

A person in a white shirt and suspenders on the left and a person in a blue jacket on the right are holding hands. The background is a soft, cloudy sky with a hint of a field at the bottom.

Lost *and*
Found

SUZANNE
WOODS
FISHER

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *A SEASON ON THE WIND*

Lost *and* Found

SUZANNE
WOODS
FISHER



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Uniformity is not the same thing as unity.

DAVID STOLTZFUS,
bishop to the Old Order Amish
church of Stoney Ridge

Meet the Cast

Micah Weaver—(age twenty) Has developed a reputation in the bird world for his remarkable ability to spot and identify birds, especially rare birds. Started a business as a field guide for avid birders. When not birding, he repairs shoes at the Lost Creek Farm Shoe Repair Shop.

Trudy Yoder—(age seventeen) Avid birder, works at the Bent N’ Dent store. Rather fond of Micah Weaver.

David Stoltzfus—Amish bishop to the little Amish church of Stoney Ridge, husband to Birdy, brother to Dok, son to Tillie Yoder Stoltzfus, father to many—both his own children and his flock.

Birdy Stoltzfus—Wife of David, mother to Noah and Timmy, passionate birder.

Dok (Ruth) Stoltzfus—The only doctor who makes house calls in Stoney Ridge. Sister to David, daughter to Tillie, wife to police officer Matt Lehman. While in her teens, Dok left her Amish upbringing to pursue higher education and a medical career. Over time, she has been reunited with her family.

Tillie Yoder Stoltzfus—Mother to Bishop David Stoltzfus and Dok Ruth Stoltzfus. Known for being a teensy bit difficult to get along with.

Hank Lapp—Needs no introduction. You'll hear him coming.

Edith Fisher Lapp—Hank's wife. Best to stay out of her way.

Billy Blank—(age twenty-one) Young Amish goatherd. Fainting goats, to be specific. (No one understands why.)

Shelley Yoder—(age twenty) Trudy's older sister. Ran away from home in *A Season on the Wind* to pursue a singing career in Nashville.

Zeke Lehman—Bishop of the Beachy Amish church (read Author Note in the back if you'd like to know more about the Beachy Amish).

Dave Yoder—Amish farmer, father to Trudy and Shelley, husband to Bonnie.

Titus and Alice Gingerich—Swartzentruber farmers in Tennessee (read Author Note in the back if you'd like to know more about the Swartzentrubers).

Tattooed woman—Runs the tiny city hall of Stoney Ridge. President of the local Audubon Society. Has political ambitions. Mo McIntosh is her actual name. She wants you to remember it.

Birder's Glossary

accidental: a bird that shows up where it shouldn't (aka casual)

bins: slang for binoculars

casual: birds that fly from wherever to a wrong place (aka accidental)

chase: to chase after a reported rarity

chick: newly hatched baby bird

clutch: eggs in a nest

dip: a rare bird that a birder missed seeing

fledgling: a young bird with wing feathers large enough for flight

irruption migration: when a species migrates to an area in large numbers based mainly on food supply

lifer: a first-time sighting for a birder

LBJs (Little Brown Jobs): a blanket term for bland songbirds that are difficult to distinguish

nemesis bird: a species that constantly eludes a birder

jinx bird: a relatively common bird that has managed to elude a person's life list despite repeated attempts on their part to find that species

rookery: a breeding colony

snags: dead trees

spark bird: a species that triggers a lifelong passion for birding

twitcher: a hard-core birder who goes to great lengths to see a species and add it to his or her list

vagrant: straying well outside of the regular ecological range

whitewash: excrement outside of nest



The horse knew the way to the Bent N' Dent store so well that David Stoltzfus only had to hold the buggy reins loosely in his hand, his mind free to wander on this warm August morning. To ponder, to mull, to consider. Mostly, to fret.

