

John Yerger
1015 Princeton Place
Warwick, PA 18974

February 22, 2005

Bill, John

This was a particularly hard report for the committee to decide on. After 2 rounds the final vote was 4-3 to accept which is below the committee's standard of concensus for accepting a report as conclusive. Part of the difficulty was that taken individually neither report provided a complete view of the bird, but taken together they definitely added up to a bird which was not a "Slate-colored" Junco.

However that alone was not enough to conclude it was a "Oregon" Junco. Juncos as you probably know are one of the most complicated passerines in N. America, taxonomically with some 15 described subspecies. Moreover these races will interbreed where ranges overlap, and 1 race *cismontanus* is believed to be derived from intergradation between "Slate-colored" and "Oregon". Given this degree of complexity Juncos need to be very closely described to get form "not a Slate-colored" to "Oregon". None of the committee members had much specific to note as wrong with the description, so this result is rather a conservative stance on a less than ideal observation.

Sincerely

Matt Sharp
Chair: Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee.

840A-01-2002

Rare Bird Documentation for the PORC:

Species: Dark-eyed Junco, Oregon subspecies

Number: 1

Sex, age, plumage: female

Date/time of observation:

30 November 2002, approximately noon.

Location: Bucks County, Nockamixon Township on Foellner Lane, just off Route 611 near Harrow.

Observers:

Bill Etter

1030 Old Bethlehem Road #2

Perkasie, PA 18944

better@netcarrier.com

215-258-0229

John Yerger

1015 Princeton Pl

Warwick, PA 18974

psy101@psu.edu

Habitat:

The bird was seen in an agricultural area, in a roadside thicket bordering a cornfield.

Behavior:

The bird was associated with a mixed flock of juncos and sparrows, feeding in a roadside bramble that bordered a field.

Conditions:

Viewed at about noon under a slightly overcast sky, but on a generally clear day.

Distance + Optics:

Bird was within 50 feet, and viewed with 10x24 binoculars.

Description:

While watching a mixed flock of sparrows at the roadside, I noticed a bird that wasn't immediately familiar. First impression while viewing the bird from behind was that the coloration on the back was a warm tannish hue, resembling that of a female Indigo Bunting. Eventually, the bird turned, affording a better view from the side. At this point it was suddenly apparent that the bird was a junco, due to general size and shape, though unlike any expected junco. The flanks, sides and coverts of the bird were a bright rufous to orange. The breast was pale. My view of the throat was brief and somewhat inconclusive. I noticed the presence of a darkish hood, but cannot personally elaborate as

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to its completeness, or to the sharpness of the division between the hood and throat. I recognize the fact that this is an unfortunate lapse in the description, as the finer details of the hood and throat are rather crucial to the identification of this particular subspecies. Please refer to John Yerger's report when evaluating this record.

Differentiation from similar species:

The overall color (specifically the bright rufous-orange flanks and sides) of this junco was suggestive of three possible subspecies: 1.) a very light brown female Dark-eyed, 2.) a Pink-sided, and 3.) a female Oregon. The lack of a pale throat and hood eliminates Pink-sided, as does the very pale breast. From the view of the bird that I had, I feel that Slate-colored is eliminated by the presence of the bright orange sides, noted from the flanks and extending the full length of the side, well into the shoulder of the bird.

Vocalizations: None

Supporting evidence: None

Previous experience: None with this subspecies, though I am, of course, quite familiar with the expected range of plumages of the common Dark-eyed Junco.

Certainty of identification: I am confident in my identification of this bird, particularly given collaborative details from another observer.

References consulted: I checked the major field guides (Sibley in particular, National Geographic) as well as several internet sources.

Date of report: 11 December 2002.

Signature of observer: Bill Etter

Bill Etter
am

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Rare Bird Documentation for the PORC:

Species: Dark-eyed Junco, Oregon subspecies (*Junco hyemalis thurberi*)

Number: One

Sex, age, plumage: Female

Date/time of observation:

30 November 2002, approximately noon.

Location: on Foellner Lane in Nockamixon Township, Bucks County, just west of Route 611 near Harrow.

Observers:

John Yerger

1015 Princeton Pl

Warwick, PA 18974

jzy101@psu.edu

Bill Etter

1030 Old Bethlehem Road #2

Perkasie, PA 18944

better@netcarrier.com

Habitat:

Roadside thicket of small trees and shrubs, surrounded by farmland/cornfields.

Behavior:

Apparently feeding (though not specifically noted eating anything) with a mixed flock of white-throated sparrows and other Dark-eyed 'slate-colored' Juncos.

Conditions:

Viewed at about noon under a partly cloudy sky, but for the most part a clear day.

Distance + Optics:

Bird was 30 to 40 feet, and viewed with Celestron Ultima 10x50 binoculars.

