



A likely Swainson's Warbler nest was discovered 12 July 2009 in giant cane near where a male was singing. No eggs were found in the nest, nor was the warbler seen building it.

*Photo by
Matt McKim-Louder.*

At each canebrake located within the study areas, we used 5-minute call-playback surveys to determine the presence of Swainson's Warblers. Songs were broadcast adjacent to canebrakes using audio recordings provided by the Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds (Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY) and an MP3 player with portable speakers. Songs used were from a male recorded 28 April, 1957 in West Virginia (recordist: William W. H. Gunn) and chip notes used were from a different male recorded 7 April, 1981 in Louisiana (recordist: Theodore A. Parker III).

Nest searches were conducted with one to three people in appropriate nesting habitat (i.e. cane or dense vines) where male Swainson's Warblers were detected. For each bout of nest searching, searchers used behavioral cues and visual inspection of all nest-like objects to detect the presence of nesting activity.

Results

Song playback surveys of 115 distinct patches with suitable habitat throughout the southern Illinois study areas detected Swainson's Warblers in two specific patches (1.7% of total surveyed) during 19 May through 27 July 2009. Within these two specific patches, behavioral observations and nest searching resulted in:

Individual Accounts

On 2 June, 2009, while searching for canebrakes in a swamp located in southern Johnson County, the potential song of a Swainson's Warbler was heard about 200m from an observer's location. This individual was singing within a recently planted (< 10 years) IDNR forest regeneration plot with a tree density resembling the stem-density associated with most observed canebrakes. After using song playback, the bird was confirmed to be a male Swainson's Warbler and the bird repeatedly responded aggressively

within close range (often < 4 m). A subsequent playback survey of the area and immediate vicinity on 12 June failed to detect the presence of the male. However, on 22 June, the same male (determined by distinctive song quality) was relocated without song playback about 100 m from the previous location in similar habitat.

Nest searching for this individual was conducted on 29 June and 15 July. On each visit, two researchers followed the singing male without playback for nearly four hours. No observations of a female or behaviors indicating nesting activity were detected. While observing this male foraging at close range, we heard the quiet "subsong", a barely audible variable warbling described as sounding similar to American Goldfinches (*Carduelis tristis*) (Brown and Dickson 1994). Although many nests of other species were located within this specific habitat, no putative Swainson's Warbler nest was located.