David couldn't fathom how quickly things had changed in Stoney Ridge. His horse turned right on the narrow country road that led to the store, and the summer sun hit him right in the face, making him squint. Normally, on the pleasant drive into work, he could hand off his burdens of worry to the Lord and arrive at the store with a lightened heart. Not today. It was only eight in the morning and that familiar heaviness he'd been experiencing lately weighed him down. It was weighing the whole church down.

Last evening, Gideon Smucker had come to his house to tell him that he and Sadie were moving their large family to Ohio. That would be the third family to move away in the last few months.

Losing the Smucker family was a particularly hard blow. Gideon was a beloved schoolteacher, one of the few male career teachers among the Amish. Sadie baked goods and sold them at a bake stand at the farmers' market. But they just couldn't make ends meet any longer, Gideon told David, not after . . . Stroking his beard, he had paused. "Well, you know."

David knew. They couldn't make ends meet after the Beachy

Amish church had moved into Stoney Ridge last year. The Old Order Amish felt squeezed out . . . by another Amish church. “Is your mind settled? Couldn’t we consider some options to help you stay put? You and Sadie, and your children, you’re all greatly loved here.”

“I already accepted a position at a school in Millersburg. For this fall term.” His face scrunched up. “I’m sorry about the short notice.”

David felt as if he’d been punched in the gut. It was late August. School would be starting soon. Who could replace Gideon? The church population had dropped so much in Stoney Ridge that they’d whittled down to one school, one teacher. It was a full classroom of pupils, but there wasn’t a teacher waiting in the wings. When Gideon had been hit by the flu last winter, David’s wife Birdy had substituted for him. His mind started racing, mentally scanning through the church for possible teachers, coming up empty. “I’m hopeful . . . you have someone in mind to take your place? A recent graduate?” Anyone? Even to his own ears, it sounded like a desperate plea.

Gideon didn’t meet his gaze. Or maybe he couldn’t. “I wish I did. It doesn’t feel right to leave you in a tight spot. Some of the youth are needed at home, but most are working out. They can make more money working out . . . and lately that seems to be the only thing that matters.” Gideon hesitated, as if reluctant to say more. “Honestly, we don’t want to move. We love Stoney Ridge. But it isn’t just about making ends meet.” He rose from the rocking chair and walked to the top of the porch steps, then turned back to face David. “Sadie and I have prayed over our children since the day they were born. Our heart’s desire is that they would join our church. If we stayed . . .”

Another long pause. “If you stayed,” David prompted.

“If we stayed, we’re worried our children would lean to the Beachy Amish. I see it in the classroom among the upper grades. I hear the pupils talking about cell phones and computers. I see

what such temptations are doing to the Old Order children.” He raked a hand through his hair before plopping on his hat. “Two years ago, it wasn’t that way. It feels like . . .”

David filled in the missing words. “It feels like someone’s opened a Pandora’s box.”

“Yes. Exactly.” Gideon’s eyes lit. “Sometimes I think it would be easier if it was an Englisch church that moved in. More separate, more distinct. To our youth, the Beachys look mighty tempting.” He adjusted his hat brim. “Funny thing is, I can understand the attraction. Maybe that’s what has me worried. If I were a teenager, I’d be chomping at the bit to go to the Beachys. All their bells and whistles are mighty appealing.”

Already, there’d been three Old Order youth who chose to be baptized as Beachy Amish. More to come, no doubt, attracted like bees to flowers. Parents were raising the alarm bell, spewing their worries at David. “They’re tempting our children to the ways of the world” or “They’re stealing them from us!”

Gideon started down the steps and stopped at the bottom to look back up at David. “This very morning,” he said, “Sadie kept trying to water the garden with a bucket.”

David settled back in the chair, waiting. Gideon had a round-about way of drilling home a point and it was usually worth the wait. But conversations with the earnest schoolteacher required more than a little patience. You could hurry speaking, but you couldn’t hurry listening.

