

dark-eyed junco

Junco hyemalis

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 dark-gray back feathers with a dark gray or black hood of feathers, while the female and immature birds have lighter shades of gray feathers in these areas. Immature birds in their first summer have streaked breast feathers 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 out of 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 woodland oriented after leaving Illinois in the spring. The song is a trill while the call is “smack.” This bird eats insects and seeds.

TAXONOMY

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Passerellidae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

ILLINOIS RANGE



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adults

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Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands;
upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none