



How to Recognize Birds

Why did the 5th grader toss a stick of butter out the window?

Identifying tools for birds are the same things you use when you see your friends in the distance. You look at size, color, shape or **silhouette** and you listen to the sounds. You ask what, where, when, why and how questions. You look for something familiar or something unique that makes your friend different from the crowd. It is the same thing when looking for a bird.

Use the description of the Florida Scrub-Jay below to describe and answer the questions.

- Size
- Color.....
- Shape.....
- Silhouette..
- Sound.....



- What plant does the bird use?
- Who does the bird look like?
- When does the bird feed?
- Where does the bird hang out at night?
- Where does the bird nest?
- What does the bird eat?
- How does it use its beak & feet?
- How does the bird fly?
- Ask around if anyone has seen the bird?
- Who are its enemies?
- When does it make a sound?

Florida Scrub-jay

He wanted to see a butterfly!

The Scrub-jay is a medium sized, gray and blue bird with a round head. It is a passerine bird that perches in an upright silhouette position like a mockingbird. It has a harsh call instead of all the songs that the mocking bird sings. Female jays make a rapid call while bobbing up and down and looking up when alarmed. The jays are cooperative breeders which means that they have family groups that help rear new chicks. The bowl shaped nest is made of twigs and palmetto fibers in springtime. Scrub-jays are territorial birds that do not migrate.

One member of the family acts like a lookout and flies directly with steady wing beats to the top of trees to give danger warning calls when Birds of Prey come into the habitat. Crows and Blue Jays eat eggs. Birds of Prey like Red-tail Hawks and Eastern Screech Owls attack hatchlings in addition to Coopers Hawks, Sharp-shinned Hawks and Merlins who attack adults.

These birds like to hang out in scrub habitats near Sand Live Oak trees which are small to medium sized evergreen trees. Florida Scrub-jays love the smaller acorns of this scrubby native plant and are known to bury them for storage. They hold acorns with their feet and use their chisel-like beaks to crack the shell. Jays are omnivores and eat acorns, seeds, frogs, insects, baby turtles and snakes. It is the only endemic bird species in our state. Florida Fish and Wildlife, Florida Audubon and local volunteers use a group called Jay Watch to protect the species. They do surveys to keep track of this vulnerable species.