



COMPASS

Navigating the world of birds and nature

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JULY/AUGUST 2013



Golden-winged Warbler. Photo by Brian E. Small.



Golden-winged Warbler. Photo by Charles Randal Smith.

Warblers Galore

The Golden-winged, The Blue-winged,
The Brewster's, The Lawrence's



The beautiful Golden-winged Warbler is a slim, silvery gray bird with golden flashes on the head and wings and a very thin bill. They prefer open spaces such as recently abandoned farms and any other clear-cut areas. They breed in wet, tangled shrubby habitats such as regenerating clear cut's, wet thickets, tamarack bogs, and aspen or willow stands in the Upper Midwest and Appalachians. Recent radio-tracking studies have discovered that Golden-winged Warblers move into mature forests immediately after fledging. This means that a mixture of shrubby, open areas (for nesting) and mature forest habitats (which offer cover for fledglings from predators such as hawks) are both very important landscape features for this species. However, the clear cuts of abandoned farms and open ground in general does not last long because of current reforestation or

human development, and these factors are reducing available breeding habitat.

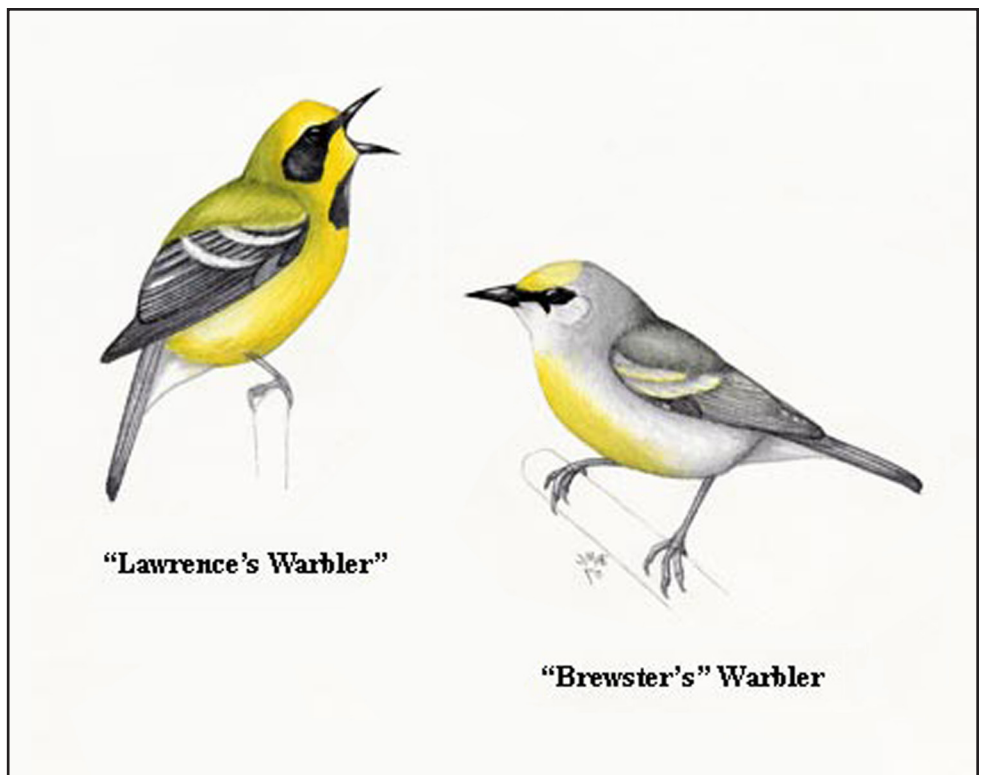
The Golden-winged often crossbreeds with Blue-winged Warblers, producing a range of distinctive forms which is another reason for population decline. Their crossbreeding with the Blue-winged Warbler creates the distinctly plumaged "Brewster's" and "Lawrence's" warblers. A Brewster's looks like a Blue-winged Warbler with a white chest, and a Lawrence's looks like an all-yellow Golden-winged. Backcrosses of hybrids to pure parental types result in many intermediate-appearing birds. Hybrids sing either normal Blue-winged or normal Golden-winged songs, and some birds sing both. Occasionally pure-looking parental types sing the "wrong" song. It's probably safe to assume that their offspring are not confused by this!