“She’d fill it to the top from the hose bib,” Gideon said. “By the time she’d crossed the yard to get to the flower bed, half the water was gone. It took her the longest while to figure out the bottom of the bucket had a leak.”

There was probably a point to this story, there usually was to Gideon’s stories, but David wasn’t sure what it might be.

“It occurred to me that you, my friend, are holding a leaky bucket.”

David’s eyebrows rose. “How’s that?”

“More and more families are going to be leaving Stoney Ridge.”

David pushed back and forth on the front porch rocker, back and forth. Gideon’s warning wasn’t a new thought. He could see what was coming.

“Pardon my bluntness, but you can’t ignore this much longer.”
Ignore it?

From anyone else, that remark would’ve felt like a sharp elbow jab. David knew that many considered his leadership to be too passive, too accommodating. But from gentle Gideon, the advice was meant for his good. “The bucket is leaking,” he said.

Gideon gave a nod. “The future of this church hinges on how you lead everyone, how you hold it all together. You know how that old saying goes. *Aller Mann fer sich un der Deiwel fer die Iwwriche.*” *Everyone for himself and the Devil takes the rest.*

As David watched Gideon drive off in his buggy, he wished he had thought to remind him that he needn’t worry about the church. The church belonged to God and God alone.

But Gideon knew that. He might be much younger than David, but he had a mature faith. His warning about the encroaching temptations of the world was worth heeding. As was his remark that David couldn’t ignore this any longer.

The horse made a sharp right turn down the road that led to the store, tugging David out of his daze, back to the present. Somewhat. His mind kept returning to Gideon’s warning. The Plain People weren’t perfect. Not at all. But one thing they’d always done well was community. People took care of each other. They looked after each other. They had each other’s back.

But a shift was in the offing.

It started over a year ago when a Beachy Amish church group moved to Stoney Ridge. To outsiders, they seemed similar to the Old Order Amish—head coverings for women, beards for men, no television or radio—though insiders knew the Beachy Amish leaned toward conservative Mennonites. Progressive, at least, compared to the Old Order ways. Others might call them liberal. The Beachy

Amish considered themselves to be moderate. Tractors in the fields, filtered internet and electricity in the houses and buggy shed.

Even though all Anabaptists could trace their roots to the Dutch priest Menno Simons, most Old Order Amish considered other denominations to be outside the sheepfold. David had a more generous outlook, based on the kindness and mercy of God he'd experienced. He liked to think that all Plain People had more in common—a love of God—than what separated them.

The horse stopped under the shade tree in front of the Bent N' Dent, its favorite spot to pass the time. David climbed out and gave him a few long strokes down his big neck before tying the reins to the hitching post. "I won't be long, old boy. Just opening the store and waiting until Trudy arrives for work."

He thanked God for Trudy Yoder, something he'd done daily for the last two months, since his mother had fallen and broken her hip and he was needed at home more often. Trudy was one of those rare employees who saw what needed to be done before it had to be pointed out to her.

He unlocked the door to the Bent N' Dent and went inside, closing the door behind him. The shades were drawn to keep the store as cool as possible during the long summer day ahead, and for a moment he could see nothing. He stopped, waiting for his eyes to adjust. It didn't take long to grow accustomed to the darkness—in less than a minute, the rockers by the cold woodstove emerged into sight, the shelves, the counter with the rusty-but-still-working register.

He paused, struck by the relevance. Gideon's remark that he couldn't ignore the situation much longer drifted once again through his mind. Discouraged, he took in a deep breath and let it go.

It didn't take long to grow accustomed to the darkness.

How good was that line? A smile tugged at the corner of his lips. There was a sermon in that sentence.

Today was the best day of Trudy Yoder's life. She knew that Micah Weaver's feelings for her were changing. She knew this because she had read it in his bird log. Read it from front to back cover and didn't even feel too terribly guilty about it. How else could she know what thoughts and feelings went through that silent head? He hardly ever talked. If he did have something to tell her, it was usually about birds.

