

Three Little Birds

By T. Andersen

For my money, some the best times to see our feathered friends coming back to Kinnickinnic Township is during the months of April, May, and early June. Some of these birds nest here and others are just passing through. Three of my favorite migrants are the American Redstart, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and the White-throated Sparrow.

When the American Redstart shows up in Kinnickinnic Township in April, I think about sitting at the Smokey Mermaid, a little open air restaurant in Belize City. Each time I have visited that spot in the winter, this little bird has entertained me while I'm dining.



American Redstart (Male)

Photos were taken in Kinnickinnic Township

I'd like to think that very same bird has flown 1900 miles just to visit me again here in Kinnickinnic Township. The summer range of this little Wood Warbler includes Kinnickinnic Township. A likely spot to find this bird would be along our very own Kinnickinnic River.



American Redstart (Female)

Lots of bug life in a trout stream makes for prime habitat for this bird. Watch for them flitting among the alders feeding on mayflies, caddisflies, and other streamborn insect life that emerges from the Kinni. They rarely sit still. They have an interesting habit of fanning their tail feathers and drooping their wings as they search for food. They do nest here.

One of the most common migrating Wood Warblers that pass through the Township is the Yellow-rumped Warbler.



Yellow-rumped Warbler

As early as late March some years, but most likely in April and through the month of May, the Yellow-rump Warbler makes an appearance. They might possibly nest here but more likely as close as Northern Wisconsin. Like many Warblers they dine primarily on insects. When caught off guard by an April snowstorm, they often

adapt to other food sources. I've observed them at suet feeders and interesting enough, dining on sap running from Maple trees! They are usually rather tame and photographing them is often quite easy.

Another common spring migrant is *Old Sam Peabody*. Well, the real name is the White-throated Sparrow. Depending on the year, they can be seen usually from early April well into May.



White-throated Sparrow (Adult Male)

Their song is one of my favorites. It sounds like *Old Sam Peabody, Peabody, Peabody*. They most likely nest in Northern Wisconsin and then in Canada. Of course, once they reach the breeding grounds in Canada, the Canukes claim the bird is singing *pure sweet Canada, Canada, Canada*. I've not often heard their song here when they are passing through, but I hear it often in April and May when fishing some of my favorite streams in Northern Wisconsin. They prefer shrubby woods edges and brushy understory.

If you like birds, spring is a great time to be out looking. Spotting migratory birds as they come through is often best done by sitting patiently in the woods or streamside with a good pair of binoculars. Bring a comfortable stool and perhaps a cup of coffee and enjoy. When it comes to

bird watching my motto is: Find the food, find the birds. Watch for birds flying back and forth from one side of the Kinnickinnic River to the other. They are catching insects that are emerging from the river. Some birds find and use "favorite" feeding areas. Usually these are particular trees or brush piles that have a goodly number of insects to dine on. Birds will return again and again to the same spot. I find these spots, get comfortable, and wait. It is usually not long before they return and give me good viewing or a photo opportunity.

If you are wandering in the woods and grasslands this spring looking for birds, make sure you take precautions against ticks. We have the black legged deer tick and tick-borne diseases are common in this area. Use a good spray repellent before venturing out. I lightly saturate around the cuffs of my pants and pant legs and around the cuffs of my shirt. A bit on the back of my hand to rub on my neck and I'm good to go. Be religious about this.

Get out this spring! Kinnickinnic Township is a great birding destination. If you don't have a woodlot of your own, there are hundreds of acres of public land in the Township and a beautiful trout stream running right through it!