



dark-eyed junco

Junco hyemalis

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Passeriformes
Family: Emberizidae

FEATURES

The dark-eyed junco is sometimes called a “snowbird.” It has white, outer tail feathers that are easily seen when it flies. The male has a dark-gray back with a dark gray or black hood, while the female and immature birds have lighter shades of gray in these areas. Immature birds in their first summer have a streaked breast and may be confused with some sparrows.

BEHAVIORS

The dark-eyed junco is an abundant migrant and winter resident statewide in Illinois. Fall migrants begin arriving in August. Spring migration from Illinois may begin in February. This species nests in the northern United States and Canada. The nest is constructed on the ground, in roots of a fallen tree or in a tree, as high as eight feet off the ground. Built by the female, the nest is made of grasses, rootlets, bark, sticks and mosses and lined with hair, grasses and rootlets. Four or five pale blue or gray eggs with dark splotches are laid by the female and incubated by her alone for the 12- to 13-day incubation period. Two broods are raised each year. In winter, the dark-eyed junco lives in open woods, edges, hedgerows, shrubs, weedy areas, lawns, grasslands and cornfields. It becomes more wood-

land oriented after leaving Illinois in the spring. The song is a trill while the call is “smack.” This bird eats insects and seeds.

HABITATS

- bottomland forests
- coniferous forest
- southern Illinois lowlands
- upland deciduous forest

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident:

Summer resident:

Migrant: statewide

Winter resident: statewide

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.

Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume 2: Woodland Habitats CD-ROM.