

STELLER'S JAY.

+GARRULUS STELLERI, *Gmel.*

+PLATE CCXXX.—ADULT.

Of this Jay, discovered by STELLER, whose name it bears, Dr. RICHARDSON states that it "is not uncommon in the summer time on the Pacific coast of America, from the mouth of the Columbia to the 56th parallel. It also frequents the Rocky Mountains, where Mr. DRUMMOND procured a specimen. In its manner it greatly resembles the *Garrulus cristatus*." Mr. NUTTALL's account of it is as follows:—

"We first observed this bird in our western route in the Blue Mountains of the Columbia, east of Wallah Wallah. Here they were scarce and shy, but we met them in sufficient abundance in the majestic pine forests of the Columbia, where, in autumn, their loud and trumpeting clangour was heard at all hours of the day, calling out *djay, djay*, and sometimes chattering and uttering a variety of other notes scarcely recognisable as distinct from the calls of our common Blue Jay. They are, however, far more bold, irritable, and familiar. Watchful as dogs, a stranger no sooner shews himself in their vicinity than they neglect all other employment to come round, follow, peep at and scold him, sometimes with such pertinacity and irritability as to provoke the sportsman intent on other game to level his gun against them in mere retaliation. At other times, stimulated by mere curiosity, they will be observed to follow you in perfect silence, until something arouses their ready ire, when the *djay, djay, pay, pay*, is poured upon you without intermission, till you are beyond their view. So intent are they on vociferating, that it is not uncommon to hear them busily scolding even while engaged with a large acorn in the mouth. Of their geographical limits we are as yet uncertain. They were first found by STELLER at Nootka; but they do not extend into upper California, and scarcely to the west as far as the most western of the true Rocky Mountain Chains. They feed on insects, acorns, and the seeds of the gigantic pines which form a belt along the Pacific and the rivers of the Oregon Territory. In the month of May, I found a nest of this species in a small sapling of Douglas's Fir, on the borders of a dark and dense forest, and again some time after a second nest with young, in an elevated branch of the same pine, on the border of a rocky cliff. On approaching the nest, which contained four eggs, of a pale green

colour, with small olive-brown specks, varied with others of rather a violet hue, both the male and female flew at me with the utmost anger and agitation, deafening me almost with their cries and entreaties. But though I took only two of their eggs, I found next day that they had forsaken the nest, being too fearful and jealous of the intrusion to remain any longer in the same place. The nest as usual was bulky, made of interlaced twigs, and roots, with a stout layer of mud, and lined with black root-fibres. I saw the nest about ten days previous to the time of taking two of the four eggs. On that occasion the female (probably) only followed me in silence."

CORVUS STELLERI, Gmel. Linn. Syst. Nat., vol. i. p. 370.

CORVUS STELLERI, Bonap. Syn., p. 433.

STELLER'S JAY, *Corvus Stelleri*, Bonap. Amer. Orn., vol. ii. p. 44.

GARRULUS STELLERI, *Steller's Jay*, Swains. and Rich. F. Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 294.

STELLER'S JAY, Nutt. Man., vol. ii. p. 229.

STELLER'S JAY, *Corvus Stelleri*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. iv. p. 453.

Male, 13, wing, $5\frac{1}{2}$.

Rocky Mountains, Columbia river, and North-west coast. Common. Migratory.

Adult Male.

Bill shorter than the head, strong, straight, a little compressed; upper mandible with the dorsal line declinate and convex toward the end, the sides sloping and becoming more convex toward the tip, which is declinate, thin edged and obtuse, the edges sharp and overlapping, with a slight notch; lower mandible straight, the angle short and broad, the dorsal outline ascending and slightly convex, the sides convex, the edges sharp and directed outwards, the tip narrow. Nostrils basal, roundish, covered by reversed bristly feathers.

Head large, ovate, eyes of moderate size; neck rather short; body compact. Legs of moderate length, strong; tarsus much compressed, with seven large anterior scutella, and two long plates behind, meeting so as to form a sharp edge. Toes stout, with large scutella, the outer adherent as far as its second joint to the middle toe; first very strong; lateral toes nearly equal, third much longer. Claws strong, arched, compressed, sharp.

Plumage full, soft, blended; stiff bristly feathers with disunited barbs over the nostrils, some of them extending a third of the length of the bill; at the base of the upper mandible several longish slender bristles. The feathers on the top of the head and occiput linear-oblong, slightly recurved, and forming an erectile crest an inch and a half in length. Wings of moderate length, convex, and much rounded; the first quill very short, the second an inch and a quarter longer, the third nine-twelfths longer than the second,

and three-twelfths shorter than the fourth, which is one-twelfth shorter than the fifth, the latter being the longest, although scarcely exceeding the sixth. Tail long, rounded, of twelve rather broad, rounded, and acuminate feathers, of which the shafts are undulated.

Bill and feet black. Iris hazel. Head and neck, with the fore part and middle of the back brownish-black, of a lighter tint on the back, and on the throat streaked with dull grey; the feathers on the forehead tipped with bright blue; the hind part of the back, the rump, and the upper tail-coverts light blue; as are the lower tail-coverts, the sides and lower parts of the rump, the sides of the body, and the whole of the breast; the middle of the abdomen paler, the tibial feathers, and the lower wing-coverts dusky, tinged with blue. Wings blue, the secondary coverts and quills rich indigo and ultra-marine, narrowly barred with black, the outer coverts of the primaries pale; the inner webs of the primaries and outer secondaries dusky; tail blue, with numerous narrow, inconspicuous dusky bars; the lower surface of the wings and tail dusky.

Length to end of tail 13 inches; bill along the ridge $1\frac{1}{2}$, along the edge of lower mandible $1\frac{4}{12}$; wing from flexure $5\frac{1}{2}$; tail 6; tarsus $1\frac{8}{12}$; hind toe $\frac{7}{12}$, its claw $\frac{7}{12}$; middle toe $\frac{1}{12}$, its claw $\frac{5}{12}$.

The female is similar to the male, and scarcely inferior in colouring, but somewhat smaller.

Length to end of tail 12 inches; bill along the ridge $1\frac{1}{2}$; wing from flexure $5\frac{1}{2}$; tail $5\frac{1}{2}$; tarsus $1\frac{8}{12}$; middle toe $\frac{1}{12}$, its claw $\frac{5}{12}$.

Mr. TOWNSEND informs me that it is called *Ass-ass* by the Chinooks, who regard it with a superstitious feeling, believing that should a person hear it enunciating certain notes, which resemble the syllables *jaa-jaa*, he will shortly die, whereas its other notes, *kuc, kuc, kuc, kuc*, rapidly repeated, portend good. He further states that it is gregarious, like the Blue Jay, and corroborates some of the particulars above given.

Two eggs presented to me by Mr. NUTTALL measure an inch and an eighth in length, and seven-eighths in breadth.



R.T.

Stellers Jay

Male.



Audubon, John James. 1842. "Steller's Jay, *Garrulus stelleri*, Gmel. [Pl. 230]."
The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories 4, 107–109. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319343>.

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