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Conservation

Florida Scrub-Jays: 2019 By the Numbers

A summary from the Jay Watch season.

  

Birds in This Story

Florida Scrub-Jay
Latin: *Aphelocoma coeruleascens*



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Florida Scrub Jay. Photo: Ann Foster/Great Backyard Bird Count.

According to historical records, Florida Scrub-Jays have never lived anywhere outside Florida. Increasingly rare, intact scrub habitat in coastal areas and interior to the Florida peninsula is the only home that these flashy, intelligent birds know. The estimated historical population of 40,000 jays declined over decades as bulldozers razed tens of thousands of sandy scrub oak acres for construction of homes, orange groves, and other commercial interests.

The map illustrates the current distribution of Florida Scrub-Jay families as of spring 2019. In 2018, Palm Beach County joined nine other counties in which jays are no longer found. Many other counties have dwindling populations. Fortunately, some state and local agencies and nongovernmental organizations are working diligently to restore and maintain scrub habitat to support scrub-jays and the many other unique plants and animals that share their habitat.



Map created by Frances Roy Agency.

The three largest remaining populations of jays on conservation lands can be found at Ocala National Forest in Marion County, on federal and county lands in Brevard County, and across a broad patchwork of state, federal, and NGO-managed lands in Highlands County located close enough together that jays can fly from site to site to find mates and establish new territories.

It's on us – conservation scientists and community science volunteers – to carry our messages widely by teaching friends and family about the importance of conserving the remaining scrub as conservation lands and maintaining the habitat in perpetuity for the unique, Florida-only scrub-jay.



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