

26# Red-winged Blackbirds

Red-winged blackbirds nest among the cattails in the Class of 1918 Marsh. Males are black birds about the size of a robin, with a distinctive red patch, edged with bright yellow, on each wing. Females do not look anything like the males. They're a little smaller and not even black. They look more like enormous brown sparrows!

You can see many red-wings from early March to late September. Look around and see if you can spot males perched on top of a cattail stalk. Females are not easy to spot. They hop around in the cattails close to the water, where they spend their time incubating eggs, and tending to their young.

If you are visiting the marsh in the spring, it is a noisy place. The territorial call of the male red-winged blackbird is distinctive. Many people think it sounds like the sound of a rusty gate. Listen!

Males call and display their red wings as they defend their territories among the cattails. They do this to attract a female. Each male tries to stake out a territory with an abundant food supply. Blackbirds eat a variety of insects. A good territory means that he and the female have a good chance of raising a large healthy brood.

Take a few minutes and listen to the sounds of the marsh. Do you hear the red-wings? What other sounds of nature do you hear?