

## BLUE JAY IN CALIFORNIA

On 30 October 1963 Dr. John D. Goodman of the University of Redlands heard a strange call outside his home in Igos, San Bernardino County, and upon investigating found a Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*). This bird remained in and around Igos, a small community along Mill Creek Canyon at 3900 ft. elevation in the San Bernardino Mountains, until 20 April 1964. It was usually with a loose mixed flock of Steller's Jays (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) and Scrub Jays (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) frequenting the area, and often came to feeders maintained by the local residents.

I saw this Blue Jay on 7 December 1963 and again on 7 February 1964. On both occasions it was with Steller's Jays and Scrub Jays that responded to "squeaking"; however, it appeared to be more wary than its companions, and did not come as close. On the first occasion I had the bird under observation for about 30 minutes and obtained the following description:

About the size of a Scrub Jay, but appeared plumper, had a slightly shorter tail, and had a crest. Top of the head, back, scapulars and rump purple-blue. Wings blue, with black barring on the secondaries and upper wing coverts, and a bold white bar at the ends of the secondaries and greater secondary coverts. Most of tail blue with black barring, but with extensive white on ends of outer tail feathers. Side of face, to above the eye, and throat white; lores black, and a black line extending backward from the eye. Face and throat outlined by bold black collar extending from the bottom of throat, around the edge of ear coverts, and up into the back portion of crest on upper nape. Breast and flanks pale grayish-white fading into white on belly and under tail coverts. Bill black. Legs and feet blackish. Eye appeared dark.

The bird called on a few occasions, a clear high-pitched "eeeeeeef" that somewhat resembled the note of a Common Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*).

The most striking characteristics of this jay were the white bars in the wings, the white corners to the tail, and the bold black collar, all marks possessed by none of the western jays. The blue of the upper parts was a very different shade than that of any of the western jays, and it contrasted sharply with the blue of the wings and tail.

A Blue Jay heard calling on the Chico State College campus, Chico, Butte County, on 24 April 1950 by Dr. Thomas L. Rodgers (pers. comm.) appears to be the only other record for California. This individual was collected the same day and is deposited in the Chico State College bird collection.

Neither of the two jays had bands or other types of markings on them, and the feathers showed no signs of captivity (an escapee will lose all signs of wear once it molts). Goodman checked around the small community of Igos to see if any of the residents had lost, or knew of anyone who had lost, a captive Blue Jay, and received only negative responses. Rodgers checked with the local aviary owner and found she had never had a Blue Jay. I have never seen a captive Blue Jay outside a zoo in California, nor have I heard of any being kept here, though I have seen other members of the Corvidae being held as pets. In the East Blue Jays are frequently kept as pets, and the fact that there is no definite evidence that either of these two birds was an escapee can never eliminate the possibility that they had been transported to California where they escaped or were released.

The Blue Jay is normally considered a resident bird within its range in eastern North America (A.O.U. Check-list, 1957). However, there is much evidence that these birds migrate in the fall. Numbers in the thousands have been

