

AN ALBINO SNOWBIRD
By Constance Katholi

Junco hyemalis #108-81847 is a partial albino which I took in my mist net on the early morning of April 15, 1964. The bird's appearance was startling, not to say comical.

Its plumage was an even, slate-gray overall with no buffy feather edges. The lower breast, crissum and under tail coverts were unmarked white. The wings were gray. In the tail, although the outer two pairs of rectrices were white as is normal, additionally, on the right side, primaries #7, 6, and 5 were white toward the base, and slightly barred throughout. A few flecks of white occurred over the nape and crown. The bill was a pronounced pinkish-red and the legs and feet were pink. The eyes were a reddish brown.



JUNCO # 108-81847

The unusual albino marking was roughly in the shape of a four-leaf clover and could best be appreciated viewed head-on. The first leaf was the area of the forehead with the white curving upward in a petal shape; the second and fourth ones on each side of the head included the auricular and malar regions. Gray malar stripes like the moustaches of the song sparrow separated "leaves" 2 and 4 from #3 which included the chin and part of the throat. In appearance this "leaf" closely resembled the "throat-patch" on the white-throated sparrow.

With the red bill centered in this white clover-leaf, a fantastic clown-like effect was created.

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On April 6, 1965, I placed band #110-93634 on another junco with albino tendencies. This bird was a pale gray individual with a tan back. His eyes, bill, and legs were normal in color. The differences centered on the tail, in which the two outermost rectrices were entirely white, the central pair brown (fuscous), and all the others, ashy or dirty white. In effect, it was a bird with a "white tail." The undertail coverts were gray-tan centrally with light edgings.

The outermost remiges were pale brown with light outer webs. The inner ones were dark ashy similar to the tail but darker. The wing coverts were dusky brown.

This bird was hardly as spectacular as #108-81847 and possibly not so much an albino as an example of the extreme variation found in juncos. Perhaps I err in denoting #108-81847 as "hyemalis," but one can hardly determine it under these circumstances.