THE FLORIDA JAY.

†GARRULUS FLORIDANUS, *Bartram*.

PLATE CCXXXIII.—MALE AND FEMALE.

This beautiful and lively bird is a constant resident in the south-western parts of Florida, from which country it seldom if ever removes to any great distance. It is never seen in the State of Louisiana, far less in that of Kentucky, and when CHARLES BONAPARTE asserts that it occurs in these districts, we must believe that he has been misinformed. It is so confined to the particular portions of Florida which it inhabits, that even on the eastern shores of that peninsula few are to be seen. I have never observed it in any part of Georgia, or farther to the eastward.

The flight of the Florida Jay is generally performed at a short distance from the ground, and consists either of a single sailing sweep, as it shifts from one tree or bush to another, or of continuous flappings, with a slightly undulated motion, in the manner of the Magpie (*Pica melanoleuca*) or of the Canada Jay (*Garrulus canadensis*). Its notes are softer than those of its relative the Blue Jay (*Garrulus cristatus*), and are more frequently uttered. Its motions are also more abrupt and quicker. It is seen passing from one tree to another with expanded tail, stopping for a moment to peep at the intruder, and hopping off to another place the next minute. It frequently descends to the ground, along the edges of oozy or marshy places, to search for snails, of which, together with berries of various kinds, fruits and insects, its food consists. It is easily approached during the breeding season, but is more shy at other times. It is a great destroyer of the eggs of small birds, as well as of young birds, which it chases and kills by repeated blows of its bill on their heads, after which it tears their flesh with avidity.

The Florida Jay is easily kept in a cage, where it will feed on recent or dried fruits, such as figs, raisins, and the kernels of various nuts, and exhibits as much gaiety as the Blue Jay does in a similar state. Like the latter, it secures its food between its feet, and breaks it into pieces before swallowing it, particularly the acorns of the *live oak*, and the snails which it picks up among the *sword palmetto*. No sooner have the seeds of that plant become black, or fully ripe, than the Florida Jay makes them almost its sole food for a time, and wherever a patch of these troublesome plants are to be seen, there

Florida Jay.

1. Male. — 2. Female.

Persimontree. Diospyros Virginiana.

also is the Jay to be met with. I have called the *palmetto* a troublesome plant, because its long, narrow, and serrated leaves are so stiff, and grow so close together, that it is extremely difficult to walk among them, the more so that it usually grows in places where the foot is seldom put without immediately sinking in the mire to a depth of several inches.

The nest of the Florida Jay is sparingly formed of dry sticks, placed across each other, and, although of a rounded shape, is so light that the bird is easily seen through it. It is lined with fibrous roots, placed in a circular manner. The eggs are from four to six, of a light olive colour, marked with irregular blackish dashes. Only one brood is raised in the season.

I had a fine opportunity of observing a pair of these birds in confinement, in the city of New Orleans. They had been raised out of a family of five, taken from the nest, and when I saw them had been two years in confinement. They were in full plumage, and extremely beautiful. The male was often observed to pay very particular attentions to the female, at the approach of spring. They were fed upon rice, and all kinds of dried fruit. Their cage was usually opened after dinner, when both immediately flew upon the table, fed on the almonds which were given them, and drank claret diluted with water. Both affected to imitate particular sounds, but in a very imperfect manner. These attempts at mimicry probably resulted from their having been in company with parrots and other birds. They suffered greatly when moulting, becoming almost entirely bare, and required to be kept near the fire. The female dropped two eggs in the cage, but never attempted to make a nest, although the requisite materials were placed at her disposal.

I have represented a pair of Florida Jays on a branch of the *persimon* tree, ornamented with its richly coloured fruits. This tree grows to a moderate height as well as girth. The wood is hard and compact. The leaves drop off at an early period. The fruit, when fully ripe, is grateful to the palate. The *persimon* occurs in all parts of the United States, but abounds in the low lands of Florida and Louisiana, probably more than in any other portion of the Union.

CORVUS FLORIDANUS, Bonap. Syn., p. 58.

FLORIDA JAY, *Garrulus floridanus*, Bonap. Amer. Orn., vol. ii. p.

FLORIDA JAY, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 230.

FLORIDA JAY, *Corvus floridanus*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. i. p. 444.

Male, $11\frac{1}{4}$, 14.

Confined to the Floridas. Not very common. Resident.

Bill short, strong, straight, compressed, acute; upper mandible with the dorsal outline nearly straight, the sides sloping, the edges sharp and overlapping, the tip slightly declinate; lower mandible with the back narrow, the

sides sloping. Nostrils basal, open, covered by the reversed bristly feathers. Head rather large, neck short, body robust. Feet of ordinary length; tarsus about the same length as the middle toe, anteriorly scutellate, compressed, acute behind; toes free, scutellate, the inner shorter than the outer; claws arched, compressed, acute.

Plumage soft, blended, glossy. A tuft of reflected bristly feathers over the nostril on each side; and several bristle-pointed feathers at the base of the upper mandible. Wings short, third and fourth quills longest, first short. Tail long, much rounded, of twelve rounded feathers.

Bill and feet brownish-black. Iris hazel. Upper part of the head, the cheeks, side, and back part of the neck, the wings and tail, of a bright purplish-azure. Back light yellowish-brown. A band of white on the forehead, extending over the eyes. The under parts brownish-white. The upper tail-coverts are blue, and the tail-feathers are indistinctly barred with deeper lines.

Length $11\frac{1}{4}$ inches; bill along the ridge $1\frac{1}{2}$, along the gap nearly $1\frac{1}{4}$; tarsus $1\frac{2}{12}$, middle toe nearly the same.

Adult Female.

The female presents the same colours as the male, the difference in tint being hardly perceptible.

THE PERSIMON TREE.

Diospyros virginiana, Willd., Sp. Pl., vol. iv. p. 1107. *Pursh*, Flor. Amer., vol. i. p. 265. *Mich.*, Abr. Forest. de l'Amer. Sept., vol. ii. p. 195, pl. 12.—*Polygamia Diœcia*, Linn.—*Guaïacanæ*, Juss.

Leaves ovato-oblong, acuminate, smooth, venous; petioles downy; buds smooth. The flowers are pale yellow, and the fruits, which are of the size of a plum, are of a globular form, and when mature, of a dull yellowish colour. The bark of old trees is cracked, and of a dark colour. The wood is employed for various purposes, being fine-grained, hard and durable.

²⁵
Florida Jay.

1. Male. — 2. Female.

Persimontree. Diospyros Virginiana.

Audubon, John James. 1842. "The Florida Jay, *Garrulus floridanus*, Bartram [Pl. 233]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 4, 118–120. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319346>.

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