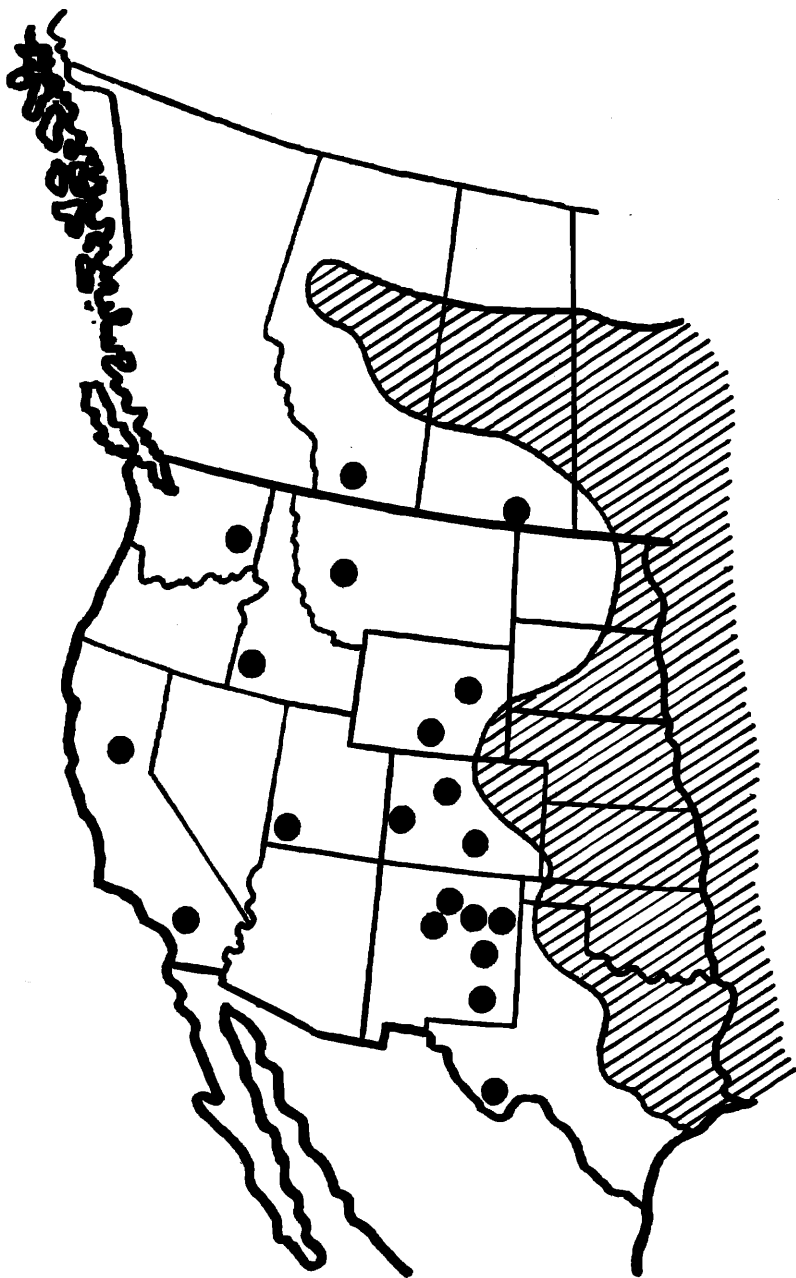


FIGURE 1. The western edge of the Blue Jay's range, and some localities westward from which it has been reported during the fall and winter.

reported moving at such localities as Cos Cob, Connecticut (Audubon Field Notes 16:13, 1962), Amherstburg, Ontario (A.F.N. 21:28, 1967), and others too numerous to mention. A check of records published during the past ten years indicates that there is some movement towards the southwest in the fall. Fig. 1 shows the western boundary of the breeding range, and also indicates localities west of that boundary from which individuals have been reported. The westernmost of these occurrences (all unchecked, and as they appear in Audubon Field Notes) are one on Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, about 15 miles south of Spokane, Washington, on 29 September 1968 (A.F.N. 23:84, 1969); one on Ravalli Refuge, about 25 miles north of Missula, Montana, on 19 November 1968 (A.F.N. 23:84, 1969); one in Star, about 20 miles west of Boise, Idaho, during the winter of 1959-60 (A.F.N. 14:329, 1960); one in Cedar City, Utah, on 29 October 1966 (A.F.N. 21:63, 1967); one in Albuquerque, New Mexico, between 7 December 1965 and 19 February 1966 (A.F.N. 20:447, 1966), and another there during the winter of 1967-68 (A.F.N. 22:466, 1968); one in Big Bend National Park, Texas, during the winter of 1967-68 (A.F.N. 22:466, 1968).

The California occurrences appear more likely to have been genuine strays from the western edge of their breeding range rather than escapees when the following facts are considered:

1. Neither individual exhibited the characters of a recent escapee.
2. No Blue Jays were known to have been released, or lost, in the immediate vicinity of either of the two localities.
3. One individual appeared in the fall and remained for the winter, a pattern being set by other westward occurring individuals of this species. The other occurred at the time of year when it would be expected to be moving from its winter quarters to its normal range. *Guy McCaskie, San Diego Natural History Museum, Balboa Park, San Diego, California 92112.*

## AN INLAND RECORD OF THE BLACK OYSTERCATCHER

On the afternoon of 5 July 1969 I saw a Black Oystercatcher (*Haematopus bachmani*) flying among the deciduous trees along Bear Creek about two miles east of Shelter Cove, Humboldt County, California. This point is about twenty miles upstream and is at an elevation of about 1400 feet; it is separated from the nearby coast by a ridge with peaks reaching more than 3000 feet. The weather was bright and clear for the week prior to the observation; thus the possibility of the bird having become lost in the usually common coastal fog is unlikely.

The Black Oystercatcher is resident along the rocky coast between Alaska and Baja California and is relatively uncommon along the Humboldt County coast. There appear to be no previous records of this species away from the coast, and even though this bird was but two miles inland, it more than likely followed Bear Creek twenty miles upstream. *Raymond Higgs, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Bolinas, California 94924.*