Not that Trudy didn't appreciate hearing Micah's sightings. She was as dedicated to birding as he was, though not as gifted a guide. No one was. But she'd also come to a time in her life when she was ready for a little more than just bird-watching between them. And she'd been hoping and praying and waiting patiently for Micah to feel the same way.

So when she came across his bird log today—forgotten on the counter of the Bent N' Dent because Hank Lapp burst into the store to announce he'd seen something odd in the eagle aerie at Wonder Lake and Micah blew out of that store to go see for himself—she picked it up to go running after him to return it.

But then she thought twice.

She slipped Micah's bird log into her apron pocket and waited until the store emptied of customers and she was alone. David Stoltzfus had left the store in her hands today, and she was thankful, because if he were here, she wouldn't have been able to do what she did. She sat on a stool, took the bird log in her hands, and looked up. "Lord, forgive me in advance for this transgression. And thank you for understanding." Then she opened Micah's precious leather-sided bird log.

Micah carried it with him wherever he went, scribbling away in it throughout the day. Nervously glancing up at the door to see if any customers were coming, Trudy skimmed through the pages, as quickly as she could. Mostly, the entries were bird sightings. Which birds he'd seen and where, details he'd noticed. Things he already knew about them.

A dried flower slipped out of the log and she bent down to pick

it up. She let out a loud gasp. She knew this flower! She'd picked it one spring day when she'd gone birding with Micah and happened upon a Scott's Oriole—an accidental. Pleased, she'd stooped to pick a bright yellow mustard flower growing in the grass to commemorate this rarity, and stuck it behind her ear. A funny look came over Micah, almost like he was seeing her for the first time. He leaned forward, closing the space between them, and everything started to fade away around them. For just a split second, she thought he was going to kiss her. Soooooo close. Then, as if he suddenly realized he was letting the excitement of finding the Scott's Oriole carry him away, he pulled back, pushing his hair from his forehead, rearranging the bent of his hat. The sweet, tender, romantic moment was over. She thought of it as their near-kiss.

Gently, she placed the dried flower back in the log, and that was when she saw the page was filled not with a bird log but with a poem he'd written. A poem! Who would've ever thought Micah Weaver had a poet's soul?

She did. She always knew that still waters ran deep in him. And then she realized the poem was about . . . her. *Me!*

LBJ (Trudy)

*A sparrow, a little brown job
Hops along from bush to bush
Its song a constant chirping
Its chatter calls my attention
Its piercing trill tugs at me
Little Brown Job, Trudy
Overlooked, unnoticed, asking nothing
But sings like spring has come
Why do people cherish the rare and disdain
the common?*

Her heart soared. Her hands shook. She thought she might stop breathing and faint dead away. A sparrow.

He thought of her as a sparrow.

Trudy believed that birds held special meanings, that they were symbolic of greater truths. She kept such thoughts to herself after Edith Lapp once told her that kind of thinking bordered on paganism. Assuming Edith was joking, Trudy had burst out with a loud laugh. Big mistake. Edith Lapp did not make jokes. Ever. Trudy sobered instantly, though she wasn't about to accept Edith's narrow thinking. What was so wrong about the Christian tradition of symbolism assigned to a bird? It wasn't as if she was making the bird into an idol to be worshiped. Nothing like that.

Besides, God loved birds. They were everywhere in the Bible, from beginning to end—from a dove sent out from Noah's Ark, to a raven delivering food to the mighty prophet Elijah, to a sparrow pointed out by the Lord Jesus himself. There were layers and layers of meaning to birds in the Bible. God described himself as an eagle, carrying the Israelites on its wings, under whose feathers they would find refuge. Birds held so many keys to what the Scriptures had to teach about God. Even Jesus said to consider the birds.

