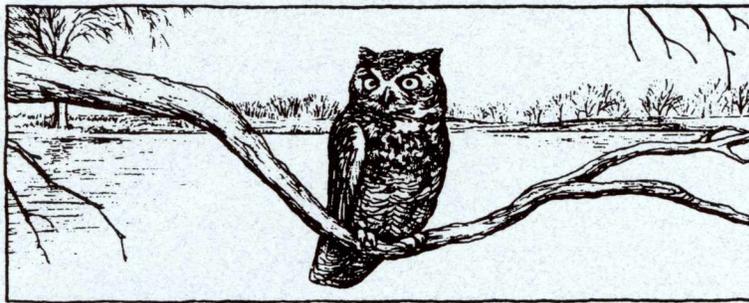


STILLMAN NEWSLETTER



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Warblers on the Wing

--Mark Spreyer

May 12th was, appropriately enough, the day after "Migratory Bird Day" and the migrants were putting on a show the likes of which I haven't seen for years. The stars of the show were the spring warblers, the feathered jewels of the bird world.

To avoid the severity of a northern winter, all of our warbler species spend their winters in warmer climates where insects can be hunted year-round. Some of the warblers we saw on May 12th are just passing through, while others might be here to stay.

For example, there were three male American Redstarts hopping around on the ground near the butterfly garden. They were so cooperative that binoculars were not needed to spot them. The males, with their glossy black bodies sporting patches of orange on their wings, sides and tails, look all the world like miniature Baltimore Orioles.

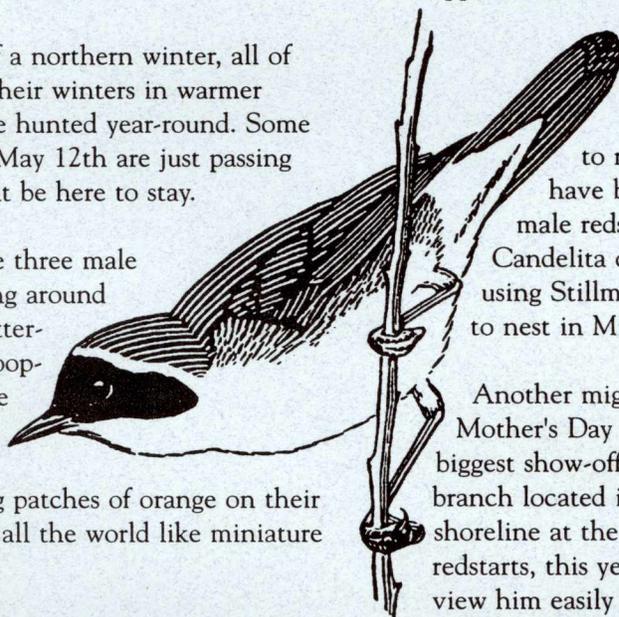
Whenever I see a redstart, I'm reminded of a female bird I once held in my hand. I had this opportunity because I'm a licensed bird bander (see **Programs** for more about banding). The female redstart can be recognized by its grayish yellow body with patches of bright yellow where the male has orange. This particular female weighed 9.5 grams (about 1/3 ounce) and was banded in May in northern Minnesota, where I was doing owl research. The fol-

lowing March she was recovered, dead, in the Central American country of Honduras. Although I've watched migrating birds for decades, it was this hands-on experience with a redstart that taught me a true appreciation for the monumental journey these diminutive creatures make twice a year.

Although redstarts have been known to nest in Chicagoland, no such nests have been observed here at Stillman. These male redstarts, known in Latin America as Candelita or "little torches," were probably just using Stillman as a rest area as they headed north to nest in Minnesota or Wisconsin.

Another migrant warbler that was easy to spot this Mother's Day was the Common Yellowthroat. The biggest show-off I saw was a bird perched on a dead branch located inches above the water along the shoreline at the north edge of the pond. Like the redstarts, this yellowthroat was so brazen you could view him easily without binoculars. He was intent on flitting across the water in pursuit of unseen insects.

When he returned to his perch, you could clearly see the whole bird. About five inches long, the Common Yellowthroat is olive green above, yellow below, and the mature male, which this bird clearly was, wears a black mask edged in white. Its distinctive mask has earned this warbler an appropriate nickname, "the lone ranger bird."



