



SALLY KING/JIPS

Pinyon jays are beautiful, dusky blue birds found only in the western U.S. If you live in pinyon jay country, you'll hear their distinctive, loud, raucous calls as they fly in flocks searching for piñon pine seeds (nuts) to eat. Pinyon jays rely on piñon pines to provide them with this food, but piñon pines also depend on pinyon jays to disperse their seeds.

Piñon pines only produce seeds in the fall, so pinyon jays collect and store them in the ground to eat later. One pinyon jay can collect and store approximately 2,600 seeds each year. These highly intelligent birds remember where most of their seeds are stored but inevitably forget where they hid some, leaving those seeds to grow into new piñon pines.

Unfortunately, pinyon jays are currently locked in a downward spiral toward extinction.

DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. In the Southwest, we work to conserve jaguars, ocelots, Mexican gray wolves, pinyon jays and other imperiled species and to protect important habitats and vital wildlife movement corridors. We also advocate for state and federal legislation that safeguards wildlife and habitat. To achieve our conservation goals, we collaborate with numerous other organizations and agencies.



PROTECT
Pinyon Jays!



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A Dire Situation

The pinyon jay is one of the most rapidly disappearing birds in the U.S. The global population has declined by more than 84% since the 1960s. If we don't take immediate conservation actions, scientists predict the remaining small population will be cut in half by 2035.

The pinyon jay population decline is a result of numerous factors, including climate change induced piñon pine mass mortality, reduced piñon pine seed production caused by a drier and warmer Southwest, and removal of piñon pines for wildfire prevention, cattle grazing, fuel wood, housing developments and other reasons.

Without abundant piñon pine seeds, pinyon jays can't survive, and without abundant pinyon jays, piñon pines—their seeds too heavy to spread on the wind—can't survive either.

This is a dire situation, but you can help turn it around!

What You Can Do

1. Take care of the piñon pines on your private property.

Regularly water the trees (especially the ones with a diameter at chest height greater than 3.5 inches, which produce more seeds).

- Provide deep watering once per month or more, if necessary, even in the winter.

Keep the soil around the trees cool.

- Place a layer of mulch, 2-4 inches thick, under and around piñon pine trees, especially those with a diameter at chest height of greater than 3.5 inches.

Capture more water for the trees.

- Place erosion control structures, such as straw wattles, around the bases of the trees to trap runoff.



PIÑON PINE WITH STRAW WATTLE | © PEGGY DARR

Don't use pesticides.

- Pinyon jays also eat insects and other invertebrates, so if your piñon pine is infested with bark beetles, piñon pine scale, etc., give it extra water and mulch to keep it healthy and able to defend itself without the need for pesticides.

2. Donate a small portion of seeds from your piñon pines for ecosystem restoration efforts.

Defenders of Wildlife and our partners will use your seeds to plant new piñon pines for pinyon jays—and people.



PIÑON PINE SEEDS | © PEGGY DARR

3. Assist with efforts to grow and plant young piñon pines.

We also need your help growing and planting piñon pine seedlings and seeds.

4. Assist with pinyon jay and piñon pine monitoring.

Become a community scientist and help gather crucial data.

5. Encourage your government officials to address climate change.

Get Started!

To donate piñon pine seeds, assist with growing or planting piñon pines or to request more information about how to help pinyon jays and piñon pines, contact:

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To sign up for pinyon jay and piñon pine monitoring, contact Cathy Wise: cathy.wise@audubon.org