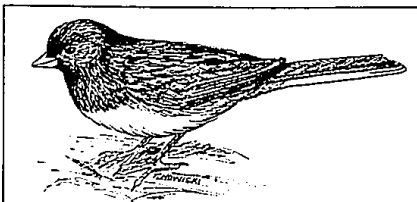


To junco, our region is 'south'



nature
Timothy Nowicki

FALL IS the season when plants and animals prepare for the rigors of winter. Squirrels are storing food, turtles and frogs have found places in which to bury themselves until spring, and a few will hibernate. Mobile animals, like birds, are able to migrate to warmer or more suitable climates, just like the Michigan "snowbirds" who drive to Florida when the weather gets cold. One winter visitor that many will see at their bird feeding stations this winter is the dark-eyed junco. Many people call this small, gray bird with a white belly a "snowbird," because they see it only when snow is on the ground.



For the dark-eyed junco, going "south" in winter means southern Michigan

PEOPLE WITH cottages in the Upper Peninsula may see the junco during the summer, but most of us will only be able to enjoy it during the winter months. The birds we see at our feeders have migrated south from their northern Canada nesting grounds. This northern forest nesting species migrates and winters as far south as Florida. But individuals that nest in the high elevations of the Smokey Mountains only migrate down the mountain to the lower elevations. At the base of the mountains, the climate is moderate enough for them to survive the winter.

Dark-eyed juncos not only have two different migratory patterns, but they also look different depending on where you see one in the United States. In the western states, males have a gray head, a white belly and two white outer tail feathers just like the birds in the eastern states. But those in the west have darker heads, and they also have buff-colored feathers on their sides. Eastern birds have gray on their sides.

Not long ago, eastern and western juncos were considered two different species. But since they interbreed and produce young that can produce young, today they are considered two forms of the same species. At your feeder, juncos will spend most of their time on the ground feeding on the small millet seeds that are often found in mixed birdfeed. When you see a small, dark-colored bird flash white from its tail, you are watching a junco that has arrived from Canada.

The writer is staff naturalist at Independence Oaks County Park.

OU Chorale to perform Sunday

The Oakland Chorale of Oakland University, Rochester, will give a concert at 3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 13, at Varner Recital Hall on the OU campus. Soloists will be Edward Bellaire of Plymouth, Jan Honey of Pontiac, Kim Schuenger and Lisa LaForrest of Rochester and Michelle Blomberg of Davisburg. The chorale is a select group of 25 graduate and undergraduate students directed by Lyle Nordstrom of the department of music, theater and dance.

The program will include Brazilian Psalm by Jean Berger, "Jauchzet dem Herrn" by Pachelbel, folk songs by Ralph Vaughn Williams and spirituals by Harry Burleigh and William

L. Dawson. Tickets are \$3 general admission and \$2 for seniors and students. For information, call the Center for the Arts box office, 370-3013.



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