

Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)

Cardinals have steadily extended their range northward and now southern Ontario enjoys the beauty of these birds year round. The dashing red male is complemented by a female clad primarily in tones of brown and cream with subtle red accents.

At Colonel Sam Smith Park, look for them in brushy areas that not only offer some cover and safety, but also serve as their favourite nesting locations. Starting as early as January, when days are lengthening, the males begin to sing in order to defend their territory. Females tend to sing during the breeding season before nesting begins.

Females build the nests and brood the eggs, but both parents play an active role in feeding the young. Males may feed fledging chicks, while females are actively involved with laying a second clutch of eggs.

Ancient legend predicts that a Cardinal flying upward toward the sun will bring an observer good luck.

Cardinals are regular visitors to bird feeders and especially enjoy black oil seed and peanuts.