

Pests?!



Left, common locally, the Western Scrub Jay; right, less common locally, true Blue Jay. Go to the Cornell Lab site and click on their birdsong audio--you will recognize our local fellow! --but please do not shoot them!!

[All About Birds, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/blue_jay/id)

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As I always maintain, history is all about viewpoint. I was researching the Capay Valley Gladney family in relation to the Full Belly Farm for this volume's feature on organic farming, and I came across an interesting "story" about the first Gladney pioneer to the Capay Valley: S. Gladney [he never used his given name, Shadrack, just "S"].

In a prior issue, I mentioned the importance of our local Western Scrub Jays in spreading the oak tree acorns and how delightful I found their screeching song. But not everyone found them so useful or charming, it seems! Ironically, I had just been listening to Dru Rivers of *Full Belly Farm* talk about the "pests" they deal with on their farm, so this story created even more intrigue.

According to "All About Birds" on the Cornell Lab of Ornithology site, "This common, large songbird is familiar to many people, with its perky crest; blue, white, and black plumage; and noisy calls. Blue Jays are known for their intelligence and complex social systems with tight family bonds. Their fondness for acorns is credited with helping spread oak trees after the last glacial period." This describes both the local Scrub Jay and the other Blue Jays throughout the land, but it does not tell of their "pest" designation.

Apparently, the Almond Growers Association in Capay Valley paid farmers five cents a jay once upon a time to protect the valuable almond crops. Upper Capay Valley's S. Gladney wrote, "I have often lost one half ton of almonds from blue jays in one season, which would be worth from \$125 to \$150." California woodpeckers, the red-shafted flicker, and the crow, often seen as pests, have also been trouble for almond growers, but since they are not as plentiful, they are not the problem the jays are. Some farmers tried mosquito netting, but it was far less practical than just shooting the jays out of the air!

Another beautiful and useful bird, the robin, is a "pest" to the olive growers during migration time...but isn't it as big a sin to kill a robin as a mockingbird?!

Cashmere Colony, a Capay Valley Ghost town.

According to Ada Merhoff's Capay Valley The Land & The People, S. Gladney and his wife, Josephine Daly from Antelope, were "the only purchasers of Cashmere Colony Tract land to remain as long-time residents in the area; later associated with the post office, they would be ever-important to the Guinda Community."

Arriving in Capay Valley about 1891, S. brought his new wife to join him in 1895. Their first child, Roy, came in 1899, at which time they purchased the creekside parcel that would become Full Belly Farm.