STILLMAN NATURE CENTER

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The yellowthroat spends its winters where many of us would like to spend our winters, along the Gulf coast and in the West Indies. This time of year, it can be found nesting across the United States and southern Canada including right here at Stillman.

So, if you come out for a summer's walk and hear a bird singing "witchity, witchity, witchity," take a close look for the lone ranger bird. If you do come, be prepared. Besides bringing binoculars and a field guide, wear boots since the Common Yellowthroat likes to haunt wet places. Of course, you might not see a warbler but there are many other colorful summer residents, such as the Baltimore Oriole, Black-crowned Night-Heron and Eastern Meadowlark, that you might spot.

Even if you don't find any of these birds, I bet you'll still enjoy yourself. If the weather cooperates, a day outdoors is always a day well spent. Oh yes, there's one more thing. If you are bothered by mosquitoes, put on some bug juice before you get here. If you don't, the insects will love you as much as the birds love them.

PROGRAMS

BIRD BANDING OPEN HOUSES

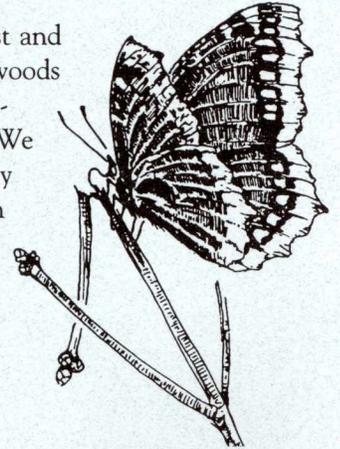
Watch Mark Spreyer (a licensed bird bander) measure, weigh and record data about our resident and migratory birds. Catching birds is not always predictable, so come prepared to hike the trails. If it is raining, the demonstration will be cancelled.



Date: Sundays; June 2, July 7,
& August 4
Time: 9:00AM to Noon
Fee: None

BUTTERFLIES, MOTHS & CATERPILLARS

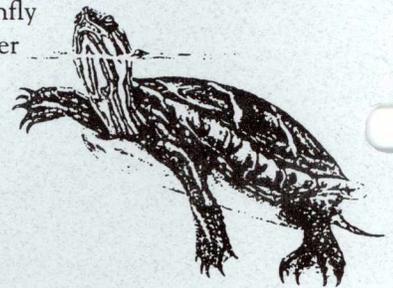
Join Stillman's naturalist and search the nature center's woods and fields for moths, butterflies and their caterpillars. We will visit Stillman's butterfly garden where you can learn about plants that attract these colorful insects.



Date: Sunday, June 30
Time: 2:00PM
Fee: None

POND LIFE: From the Bottom Up

This afternoon, with the help of long-handled dip nets, visitors will scoop into our pond in hopes of catching crayfish, dragonfly larvae, tadpoles and other rarely seen pond inhabitants. Dress in clothes you don't mind getting muddy.



Date: Sunday, July 14
Time: 2:00PM
Fee: None

**FOR MORE PROGRAM INFORMATION
OR TO MAKE RESERVATIONS,
PLEASE CALL (847) 428-OWLS.**

MEMBER'S DAY COMING THIS FALL

Look in the autumn newsletter for details about a special afternoon in September set aside just for volunteers and Friends of the Stillman Nature Center.

THANK YOU

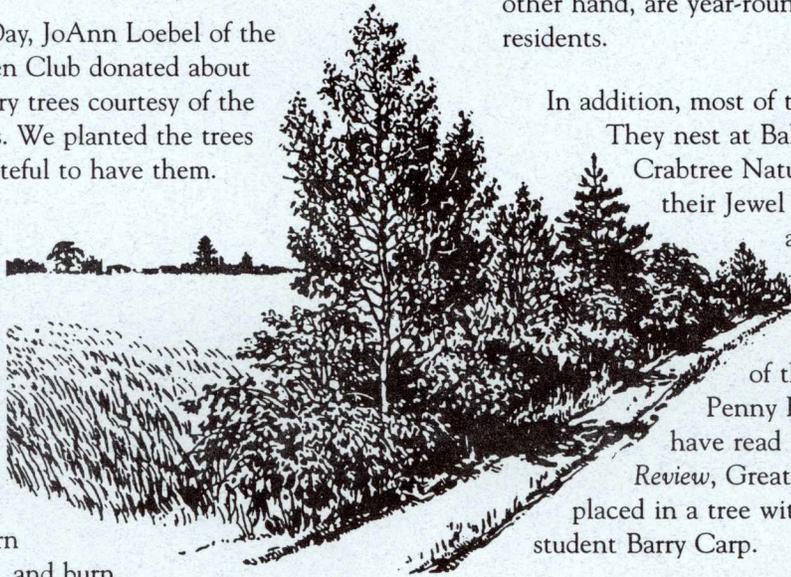
A long overdue thank you goes to Frank Wollney who donated bird feed and related supplies. If you're looking for a good squirrel baffle, he's the man to contact.

