



## **FAQs**

Brevard County Florida scrub-jay translocation project

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### **What is translocation?**

Translocation is a scientific term for the movement of a wildlife species from one place to another by humans. Translocation often is used as a conservation tool to boost small populations or to move species back to places where they used to live.

### **I don't understand why scrub-jays are being moved from Palm Bay. Why can't they leave them alone?**

Moving (translocating) the birds serves two purposes:

1. The project will move scrub-jays from poor quality habitat that will eventually be developed to quality protected habitat. The specific locations from which the scrub-jays are being moved will eventually be developed, resulting in the complete loss of habitat. Also, although the scrub-jays in the area are surviving right now, they are not thriving. Scrub-jays require a very special type of habitat and generally do not do well in residential areas due to cars, cats and poor quality habitat. In Palm Bay, there used to be 54 scrub-jay families in the early 1990s, but only about 16 families remain. Scrub-jays can live up to 15 years and will cling tenaciously to their territories, even when the habitat becomes poor. People may see adult scrub-jays hanging on in residential areas for many years, but often they are unlikely to produce enough young to be replaced once they die.
2. The project will boost existing scrub-jay populations on protected conservation lands to increase the chance that scrub-jays will continue to survive in mainland Brevard County.

### **Instead of moving my scrub-jays, why not translocate someone else's in Palm Bay?**

The goal is to eventually move all the scrub-jay families in Palm Bay to protected, managed conservation lands where they will have a better chance of surviving and reproducing.

### **Can landowners or developers ask for scrub-jays to be moved from their properties?**

Moving scrub-jays does not provide landowners an opportunity to avoid their requirements under the Federal Endangered Species Act. Biologists may move scrub-jays only if the landowner has received an Incidental Take Permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and has completed the mitigation and minimization requirements in the permit.

### **Who is moving the scrub-jays?**

The Brevard Zoo holds the necessary federal and state permits to move scrub-jays. Zoo volunteers are helping to prepare traps and to monitor the scrub-jays that will be moved. Information gathered from the project will help biologists more effectively manage and protect the species.

### **Who decides which scrub-jays to move and the sites that will receive them?**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission provide guidance on the scrub-jays to move and the appropriate recipient sites based on the greatest potential conservation benefit for scrub-jays.

### **How do you know this will work?**

Translocation is a relatively new tool in the efforts to protect this species, and there are no guarantees. A test translocation of one family was completed successfully last year, and those scrub-jays stayed where they were placed and nested.

### **How do you catch them?**

Volunteers train the birds to enter traps for several weeks. The goal is to capture the entire family group at once and transport them immediately to the release site. Personnel from the Brevard Zoo have the necessary experience, equipment and supplies to safely capture and transport scrub-jays.

### **Where are you taking them?**

The scrub-jays will be moved to Buck Lake Conservation Area in northern Brevard County.

### **Why are they being moved to the Buck Lake Conservation Area?**

Many sites in Brevard County were evaluated as potential recipient sites for these birds. Buck Lake was chosen because it is an important property for conserving scrub-jays in northern Brevard County. It has plenty of good quality habitat not currently being used by scrub-jays. The St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) has done extensive restoration on the property to create quality scrub-jay habitat. The scrub-jay population is closely monitored, and there is close cooperation between the SJRWMD, the FWC, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Brevard Zoo, and some of the key scrub-jay biologists in the state.

### **Is there enough room for the new scrub-jays at Buck Lake Conservation Area?**

Yes. There are currently 6 families of scrub-jays at Buck Lake. The SJRWMD recently restored much of the habitat, and there is now plenty of room for more scrub-jay families.

### **Is there a management plan for scrub-jays at Buck Lake Conservation Area?**

Yes. The Land Management Plan for Buck Lake Conservation Area was recently updated and includes management actions specifically aimed at maintaining quality habitat for scrub-jays and all the other scrub species that benefit from similar management. The plan is available on the SJRWMD Web site ([www.sjrwmd.com/landmanagementplans/pdfs/2009\\_Buck\\_Lake\\_CA.pdf](http://www.sjrwmd.com/landmanagementplans/pdfs/2009_Buck_Lake_CA.pdf)).

### **Will the scrub-jays living at Buck Lake be affected by the addition of more birds?**

We do not anticipate any negative impacts to the resident scrub-jay families. The relocated scrub-jays will be placed outside of the resident scrub-jays' territories. Adding additional scrub-jay families improves the chances of scrub-jays being on the site over the long term by helping resident families detect predators, providing more genetic diversity, and boosting the size of Buck Lake's scrub-jay population.

### **Will the birds be accessible for public viewing at Buck Lake Conservation Area?**

Yes, Buck Lake is open to the public. Hiking, biking and horseback riding are allowed; however, no motorized vehicles are allowed. For more information on Buck Lake Conservation Area, go to <http://sjr.state.fl.us/recreationguide/bucklake/index.html>.

### **How can I help?**

Contact the Brevard Zoo at 321-254-9453 to learn more about volunteer opportunities.

### **Scrub-jay fast facts**

#### **What is a Florida scrub-jay?**

The Florida scrub-jay is a blue-and-gray bird found only in Florida. It is approximately 11-inches long – about the size of the more common blue jay – with a blue head, wings and tail; a gray back and underparts; and a whitish wash on the forehead. Scrub-jays live in family groups of 2-8 birds.

#### **How is a scrub-jay different from a blue jay?**

Blue jays have a crest of feathers on their head, bold black-and-white markings on the head and wings, and white tips on some tail feathers. Scrub-jays have a smooth head and lack the bold black-and-white markings. People sometimes confuse the two, but scrub-jays are an imperiled species with very specific habitat needs, while blue jays are common and live in many different habitat types in Florida and other parts of the United States.

### **Why is the scrub-jay a threatened species?**

The scrub-jay is a threatened species because most of its habitat has been converted to development and agriculture over the past century. Additionally, much of the remaining habitat is overgrown and unsuitable due to lack of management by fire.

### **Where do scrub-jays live?**

As their name implies, scrub-jays are found in scrub habitat. They are known as habitat specialists because to survive, scrub-jays require scrub - dry, sandy areas with low, shrubby oaks and few trees. The oak shrubs provide acorns, which are an important food source for scrub-jays. Scrub-jays collect and bury acorns in sandy openings between the shrubs. Periodic fires are necessary to maintain this unique plant community of low, scrubby vegetation interspersed with open, sandy areas. If fire is suppressed, the plants become too tall and thick, making the birds more vulnerable to predators and leaving them fewer places to hide their acorns.

Historically, natural fires provided this clean-up service; today land managers use controlled burns to create this unique habitat needed by scrub-jays and other critters of the scrub. Unfortunately, this type of habitat is rapidly disappearing.

### **Why are scrub-jays important?**

The Florida scrub-jay is the only bird species unique to Florida. This makes the scrub-jay an important part of Florida's natural heritage. Scrub-jay populations have been declining throughout the state, and both the state and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service list the scrub-jay as a threatened species. They are also one of only a few bird species in Florida that are "cooperative breeders." This means they live in family groups, and the young of previous years often stay with their parents to defend the territory and help raise their siblings in following breeding seasons.

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