

Birding

Summer is a great time to watch a movie about juncos

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http://www.heraldtimesonline.com/life/outdoors/summer-is-a-great-time-to-watch-a-movie-about/article_8c677325-a47e-5851-9ec0-594233341f97.html

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Mid-July is not junco season in Indiana. Still, I'm embarrassed to admit that it was only recently that I finally sat down to watch the junco movie.

"Ordinary Extraordinary Junco" is an extraordinary movie, made by junco researchers at Indiana University, but it is every bit as professionally done as you might watch on PBS or the Discovery Channel or Animal Planet. Total viewing time is 88 minutes, but each module is between three and 20 minutes, making it convenient for interruptions. I, however, found it so engaging that I watched it straight through one evening, then went back again and re-watched several modules.

If you feed birds, you are familiar with the "ordinary" little slate and white snowbirds that visit this area in winter. But what those little birds have revealed about evolution, speciation, adaptation, hormones, social relations, mate selection, parenting and so much more is truly extraordinary. The movie calls juncos a "rock star" of biological research.

IU biology professor Ellen Ketterson has been studying juncos for 40 years. She is the executive producer and her post-doctoral research associate Jonathan Atwell directed the film and co-wrote the narration.

It is quite likely that Ketterson knows more about juncos

than any other living human, but that depth and breadth of knowledge translates into an engrossing, stimulating, thought-provoking, very fun and fascinating movie.

This movie shows that science can be an adventure. The researchers crossed North America, literally climbed mountains and hopped aboard a Mexican Navy ship to sail to a remote island in the Pacific to track down juncos to see how closely the species are related to each other.

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Ordinary
Extraordinary
JUNCO
Remarkable biology from a backyard bird!

A science film for public and student audiences

Now available for...
...screenings
...online viewing
...classrooms
...You

Evolution
Ecology
Behavior
Physiology
Genetics
Biodiversity
Research Methods
Biology

Support provided by
National Science Foundation
WHERE DISCOVERIES BEGIN
INDIANA UNIVERSITY
Department of Biology
Department of Telecommunications
Office of the Vice Provost for Research
College of Arts & Sciences
Center for the Integrative Study of Animal Behavior

Designed with high school and college science standards in mind.
Feature-length film (88min.) is made up of eight (3-20min.) segments.
Video chapters & teacher resources are available free online at our website.

www.juncoproject.org

"Ordinary Extraordinary Junco," is a scientific film about a songbird species that can be found in south-central Indiana in the colder months of the year.

Watch the movie: "Ordinary Extraordinary Junco" can be viewed for free online at <http://juncoproject.org>. Click on "Videos" and you can stream or download the movie in eight segments.

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We all know that dark-eyed juncos are migratory: They're here in the winter and up north in the summer. Similar migration patterns occur with juncos in California. But in the mid-1980s, a few juncos decided to stop migrating, taking up permanent residence on the campus of the University of California San Diego. Now, that nonmigratory, urban flock is starting to behave differently than the migratory, rural flock of close cousins. The San Diego flock is more tolerant of humans, and its diet is more diverse than that of its ancestors and country cousins. The movie documents what might be the evolution of a new species from its origins.

It's the kind of movie that keeps me thinking about it for days afterward. It struck me that junco behavior relates directly to human behavior. Juncos are monogamous, except when they cheat, which happens frequently. Some juncos are good parents and some are poor. Male juncos with extra high testosterone levels attract more females and father more offspring than male juncos with normal testosterone levels, but extra-testosterone males aren't very good fathers, and their offspring suffer. High-testosterone males have a shorter life expectancy, perhaps from engaging in extra risky behavior.

It's also fascinating to watch ornithological researchers at work, tromping through woods, looking for nests, using mist nets to catch birds, taking blood samples and generally helping us better understand life on Earth.

If you enjoy the birds that visit your feeders, you will enjoy this movie, no doubt about it. And when the juncos return to your yard in October, you will watch them with new appreciation.

More Information: www.juncoproject.org

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