

Welcome the Dark-eyed Junco with seeds & water

BY BRUCE MCCAMMON

As the leaves begin to fall and the mornings have that cool, crisp feel, the Juncos return.

They come into our area a bit at a time and soon it seems that they are everywhere.

Backyard feeders are popular with these sparrow-sized birds. Feeders take on more importance in the winter months due to the relative scarcity of natural food.

An almost sure way to bring Juncos to your yard is to offer some fresh bird food and water. Maintaining feeders and water in the winter requires more attention but the reward of watching Juncos and other species come to feed or drink is a great way to spend a snowy day.

Dark-eyed Juncos tend to be winter birds in our area but



Bruce McCammon is retired, color-blind and enjoys photographing the birds in north central Washington.



might be seen all year near the border of Canada and Washington.

There are a few varieties of Junco: Oregon, Slate-colored, Gray-headed, and White-winged.

In north central Washington it is fairly safe to assume that the Junco you see is the Oregon variety. Calling them Dark-eyed Juncos is a very safe bet. Just expect to see some variety in the darkness of their heads or side coloration.

They all have the distinctive white edged tail. You'll see two bright white stripes on the tail as they fly away.

Dark-eyed Juncos tend to sit out in the open much more than the House Sparrows that are abundant in our area. That gives us a good chance to watch them through binoculars or a spotting scope. Their dark head and lighter body helps to quickly identify them.

If you're lucky they will be mixed in with House Finch, White-crowned Sparrows and Golden-Crowned Sparrows. Watch for that dark head and the white edges on the tail.

Be sure to watch for Juncos this winter. They'll be gone from our area as summer approaches next year. Good luck.