

Steller's Jay



This bold, inquisitive and beautiful bird is familiar to everyone who spends much time in conifer woods in and around Corvallis. Steller's Jays are easily recognized by their large size, deep blue and gray-black coloration, and bold crest. There are a handful of other birds in our area that are blue in color, but nothing with a crest. Once you've seen one, you'll never mistake it for anything else. They spend most of their time in mature conifer forests, where they typically travel in flocks of 10 or more birds. They are very noisy, so you can always tell when they are in the neighborhood.

Steller's Jays spend most of their time in the upper canopy, gliding slowly and gracefully between tree tops, until they see something to eat or investigate on the ground. Then they swoop down to lower branches and ground level, where they hop confidently about out in the open on long, strong legs. There is nothing shy about these birds.

Like all jays and their relatives the crows, Steller's Jays will eat almost anything and are easy to attract to feeders. Like California Scrub Jays, they LOVE peanuts and will quickly carry away and hide any you put out. Also like other jays, they cache food to eat later and have very good spatial memory for finding items they've hidden.

Steller's Jays make an interesting contrast with the other common jay of our area, the California Scrub Jay. Both are highly intelligent, bold and inquisitive. Both are omnivores that will eat almost anything. But they live in different habitats – Steller's Jays are almost always in tall conifer forests, and Scrub Jays are almost always in open scrubby areas. In fact you will seldom see both at the same location. Scrub Jays sometimes gather in flocks, but in Corvallis I generally see them individually or as a pair possibly with young offspring. Steller's Jays, on the other hand, are almost never found alone and I seldom see fewer than 4 at a time.