

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based only on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: SB 188

SPONSOR: Senator Kurth

SUBJECT: Designating the Scrub Jay as the Official State Bird

DATE: April 9, 1999 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Rhea	Wilson	GO	Favorable
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

I. Summary:

This bill designates the Scrub Jay as the official state bird of Florida.

This bill creates section 15.051, Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

On April 23, 1927, the Legislature, in Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 8, designated the Mocking Bird as the State Bird for the State of Florida. The text of the resolution states:

WHEREAS, The Legislature of the State of Florida has thrown the arm of its protecting care around the Mocking Bird by the enactment of suitable legislation, and,
WHEREAS, The melody of its music has delighted the heart of residents and visitors to Florida from the days of the rugged pioneer to the present comer, and
WHEREAS, This bird of matchless charm is found throughout our State, therefore

Be it Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

That the Mocking Bird be and its is hereby designated as the State Bird for the State of Florida.

The mocking bird is found in 40 of the lower 48 states. It is the state bird in five states.

The Florida Scrub Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) is endemic to Florida and is found nowhere else in the world. A Florida Scrub Jay is blue with a gray saddle on the back. The undersides are white with a blue necklace that does not quite reach across the front. It has a white eyebrow and darker markings around the eye. Scrub Jays lack the crest of the Steller's Jay. The Florida Scrub Jay is a distinct species, separate from the Western Scrub Jay. They differ in voice, habitat requirements, and slightly in appearance.

The Florida Scrub Jay is non-migratory and inhabits sand dunes, shrub oaks and pines. These areas are characterized by relatively short, dense vegetation thickets interspersed with bare sand areas that are used by the birds for feeding. They feed on almost everything - acorns, nuts, fruit, insects, bird's eggs and nestlings. Under natural conditions, scrub habitats are sustained by fire which limits the height of the vegetation and prevents succession of the scrub into hammock.

Adult Florida Scrub Jays mate for life and rarely venture far from home. Their nests are made of interlaced twigs lined with available scraps of string or horse hair. The species also has a cooperative breeding system that is rare in the avian world. Instead of abandoning their nests, young Florida Scrub Jays, known as "helpers," remain nearby and assist their parents in the rearing of siblings by helping to find food and by fending off predators. Most pairs have one to two helpers, but as many as six have been observed. A dominance hierarchy exists with the family with breeders dominating helpers and males dominating females. In addition to raising the young, the family defends its territory, which is 22 acres on average.

The Florida Scrub Jay, however, is dwindling in number due to habitat loss and degradation. Its numbers are estimated to be at only one-fifth of the original population. As a result, the Florida Scrub Jay is currently listed as threatened. It is estimated that about 3,600 Florida Scrub Jay families remain in Florida. The largest groups are found on Merritt Island, around Ocala National Forest, in Jonathan Dickinson State Park in Martin County and on the south end of the Lake Wales ridge of scrub.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill designates in law the Florida Scrub Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) as the official state bird.

The act takes effect upon becoming law.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's sponsor or the Florida Senate.
