

# Bird Symbols of Canada

## Part 7

### Prince Edward Island

#### Provincial Bird: Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*)

Prince Edward Island (PEI) adopted the Blue Jay in 1977 following a province wide vote. The General Assembly of PEI confirmed adoption of the Blue Jay in legislation, which is currently consolidated in Part One of the Provincial Emblems and Honours Act:

**“2. Avian emblem:** *The bird known scientifically as Cyanocitta cristata (L.) and popularly known as the blue jay is adopted as and shall be the avian emblem of the province. 1997,c.36,s.2.”*<sup>1</sup>

Under this Act, PEI also adopted the Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) as its animal; the Red Oak (*Quercus rubra L.*) as its tree; and the Lady’s Slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*) as the floral emblem of the Province.

eBird describes the Blue Jay thus:

*“Blue above, light gray below. Black and white markings on wings and tail. Larger than a robin, smaller than a crow. Crest and long tail. Noisy and conspicuous in areas with large trees. Regularly visits feeders.”*<sup>2</sup>

All basic stuff, but Nature Canada<sup>3</sup> has some more intriguing content about the Blue Jay, under the heading “Five weird facts about the Blue Jay”, which I have attempted to summarise below:

- Blue Jay’s rub ants on their feathers, ostensibly to remove the formic acid (they taste better without);
- The pigment found in the feathers of the Blue jay is brown, not blue: this is owing to fact that the composition of the feathers includes melanin which is brown in colour. When light hits the Blue Jay, it is the blue that is refracted, whilst other colours are absorbed by the melanin;
- Blue Jays mimic hawks (in particular the Red-shouldered hawk). This is both as a warning to other Jays and possibly also to fool other bird species that there are predatory hawks nearby;
- Blue Jays collect paint-chips, possibly as a source of calcium; and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/legislation/P-26-1-Provincial%20Emblems%20And%20Honours%20Act.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ebird.org/species/blujay>

<sup>3</sup> <https://naturecanada.ca/news/blog/5-weird-facts-about-blue-jays/>

## BIRD STAMP SOCIETY

- Blue Jays are noisier in the Autumn than in the Spring or Summer, when they are more secretive during the breeding season.

The Blue Jay is around 25-30 cm in length and weighs 70-100 grams. Nature Canada reports that the eldest banded bird was 26 years old.

Canada Post has issued just two stamps which feature the Blue Jay, one in 2000 and one in 2017. Here they are:

### 2000 Birds of Canada



Image source: [www.birdtheme.org](http://www.birdtheme.org)

This stamp is from a strip of four gummed stamps. Canada Post also issued the strip in self-adhesive format too. Raymond Bellemare and Ashton Potter (engraving) designed the stamps<sup>4</sup>.

### 2017 [Provincial] Birds of Canada



Image source: <https://www.canadapost.ca/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.stampworld.com/en/stamps/Canada/Postage%20stamps/2000-2009?year=2000&user=441875>

## BIRD STAMP SOCIETY

This particular set of stamps, issued in both a gummed mini-sheet (110,000 issued) and in a stamp booklet of 10 stamps (400,000 issued). Canada Post priced each individual stamp at 85 cents as at the issue date, but all have the "Permanent" NVI in the Maple Leaf logo.

Below is the FDC for this issue, released at \$5.25 (10,000 issued):



Since the Blue Jay is a bird that is essentially confined to the North American continent, there are not too many other Blue Jay stamps to select that are from countries where the Blue Jay is present.

The United States has issued a few:

### 1978 USA - Canadian International Philatelic Exhibition (Capex) – Wildlife Sheetlet



Image Source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

**1987 North American Wildlife**



Image source: [www.birdtheme.org](http://www.birdtheme.org)

This single stamp comes from a gummed sheet of 50 stamps (five rows of 10 stamps) featuring wildlife of America. The Blue Jay is from the fourth row down, third stamp from the left.

**1995 USA Blue Jay - Definitive**



Image source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

The US Postal Service re-issued this stamp twice in 1996 as a self-adhesive, once vertical rouletted format and once with in rouletted format, as below:

**1996 USA Blue Jay - Vertical rouletted**



Image source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

**1996 USA Blue Jay – Rouletted**



**2018 USA Birds in Winter**



Image source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

There is also one stamp from St Pierre et Miquelon, the French Overseas Community and Territory located off the North East coast of Canada, south of Québec and Newfoundland:

**2013 St Pierre et Miquelon**



Image source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)