

Gillespie Creek Journal

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This Junco posed for only a second this morning. In our region the bird has officially been named "Slate-colored Junco." The species are ground feeders and nesters. Their late September arrival is a harbinger of winter giving them the nickname of "Snow Bird." Look for Junos under pine trees and flitting around in thickets within your neighborhood. I've grown to love this bird willing to feed on leftovers under feeders.

The Garter Snake pictured on the right surprised me last week. Lying on the roadside it seemed healthy and vital. Looking more closely I could see that its tail had been injured and in fact it was dead...otherwise I would have run away screaming! Yes, I've always been so frightened of snakes that I can't even look at a picture of one without jumping away. Of course Garter Snakes are harmless. They have an important purpose in the healthy ecology of a neighborhood. Garters are carnivorous. Their diet consists of almost any creature that they can overpower. When living near water they eat other aquatic animals. Along land they may even eat rodents. Their food is swallowed whole. Live animals are preferred but snakes will eat eggs when other food is scarce.

Garters do produce venom but don't have the a means to deliver it.

More about Gillespie Creek ground creatures' autumn season lives.



Mushrooms are flourishing with the welcome rains of the past three weeks. The left photo is the underside of a Horse Mushroom. This species is edible however watch out, the toxic Yellow Strainer is similar! The mushroom on the right is called a Hare's Foot Ink Cap. It grows prolifically in a wood mulched area. Edible but considered to be too insubstantial to bother with.



Garter Snake by Terry Hoffman

I slither and I crawl around
Through grass and rocks and dirt
Please don't jump when you see me;

I don't mean any hurt.
I'm long and thin and not so big,
But have my place in life.
I eat bugs and pesky things,
So you don't have that strife.