Description:

Bill and I exited our vehicle on Foellner Road to look for sparrows in the surrounding plowed cornfields. The trees and brush were on the side of a steep, 5-6 foot embankment, which Bill climbed to check out the upper field, while I stayed below and scanned the brush in between us. Eventually, an interesting junco landed in front of me at about eye level in some exposed brush. What I noticed that first made me think 'what a weird little junco' is that the bird had a hood that was a distinctly different color than any other part of the body, quite unlike the 'normal' slate-colored variety I see almost daily in the winter. I immediately called to Bill "Hey, check out this junco!" but I believe he was

already on the same bird, as he responded affirmatively that he was on it without directions.

The dark (gray-black) hood stopped rather abruptly below the throat, but a good deal into the breast, ending in a clean line that divided it from the white breast and from the orangish sides. The light in the shrubs wasn't right enough for me to get a 100% clear view of the sides and flanks, but they were distinctly different from the white breast and a different color than the hood and wings. If I had to assign a specific color name, I would call the sides/flanks bright orangish. Unfortunately after approximately a minute of viewing it through my binoculars, with the junco facing me directly, it took off suddenly to the side, crossing a break in the hedgerow/treeline to another clump of shrubs. I didn't get a clear view of the back, unfortunately, as it left my view so suddenly I had no time to get back on the bird with my bins. I was unable to relocate the bird after about a minute or two casual searching, not realizing it was a reportable subspecies at the time. I realize now that a clear view of the back and spread wings could provide extra evidence for the identification of this bird, but I do not have it. Please refer to Bill Etter's report when reviewing this subspecies, as I believe he had a better view of the back of the bird.

Differentiation from similar species:

The most important characteristic was the hood, I think. It struck me as pretty dark and solid colored. Upon referring later to the Sibley Guide to Birds, I noticed that both the 'pink-sided' variety has dark lores. I am certain our bird did not have black lores. The 'Canadian Rockies slate-colored' and 'brown adult slate-colored' varieties have hoods that seem to blend as they approach the sides of the birds. The hood on this bird was sharply divided from the sides and breast. Also, Bill exclaimed at the time how much bright orange the bird had in its sides. I agree, though he most likely had better lighting with which to view them. I trust he included this description in his report.

Vocalizations: Bird did not call

Supporting evidence: Neither of us had a camera, nor the opportunity to photograph

Previous experience: I am quite familiar with the expected plumages of the common slate-colored Dark-eyed Junco, but I have no experience with this particular subspecies. I have experience with the 'gray-headed' variety of Dark-eyed Junco from my ornithological research internship this summer in the Chiricahua Mts. of southeast AZ.

Certainty of identification: I am confident in my identification of this bird.

References consulted: I consulted the Sibley guide primarily, but also several internet sources.

Date of report: 12 December 2002.

Signature of observer: John Yerger

John Yerger/am

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round Two

Species: "Oregon" Junco (Junco hyemalis thurberi)

Date of Sighting: 30 November 2002 to 30 November 2002

Location: NOCKAMIXON TWP.

County : BUCKS

Observer(s): Bill Etter, John Yerger

Date of Submission: 2002

Submitted by: Bill Etter, John Yerger

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

Recording: No

| Member | Class I | Class II | Class III | Class IV-A | Class IV-B | Class IV-C | Class V | Abstain |
|--------------|---------|----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|---------|---------|
| G. Armistead | | X | | | | | | |
| D. Heathcote | | | | X | | | | |
| P. Hess | | | | | X | | | |
| J. Stanley | | X | | | | | | |
| E. Witmer | | X | | | | | | |
| R. Leberman | | | | X | | | | |
| M. Sharp | | | X | | | | | |
| TOTALS | | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | | | |
| DECISION | | | | X | | | | |

Comments:

4/3

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

2/10/04

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: "Oregon" Junco (Junco hyemalis thurberi)

Date of Sighting: 30 November 2002 to 30 November 2002

Location: NOCKAMIXON TOWNSHIP

County: BUCKS

Observer(s): Bill Etter, John Yerger

Date of Submission: 2002

Submitted by: Bill Etter, John Yerger

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

Recording: No

| Member | Class I | Class II | Class III | Class IV-A | | | | Abstain |
|--------------|---------|--------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|---------|---------|
| | | | | | Class IV-B | Class IV-C | Class V | |
| G. Armistead | | X | | | | | | |
| D. Heathcote | | | | X | | | | |
| P. Hess | | X | | | X | | | |
| J. Stanley | | X | | | | | | |
| E. Witmer | | X | | | | | | |
| R. Leberman | | | | X | | | | |
| M. Sharp | | | X | | | | | |
| TOTALS | | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | | | |
| DECISION | | | | | | | | |

Comments:

4/3 GO TO 2ND ROUND

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

6/7/03