

# Says Not All Black Birds Are Blackbirds

By LYDIA KING FREHSE  
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

Anyone who often goes afield is friend to the red-winged blackbird. His color and his song are inseparable attributes of the marshes and swamps of eastern North America.

The red-wing is the best known of the several species of so-called "blackbirds," a family which shows great variation in appearance, habit and voice. It also includes the grackles, crows, meadow larks, cowbirds and bobolinks.

Some of these contrast their black plumage with markings of vivid colors. Others like the cowbirds and grackles are distinguished by a blue, purple or greenish iridescence.

The Orioles, meadow larks and bobolinks are more brightly colored than they are black. They are appreciated for their beautiful voices as well as for their red-winged and the yellow-headed blackbird show

Mrs. Frehse looks. Both the red-winged and the yellow-headed blackbird show

See the COTTON DRESS SALE At the Village Store

striking color contrast. The latter has always been classed as a western species, but the Audubon society has at least two records of its appearance within our Detroit area.

DO NOT CALL every bird which happens to be colored black, a "blackbird."

Crows, for instance, belong to a large family of their own which not only includes our familiar eastern crow but the jays, ravens, magpies, rooks and nuthatches.

The starg is not a blackbird and can be readily identified by its short tail and yellow bill.

The blackbird family has the distinction of containing the only North American parasitic species, the cowbird.

Much has been written of the egg laying habits of this bird which refuses to assume the obligation of parenthood. Instead, the female lays her eggs here and there in the nests of smaller birds such as warblers and sparrows, where they hatch first and crowd out the rightful occupants.

Much has also been recorded of the doings of the yellow warbler who when her nest is thus parasitized, will repeatedly build a new

nest floor and begin her own egg laying all over again.

WERE THE red-wing less common he would be much sought after for his color contrasts are striking and his song pleasant, if not entirely musical. The little jingle:

"Flag of Belgium on his wing, From the cat-tail hear him sing," is well taken.

The entire bird is a glossy jet black with the bend of the wing bright scarlet edged with yellow, fading to whitish. Only the yellowish edging remains visible when the wing is closed.

As is characteristic of this family, the female and the immature bird bear little resemblance to the adult male. As a protective measure the two former are striped "salt, pepper and mustard," to blend with the lights and shadows of the marsh vegetation in which they make their home.

When the migratory flocks of spring and autumn are seen trailing over the lowlands, you may be sure the red-wings are well represented. The males fly north several weeks ahead of the females and set up a well-defined territory.

DURING THE noisy courtship which follows the marshes ring with the familiar "Ch-ka-le-e-e," which sometimes ends in a vigorous crescendo and sometimes with a trill. The quality of the song is most often described as flute-like.

When it is delivered from a cat-tail, the bird lifts its wings, displaying the red shoulder patches.

The familiar nest—a loosely woven cup of plant fibers, is frequently suspended from reeds a few feet above the water. It may also appear on a hammock, on the ground in a grass clump or in

a shrub at the water's edge.

Here are laid three to five eggs, bluish and well camouflaged with dark blotches and lines, "as if the mother bird had come home with ink on her toes."

Although the red-wing breeds in the marsh, he forages in open fields and plowed lands for his food. He prefers weed seed (especially smart weed and barn yard grass) to grain, but he is often in disfavor for what grain he does steal. However this theft is more than counterbalanced by his taste for grubs, worms, caterpillars and grasshoppers.

THE RED-WING also makes war on cankerworms which defoliate shade and fruit trees, often flying a half mile or more to secure these delectable morsels for the young.

Studies have proven this bird's usefulness to man with figures showing that seven-eighths of his food consists of weed seeds and insects injurious to crops.

By the first of August the family cares are over and the flocks re-gather for less strenuous communal life. As autumn approaches they often join with grackles, starlings and cowbirds in huge night roosts whose dirt and din is most undesirable if they happen to be located near a residential section.

But on a day when the sun and woodbine have crimsoned and the country lanes are purple with wild grape, the red-wings will stream through the upper air in long waving columns. Their migration flight which signals the end of summer, will soon be underway, and the cat-tail marsh will be left silent and empty.

Want ads cannot be accepted after 5 p.m. each Tuesday.



SEEING THE BEAUTIFUL and historic sights of their Capital proved a thrill for these young AAA safety patrol boys. They were among 115 Michigan patrolers taken recently to Washington, D.C., on a four-day honor trip by Automobile Club of Michigan as a reward for long hours of guarding classmates at school corners. From left they are John Horner, Adams school, Birmingham; Gary Leonard of Hazel Park; and John Rulapaugh of Berkley.

## Renamed Delegates

Supervisor William Roeser and Leonard Lamb, water department head, have been re-named as delegates and alternate for the South-eastern Oakland County Water Authority by Southfield township board members.

## LAWN SPRINKLER SYSTEMS NO MORE HOSE!

We Install Full Coverage Systems Automatic Or Manual Control

EXPERT WORKMANSHIP

Systems Fully Guaranteed

Let us quote our price on your home—no obligation on your part.

NO MONEY DOWN — F. H. A. 36 MONTHS TO PAY

GREEN-LAWN SPRINKLING SYSTEMS

UN 2-0398

IL 6-3214

...it's your move  
if you want to

Save **BIG** Money!

NOW... during our REMOVAL\* SALE

you can buy a thrilling new 1954

**Pontiac**

at the **GREATEST SAVINGS** ever!

SOON... we'll be moving into our big, beautiful new dealership building... and we must therefore reduce our inventory of new '54 PONTIACS at once from our present building. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for you to buy a luxurious new PONTIAC (the most beautiful thing on wheels)

at TREMENDOUS SAVINGS... and on the EASIEST TERMS! Hurry in today and TEST drive a new PONTIAC. Find out for yourself why DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR YOU CAN'T BEAT A PONTIAC. And find out, too, how you can buy a king-size '54 PONTIAC from WILSON'S... AND SAVE BIG MONEY!

Come In Today!



Pontiac's **Big Car Performance!**

drive it... AND YOU'LL WANT IT!  
price it... AND YOU'LL BUY IT!

Come In Today!

**WILSON PONTIAC CADILLAC INC.**

275 N. WOODWARD, BIRMINGHAM  
JOrdan 4-6626 Midwest 4-1930

COME IN TODAY! MAKE US PROVE IT! WE CAN... AND WE WILL!

Just 1 Block North of W. Market

We give

PROMPT, EFFICIENT, GUARANTEED SERVICE

On Your

Radio — Television — Record Changer  
Tape Recorder

**McCallum and Dean**

409 E. Maple MI 4-5230

WARFIELD'S  
SPRING  
PAINT  
SPECIALS

Friday and Saturday  
May 21 and 22

1-2" \$1.50 Bristle Sash Brush FREE (of cost) with the purchase of one gallon of paint.

1-3" or 3 1/2" \$3.20 Wall Brush FREE (of cost) with two or more gallons of paint.

Pontiac No. 500 White House Paint \$5.50 per gallon.

Pontiac Masonry Paint for asbestos shingles \$5.50 per gallon.

**WARFIELD PAINT COMPANY**

250 North Woodward, Birmingham MI 4-0910  
FREE PARKING in rear of store