Blue-winged Warbler. Photo by Terry Sohl.



Blue-winged Warbler. Photo by Kevin Bolton.



"Lawrence's Warbler"

"Brewster's" Warbler

Lawrence's and Brewster's Warblers. Illustration by Benjamin Clock.

... And Another Beautiful Warbler

The Prothonotary Warbler

The Prothonotary Warbler is a strikingly brilliant yellow-orange warbler that is one of only two warbler species that nests in cavities. (Lucy's Warbler is the other.)



Prothonotary Warblers. Photo by Jim Braswell.

The males select at least one cavity and place moss inside the cavity prior to attracting a mate. When courting, the male flies close to the female and both birds chip softly. The male shows off possible nest cavities, entering and exiting each one. Once a pair forms, the male guards the female while she is building the nest and laying eggs. The females build the remainder of the nest with a foundation of mosses or liverwort. The nest cup is about 2 inches wide and is made of rootlets, plant down, grape plants, or cypress



Prothonotary Warblers. Courtesy of NatureScapes.net

bark lined with grasses, sedges, tendrils, rootlets, leaves, leafstalks, poison ivy, and even fishing line. The nests are built in old Downy Woodpecker holes, bird boxes, gourds, or the cone-shaped exposed growths of bald cypress tree roots. Characteristic tree species include willow, sweet gum, willow oak, black gum, tupelo, balk cypress, elms and river birch. The nests tend to be built in those trees that are near or over standing water. They feed on butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, mayflies and spiders. Interestingly, the Prothonotary also eat mollusks and wood lice outside of the breeding season.

And Yet Another...

The Cerulean Warbler

The poetic definition of the color "cerulean" might be "deep blue in color like a clear sky." It is a color that is considered particularly valuable for artistic painting of skies because of the purity of the blue itself—specifically the lack of greenish hues. All of these features of this particular blue are apparent in the coloring of this extraordinarily beautiful little bird. The male Cerulean is a deep cerulean blue above with a white throat and under parts, blue streaking down the sides of the breast and a dark band across the throat. He has a black stripe into the eyes, creating a blue eye

stripe above, and his back shows faint black streaks.

As is true of females of most bird species, the female Cerulean has very different coloring from her mate. She is bluish-green above and white washed with yellow below. She has a white or yellowish line over the eyes, dusky streaking down the sides of her breast, two white wing bars, and her back is unstreaked. She constructs a cup-shaped nest made of grass, bark fragments and hair. These are all bound together with a spider web. When re-nesting after a failed first nest, the female often reuses the spider web from the old nest to start construction



Cerulean Warbler. Photo by John Schwartz.

on the new one. Fresh lining is gathered, but the spider web is clearly too valuable and time-consuming to waste.

The female has an unusual way of leaving a nest after sitting a while. She drops from the side of the nest, keeping her wings folded to her sides, and opens her wings to fly only when she is well below the nest. That's one way to keep from disturbing the sleeping chicks!



Cerulean Warbler (female) in nest. Photo by Mashall Faintech.

The Annual Birdseed Sale is Coming!

The September–October issue will have all the details for our upcoming annual Birdseed Sale in October. Please pass the word to anyone you know that likes to feed the birds but may not know about our sale—high quality seed at reasonable prices. As you know, this is a major fundraiser for Chicago Audubon projects and goals.

We thank you for all your past support and look forward to hearing from you in the fall!



Goldfinches at birdfeeder. Photo courtesy backyardchirper.com



Goldfinch (female) and Blackcapped Chickadee at birdfeeder. Photo by Chet Gottfried.

COMPASS

CHICAGO AUDUBON SOCIETY
NORTH PARK VILLAGE
5801-C N. Pulaski Road
Chicago, IL 60646-6057

www.chicagoaudubon.org

773-539-6793



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Report sightings to: 773-539-6793

Report injured birds to Chicago Bird Collision Monitors: 773-988-1867

Website: www.chicagoaudubon.org

Office Administrator: Skipper Wolters, 773-539-6793, cas@chicagoaudubon.org.

