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FLORIDA SCRUB-JAY KILLS COMMON GROUND-DOVE

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The Florida Scrub-Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) forages in low-growing, open shrub habitat by hopping through the vegetation or along the ground beneath the vegetation, visually searching for prey in the shrubs, palmettos, leaf litter, or bare sand (Wolfenden and Fitzpatrick 1996). Acorns, collected and cached during the late summer to early fall and retrieved in winter and early spring, are the primary plant food of its diet. Insects comprise most of its animal diet, but small vertebrates are also eaten when encountered. Fast-flying or fossorial prey are rarely taken (Wolfenden and Fitzpatrick 1984). I report a Florida Scrub-Jay killing a Common Ground-Dove (*Columbina passerina*).

On 2 July 1992 at 1715 a Common Ground-Dove flew out of saw palmettos (*Serenoa repens*) onto the sidewalk in front of the Briggs Nature Center in Naples, Collier County, Florida. The dove held its wings at a 45 degree angle and flopped slowly away from the bushes in a typical distraction display (Terres 1987). About ten seconds later, a Florida Scrub-Jay flew out of the palmettos and landed next to the dove. The dove kept turning its body perpendicular to the jay with its wings raised at an angle. The jay hopped after the dove for a minute or two and pecked three or four times at the back of its head. After the dove was subdued, the jay pecked it three more times, grabbed it by the neck, and flew about 5 m before dropping the dove. The jay then got a new grip on the dove and flew into a Florida privet (*Forstiera segregata*). Although the jay was out of view, I observed feathers coming out of the bush. After several minutes, the jay flew to a wire and wiped its bill back and forth on the wire, suggesting that it had recently fed, presumably on the dove.

Although I didn't search, I assumed from the behavior of the dove that it was nesting nearby. As a ground nesting species, Common Ground-Doves use distraction displays to lure predators, including Florida Scrub-Jays, away from their nests (Hailman 1989). It seems possible that the dove that I observed had not led the scrub jay far enough away from its nest to discontinue its display before the jay attacked.

Other instances of Florida Scrub-Jays attacking birds exist. Curry (1992) documented a Florida Scrub-Jay attacking and killing a Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*). In this case, the mockingbird may have been caught on a bush and unable to break off the fight. Curry also provided observations of other birds that fled when attacked by jays. In addition I have observed Florida Scrub-Jays at the Briggs Nature Center that attacked or carried off birds. On separate occasions, a jay attacked a Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) and Rufous-sided Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) after they had flown into a window, but the birds quickly recovered and flew away from the jay without being pursued. At another time, I saw a jay carrying a Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*) that died after flying into a window.

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