

Bird specimens aren't always a picture-book match

A common statement made by people who are beginning to learn bird identification is that it doesn't

look like the picture in the book. Well, there can be a lot of truth to that statement.

First of all, artists that paint the portraits of birds in field guides must select a representative bird from a vast collection. If one could see a large collection of museum specimens, the variation in coloration and patterns would be very noticeable.

Just like no two people are exactly alike, so it is with birds. And the bird you see in the field, or at your feeder, may not look just like the one the artist chose to paint.

Identifying basic patterns, shapes, and physical structures will allow one to correctly identify a bird, but try not to be discouraged because it

does not look exactly like the book.

There are times when one has to go by experience to identify some really unusual birds. Mrs. Greune from Farmington Hills wrote me and said she had a white bird with black in its wings. It was about the size of a sparrow and had been feeding at her feeders for several days.

IF ONE LOOKED in the field guide and tried to identify a bird with those features, the most likely bird would be a snow bunting. Buntings at feeders are very unlikely though.

In this case it turned out to be an

almost completely-white house sparrow. It was not a true albino because it did have some brown spots and a wash of brown under its bill. A true albino would not have any traces of brown or color, and it would have a red eye.

Positive identification of a rare coloration like this is based on the shape of the bird, its behavior and its associates. Albinos, or nearly white birds, are easy to spot but sometimes confusing to identify.

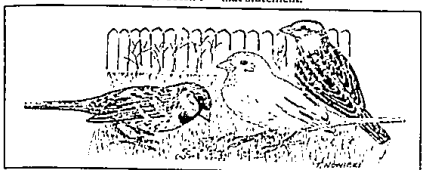
I recently saw a mourning dove that had several white feathers on its back. If one was unfamiliar with the general appearance of a normal



nature
Timothy Nowicki

dove, one may think it was a new species.

White spotting occurs more commonly than true albinism and can cause confusion, but it forces birders to check several other features in order to try and properly identify it.



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...for Miss Winter Wonderland

Wonderland Mall will be holding their 3rd Annual "Miss Winter Wonderland" Pageant on **Saturday, February 10th 5 p.m.** The pageant is open to single, young ladies between the ages of 16 and 23. ALL Contestants must attend the preliminary auditions on **Monday, February 5th at 4 p.m.** The deadline for applications is **Thursday, February 1, 1990.**

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A...Tuesday, January 30th at 5 p.m.
F...Wednesday, January 31st at 5 p.m.
P...Thursday, February 1st at 5 p.m.

Semi-finalists will be notified by mail to appear at Wonderland Mall on February 10th at noon for rehearsals...final judging will be at 4 p.m.

Applications are available at the Information Booth

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