

CORVIDS OF CAÑADA



COMMON RAVEN (Corvus corax)



AMERICAN CROW (Corvus brachyrhynchos)



YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIE (Pica nuttalli)



STELLER'S JAY (Cyanocitta stelleri)



WESTERN SCRUB-JAY (Aphelocoma californica)

Five of the ten California birds in the Family Corvidae are represented here at the Cañada de los Osos Ecological Reserve.

The **Common Raven** is the largest and can be found in the cold of the Arctic and the extreme heat of Death Valley. It has shown itself to be one of the most intelligent of all birds. It is a supreme predator and scavenger, quite sociable at certain times of the year and a devoted partner and parent with its mate.

The **American Crow** is black, like the Raven, but noticeably smaller. Particularly in the fall, it may occur in huge foraging or roosting flocks. Crows can be a problem for farmers at times of the year and a best friend at other times, when crops are under attack from insects or when those insects are hiding in dried up leftovers such as mummified almonds. Crows know where those destructive navel orange worms are. Smaller birds do their best to harass crows because they recognize the threat they are to their eggs and young. Crows, ravens and magpies are important members of the highway clean-up crew when it comes to roadkills.

The very attractive **Yellow-billed Magpie** tends to nest in loose colonies and forms larger flocks in late summer or fall. In the central valley of California, they can be a problem in almond and fruit orchards, but they also are adept at catching harmful insect pests.

The **Steller's Jay**, with its black crest, prefers forested habitats and is a common visitor to picnic areas and campsites. It frequently mimics the calls of Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks. Like other jays, it will rob the nests of other birds.

The **Western Scrub-jay** is fairly common throughout much of California and can be found in many habitats, from large cities to remote scrub lands. It is the major benefactor of our oak woodlands. They spend much of their time planting acorns for future meals. Most young oaks actually arise from this activity. Like many other jays, it will plunder smaller bird's nests.

If you want to see the other members of the California Corvids, you'll have to do a little traveling. The **Gray Jay** (*Perisoreus canadensis*) live in the far northwest of our State. A common visitor to campsites, as is the Steller's Jay.

The **Clark's Nutcracker** (*Nucifraga columbiana*), is a chunky gray, white and black jay of the high Sierra. Just as the Scrub Jay plants oaks, the Nutcracker is a pine planter of the high mountains.

The **Pinyon Jay** (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*), is another bird of the Sierra. The pinion-juniper woodlands of the Sierra are the haunts of this bird which frequently occurs in flocks numbering in the hundreds.

The **Black-billed Magpie** (*Pica nuttalli*), can be found in woodlands and watercourses of the northeast high desert areas of California.

You need a boat to see the last California member of this family. The **Island Scrub-jay** (*Aphelocoma insularis*), resembles a very large, heavy-billed California Scrub-jay. It is also much bluer and lives off the coast on Santa Cruz Island, a part of the Channel Islands.