

## A NOTE ON THE JAYS OF NORTHERN ARGENTINA

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THE genus *Cyanocorax*, as now recognized, ranges from northern to southern tropical or subtropical extremes: southernmost Texas to northern Argentina. Of the Argentine species only the *Urraca Común* or "Common Jay" (*Cyanocorax chrysops chrysops*) pictured opposite is also found in the northwestern provinces, where it is represented by the race *tucumanus*. The other two species reaching Argentina are confined to the northeast.

In the course of a month's field work in Misiones I did not see *Cyanocorax cyanomelas*, nor to my knowledge did any of the hunters bring a specimen to camp, so I conclude that in the Tobunas area it is at least uncommon.

The "Blue Jay" of the region, *Cyanocorax caeruleus*, while seen in small groups from time to time was not as abundant as *C. chrysops*. *Cyanocorax caeruleus* is larger, more heavily built, dark eyed, and crestless (but for stiff, elongated feathers on the forehead which added to its somewhat raven-like appearance).

On 11 September 1959, I had been imprisoned by heavy rains. From the birds the hunters brought in I made the usual notes on fleshy parts and then selected *Cyanocorax chrysops* to occupy my painting efforts for the afternoon. Almost daily I had seen these jays trooping noisily through the forest interrupting my otherwise-directed caution with their great repertory of sounds resultant upon their amazed discovery of Man. I remembered the look one had when it saw me and peered and called and bounced excitedly and pumped its tail. I remembered its pale-eyed expression, its bizarre crewcut, and the way the whitish-blue feathers on the back of its head appeared to be bound down from the crest by an invisible string. This I tried to portray by showing it perched on an orchid-grown branch snapped from a convenient tree.

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