Office hours: Monday–Thursday 10:00 a.m.–4:15 p.m. Closed Fridays and holidays

OFFICERS

President: Roger Shamley, 773-274-5362, drongo@comcast.net

Vice President: Chris Van Wassenhove, 773-477-4618, cmvwhic@gmail.com

Treasurer: Bobbi Asher, 708-771-2085, roberta.asher@comcast.net.

Secretary: Annette Prince, 630-841-7110, aprincebcm2@msn.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Awards: Alan Anderson, 847-390-7437, casresearch@comcast.net

Birdathon: Joe Lill, 773-631-3154, trptjoe@aol.com

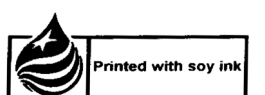
Education Chair: Roger Shamley, 773-274-5362, drongo@comcast.net

Field Trips: Jeff Sanders, 847-657-6431, yellowstart5@yahoo.com

Stewardship: Dave Kosnik, 847-456-6368, skokielagoons@gmail.com

Nominating: Alan Anderson, 847-390-7437, casresearch@comcast.net

Editorial: Skipper Joy Wolters, 773-539-6793, cas@chicagoaudubon.org





Baltimore Oriole (male). Photo by Jeffrey Foltice.



Baltimore Oriole (male) enjoying an orange. Photo by Julie L. Brown.

Baltimore Orioles

Our Bright Orange Beauty

The Baltimore Oriole's rich whistling song echoes from treetops in the spring, heralding the new season with his unmistakable flute-like music. He is a little smaller than the American Robin. Adult males have flame-orange bodies with solid black heads, one white bar on their black wings, long legs and a sturdy body. Female Orioles and immature males are grayish on the head and back, have yellow-orange on the breast and two bold white wing bars. Their long, thick-based pointed bills are an indication of the blackbird family to which they belong.

They are accomplished acrobats—hovering, clambering and hanging among the foliage as they comb the high branches. They are found in leafy deciduous trees, open woodlands, the edges of forests, orchards, stands of trees along rivers, and in parks. In those environments, they are often heard more than seen because they prefer to feed high up in trees, searching leaves and small branches for insects, flowers, and fruit. But because Baltimore Orioles love ripe fruit, you can easily lure them to your backyard or the area where you live by hanging oranges (cut in half) from trees limbs or placing the cut fruit in fruit hangers. Actually, they love brightly colored fruits of any kind, including nectar-bearing flowers such as raspberries, crab apples, and trumpet vines.



Baltimore Oriole nest. Photo by Mary McAvoy.

The nest is a remarkable tightly woven hanging pouch constructed by the female, usually 15-30 feet from the ground and well concealed by leaves. The elm, cottonwood, maple, willow or apple trees are preferred. The nest is made in three sections: Outer basket, inner basket, and lining, each with increasingly finer material. Typically she will use plant fibers, hair, wool, and synthetics (plastic fibers, cellophane). The lining is formed with plant down and feathers. When the chicks hatch, both parents feed and watch over them until they fledge in about two weeks. Most of the old nests survive the winter and the materials are then re-used by the Orioles and other birds to make new nests. Recycling comes naturally to many bird species!



Baltimore Oriole (female) and nest. Photo by Hank Davis.

Birdathon!

2013

New Teams and a Great Success!



Swainson's Thrush. Photo by Lloyd Spitalink.

On May 18th, the Chicago Audubon Society held Birdathon! 2013, which is the 14th Annual Beecher Cup competition. All species were identified within Cook County and the total number of species seen by the combined teams was 166. The word Birdathon combines the words birdwatching and marathon to describe a friendly sport which originated in England years ago. Teams compete to see how many different species of birds they can identify within a specified time limit.

This year, the coveted Beecher Cup is retained by the Field's Flickers (John Bates, Nick Block, Josh Engel & Jason Weckstein), who identified 155 species in a single day! The Steel Belted Kingfishers (Jill Anderson & Joe Lill) garnered 141 species. A new team, the Bobolinkers (Steve Bailey & Sheryl DeVore) tallied 112 species. The first winner in the Muscle-powered category were the Meandering Mollmawks (David Willard, Kevin Slagel, Mary Hennen & Ben Marks), who identified 88 species as they meandered on foot from Grant Park to Jackson Park. First birds of the day, you ask? A flyover Swainson's Thrush (Flickers), a Common Nighthawk (Kingfishers), a singing Wood Thrush (Mollmawks)

and the only Screech Owl of the day for any team (Bobolinkers). Final birds, you ask? Bank Swallow (Kingfishers) (at Northwestern), Green Heron (Mollmawks), Tufted Titmouse (Flickers) and Belted Kingfisher (Bobolinkers).

