

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

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ISLAND SCRUB-JAY

*Aphelocoma insularis*

Family: CORVIDAE  
B551

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

Written by: T. Kucera, 1997

#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Resident on Santa Cruz Island in oak woodland and scrub habitats. Previously a sub-species of western scrub-jay (*A. californicus*) recently elevated to specific level (AOU 1995). Most habitat and life-history information based on knowledge of western scrub-jay.

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Probably like western scrub-jay, which is omnivorous; mostly eats acorns, nuts, seeds, fruits, insects, and other invertebrates. Also eats small vertebrates, bird eggs and young. Gleans and picks food from ground, foliage, bark and wood. Hammers nuts open. Often caches nuts and other food in soil (Bent 1946).

**Cover:** Generally prefers trees and shrubs in arid woodlands and shrublands; also frequents riparian woodlands.

**Reproduction:** Nest of western scrub-jay is a cup of twigs and grasses lined with rootlets and other plant fibers; built by both sexes (Harrison 1978). Nest usually placed in dense foliage in a tree or shrub 0.9 to 9 m (3-30 ft) high, often near water (Airola 1980).

**Water:** Williams and Koenig (1980) reported western scrub-jays making regular drinking visits to a spring in oak woodland in coastal California. Drinking water probably essential.

**Pattern:** Prefers open woodlands and shrublands, especially with oaks.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Yearlong, diurnal activity.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Yearlong, resident on Santa Cruz Island.

**Home Range:** For western scrub-jay, same size as territory (Airola 1980). Erickson (1937) reported density of 1 pair per 1.6 to 4 ha (4-10 ac.).

**Territory:** Verbeek (1973) reported territory of western scrub-jay "about" 3 ha (7.5 ac) in coastal California, and defended yearlong. Hardy (1961) reported a single territory/home range of 2.1 ha (5.3 ac) in New Mexico.

**Reproduction:** Western scrub-jay breeds from early March to mid-August. Monogamous; Lays 2-6 eggs, usually 2-3; clutch smaller in arid areas. Incubation 15-18 days, by female only. Male feeds female during incubation. Altricial young tended by both parents (Harrison 1978). Young leave nest at 18-23 days (Bent 1946,

Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Niche: Like western scrub-jay, occasionally preyed upon by hawks, small mammals, and other corvids. Closely associated with oaks and acorns. Steals acorn woodpecker caches.

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