

840A-01-2003

PENNSYLVANIA RARE BIRD REPORT

SPECIES: Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*)

SUBSPECIES: Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco (*Junco hyemalis thuberi*)

NUMBER OF BIRDS: 3 SEXES: 1 male, 2 females

AGES & PLUMAGES: All 3 birds were adults in post-breeding plumage.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: December 3, 2003 TIME: 0834 – 0856

LOCATION: Slippery Rock Borough, Butler County, Pennsylvania

EXACT SITE: 513 Kelly Blvd. All 3 birds were in our backyard.

OBSERVER REPORTING: Dr. Gene Wilhelm
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OTHER OBSERVER: Joanne M. Wilhelm – wife

HABITAT: The birds were mostly around our cinder block bird feeding station located in our backyard on the edge of mowed lawn and a spruce woodlot.

DISTANCE TO BIRDS: About 50 feet

VIEWING CONDITIONS: Somewhat overcast with high cirrostratus clouds, strong (40-45 m.p.h.) western wind, about 42 degrees F. temperature, with bright but sometimes overcast sunshine to the east of our condo. We were inside looking through glass windows and porch sliding glass doors.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT: 9 x 35 Bausch & Lomb and 8 x 24 Leitz Trinovid binoculars

DESCRIPTION: All three birds were slightly smaller than surrounding Slate-colored Juncos with typical junco posture of head and body showing more or less continuous smooth body lines from crown to tail; chesty, especially when hopping on the ground for food; tail held almost horizontal when on the ground. The single male Oregon was a dark adult with slightly worn feathers, thus colors were slightly subdued and not as vivid as when in spring breeding plumage. Nevertheless, distinct yellow bill, handsome black hood extending from nape to bottom of breast, red mantle, scapulars and tertials, rusty brown sides, flanks and vent, white belly and under-tail coverts were easily observed. The tail was nearly half the length of the male's body (about 6 inches) with distinct white outer tail feathers both while hopping on the ground and more in flight. The eyes were

2 Adult Female Oregon Juncos

1. yellow bill
2. dark sooty lores and eyes matched color of hoods
3. dark sooty hoods; pale reddish mantels; pinkish-brown sides-flanks; gray wing coverts
4. white bellies, under-tail coverts, outer-tail feathers
5. flesh-colored legs

Adult Female Slate-colored Junco

1. yellow bill
2. gray lores, dark eyes
3. light gray hood, mantle, sides-flanks; gray-brown crown, mantle, wing coverts
4. white belly, under-tail coverts, outer-tail feathers
5. flesh-colored legs

CONCLUSION: Adult male & female Oregon Juncos' four-color plumage pattern contrasts sharply with far less simple dark gray-white color pattern of adult male and gray to gray brown-white color pattern of adult female Slate-colored Junco.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE: See above Description and Diagram.

DISCUSSION: According to McWilliams & Brauning (2000: 420), the Oregon Junco is reported annually in the state, primarily at bird feeding stations during migration and in winter. Yet, I could not find any record of more than one individual at any one time. This may be a first record of multiple individuals. Further, single adult male Oregon Junco records pose the question why? Are adult or first year females being overlooked, lumped together or both? The same questions can be asked about the Canadian Rocky Mountains and Pink-sided subspecies which we suspect have been and will continue to visit our state.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: We have lived, worked, and wintered on The Nature Conservancy's Bear Mountain Preserve in southwest New Mexico where Slate-colored, Oregon, Pink-sided, Canadian Rocky Mountains, and Gray-backed subspecies of the Dark-eyed Junco intermingle in winter.

ARE YOU POSITIVE ABOUT IDENTIFICATION? Yes, because the four-color plumage pattern on both male and female Oregon Junco hood, back, sides-flanks, and belly contrasts sharply with the far less simple gray or gray-brown and white pattern of the male and female Slate-colored Junco. Further, previous daily field experience with all subspecies of the Dark-eyed Junco intermingling in New Mexico in winter helped.