To see a pdf of the complete list of species sightings, please go to our website at chicagoaudubon.org. Funds raised by this event go toward the environmental mission and programs of Chicago Audubon Society. Our thanks to all who participated, either by birding or donating!



Bank Swallow. Photo by Kent Keller.





Bright lights from buildings, along with reflective or transparent window and lobby glass, are hazards for birds migrating through Chicago.

Each year Chicago Bird Collision Monitors recover more than 5000 birds that have suffered collisions in the downtown area.

With your participation our rescue and prevention efforts can be expanded and more birds can be saved.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE TO OUR READERS

There has been some confusion about the difference between a National Audubon membership and a Chicago Chapter membership. A National membership by itself does not financially support the Chicago Audubon Chapter. National Audubon and the Chicago Chapter (and all other chapters) have entirely separate budgets (except for a small yearly stipend from National). In other words, the Chicago Chapter has always carried the burden of all costs of producing and mailing this newsletter and other types of mailings that we have been sending to both the Chapter members and the National members in this area. Because of this

separation in budgets and because we need local support, we are asking that you consider becoming a Chapter member at this time. Chapter membership will not only help with our immediate need to reduce costs related to the newsletter, it will give direct financial assistance to our local programs and goals and enrich the energy and support of the Chapter membership base. If you would like to become a Chicago Audubon Chapter member, please fill out the form below and send it to our office.

Chicago Audubon Society does not rent, lease, trade, or otherwise disclose any membership information whatsoever.

Chicago Audubon Membership Form

If you wish to become a new member, you may either mail in this form or charge your membership online (chicagoaudubon.org). You may also make a straight donation with this form or online. If you prefer, you may call the office with your credit card information (773-539-6793).

Your name _____

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Minimum yearly membership: \$25

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Calendar of Events July/August 2013

Birdwalks, Workdays, Special Events

CHICAGO AUDUBON SATURDAY BIRD WALKS will start up again in September and continue through October. Start at 8:00 a.m. North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 N. Pulaski, Chicago. Our popular Fall bird walks will begin once again on September 1 (Labor Day weekend) and continue every Saturday through October. It's never too early to mark your calendars for these fun and informative walks and September will be here before you know it! Learn about birds and their habitats while walking through the beautiful Autumn woods surrounding the Nature Center. All levels of birders are welcome. *For information or directions to the Nature Center, call the Chicago Audubon office 773-539-6793. Everyone is welcome!*

wonderful walks continue throughout the year. Bring binoculars, field guides, and dress for the weather. Many species are seen. Meet at Clarence Darrow Bridge, just south of Museum of Science and Industry. *For details and directions, contact Pat Durkin at pat.durkin@comcast.net. Everyone is welcome!*

SKOKIE LAGOONS WORKDAYS. 10:00 a.m. monthly, every second Saturday. These workdays are sponsored by Chicago Audubon and are continuous throughout the year. Activities include buckthorn cutting, brush pile burning and other management endeavors. Meet at the Tower Road parking lot, east of the lagoon bridge. *For further information, please call Dave Kosnik at 847-456-6368. Everyone is welcome!*

WOODED ISLAND BIRD WALKS. JACKSON PARK. Every Wednesday at 7:00 a.m. and every Saturday at 8:00 a.m. These

Reminder to our readers:

The Compass can be read and enjoyed in color on our website, chicagoaudubon.org. Just click on the word "Compass" in the top row of links on the homepage to visit our archives. Don't miss these wonderful birds in living color! For historical value, we have added a link to the very first Chicago Audubon newsletter. This link is sitting on top of the Archive list. Enjoy!



Clymene Moth. Photo by Roger Shamley.



Belted Kingfisher. Photo by Will Elder.