

Red-winged Blackbird



Flowing sap and the smell of maple syrup cooking aren't the only signs of the coming spring. With a loud "conk-a-ree," the male Red-winged Blackbird announces his return to Michigan.

Just like the name implies, the glossy-black males have red and yellow patches on their wings. These colored "epaulets" can be puffed out or be pulled in, depending on how confident they feel. Males are quite feisty during the breeding season. They can be found repeatedly calling from their perches on cattails, telephone wires along soggy ditches, or even cars in CNC's parking lot. When rival males, nest predators or large animals (including humans) get too close to their territory, the males aggressively chase away these intruders.

Males arrive early to find and defend the best territory before females arrive. During courtship, males will spread their tail, droop their wings while raising those colorful wing patches, and sing. Even with their entertaining display, it is the quality of their territory that females find most appealing. Males with superior territory will often mate with several females, as many as 15 in some cases!



Nature Notes

After the females return, they get to work weaving a nest, usually over water in dense cattails or shrubs. The nest is constructed over 3-6 days and is made from stringy plants, wet vegetation, mud and fine grasses.



Red-winged Blackbird eggs are bluish-green and marked with dark speckles.

Watch for these lively birds and other spring migrants as the season changes.

Stop by the Visitor Center Office for program information.

This inSTALLation is available online at www.chippewanaturecenter.org under About Us, Publications.