

Florida Scrub Jay Feeding

While feeding birds is a popular activity, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission does not promote feeding Florida Scrub Jays. In fact, there are some cases when feeding can be harmful to the birds. Please take into account the following points before you consider feeding Scrub Jays.

1. **What to feed:** DO NOT feed Scrub Jays any processed foods that contain sugar, salt, spices, cooking oils, or flavorings. Examples of bad foods for jays include flavored peanuts, granola bars, bread, table scraps, and Cheetos. Examples of good foods for jays include acorns, raw peanuts without flavoring (including salt), and high-protein insects. Insects such as waxworms, mealworms and grasshoppers are often available at pet stores or feed stores, or on-line through pet suppliers.

2. **Where to feed:** DO NOT feed Scrub Jays near a road. Jays, especially young birds that are unfamiliar with roads, are frequently hit by motor vehicles.

3. **When to feed:**

- a. DO NOT feed Scrub Jays if there is a hawk nearby.
- b. DO NOT feed Scrub Jays daily because the foods people can offer are not as healthy for the jays as the varied diet they would normally eat.
- c. DO NOT feed Scrub Jays during breeding season, April to June. During this time, Florida Scrub Jays are nesting and raising young; they should not be fed peanuts or other seeds. When a steady supply of peanuts is available, Scrub Jays may feed their young peanuts instead of the more nutritious insects they would normally catch. High-protein foods such as insects are better for jays during the spring.

While Florida Scrub Jays never *need* to be fed by humans, in some cases it is useful for people to feed the jays. For example, researchers may feed Scrub Jays as part of a study. Also, educators who would like to show other people Scrub Jays sometimes feed the birds. Educators should emphasize the above points in their interactions with the public.

Finally, remember that the Florida Scrub Jay is a *threatened* species and needs your help. Follow these feeding guidelines, support Scrub Jay habitat

restoration and acquisition, and educate your friends about this beautiful bird that is only found in Florida.

What you can do to help the Florida Scrub Jay:

- 1. Support Scrub Jay habitat management, including burning and mechanical treatments, if needed**
- 2. Support Scrub Jay habitat acquisition**
- 3. Educate the public**
- 4. If you must feed Scrub Jays on rare occasions, follow Scrub Jay feeding guidelines.**
- 5. Keep cats indoors**
- 6. Report banded Scrub Jays from unusual locations. Follow this model:**
 - a. Written: RE/S-OR/DB**
 - b. Spoken: Red over silver dash Orange over dark blue. (You may have to guess on the names of some of the colors).**
 - c. Karl Miller of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is completing a 4-year study of Scrub Jay demography in the county. He color banded almost all of the Scrub Jays in Deep Creek and in the undeveloped areas east of the Peace River. He is analyzing his data now and is interested in collecting any reports of sightings of banded Scrub Jays west of I-75 and east of the Myakka River. Please report any banded jays seen in this area to Karl at 352/955-2230.**
- 7. Take a kid out birding**

Information provided by Adam Kent, October 2007