



# NEWSLETTER FROM SUNFLOWER AUDUBON

December, 2025

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## GET TO KNOW:

Dark-Eyed Junco



The Dark-eyed Junco, *Junco hyemalis*, is a common winter bird in most of the United States. A medium sized sparrow with a round head, fairly small, pale bill and long tail. The birds are easy to recognize by their

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I sit and reflect about the quickly fading year, I count my blessings. This Sunflower community is one of them. I am truly thankful to every one of you that has shown any interest in this group. I began the chapter a little over 2 years ago. There were many bumps in the road, but I feel we are on our way to having an impact in with our mission statement “to increase awareness in not just birds but the whole of the natural world”

Over the year we had some notable achievements. Our website creation being a biggie. Then the start of our own YouTube channel to spread information to those in our vast territory who can't join us at the local events. We participated in the first ever Hays Science Fair and will continue in 2026 to increase our community involvement.

Again, thank you to all of and may the holidays be everything you desire. From the bottom of my heart, Diana Pantle

## EXCITING NEWS!!!

Our very own videographer, James Charles Smith, was honored at the recent Hays Winter Art Walk! James had 3 of his photographs accepted out of the 600 entries submitted. His photo of a Western Meadowlark stretching a wing won the award for best nature photograph. Let's all congratulate James!

## BIRDS AND BREWS

December 18, the chapter will host its first trivia contest. To be held in the back room at the Golden Q starting at 5:30, come for a fun time. We only request that you buy at least one beverage. For this first event, all questions will be related to birds. Teams of 2 or singles may participate. A lovely prize will be given to the winner. No expert knowledge is needed! We'll have at least 4 rounds and maybe many more depending upon attendance. Anyone is welcome. Let's just have a pre-holiday time to become better acquainted and maybe even learn something cool about birds.

crisp (though extremely variable) markings and bright white tail feathers, they flash while in flight. They are year-round residents of the western mountains and Canada, flooding the rest of North America for the winter.

The Dark-eyed Junco is one of the most common birds of North America. Before you see the bird, you might hear their twittering call or trilling song.

Primarily seed-eaters, they prefer millet to sunflower seeds. When feeding they typically hop, pecking or scratching at leaf litter or flitting in low undergrowth gleaning food from twigs and leaves.

For the most part, they are ground nesters but around people may nest in or underneath buildings, maybe even in your flower pot!

Where ranges overlap, you may find several subspecies in a single flock.

Information courtesy of:

All About Birds

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Every year between December 14 and January 5, citizen scientists from around the world band together to count the birds they see to give Audubon scientists data about bird populations. The nation's longest running community science bird project, Audubon partners with Birds Canada. This year marks the 126<sup>th</sup> count. Hays/Ellis County's official event will be on **December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025, starting at 7:30am. Meet in Albertson Hall, Room 169 on the FHSU campus.** The event kicks off with an overview of the territory and participants are given a specific sector to canvas and record their findings. Many that have participated in past counts have an area they prefer and are given priority. Even if you have little bird ID experience, you are welcome and will be paired with a more experienced birder for the morning/day. There will also be a beginner friendly bird walk around the FHSU campus from 11am–12pm, meeting in front of Albertson Hall. If a person chooses, they may also do a count of the birds visiting their bird feeders. Each person or team is given a tally sheet and at the end of the day will turn this in to Diana Pantle, the coordinator for this year's count. She will tabulate the results and turn them into National. For more information about this and prior counts, please visit [Audubon Christmas Bird Count | Audubon](#)

## MOTUS TOWERS

The National Audubon Society and its various chapters join Global Wildlife in a large network designed to help birds. For those who aren't aware, across the country, chapters are involved in helping track radio-tagged birds, connecting the dots of bird migration across the hemisphere and inform conservation and research efforts. The towers, called Motus towers are part of a global wildlife tracking research effort. For a complete rundown of this valuable tool, please click here: [Audubon, Chapters Join Global Wildlife Tracking Network to Help Birds | Audubon North Carolina](#)

## AUDUBON POLICY COMMUNITY CALLS

On December 8, National Audubon initiated the first of its policy calls. These calls are designed for members to keep abreast of the activities of Audubon to further conservation and help birds across the globe. Any member can attend these zoom updates. Check out Mobilize to sign up and be alerted to future calls.

This call highlighted not just efforts by those in the US but told how National staff attended various summits in other countries to partner with global stewards of the environment. The call was attended not just by some who went to these meetings, but a lobbyist who serves National's interest to Congress also spoke about what he's seeing and how he's advocating for birds, climate change, etc. To access the recording of this meeting, click here: [12.8 Audubon Policy Community Call Recording.mp4 | Powered by Box](#)

## CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY SCIENCE!

Did you know that your observations could contribute to the conservation of a species? Documenting what you see while birding can help scientists document the distributions of wild creatures throughout the state:

One way to keep track is using *eBird*. A popular app managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Observers can log the birds they see while the app keeps track of the date, location and time spent observing. Even recording visits at your bird feeder may have an impact!

Another app used by many, *iNaturalist*, is for everything that isn't a bird. This app allows a person to upload photos or sound recordings. Volunteer experts subsequently confirm the identity of your observation (or politely suggest an alternative)

## MOBILIZE

National Audubon has made available a sharing platform, Mobilize. This is a place to share events as well as post content for viewing. Many chapters when posting events can have sign up options for their events, bird walks, etc. Sunflower Audubon will be posting not just events but also various programs available not just to those in our chapter but open to viewers from around the country. Check it out! It's easy to sign up for any event, stay tuned for updates for future programs [Volunteer Opportunities, Events, and Petitions Near Me · Mobilize](#).

## 2nd ANNUAL HAYS KANSAS SCIENCE FEST

We will once again be hosting a booth at the above. Slated for Sunday May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026 from 11am to 3pm. Last year the inaugural event was attended by around 1,200 people. Many are expected to return again this year.

Last year we had a bird beak trivia game, migration game and a game of how the 5 different vertebrate groups might be alike. Any suggestions to mix it up this year are welcome. As are volunteers to assist. With just myself and Kelly, at times we had more kids to help than hands 😊



## SAVE THE DATE



# May 03 2026

JOIN US IN DOWNTOWN HAYS FOR:

- ALL THINGS SCIENCE
- HANDS-ON LEARNING AND FUN
- FOOD TRUCKS
- FACE PAINTING
- LIVE MUSIC



ADDITIONAL FUN ON  
05/02/26

- MOVIE • ASTRONOMY EVENT • ASTRONAUT Q&A

★ FOR UPDATES FOLLOW: [FB EVENT: HAYS KANSAS SCIENCE FESTIVAL](#)  
SITE: [SCIENCEFESTKS.ORG/HAYS](http://SCIENCEFESTKS.ORG/HAYS)

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