

Graber, 1983; Joliet Park District, 1926; and Kleen, 1974, 1984, 1991/92) does contain records from Will County for all three species during various breeding seasons, but there is no mention of nests or young for any of these species. (See separate article for Ring-billed Gull account in this issue: A Tale of Two Colonies.)

Hooded Warbler

While birding Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve near University Park in eastern Will County on 21 June 1993, I flushed a female Hooded Warbler from the forest floor. The female was holding a long strand of nesting material in its bill. The warbler's behavior suggested that it was not merely collecting nesting material, but was attempting to deliver it to a location close to where I stood.

After a cautious search of the immediate area, I located a fairly well-hidden nest 20 inches above the forest floor in multiflora rose. The nest was constructed with bark strips, leaves, and other plant materials; but the finer nest-lining materials were not yet in place and no eggs were inside. The nest appeared surprisingly bulky and unkempt. The placement and construction reminded me of an Indigo Bunting nest, but the white cottony material which covered portions of the outside reminded me more of a Willow Flycatcher's nest.

When I returned on 30 June, the nest contained three white oval-shaped eggs with fine and coarse chestnut spots. The eggs were somewhat wreathed at the larger end. The nest was wet and had lost its cottony appearance.

The Hooded Warbler nest was in an upland oak-hickory section of the preserve bordered on two sides by open fields in varying stages of succession. The nest was only approximately 24 feet from the nearest woodland edge. Some of the more unusual associate species in the immediate vicinity were Veery, White-eyed Vireo, and Blue-winged Warbler.

Yellow-headed Blackbird

My typical drive to work each day takes me past a marshy area of the Rock Run in Joliet and Crest Hill known to local birders as Theodore Marsh. As I drove past the marsh on 28 April 1993, I was surprised to see a male Yellow-headed Blackbird in the marsh south of Theodore Street in Joliet. I returned the next day and observed the male actively calling and chasing Red-winged Blackbirds and Yellow-rumped Warblers out of the west end of this



Male Yellow-headed Blackbird defending fledged young, Theodore Marsh, Will County, first confirmed breeding record for the county. 6 June 1993.

Photo by Joe B. Milosevich.

marsh. Clearly, this aggressive male was defending territory.

On 12 May, I observed both a male and female Yellow-headed Blackbird at the same location. I watched the female land near the road where I was standing. About 15 feet through the cattails was a nest-like clump. Donning chest waders I returned on 16 May and found four oval greenish white eggs in the nest. The eggs were heavily marked over the entire surface with brown and gray fine and coarse spots. The nest was attached to a cluster of cattails 20 inches above water. Water depth was 30 inches below the nest.

The nest still contained four eggs on 22 May, but on 6 June it was empty. Heavy excrement on the rim of the nest and the anxious behavior of both adults strongly indicated that fledged young were nearby. Two large young were observed flying short distances in the west end of the marsh on 19 July. While wading this same end of the marsh on 20 July, I not only observed the adults and young again, but also discovered a second Yellow-headed Blackbird nest with one egg. This nest was approximately 100 feet away from the first nest and in an area farther away from the road that supported denser cattail growth. A small puncture in the egg and the nest's poor condition suggested that the nest may have been abandoned. Yellow-heads occasionally have been known to have their nests destroyed by Marsh Wrens, but apparently are also able to recognize this species and exclude it from their own territories (Ehrlich 1988). A male Marsh Wren was heard singing in close proximity to this nest on at least two occasions.

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