

February 23, 2005

Dean Kendall  
Leesport, PA

Dean

As a records committee member this is the sort of description I dread, because it is obviously correct but still not quite acceptable. All other members of the committee basically agreed and the vote was 6-1 against accepting the report as conclusive. To nit-pick some of the reasons cited for not accepting the report were as follows.

- Eye color not described.
- Bill color not described
- Color of flanks not described
- Extent of gray on underparts not described
- Darkness of bird relative to Slate-colored not mentioned

Basically these reasons point more to the conservative stance taken by the committee on a report of a species with almost no precedence of occurring in the east than a comment on the identification. Given that Juncos are one of the most variable and taxonomically complicated species in North America, and that all of the subspecies groups will intergrade where the ranges meet a report of a species this rare would probably have to include a photograph, or at least a feather-by-feather description to be accepted. Nonetheless, since you have taken the time to submit the description it will become a valuable part of the record of the birds of PA.

Sincerely



Matt Sharp  
Chair: Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee.

>===== Original Message From "Dean Kendall"

<deankendall@paydaynet.org> =====

Species: GREY-HEADED JUNCO -- *Junco hyemalis caniceps* (or *J. h. dorsalis*)

Number/age/sex: Single Adult, sex unknown (but colors clean and bright as is male).

Date of observation: 16 November 2001 (not seen again as of Feb.1, 2002, when this report was filed)

Observers: Dean Kendall (author of this report), and Anna Kendall.

Time and Duration of observation: Mid-morning, for about 3 or so minutes between 9 and 9:30 AM.

Location: At Kendalls' farm near Leesport (Ontelaunee Twp., Berks Co.), PA, at water pan and then birdbath in semi-woody yard by house.

Means and conditions of observation: 7 x 35 Leitz binoculars at 10-12 yds from inside the house (looking toward the SW through the windows); the bird well lit by bright mid-morning sunlight from behind the observers.

Situation/Behavior: The bird was first noticed taking drinks at a bird-watering pan we'd set out for the winter. It continued taking drinks there for a minute or so, before flying to an adjacent ground-level birdbath and taking a longish bath.

Description: Junco size and shape. Back a bright, deep rust red-brown, in the shape of a sharply-defined triangle - as if cut out of cloth and pasted on. Otherwise uniformly medium-dark clean gray above including wings, except for contrastingly black area around and (mostly) forward of eyes. Did not take note of the extent of the gray below, nor the color of the bill.

Comments: From the first glance, naked-eye at 30 ft, the bird was instantly if unbelievably recognizable as a Grey-headed Junco, which I have some experience with on its breeding grounds in central-west New Mexico, and in winter at my brother's near Socorro, NM, where some years a few have regularly fed with Pink-sided and Oregon, and at times a Slate-colored or 2, in his chicken yard. Unfortunately, not having taken note of the bill color precludes distinguishing for certain between *Junco hyemalis caniceps* and *J. h. dorsalis* (the 2 "subspecies" of Grey-headed Junco according to *The Sparrows of the US and Canada*, by James Rising -- *dorsalis* being what *The Sibley Guide to Birds* calls Red-backed Junco, and *caniceps* what he calls Grey-headed). But given the greater range of *caniceps*, and presumably therefore its greater numbers, and especially its greater normal range of migration (*dorsalis* being restricted in smmer to a narrow band across mid-AZ/NM. and in winter to an adjacent narrow band on the S), *caniceps* is more likely. Given that the bird here lacked any rufous on the greater wing coverts and tertials (which *dorsalis*/Red-backed sometimes shows, according to Sibley), also suggests *caniceps*. So does my not noting its bill color, which suggests it was the same as Slate-colored's, the species I was comparing it to at the time. Too bad that's not enough to say which for sure!

**Subject: Re: Gray-headed Junco report**

**Date:** Sat, 9 Feb 2002 01:43:48 -0500

**From:** "Dean Kendall" <deankendall@paydaynet.org>

**To:** "Nick Pulcinella" <nickpul@bellatlantic.net>

**CC:** "Rudy Keller" <rkeller@astro.ocis.temple.edu>, "Katrina Knight" <kknight@epix.net>

Nick, hi.

No, i didn't get a photo, unfortunately. Altho we have a camera, we seldom use it. Indeed when i dug the camera out in hopes of the bird coming back, the battery was dead and the film in it was years past the 'develop by' date!

Regarding the color of the eye, i didn't take specific note of it. But the light was excellent and the bird not distant, and i did take particular note of the extent and contrast of the black area around and forward of the eye. If the eye had been yellow rather than dark it would have stood out strongly, and i'm certain i would have noted that. Moreover, i have seen Yellow-eyed Junco at least once according to my notes (in SE Arizona in Nov '99, on Mt. Graham), and also study the books, so i was primed to notice a yellow eye had there been one.

I was hoping, since the bird hasn't returned here that we've seen, that it would turn up on one of the CBC's. It still might turn up somewhere. Let's hope so -- and that there's a camera ready!

Dean

----- Original Message -----

From: "Nick Pulcinella" <nickpul@bellatlantic.net>

To: <deankendall@paydaynet.org>

Sent: Friday, February 08, 2002 11:33 AM

Subject: Gray-headed Junco report

> Dean,

>

> Katrina Knight sent me your report of the gray-headed junco for the  
> records committee. What a great find. Would you happen to have any  
> photos?

> Also, do you remember what the eye color of the bird was? I think there  
> have been two other records of this race in the east, both from Ohio.  
> Thanks for taking the time to document this rare bird.

>

> Nick Pulcinella

> Secretary

> PA Records Committee

## Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

### Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: Dark-eyed ( Gray-headed ) Junco (Junco hyemalis caniceps)

Date of Sighting: 16 November 2001 to 16 November 2001

Location: LEESPORT

County: BERKS

Observer(s): Dean Kendall

Date of Submission: 2002

Submitted by: Dean Kendall

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

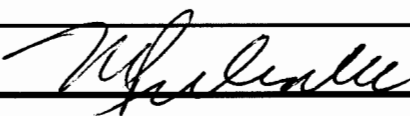
Recording: No

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			
J. Stanley				X				
E. Witmer			X					
R. Leberman					X			
M. Sharp				X				
TOTALS			1	4	2			
DECISION				X				

Comments:

1/6

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

2/11/03