Last winter, as the birds were enjoying Frank's seed, they were watching volunteer Cathy Pankow and I trudge around the frozen landscape locating points on a compass course. This spring, Cathy donated ten flowering trees for Arbor Day. Thanks to Cathy for all of her help.

Speaking of Arbor Day, JoAnn Loebel of the South Barrington Garden Club donated about two dozen oak and cherry trees courtesy of the Garden Clubs of Illinois. We planted the trees immediately and are grateful to have them.

Those who helped with the planting included Daria Sapp, Susan Allman and Barbara Day. Daria along with Jill Kohler and new volunteer John Potter have been out on many a Thursday to cut and burn brush, plant wildflowers, and burn the prairie. And of course, Roger Laegeler continues his never-ending battle against European buckthorn. We can always use help with these activities. If you'd like to volunteer, please call 428-OWLS.

As good as our regular volunteers are, there are some jobs that are just too big to tackle without the right equipment and training. That's why this spring, we were so happy to have the help of the Arboriculture class from Harper College. They came, equipped with chain saws, dump truck, tree chipper and climbing gear, and removed branches that were hanging over trails and posing a safety risk. They also took care of other projects we never could have done without their help. Under the supervision of Professor "Doc" Metcalf, they accomplished much in just two days and we look forward to working with them in the future.



This is only a partial list of the thanks we owe. Look for more thank yous in upcoming newsletters.

WHY THE OWL?

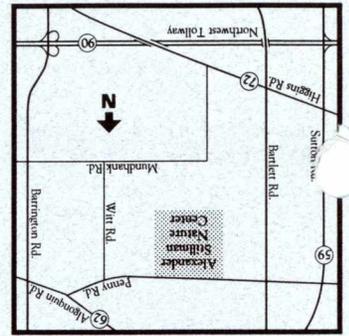
As you no doubt have already noticed, we replaced the heron that used to appear at the top of this newsletter with a Great Horned Owl. Why? Well, for one thing, herons are only here for about half the year. Like the migrants mentioned earlier in the newsletter, they spend the colder months basking in a southern bayou. Great Horned Owls, on the other hand, are year-round Stillman Nature Center residents.

In addition, most of the herons just shop here.

They nest at Baker's Lake or near the Crabtree Nature Center. We're glad to be their Jewel store but we feel a bit more attached to the Great Horned Owls that nest and hunt here. Two years ago, the owls nested at the north end of the property not far from Penny Road. This year, as you may have read in the May 2nd *Courier-Review*, Great Horned Owls used a nest I placed in a tree with the help of high school student Barry Carp.

Owls, by the way, don't build nests but reuse other birds' nests. Sometimes it's a abandoned crow's nest, sometimes a hawk's, and sometimes, as happened earlier this year at Stillman, they appropriate a laundry basket. O.K., it wasn't just a basket. Barry and I added sticks and chips but, when you look at the nest tree from below, you can't help but wonder why someone would put a laundry basket up there. Now, you know why.

Which brings us back to simplest reason for why we replaced the heron with an owl: the Stillman Nature Center phone number. It's (847)428-OWLS. So if you have any questions about a program we are offering or just something you saw in your yard, please don't hesitate to call. Can't remember the number? Just think of the bird on the Stillman newsletter!



(847) 428-OWLS
 South Barrington, IL 60010
 33 West Penny Road

STILLMAN
 nature center



OPEN SUNDAYS 9 - 4

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If you aren't already a Friend, please consider joining us.

- Yes, I'd like to become a Friend of the Stillman Nature Center. I enclose my tax deductible contribution of \$_____.
- I'd like to help as a volunteer with programs or land management at the Stillman Nature Center, please call me.
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