She hugged the bird log to her heart. So . . . Micah thought of her as a sparrow. Subtle praise, but nothing could have pleased her more. It was all she'd needed—solid gold evidence that Micah did, indeed, care for her, even a little, in the way she cared for him.

She reread the LBJ poem three more times, then carefully replaced the bird log on the counter where Micah had left it.

Best. Day. Ever.

Micah Weaver fiddled with the dials of his bins until the lens focused in on what he thought was a small fuzzy gray head. He wouldn't have thought that Hank Lapp could be right about the eagle aerie—could be right about anything at all—but astonishingly, Hank was spot-on. There was definitely something weird inside the nest at Wonder Lake. Something alive, something that

didn't belong with the two eaglets. The mother eagle flew in with a fish in her claws and started to feed the chicks.

"WHAT do you THINK it IS?"

"Shhhh! Try and k-keep your voice down."

"I AM!"

Micah and Hank were on the resting rock, watching the large stick nest from quite a distance, yet the eagle mother was startled by Hank's thundering roar and flew off. "Then stop t-talking. You scare every living thing when you start b-bellowing."

Hank looked hurt, which Micah felt a little sorry about, but at least he stopped his endless yapping as the mother eagle circled back in and flew back to the edge of the nest.

"WHAT do you THINK?"

"I think you're t-too loud."

Hank tried to whisper and it came out wheezy, like a patient with advanced tuberculosis. "But *what's* in the nest?"

"How should I know?"

"You're the GO-TO GUY. The FOWL expert." The eagle mother turned her head to glare at Hank, as if to say that if he kept bothering her babies, she might have to murder him.

Hank Lapp was a good man, but he was a loud and unaware good man. Still, it was hard to stay mad at him. "There's definitely something else in the n-nest that's alive."

"HOW could THAT be?"

"Shhhh!" But Micah shared Hank's bewilderment. "Maybe the parents brought back some k-kind of rodent to feed the eaglets."

"BUT its HEAD keeps POPPING UP like it's trying to be FED. NOT trying to GET AWAY from being EATEN ALIVE."

"Yeah. Yeah, you're right. Couldn't b-be a rat."

"I didn't think EAGLES ate up living THINGS. I thought they was SCAVENGERS."

"M-Mostly, you're right. They prefer easy prey. Fish, best of all. But those sharp t-talons can scoop up most anything." Micah squinted and peered through the binoculars. Not good enough. He

needed his spotting scope. “I’ll come out at dusk t-tonight during feeding t-time. That way I can get a clear view.”

“I’ll COME too.”

“No! No, I’ll, um, let you know.” Hank gave him a look of doubt. “I promise.”

“Micah, does TRUDY ever hear from SHELLEY?”

“Shelley?” Micah froze. “Why w-would you ask th-that?” Shelley was Trudy’s older sister. She’d left Stoney Ridge to pursue a singing career in Nashville, leaving Micah high and dry. He’d thought they shared a special bond. He was wrong.

“The other day, I thought I SAW her.”

Micah lifted his eyebrows.

“Turned out to be a SCARECROW wearing a blond WIG.”

Shelley Yoder? A scarecrow? The most beautiful girl in Stoney Ridge, in all the world over, and Hank Lapp called her a scarecrow. “You need g-glasses.”

Hank squinted his good eye. “I SPOTTED your MYSTERY chick, didn’t I?”

Micah tucked the bins in his back pocket. “Let’s go.”

As soon as the two parted ways at the fork in the bottom of the hill, Micah picked up his pace to get to Lost Creek Farm. He wished his sister Penny and her husband Ben were in town. Especially Ben. In one glance, he’d be able to identify that little gray-headed chick. Ben Zook was a highly skilled birder, an author who wrote books about rare birds. Ben and Penny had gone to Canada to work on a bird migration book. Following the birds, Ben said.

