

## October - Week 1

### *Arrival of the Snowbirds: Dark-eyed Juncos*

**During the first week of October signs of change** are everywhere. And wouldn't you know it; the first sign of winter may show up any day now. How could that be? The amount of daylight we receive is decreasing about three minutes each day and the woodlands are becoming patchwork displays of green, yellow, and orange. It is also not uncommon to receive the first dusting or trace of snow. The snow tends not to stick but the snowbirds begin to arrive for the winter.

Who are these snowbirds you may ask? These birds are actually called Dark-eyed Juncos. They are sparrow-sized birds, about 5 inches in size. They have a gray body with a white belly and a cream colored beak, and of course a dark black eye. Dark-eyed Juncos inhabit coniferous forests in Canada and Northern Minnesota, nesting on the ground beneath conifers such as spruce. In the fall many of them fly south, with some heading to places like Kansas while others move to central and southern Minnesota.

Weather patterns impact the migration of birds like the Dark-eyed Junco. If the weather is warm, aided by a strong wind out of the South, that may delay the fall migration of Juncos. Document this week's weather pattern, including the temperature and wind, and note how it may impact the arrival of Dark-eyed Juncos in your location.

This week, observe birds in your yard, neighborhood, or a local park, especially around bird feeders. Observe the birds' behaviors and make note of bird species that are present. Is one species seen in higher numbers than others? Watch for the Dark-eyed Junco. They are often seen foraging on the ground for seeds in grassy areas, flower beds, and below bird feeders. If you see one, or several, make sure to document the day they were first seen. Watch again in the following years to collect data on the typical arrival of the season's first Dark-eyed Juncos. How often do they arrive before the snow?



Dark-eyed Junco.