Gray Jay Profile

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

The Gray Jay has a smaller U.S. range than its cousin the Blue Jay, but it shares the same feeding habits. The Gray Jay eats berries, seeds and insects, but it will also eat the eggs and young of other birds, as well as small rodents. And, like the Steller's Jay, the Gray Jay visits campsites to steal food left out by humans, a habit that has earned this bird its "Camp Robber" nickname. The Gray Jay also stores away much food in summer and autumn for winter use, hiding it in the crevices of tree bark above the winter snow line.

Interesting Facts:

Family: Corvidae

Scientific Name: *Perisoreus Canadensis*

Location: The Gray Jay's range extends from Alaska through Canada, and into New England and New York. You'll also see them in northern regions of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, as well as the coastal and mountain areas of the western United States.

They prefer a coniferous habitat and tend to stay in higher elevations during summer and move to lower elevations during winter. They protect their territory year round, not just during nesting season.

Migration: Gray Jays do not migrate. When food is scarce, they may move in groups to areas outside their normal range.

Nesting: They usually nest in dense conifer trees. The nest is made of bark, twigs, and moss and lined with feathers and fur. The female lays 2-5 eggs, and incubates them by herself. Eggs are pale green or white with dark blotches. While she incubates, the male brings food to the nest. After the young hatch, both the male and female feed their young. Young leave the nest after

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	15 days. Gray Jays have just one brood per mating season. Pairs mate for life.
Diet:	Gray Jays are omnivorous, which means they eat both vegetable and meat foods. They eat nuts, insects, fruit and seeds. They also are known to eat bird eggs and the young of other birds, as well as small rodents and human food scraps. Around coniferous campsites, Gray Jays are not shy. They steal food left out by humans and they will even take it from the hands of humans.
Size and Color:	Adults are up to 12" long. Their upperparts are all gray, varying in darkness by geographic location. They have a white forehead and neck and light colored underparts. Their bill is dark. Young are slate colored all over.
Special Characteristics:	Gray Jays have special glands inside their bill, which produce sticky saliva. They use the saliva to gel together fruits and other foods into balls, which they then stick to tree branches for later use.
Attracting:	Gray Jays, especially in winter, are known to visit feeders for an offering of suet or peanuts. A pair can easily take control of a feeder, so be sure to set out more than one if you attract Gray Jays.

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