

How you Can Help Colorado Parks and Wildlife with Pinyon Jay Surveys

The Pinyon Jay Community Science Project survey effort, is managed by Great Basin Bird Observatory (GBBO) with Colorado Field Ornithologists supporting survey efforts in Colorado. Follow the provided protocol for field surveys and to input data. If you see breeding behavior during your surveys, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) would like you to share your information with them to include in their surveys for breeding locations.

CPW is **only** requesting data on potential breeding areas. Therefore, please **only** contact CPW if you document birds showing **breeding behaviors** from **February 14 – May 25**.

Please contact: Liza Rossi - Liza.Rossi@state.co.us and Amy Seglund – Amy.Seglund@state.co.us

In your email, please provide the location's **UTM coordinates** and the **types of behavior** you observed. Breeding behaviors, as defined by CPW, are on the second page of this document.

Consideration for Surveys

1. If you document breeding behaviors in an area, **please immediately leave the area** and do not disturb breeding birds. Birds will readily abandon nests if disturbed and you can inadvertently attract predators to a colony.
2. Do not trespass on private property to complete surveys.

Pinyon jay behaviors indicative of breeding colony locations with CPW behavior codes

Pair Flying Together (PF) – If you observe a pair of birds separate from a flock and fly off together, you should try and follow them to observe courtship behavior or nest building.

Mobbing (MB) – If you are at the edge or in the colony and a group of birds surrounds you (or another potential predator) and starts to make raucous warning calls, this is called mobbing. You should try to vacate to a more distant location if this happens. Helpers can be very ready to mob a potential intruder early in the breeding season and when young are fledging.

Display Flights (DF). A small group of individuals fly rapidly through and above trees, emitting loud *Krawks* as they perform steep dives and sharp turns. These flights contain yearlings and adult jays and always seem to contain one or more leaders and a group of followers. Upon landing, individuals continue to chase each other up and down through the tree branches in sharp spiral patterns before initiating another flight.

Food Transfer (FT). This involves one bird holding a piece of food, offering it to its mate and the mate accepting it. This is usually a silent exchange, and you generally observe a pair off by themselves doing this courtship behavior.

Silent Sitting (SS). Pairs leave the foraging flock and fly to a perch, where they sit silently next to one another. While sitting near one another they may alternate raising their bill upwards displaying their white-throat bib. The pair may allopreen.

Stick Manipulation (SM). A male picks up a stick, a twig, or tuft of grass and if the female does not respond, he drops the material. As courtship proceeds, stick manipulation increases in frequency and becomes suggestive of nest-building. You can hear pairs in trees making soft vocalization as they begin to select a nest tree to initiate nest building.

Nest Building (NB). Once a pair has selected a tree for nesting, they get to work. They both make numerous flights back and forth to collect sticks placing them in the nest tree. This is a great time to locate a nest from a distance because they make straight flights in and out of the nest tree.

Carrying Nest Lining (CNL) – Birds will collect fine, fluffy materials in their bill to line a nest. This indicates the nest is almost complete. It normally takes 5-7 days to complete a nest and for the female to start laying a clutch.

Courtship Begging (BG). Females crouch before their males with their heads slightly extended, open bills pointed slightly upward, with wings flapping or fluttering. The begging calls can be very insistent and loud. Females can be seen flying after males as they continue to beg. Female begging will sound the same as nestling and fledgling begging, but in the early season you can assume it is most likely a female begging to her mate.

Copulation (CP). Rarely seen. The birds stay low in the tree, and you could hear a variety of low vocalizations prior to copulation.