



Nature Discovery

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Southern Illinois Nest-Finding Eco Tour June 4-11, 2011



The Ovenbird is one warbler affected by brood parasitism.
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For over 20 years, ornithologist, Jeff Hoover has been monitoring the nesting success of neo-tropical migrant songbirds (warblers, vireos, flycatchers, thrushes) in the forests of southern Illinois, especially in relation to brood parasitism by the brown-headed cowbird. His research has been highlighted on PBS programs. Cowbirds find active nests, remove the host's eggs and replace them with their own. As a result, songbirds spend the breeding season raising young cowbirds instead of their own offspring. Dr. Hoover has found that forest-nesting songbirds have declined dramatically due to the parasitism.

Each breeding season, Dr. Hoover's research team monitors as many active nests of Acadian Flycatchers, Prothonotary Warblers, and other songbirds as possible. His sample size is limited only by how many can be located at the onset of nesting, before the eggs hatch. Locating nests requires hundreds of man hours, concentrated in a two-week period in early June. The more nests located and marked within this period, the better. The nest's contents (host and cowbird eggs) are noted and the nest's location marked. Dr. Hoover's research team will then return to monitor and collect data from all marked nests over the ensuing weeks until the young have fledged.



Dr. Jeff Hoover readies to launch a newly mist-netted, and banded Prothonotary Warbler.

Nature Discovery is leading a small group of participants to assist Dr. Hoover by acting as an extra nest-finding team during the week of June 6-10. We'll explore the lush forests and cypress swamps of southern Illinois with our eyes and ears open to our main focus - a "treasure hunt" for songbirds and their nests.

COST: \$900, includes all transportation, lodging, breakfast and lunch each day. Discount for double-occupancy. A maximum enrollment of four ensures a personal experience for all. Contact us for more details or to reserve a space.