

California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Interagency Wildlife Task Group

STELLER'S JAY

Cyanocitta stelleri

Family: CORVIDAE
B346

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common, yearlong resident of forests in mountains and foothills throughout the state. There is a downslope movement from higher elevations in winter (Grinnell and Miller 1944). Occurs in most conifer and hardwood forest habitats. Rare in the Central Valley and southern coastal lowlands in winter (McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981). Casual in desert areas in winter (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Omnivorous; eats seeds, acorns, fruits, insects and other invertebrates, small vertebrates, carrion, bird eggs and young, and camp scraps. Forages by gleaning and picking food from ground, foliage, bark, and wood. Caches food.

Cover: Trees and shrubs provide cover, especially large, mature trees. Generally prefers conifers but frequently found in hardwood habitats.

Reproduction: Nest is a platform of sticks with a lining of mud and rootlets. Usually placed 2.4 to 4.6 m (8-15 ft) above ground on a horizontal branch near the trunk of a young conifer. Sometimes nests in hardwood, shrub, or tree cavity (Harrison 1978).

Water: Drinks water (Airola 1980).

Pattern: Prefers mature conifer forests; also uses deciduous forests and woodlands. Frequents stands with open to moderate canopy, and large, mature trees.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Yearlong, resident. At higher elevations in the Sierra Nevada and elsewhere, may make altitudinal movements. Occurs rarely in the Central Valley and other lowland areas in winter. Occasionally found in desert riparian areas in fall and winter.

Home Range: No information found. Density in a live oak-eucalyptus picnic area in Alameda Co. was 19 pairs per 40 ha (100 ac) (Brown 1964).

Territory: Brown (1964) reported that the male of each pair dominated in an area (size unspecified) around the nest, but did not exclude other males. Males often ranged into neighboring or distant "territories" where they were subordinate in social interactions. Distances between adjacent nests ranged from 86-169 m (280-550 ft).

Reproduction: Breeds from late March to early July, with peak in April and May. Monogamous; lays 2-6 eggs, usually 4. Female incubates for about 16 days while being fed by male. Altricial young tended by both parents, and are dependent upon them for about 1 mo after fledging (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Adults occasionally taken by large, woodland hawks and owls. Often eats eggs and young of woodland passerines. May steal from acorn woodpecker caches.

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