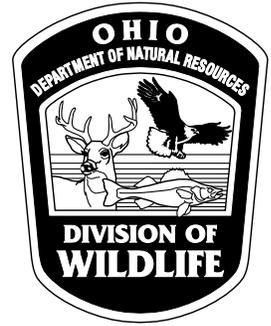


American Robin

Scientific Name: *Turdus migratorius*



Publication 239
(1099)

Introduction

The American robin is popularly recognized as a "harbinger-of-spring." However, robins can be found in Ohio throughout the year. Robins can and do roost in the state through the winter, especially if it is a mild one; those that overwinter in Ohio are more abundant in the southern portions of the state.

As winter ends, and the daylight lengthens, American robins are often the first birds you hear singing just as dawn approaches. This behavior has earned the bird the nickname "wake robin."

Pesticide contamination and its effects on birds such as the bald eagle and peregrine falcon is well known. Less well known, but as detrimental, was the effect of DDT on the American robin population. DDT was used to combat Dutch elm disease. In the process, earthworms—a staple of the robins' diet—incorporated the pesticide into their systems and eventually the pesticide passed into the systems of robins. Robin population numbers fell, but as DDT was banned and its residue filtered out of the environment American robins recovered.

American robins can be found in the eastern and northern United States west almost to the Rocky Mountains and northwest Alaska. Some range maps indicate that the species is found across the country. Robins winter as far south as the Gulf Coast west to Texas. In Ohio, they are found in good numbers in all 88 counties.

Description

The head, back, wings, and tail are a very dark gray to black in male robins and a slightly duller/lighter shade in females. The well-known breast is a light brown to brick red for adult males and a duller shade of red in females. The tail is tipped in white. Robins also have a slight white ring around their eyes. Legs and feet are a beige-gray.

Habitat and Habits

Robins prefer mowed areas in urban, suburban, and rural areas for most of their activities. Some will use open woodland areas with sparse understory or ground cover.

Robins are social birds, that when not breeding, will roost communally with other robins and occasionally with starlings and blackbirds.

Earthworms are their primary food source and robins use their sense of sight to find this meal. Robins are often seen pulling a worm from the ground or taking them off a road or sidewalk following a spring or summer rain-storm. Insects are another food source. If these sources are not available due to cold weather, robins will use fruit for food.

Reproduction and Care of Young

Robins breed and nest in virtually any mowed area with suitable nesting sites—ranging from trees, to buildings, to fence posts—nearby. Their nests are thick-walled structures made of mud reinforced with grass, leaves, twigs or man-made materials such as paper, twine, etc. The



inside of the nest is lined with grass. Nests are usually within 35 feet of the ground.

Robins are monogamous throughout the breeding season; however if something happens to her first mate, the female will choose another male for subsequent nests. Nest construction starts in late March or early April. Nests with eggs are seen as early as the first part of April. Incubation generally takes 13 days; the majority of fledglings have hatched by the last half of May. Many robins produce a second nest; young from this effort fledge in late July and early August.

Young robins are altricial, meaning they depend on their parents for their complete care. The female constructs the nest and incubates the eggs. Males help rear the nestlings and fledglings by providing food. The male's feeding role is more prominent late into the rearing of the first brood, as the female has diverted her attention to building a nest for the next brood. Young robins leave the nest at about 13 days.

Robins are not known to have any set breeding displays. There is some speculation that the female selects a suitable territory and subsequently the male inhabiting it.

Management Plans

The Division of Wildlife does not intentionally manage for this species. However, habitat for robins is provided as mowing occurs around buildings at our wildlife areas. Most homeowners "manage" for robins as well through mowing their lawns.

Viewing Opportunities

Robins can be seen virtually anywhere there is a mowed lawn and nearby nesting habitat which can include trees, buildings, lights, bridges, fence posts, and other man-made structures. Parks across the state are excellent viewing sites, particularly from late March through October.

Robins that reside in urban and suburban areas can be viewed without the use of cover or a blind. Woodland area robins are not as accustomed to human presence and activity and thus a more subtle approach is needed by the viewers.

Do Something Wild!

Robins are an important part of our ecosystem and contribute to the wildlife diversity of the state. Helping us to manage and research these species are the generous citizens of the state of Ohio. With money they either donated through the state income tax checkoff, the purchase of wildlife conservation license plates, or their direct contribution to the Endangered

Species Special Account, the Division is able to purchase critical habitat essential to sustaining wildlife diversity or to provide education materials and opportunities on wildlife to children and adults.

Contributions to our Endangered Species and Wildlife Diversity Program are accepted throughout the year. To make a donation, please send a check to: Endangered Species Special Account, Ohio Division of Wildlife, 2045 Morse Road, Bldg. G, Columbus, Ohio 43229-6693. All contributions, whether made on your income tax return or directly, are tax deductible.

At a Glance

Mating: Monogamous

Peak of Breeding Activity: April - July

Incubation Period: 13 days

Young Hatch: Late April-July; they are altricial, and require their parents' care

Number of Eggs: 3-4

Eggs Produced: 2 broods in a year are typical, but sometimes 3 are produced.

Adult Length: 10 inches

Adult Weight: Male - 4.34-5.11 ounces; Female - 4.23-4.97 ounces

Life Expectancy: Normally 1.7 years in the wild; there is a bird on record that lived 11 years in the wild (based on banding data)

Migration Patterns: Seasonal resident although there are winter roosts of robins in Ohio. Peak of the migration south is in October.

Feeding Periods: Probably the majority of feeding takes place in the morning and evenings. When feeding young they likely feed all day.

Typical Foods: Earthworms, insects and fruit

Native to Ohio: Yes

