



Photo: Paul Strauss.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY JAY WATCH!

Through 20 years of the Jay Watch program – 10 years led by Audubon Florida – volunteers and staff have collected critical information on Florida Scrub-Jay populations that have led directly to restoration initiatives and advocacy wins.

The Florida Scrub-Jay is our state's only endemic bird species, found nowhere else in the world. It was listed as federally-Threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) under the Endangered Species Act in 1987, largely due to loss of its native scrub habitat and decades of fire suppression that allowed the scrub to become overgrown and unsuitable for scrub-jays. While roller-chopping too-tall oak scrub can reduce the height of the vegetation and eliminate perches for raptors that prey on jays, fire is usually still needed to remove debris left on the ground.

The state's population of Florida Scrub-Jays is estimated to have declined by 90% since the early 1800s. While jay numbers have continued to decline state-wide, the Jay Watch program directly influences population numbers at the local scale by partnering with land managers to showcase where habitat restoration activities would be beneficial to the jays, and where prescribed fire and roller-chopping has already made a positive impact on their numbers.

Audubon Florida coordinates the Jay Watch community science program across the state. We train and support volunteers to conduct scientific surveys that measure annual nesting success and count the total number of Florida Scrub-Jays at more than 46 sites in 19 counties each summer.



60 DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTED

674 SURVEY HOURS

AT **46** SITES

*46 SITES WERE SURVEYED IN 2021, VERSUS 35 IN 2020

COUNTED

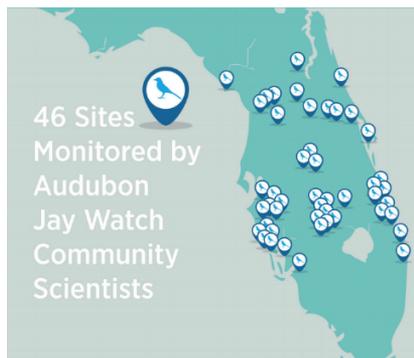
210 FAMILY GROUPS

183 JUVENILE JAYS

535 ADULT JAYS

TOTAL JAYS

718



JAY WATCH CELEBRATES 20 YEARS - 10 WITH AUDUBON FLORIDA

**Jacqui Sulek, Chapters Conservation
Manager, Audubon Florida**

"Volunteers with Audubon's Jay Watch program collect important information that helps land managers understand how to manage public land in which the Florida Scrub-Jay lives. Having lost close to 90% of these jays in the last 50 years, these efforts play a critical role in the long-term survival of the species."

**Audrey DeRose-Wilson, Director of
Bird Conservation, Audubon Florida**

"Jay Watch does the important, time-consuming work of tracking local populations through annual monitoring. Florida Scrub-Jays are management dependent, so regular, local-scale data informs managers of the need for restoration or conservation activities. Jay Watch also inspires advocates who invest in jays and then turn out to push for jay-friendly management."

**Todd Mecklenborg, USFWS Fish and
Wildlife Biologist**

"The Jay Watch data is an outstanding resource that the Service has come to rely on over the years. Many of the managed public lands do not have sufficient staff to perform regular surveys for Florida Scrub-Jays due to constraints with employee availability or budget shortfalls and priorities. Having the annual data provides population trends for many of the local populations within our 'focal landscape' areas that provide metrics for our species recovery efforts. The data is also incorporated into our 5-Year Reviews for the Status of the Species reporting required by Congress. Having the annual data also informs and prioritizes habitat management funding decisions to aid other agencies in their efforts to support population viability range-wide."



Left photo: Paul Strauss
Above photo: Shelly Rozenberg