He’d picked a good year to go. The last few years had brought drought to Lancaster County and the sparse rainfall was taking a toll. Each year brought fewer migrating birds. Even the songbirds, those that normally didn’t migrate, had reduced numbers. The birds knew to seek out new food sources.

Micah would’ve liked to tag along with Ben and Penny. Sadly, they hadn’t invited him. Not only that, they’d left him with full responsibility for the Lost Creek Farm guesthouse, on top of his

important field guide work *and* his boring shoe repair shop. As he arrived at Lost Creek Farm, he made a beeline to the repair shop and found his bird log on the ground, left leaning against the door, with a Post-it note stuck on it:

Micah, please see me at the store at your earliest convenience.

David Stoltzfus

P.S. You left your bird log on the counter.

Micah reread it, tendrils of dread curling through his stomach. His mind raced through the last few days since church. Was *iss letz?* *What could be wrong?* Had something happened to Penny? To Ben?

At your earliest convenience.

That didn't sound like an emergency. Micah ruled out any concern about his sister and her husband.

At your earliest convenience.

What exactly did that mean? Like . . . should Micah drop what he was doing and get over to the Bent N' Dent? Or could it wait until tomorrow? He felt a flicker of uncertainty. Everyone knew the bishop didn't come calling for a chat. He came for a reason.

Micah glanced at the sun's position in the sky. Wonder Lake had early sunsets because of the ridge that surrounded it. There'd only be another couple of hours before it'd be dark. Too dark to see what was in the eagle aerie. Surely, David could understand this pressing need.

Yeah, of course he did. His wife Birdy certainly would. After all, there was a bird waiting to be identified! Yeah, absolutely. The bishop could wait. He scrunched up the Post-it note and tossed it on his desk. His full attention turned to the mission he was on: Grab his spotting scope and get back up that hill.

Twenty minutes later, Micah found a place on the highest part of the ridge to set up the tripod. He wanted to look straight down

into the aerie rather than across from it on the resting rock, his typical place. He adjusted the dials and peered through the eyepiece. “Whoa.” There it was. A much, much smaller head popped up. Disappeared. Popped up again. “Whoa, whoa, whoa.” How could that chick—so clearly not an eaglet—avoid getting eaten by its larger nestmates? Because it seemed to be accepted as one of the gang. Healthy, active, hungry. Constantly begging for food.

He watched one of the eagle parents—most likely the father because it was smaller than the mother—fly to the edge of the nest with a fish in its talons. The larger eaglets reached up to commandeer the fish, moving to the edge of the nest and swallowing it in large chunks. He saw the chick bob up and down underneath its adopted siblings, grabbing whatever was dropped. The eaglets were probably four or five pounds. The chick was less than one pound. How could it survive on meager leftovers?

But then he saw the mother eagle fly in with something in her mouth. The chick aggressively grabbed morsels out of her beak. He nearly laughed out loud. This chick had gumption. As soon as the somewhat satiated eaglets realized more food was available, they swooped in and crowded out the chick. At that point, the chick resumed its begging.

Interesting. So that might be why the eaglets accepted this imposter sibling instead of killing it. Its constant begging brought them all benefits. These attentive parents supplied the nestlings well.

Man o’ man. He wished Ben and Penny were here to see this natural phenomenon. Ben had shown him an article about how raptors form exceptionally strong bonds with their young. If these eagle parents were steadily feeding this chick, it was apparent that they had accepted it as one of theirs too.

Amazing. Just amazing.

But how did the chick get in the nest in the first place?

Micah straightened, staring at the stick nest, as big as a buggy. What a curious, remarkable thing he was observing. He had no

answers for it. Not yet. But he would. Packing up his scope, he grinned. Trudy would be all over this bird mystery. She had a nose for research—especially bird behavior. Micah thought she gave birds way too many human qualities—like she believed those that mated for life were soulmates. And those that lost such a mate mourned. He was pretty confident that the only thing birds had on their minds was how to survive the day. Still, with Trudy's help, he hoped to figure out the whole story behind that little chick.

