

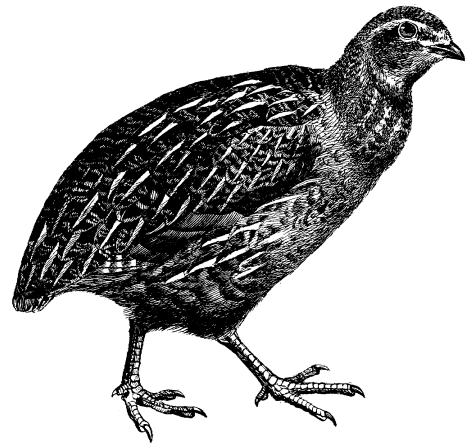
[From Summer 2001]

## Wildlife Through The Window

Would you believe it? I saw my first-ever blue grosbeak while sitting at the computer in my office here at the refuge. Imagine pecking away at the keyboard, intent on the words flowing across the screen, when a streak of blue flashes by to land in a blooming cherry tree outside the window. Who wouldn't take time to investigate further? I have made many wildlife discoveries while working in the office, usually alerted by movement or the rustling of leaves out the window.

Although it's always more satisfying to explore outdoors, wildlife watching through the window can provide interesting opportunities to observe animals while remaining relatively undetected. I was in awe of the brilliant blue plumage of the male blue grosbeak as he picked at the delicate cherry blossoms in search of a tasty morsel. His brown wing bars and conical beak were easily observed from my window seat. I was even more enthralled when the female joined him, her camouflage coloration of brown giving her a subtle beauty.

On sunny days, butterflies of all types flutter by the window. American painted ladies flit from flower to flower, bright yellow and black tiger swallowtails puddle on the ground sipping up minerals, and cabbage whites whiz by causing me to grab my binoculars for a closer look. One day, something unusual caught my attention as it worked the compact flowers of the dandelions that grow profusely in the yard. It flew like a hummingbird, forwards and backwards, with a blur of wing-beats, but had a stout furry body like a moth. The creature turned out to be a bumblebee sphinx moth, a species that frequents nectar-producing plants and is often mistaken for a hummingbird.



A rustle of leaves close to the ground caught my attention one morning. As I looked out to see what was causing the commotion, a turtle poked its head out from underneath the heat pump. A trip outside to investigate further revealed the brilliant red pattern on the shell and yellow ear stripes of a painted turtle. Now that was a surprise! I'm still not sure what a water-loving turtle was doing so far away from water, but it was one of the most brightly colored turtles I've ever seen.

One warm sunny afternoon a pair of bobwhites strolled by, picking up insects, and pausing to take a short dust bath in a sandy area. The male had striking black and white stripes on his head, while the female was buff and brown. Although they weren't calling that day, their familiar Bob-white whistle is a common sound here on the refuge.

I've seen iridescent grackles rustle in the fallen leaves, turkey vultures soar over head, bluebirds perch on bare branches, a great crested flycatcher posing as if for a photo, woodcock dancing, and Carolina wrens and hummingbirds peeking in the window - all beyond my computer screen. When I can't get outside, watching wildlife through the window is the next best thing.

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