

American Robin – by Sally Cureton

A couple of days ago I discovered a wonderful sight - an American Robin had built her nest in the bottom of a wreath next to my front door. There are three shiny light blue eggs resting there. Her presence made me curious to know a bit more about these birds. As a member of the Thrush family, they are large-eyed, with slender bills. Other members of this family include the Eastern Bluebird, Veery, and all thrushes, including one of my favorite birds, the Wood Thrush. Found nearly worldwide, these are true songbirds, and fine singers. A Robin's song comes in short phrases, rising and falling and is frequently quite continuous.

For food they eat insects, worms, snails, berries and fruit. They will nest various places including buildings and other structures that will offer them sufficient support. Robins will produce two, sometimes three, broods each year. The male will care for the first brood once it fledges while the female incubates the second clutch. In the past they were poisoned by DDT. They would eat worms that had consumed leaves from trees sprayed for Dutch elm disease in the 1950's. They would either die or be unable to reproduce as a result. Under ideal circumstances a robin could live for 14 years. The reality is that most live for only 2 years.

The acquired their name from the early English colonists who called any bird with a noticeable amount of red or russet in its plumage a Robin. Many other birds were initially also known by this name. The bluebird, which has a russet breast, was deemed to be a Robin the Towhee was labeled a Ground Robin, and the Baltimore oriole was called the Golden Robin. Even the Cedar Waxwing was called the Canadian Robin. Fortunately alternate names were eventually adopted, but those must have been confusing times for bird lovers.