Prothonotary Warbler
*Protonotaria citrea*

Forests and woodlands in proximity to water are the preferred habitat of this beautiful warbler. With the exception of the northwest corner of the state, they are found throughout Missouri as a common summer resident. Prothonotary Warblers eat insects and other invertebrates from dead logs, trees, and bark using their efficient, pointy, tweezer-like beaks.

Their underparts are golden yellow. They have a large dark eye and long dark beak. Wings and tail are blue-gray with white spots in the tail and white under the tail feathers. They measure just over five inches in length and their song is a loud ringing series.

Most Prothonotary Warblers arrive in Missouri in April and nesting begins soon after. They use snags or hollow trees in forests near water. The opening of the cavity is filled with moss, leaves, twigs, and bark. There are 4-6 eggs in a clutch, and incubation lasts 12-14 days. The young hatchlings fledge after 11 days.

Nest site competition from house wrens, parasitism by brown cowbirds, and habitat loss are threats to this species population. They are a target species for habitat restoration in the forested areas of the Ozark Highlands. Like woodpeckers, these warblers help keep populations in-check of wood-eating insects that might otherwise cause harm to forest trees.