This male Red-winged Blackbird is in full song with red epaulets exposed.

Magee Marsh
2013

Female Red-winged Blackbirds return later in the spring than males.

Foxburg, PA
2013

Male and female Red-winged Blackbirds pose after having established a relationship.

Duck Hollow
2020
A flock of male Red-winged Blackbirds just returning to Pennsylvania in March 2014.

Independence Marsh 2014

A late male RWBL stopped over to eat in my backyard after his migration from the South. Note: Red epaulets covered.

Squirrel Hill
May 2017

A male begins to establish his territory with red shoulders ablaze and singing as it flies.

West Mifflin, PA 2024
This male has his own territory, and he’s declaring it from a high point with wings extended to make himself look bigger.

Pymatuning Area
2008

This female is a part of a harem in a reedy area.

Lower Buffalo Creek
2011

Here’s what it’s all about to Red-winged Blackbirds – procreation.

Ypsilanti, MI
2021
A Red-tailed Hawk carrying a meal was merely flying over a pond where blackbirds were nesting, but a fierce male came after it to be sure it kept going. West Mifflin 2019

Another Red-tail was perched on a pole in Duck Hollow, but several birds including this pair of Red-wing males disapproved of its presence. The poor hawk looks confused as he gets it from both sides. Duck Hollow 2018

Males in a retention pond in West Mifflin were not pleased with a human (me) walking around their territories. They ganged up on this unwanted intruder. Note: Red shoulders are covered as the pair confront a common enemy. West Mifflin 2024
After writing my *Observations* article, I found two nesting sites that did not follow the “rule” of nests in reeds over water.

**AN UNUSUAL NEST**

A female Red-wing was bringing a caterpillar to its nestling or fledgling hidden in a *Tree of Heaven* tree.

Allegheny River Trail Park
Aspinwall, PA
2024

She did not like being photographed and showed the photographer her displeasure.

Allegheny River Trail Park
Aspinwall, PA
2024

She finally settled down enough to go into the tree and feed her hungry chick(s).

Allegheny River Trail Park
Aspinwall, PA
2024
MOST UNUSUAL NESTS

This field is a half mile from the nearest water, a small retention pond. It is covered with crown vetch, ox-eye daisies, various grasses, and other wildflowers (weeds). Yet, it contains probably three Red-winged Blackbird nests. (By the way, the rocky, weed-covered land is for sale.)

West Mifflin 2024

A male Red-wing sits in a leafless tree overlooking this field. Why?

West Mifflin 2024

He has a harem of females in the field. No water around but lots of room and cover for nests. One female sits on the stalk of a wildflower.

West Mifflin 2024
Here was a fledgling clinging to a cattail in a reed field above water.

Lower Buffalo Creek
2008

Another female in the waterless field perched above her nest or fledgling. Forays into the field found no nests or offspring. However, the parents buzzed the explorer as if there were offspring or nests to find.

West Mifflin
2024

A first-fall Red-winged Blackbird shows orange instead of red epaulets and brown rimmed feathers on its back. Soon it will migrate South with other first-year birds.

Frick Park
October 2012
References:


* An older name for Red-winged Blackbird is Eastern Redwing.