As he folded up the tripod, for some reason, an image of Trudy's older sister popped into his mind.

Why did Hank have to go and bring up Shelley's name? Micah hardly thought about her anymore. There was a time when she was pretty much all he thought about, mostly with how she'd left him, having played him for a fool.

It was a good thing Trudy didn't resemble Shelley in any way. You wouldn't even know they were sisters. Shelley was gorgeous. A head turner. A jaw dropper. Trudy . . . well, if Shelley were a Purple-crowned Fairywren, Trudy would be a House Sparrow. Plain, solid, reliable. Trustworthy. Good to the core. She was . . .

He didn't know. He wasn't sure what Trudy was to him. He'd always thought of her as a pesky little girl, more nuisance than anything else. This last year, they had met often to go birding. He found she was easy to be with, easy to talk to. She had more patience in the field than he did, which was considerable, and could outwait a bird like no one else. Somehow, songbirds knew to trust her. She could even entice chickadees to eat seed out of her hand.

But she was still just a girl to him, with wide owl-like eyes that appeared large and dark in her small, pale face.

Then came that day in March when she had spotted a Scott's Oriole. Typically, the Scott's Oriole was found in the southwestern United States and Mexico. This was only the second time the bird had been spotted in Pennsylvania, and the first time it had ever been recorded in Lancaster County. The first time Micah had

ever laid eyes on one. It was a stunning little bird—yellow-bodied with distinctive white stripes on its wings. It was a noteworthy find, a lifer, and Trudy had tucked a flower behind her ear to celebrate. On that day, it dawned on him that she wasn't a little girl anymore.

It was the second time Trudy had noticed a rarity. She'd been the one who had first seen the White-winged Tern, though credit had gone to Micah. Correction. Micah *took* the credit. Stole it from her. His behavior still stung him, even after he made things right with Trudy. There was a code of honor among birders, and he'd broken it. She'd never accused him of stealing the claim, but then again, she said she had never noticed his stutter, either. Whenever he brought it up, she brushed it off as nothing. She was too easy on him.

A smile started slowly, then filled him, and he picked up his pace down the hill. He couldn't wait to tell Trudy about this eaglet imposter. The way Trudy would look at him, her delicate face so open, so earnest, so *on his side* . . . she always made him feel like he was something special. And he wasn't.

Man o' man. For a smart-as-a-whip girl who noticed everything, she sure missed some big things.

Trudy Yoder, Bird-Watching Log

Name of Bird: *Scott's Oriole*

Scientific Name: *Icterus parisorum*

Status: *Low concern*

Date: *March 28*

Location: *Hiking in the hills*

Description: *Yellow-bodied, with black velvety plumage and white stripes on its wings. A standout even among a family of fabulous orioles.*

Symbolism: *Two fascinating facts about orioles make them a symbol of hope and resurrection. First, they're known to build nests in trees that have been struck by lightning. Incredible! Second, their nests are often built in the shape of the cross. (Isn't that just astounding? How would they know?!)*

Bird Action: *Serenading us from a tree branch.*

Notes: *It was a special treat for Micah and me to catch sight of a male Scott's Oriole right here in Lancaster County (a lifer for us both!). Even better than its stunning appearance, the Scott's Oriole is one of the first birds to start singing each day, well before sunrise. In fact, they're known for their lovely singing. The females are pretty, but it's the males that really shine.*

*Velvety black, bright yellow. Dazzling! Sparkling!
Radiant!*

*Despite its breathtaking beauty, this little
bird is tougher than it looks. It migrates all
the way to Mexico, enduring cold temperatures
and biting winds, to winter in the warm
sunshine.*

*Sadly, while wintering in Mexico, the Scott's
Oriole is a predator of beautiful Monarch
butterflies. (I do so love Monarchs!) Setting
aside that one little disappointing reality, there's
everything to love in this songbird.*