

Nature Notes

Singers In The Park



Many of us look forward to the return of song birds as winter slowly leaves the East Kootenay. In the Kimberley Nature Park, the beginning of April is when walks through the woods bring smiles as we listen for the first joyful songs. These songs, usually sung by the male of the species, let other males know that a territory is occupied and lets the female know that nests are available for scrutiny. The best nests would likely lead to successful mating.

One of the earliest songsters in the Nature Park would be the Winter Wren. This drab, mottled brown, member of the wren family, is only four inches long with an upright tail but has a voice that fills the woods. Listen for it as you enter the Park at the Higgins entrance or head up Jimmy Russell Road from the campground. Both of these wooded areas have a creek nearby with dense shrubbery offering the habitat that Winter Wrens prefer in our area. As the snow melts, the Winter Wren returns after spending the winter further south or at a lower elevation. Their song is easily recognizable for its bubbly, exuberant trills that lasts for several seconds. It seems to always lighten the spirit!

A Winter Wren is seldom found more than a few meters off the ground. Look for it feeding on insects alongside the creek or scurrying in the undergrowth. Well concealed nests can be built in tree cavities, upturned roots or the bank of the creek. Dummy nests are sometimes built as a protective measure from predators. Up to six eggs can be laid that are incubated for approximately sixteen days. The hatchlings remain in the nest for another couple of weeks. By October, the family is heading to their wintering grounds.



The Ruby-Crowned Kinglet, Townsend Solitaire, Yellow-Rumped Warbler, Song Sparrow, Western Tanager, and Swainson Thrush are also renowned singers in the spring!

Visit the website at www.rockies.net/kimberley/naturepark/ for a hard copy or more information about the park and events.