to identify when spotted.

Interesting Facts:

Family: Corvidae

Scientific Name: *Cyanocitta stelleri*

Location: The Steller's Jay has a large North American range. You'll see them as far north as southern Alaska to as far south as Central America. Its range extends from the west coast to as far east as the Rocky Mountains and southwest Texas. The Steller's Jay prefers the coniferous woodlands of the West, but must also have some open space. Within its range, it is absent from desert areas. It usually lives in flocks of greater than 10 birds.

Migration: Steller's Jays do not migrate, but may move down from higher to lower elevations when winter arrives.

Nesting: Nests are usually well hidden in a conifer tree, and the needles of the tree are often used to line the nest. Due to suburban development, they have also been reported nesting in nooks on buildings. The female lays a clutch that varies from 2-6 bluish-green eggs with dark brown markings. She incubates for about 16 days, and the male feeds her while she's incubating. Male and female pairs mate for life.

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Diet:	Steller's Jays eat nuts, pine seeds, acorns, berries, and small invertebrates. They will steal bird eggs and nestlings from the nests of small birds, and have even been known to attack adult birds. They also eat human foods left behind at picnic and camping areas. They forage on the ground or in trees and shrubs. These birds hide food for times when fresh food is scarce.
Size and Color:	This large jay grows 12"-13" long. Its crest is dark blue or black, with dark upperparts, head and breast and white streaks on its forehead. Its rump and belly are blue, and its wings and tail are blue with black bars. Males and females are similar in color. The Steller's Jay and its eastern cousin, the Blue Jay, are the only crested jays in North America.
Song:	Calls include "shaack, shaack, shack" and "shooka, shooka." To warn other birds, it produces a harsh nasal "wah." It also imitates the cry of the Red-tailed Hawk, to chase away other birds from its feeding areas.
Attract Them:	Steller's Jays like thick coniferous trees, so you are more likely to attract them into your yard if you have them. They will eat a variety of seeds, and due to their size, they do better at open-style or hopper feeders than tube-style feeders. They may also eat offerings of mealworms, fruit, peanuts, and other common backyard wild bird foods.

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