

An Unsuccessful Nesting of a Red Crossbill Pair

- ✓ On April 22, 1982 Dennis Thompson saw a pair of Red Crossbills carrying nesting material into a Douglas Fir south of the Art Center in Greenwood Park. They were building the nest at roughly 20 feet above the ground. (I am not very good at heights!)

On the morning of April 23 I went over to the park and looked over the group of fir trees where the nest was. I could not see the nest or the birds and had about given up. I went over to the woods east of there and when I turned around I saw two birds fly into one of the trees. I ran closer and saw a female Crossbill working around in quite a substantial looking nest. She stayed for several minutes and then flew away. After a few minutes I started to leave and was surprised to see the female on the ground only a few feet from me. She seemed quite tame. I froze and watched her. She hopped about with a small twig in her mouth and then she picked up a fluffy white feather which stuck out on both sides of her bill like a big moustache. As she flew to the nest with her trophy the male flew out of the tree above me and landed out of sight in the tree. Again I could see her working about in the nest which looked ready for occupancy.

On Sunday afternoon I went to the site but did not see the birds.

At about ten o'clock on Saturday, April 25 I went to the area. I soon heard his call notes and the two of them flew into the tree--she to the nest and he to the very top of the tree where he sat with his back to me. Later that same morning John Hoogerheide saw both of them.

I did not get back to the site until about 11 a.m. Friday April 30. I stayed around for some time and there was no sign of the Crossbills and the nest looked as though it had been molested by some varmint. There were still remnants of the nest and a few strings showing. I think the birds have not been seen again and the nest is completely gone now (May 13).

✓ Yellow-throated Warbler in Walnut Woods State Park

On May 3 1982 Charlotte Scott and I were birding in Walnut Woods. Not far from the entrance we heard a warbler song and finally spotted him high in a walnut tree. The leaves were not out at all so we had a good clear view of him with the sun at our backs. He stayed in the same tree singing merrily for some time. It was a handsome Yellow-throated Warbler. I had been up at the Ledges on April 26th where the Mooneys and I saw the Yellow-throated Warbler singing high in a tree in the same area where we had seen him last spring. As far as I know this may be a first record for Polk County. Dick Mooney went out the next day but did not find him. I have not had a chance to return.

Mrs. Dwight Brooke
126 - 51st St.
Des Moines, Iowa 50312

May 14, 1982

Dear Tom Kent:

I am sending you a play by play account of the Red Crossbill nest insofar as I know it. It was a big disappointment to have it fail. Mr. Wickizer at 339-42nd st. had a pair of Red Crossbills coming to their finch seed feeder for several weeks this spring. The male looked to me to be a young one as he was more of an orangey red. This is about three or four blocks from the nest site in Greenwood. I doubt that it was the same pair. The rump of the nesting male looked to be a bright red as I viewed him in the crest of the tree.

I am also including a report of a Yellow-throated Warbler since there are not too many records of that species in Iowa.

We have still not found any large warbler waves here in Des Moines and I am still missing a number of species for my spring list. Yesterday the Mooneys and I found a very large number of the dull brown thrushes on the hill back of the art center in Greenwood. The ones I got a bead on were Swainson's but I presume there were Gray-cheeked, too. The only warbler in evidence there was the Tennessee. None of us had ever seen thrushes in such profusion.

I loved your article on Birding Iowa. How I wish I could get around that much!

Good Birding!

Mary art Brooke