

For the Birds **(Of Kinnickinnic Township)**

By Tom Andersen

One of the joys of living in our Township is the flora and fauna we encounter on a daily basis. Our open fields, farmlands, prairie restorations, and woodlots host a great number of birds for our viewing enjoyment. Some of our feathered friends are with us year around. Other birds migrate through every spring to points north to nest and then migrate through again in the fall to points far south for the winter. Additionally, some of the migrants nest in Kinnickinnic Township.

In this and future articles I'll introduce you to some of our birds. All the pictures are taken right here in Kinnickinnic Township.



Hermit Thrush

The chubby little **Hermit Thrush** is a friendly little bird that usually shows up here sometime in April every year. They have a distinct habit of flicking their tail quickly up and then slowly down. They often occur in good numbers. Sometimes they're seen in yards mixed in with the Robins. Brushy areas of woodlots and low wet areas are preferred locations. It is not uncommon to see a dozen or more at one time when they first migrate through. If you approach them carefully you just might be able to get within a few feet. "Plump" is the best word to describe them.

The Hermit Thrush does nest in Kinnickinnic Township. They are usually ground nesters. As one might imagine, their nests are very well camouflaged.

The **Ovenbird** is a secretive little bird that can be very hard to spot. They are quite common but often go unnoticed. They are shy. They are most often identified by their call. Teacher, teacher, teacher, TEACHER is usually how it is described. Hence the common name "Teacher Bird". Trying to get a glimpse of this bird by following the call can be a frustrating experience. I've found the best way to spot them is to get close to the bird's call and then simply wait patiently, without much movement, for the bird to show itself. If you try to walk directly to the call they simply stop moving and their coloration makes them

difficult if not impossible to see. If flushed, watch carefully and mark where they land which is often close. Then move in closer with care. I'm reminded of the words of an old ornithologist friend. "Wait a while", he would advise. That's the best way to find them. Ovenbirds usually show up in mid-April to early May. They do nest in our township. They build a domed ground nest that looks like a little oven. They prefer brushy understory growth amongst the hardwoods.



Ovenbird

There are excellent resources for identifying our feathered friends. Three very good books that I find useful are *Sibley's Guide to Birds*, *Stokes Field Guide to Birds Eastern Region*, and *The Crossley ID Guide Eastern Birds*. The St. Croix Valley Bird Club is an active group of birders some of whom live in Kinnickinnic Township.

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