

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE
2469 Hammertown Road
Narvon, PA 17555

September 26, 1997

James Flynn
2952 Tree Swallow Road
Roanoke, VA 24018

Dear James,

Thank you for submitting documentation on the Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco you saw at Presque Isle S.P. on 25 November 1995 to P.O.R.C. After careful review, we regret that we are unable to accept this record. This record circulated through the committee for two rounds and caused some interesting discussion among the members. Unfortunately, on both rounds a majority vote was not reached for acceptance. Some members were concerned that the description submitted did not conclusively rule out the possibility of the bird being a first winter female "Slate-colored" Junco or a female intergrade of "Slate-colored" and "Oregon" Junco. Some members felt that hybrids occur so frequently that mixes between the two subspecies are not uncommon. The committee decided to err on the side of caution rather than accept this report.

This of course, does not mean that the birds were not "Oregon" Juncos, merely, that the record is not beyond reasonable doubt for acceptance

We hope that this does not discourage you from submitting documentation on any rare birds you find in the future. Please be encouraged to send as much detail as possible when submitting a report.

Sincerely,

Nick Pulcinella
Chairman

Record # 840a-01-1995

840A-01-1995

DARK-EYED (Oregon) JUNCO
SPECIES ACCOUNT

(Junco hyemalis oregonus)

Prepared by James F. Flynn, Jr.

Date: 25 November 1995

Time of Observation: 10:00am - 10:15am

Location: Presque Isle State Park, Erie, Co., PA.

Observers: James F. Flynn, Jr.

Weather Conditions: Overcast; southeasterly winds, temperature in the low 30's

Viewing Distance: Approximately 25 feet

Optics Used: Leica 8x42 binoculars, Kowa TSN-2 spotting scope with 20x - 60x eyepiece

Background:

On Saturday, 25 November 1995, while birding the Beach 11 parking lots of Presque Isle State Park, I observed a small flock (less than 25 birds) of mixed Dark-eyed ("Slate-colored") Juncos (*Junco hyemalis hyemalis*) and American Tree Sparrows (*Spizella arborea*) feeding in one of the grassy areas between the parking lot aisles. As I was confirming the identification of each of the birds, through my binoculars from my vehicle, I observed one junco which was noticeably more colorful than the others in the flock.

Description:

This individual was generally identical in size and shape when compared to the "Slate-colored" Juncos which were in close proximity of this bird. The light pink conical bill, pink legs, white belly and white outer tail feathers were consistent with the identifying characteristics of all Dark-eyed Juncos in adult plumage.

The entire head, upper breast, and nape of this bird were an unmarked, even charcoal gray, slightly darker than that of the male "Slate-colored" Juncos and not brownish, as in the female "Slate-colored" Juncos. The back of the bird was unmarked brown, with a slight reddish tinge, contrasting well with the head of the bird, and becoming gradually more gray-brown on the rump and upper tail coverts.

The sides and flanks of the bird were distinctly pinkish, without any gray or brown feathers, again contrasting well with the head and breast of the bird. The lower breast and belly were unmarked and snow-white. Coloration of the undertail coverts was not noted.

The wings of the bird were a dark gray-brown, with noticeably lighter feather edgings, especially on the secondaries and greater coverts. The tail was mostly dark gray-brown, with the outer few tail feathers almost entirely white.

This junco was observed for approximately fifteen minutes, alternately through my binoculars and scope (set at 20x due to my closeness to the bird).

840A-01-1995

Identification Process:

While trying to pinpoint the identification of this bird, I came to the conclusion that I was observing a female Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco for the following reasons:

- the even charcoal-gray coloration of the head and pinkish sides ruled out a female "Slate-colored" Junco, which, when compared to the other female juncos in the flock, had a more brownish-gray coloration on these areas, with no distinct contrast; this also ruled out a male "Slate-colored" Junco, which had a slightly lighter charcoal-gray coloration with no contrast between the head and sides;
- the brownish back, with a reddish cast, was a noticeably different shade of brown than the female and immature "Slate-colored" Juncos with which it was observed;
- the head and breast of the bird, although slightly darker than the other male "Slate-colored" Juncos, did not appear to be dark enough to be a male "Oregon" Junco (using several field guides as a reference).

I also observed three other juncos in this flock which had a charcoal-gray or gray-brown hoods and brownish backs, but each of these birds had sides and flanks similarly colored as the hoods, not pinkish as in the bird which I was studying. Each of these birds also had a subdued dark streaking on the back, possibly indicating they were current hatching-year birds. The back of the "Oregon" Junco was unmarked.

A hybrid can not be ruled out, although I did not notice any characteristics of this bird which would indicate to me that it was a "Slate-colored" X "Oregon" Junco intergrade. The field guides show the male "Oregon Pink-sided" Junco as having blackish lores. This characteristic was not noticed on the bird I observed. Also, this bird had a definite "hooded" appearance, unlike the "Oregon Pink-sided" Junco which appears in the major field guides to have the breast and side coloration forming much less of a defined gradient. However, I have found that reference material is sorely lacking on the identification of hybrid juncos and, at the time of this report, I do not have a reference which portrays a female "Oregon Pink-sided" Junco.

Experience:

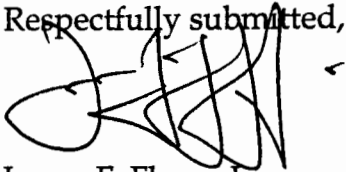
I do not have any previous experience with "Oregon" Juncos, other than information, paintings and photographs provided by field guides and other bird-related literature. I do have plenty of experience (nineteen years) with "Slate-colored" Juncos, as they are quite abundant in the autumn, winter and spring in northwestern Pennsylvania and southwestern Virginia, two areas which I bird, or have birded, heavily. This individual was quite unlike any Dark-eyed Junco I have ever observed.

Reference Materials:

Field Guide to Birds of North America, Second Edition (National Geographic Society, 1987) at time of observation.

References used after observation included *Western Birds* (Peterson, 1990); *A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies* (Peterson, 1980); *The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds, Western Region* (National Audubon Society, 1977); *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds* (Terres, 1980)

Respectfully submitted,



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Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 2 of 2

Species: Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco ()

Date of Sighting: 25 November 1995 to 25 November 1995

Location: PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

County: ERIE

Observer(s): James Flynn Jr.

Date of Submission: 1996

Submitted by: James Flynn Jr.

Written Description: YES

Photo: NO

Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas						X		
N. Pulcinella			X					
E. Kwater			X					
R. Ickes			X					
G. McWilliams						X		
P. Schwalbe			X					
S. Feldstein						X		
TOTALS			4			3		
DECISION						X		

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

F. Haas

Date:

8-16-97

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: **Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco ()**

Date of Sighting: **25 November 1995 to 25 November 1995**

Location: **PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK**

County: **ERIE**

Observer(s): **James Flynn Jr.**

Date of Submission: **1996**

Submitted by: **James Flynn Jr.**

Written Description: **YES** Photo: **NO** Specimen: **NO**

Recording: **NONE**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas						X		
N. Pulcinella			X					
E. Kwater			X					
R. Ickes			X					
G. McWilliams			X					
P. Schwalbe			X					
S. Feldstein						X		
TOTALS			5			2		
DECISION								

Comments:

Send for second round.

Signature (Secretary):

J C Haas

Date:

2-22-97