REFERENCES CONSULTED: None during the observation based on our home rules (see essay) when we concentrated upon taking notes on body parts of each bird and made a crude drawing. After the observation, we consulted Leberman, McWilliams & Bauning, PA Birds and Sibley (see essay under References Cited).

DATE OF THIS REPORT: January 9, 2004; essay January 8, 2004, both via e-mail

Gene and Joanne Wilhelm

dark, the legs flesh colored. The four vivid colors on hood, back, sides-flanks and belly made a beautiful contrasting plumage pattern that was visible even with the naked eye. The two adult female Oregon Juncos displayed more subdued colors but the same plumage pattern was noticeable: yellow bills, dark sooty (not black nor gray) hoods, dark eyes, reddish mantles (but lighter than the male), pinkish-brown sides-flanks, and white bellies, under-tail coverts, outer-tail feathers. Legs were flesh-colored like the male. These 3 birds contrasted considerably with the surrounding 15 Slate-colored Juncos, with little or no color contrast between head and body. Male Slate-colored Juncos are dark gray from the base of the yellow bill to the upper tip of the tail, uniform gray breast, sides, flanks, and vent. Eyes are dark, lores black, and legs flesh colored. This subspecies is slightly larger in length (6 + inches) than the Oregon but just as 'chesty.' Adult female Slate-colored juncos are much lighter gray overall than the male, with some females having gray-brown (but not red) crowns, napes, mantles, flanks (not rusty), and median, greater, and primary wing coverts. However, even the brownest adult female Slate-colored Junco has light gray hood and sides (not dark sooty hood and rusty sides).

BEHAVIOR: The three Oregon Juncos were transients, new birds of the day (see accompanying essay), and it was obvious from the start that they were not welcome to partake of the cracked corn breakfast provided by us atop the cinder block feeding station. The 15 Slate-colored Juncos challenged and chased the 3 Oregon birds time and time again. The Oregon Juncos would fly several feet away from the feeding station, then one by one hop back to it. Perhaps the Oregon individuals got a few kernels of corn dropped at the base of the cinder blocks, but quickly the Slate-colored Juncos recognized them, challenged them with posturing of wing spreading, lowering of heads, and finally chasing the birds head on. After 22 minutes of these aggressive antics, the three Oregon Juncos flew into the nearby spruce woods never to return the remainder of the day, even at the usual mid-afternoon feeding period.

VOCALIZATIONS: None could be heard inside the condo. We dared not open the windows or doors because we knew from experience that even the slightest noise would scare all of the juncos.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE: Crude diagram from site drawing; stationary birds facing left on the ground

Adult Male Oregon Junco

1. yellow bill
2. dark lores and eyes hard to see because of black hood
3. black hood from nape to breast; red mantle, scapulars, tertials; rusty brown sides, flanks, vent
4. white belly, under-tail coverts, outer-tail feathers
5. flesh-colored legs

Adult Male Slate-colored Junco

1. yellow bill
2. gray lores, dark eyes
3. dark gray hood, mantle, wings, flanks, upper tail
4. white belly, under-tail coverts, outer-tail feathers
5. flesh-colored legs

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco (Junco hyemalis thurberi)

Date of Sighting: 3 December 2003 to : 3 December 2003

Location: SLIPPERY ROCK BOROUGH

County : BUTLER

Observer(s): Gene Wilhelm, Joanne Wilhelm

Date of Submission: 2003

Submitted by: Gene Wilhelm

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

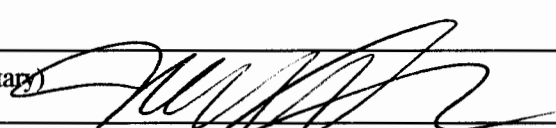
Video: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut			X					
D. Heathcote			X					
P. Guris			X					
J. Stanley			X					
E. Witmer			X					
R. Leberman					X			
M. Sharp			X					
TOTALS			6		1			
DECISION			X					

Comments:

6/1

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

~~3/26/05~~

3/26/05