

# Sisters Country birds

By Douglas Beall  
Correspondent

The Common Yellowthroat [*Geothlypis trichas*] is a warbler that inhabits many environments, from low swamps to 6,000-foot-elevation streams. Its “witchity, witchity, witchity” call can be heard all along Central Oregon rivers. One of the first warblers to arrive in spring, it behaves in a wren-like fashion as it flits about through low vegetation.

The male displays to the female during courtship by flicking wings and tail, following her closely, and performing a flight display, flying up to 25 to 100 feet in the air and returning to another low perch, calling and singing. A low-lying nest is built and three to six creamy black spotted

eggs are laid and incubated for 12 days and the young fledge in 8-10 days. Often two broods are raised during the summer.

Their diet is mostly insects: grasshoppers; dragonflies; damselflies; mayflies; beetles; grubs; cankerworms; and other caterpillars. The Common Yellowthroat was one the earliest described birds during the European human migration. Originally named the Maryland Yellowthroat, its genus name, *Geothlypis*, means ground finch which helps to describe its feeding habits.

Warblers are referred to as a “wrench,” “bouquet,” “confusion,” or a “fall” of warblers. For more Common Yellowthroat photos visit <http://abirdsingsbecauseithasasong.com/recent-journeys>.



PHOTO BY DOUGLAS BEALL

The call of the Common Yellowthroat can be heard along Central Oregon riverbanks.

# Commentary... My hour with RBG

By Dan Glode  
Columnist

A few years after I left the Lincoln County DA's office I went to work for the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (CEELI), now called ABA ROLI (Rule of Law Initiative). I lived and worked in Moscow for a few years. The program had expanded well beyond central Europe and Eurasia and was involved in democracy and institution-building programs around the world.

In 2006 I was the country director for Russia. That year, all CEELI countries submitted candidates for our annual Human Rights Advocate of the year award. Our candidate, Yuri Schmidt, won the award that year. Yuri (who died in 2013) was a human rights attorney and advocate and he had defended dissidents from the 1970s to the day he died. Not an easy task during Soviet times and in modern Russia. He was on the legal team for Mikhail Khodorovsky the Yukos Oil magnate who challenged Vladimir Putin for the presidency and who was subsequently sent to a Siberian prison for some trumped-up tax-evasion charges.

The annual meeting was in Istanbul that year and we were set to present the award to Yuri but at the last minute he became ill and could not make the journey. It was decided that I would accept the award on his behalf and

present it to him at the St. Petersburg Bar Association a few months later. By a stroke of luck there was an international conference for appellate and supreme court justices in Istanbul at the same time and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was asked to present the award to Yuri.

I was charged with drafting some biographical/background remarks about Yuri for Justice Ginsburg's presentation. I have to admit that although I didn't get rattled too often at that stage of my life I was a bit rattled that day. I did the best I could. Justice Ginsburg met me about a half hour or so before the presentation to go over her remarks.

She came in and extended her hand and we shook. We then sat down alone for a time before the event. She must have recognized my nervousness immediately as she put her hand on my arm and told me to tell her about me. She seemed genuinely interested in my life and asked questions while all the while maintaining direct eye contact. She put me to ease immediately. We then reviewed the biographical material I had prepared on Yuri. She asked a range of questions about Yuri and took the remarks I had prepared and marked them up and scribbled in the margins.

She was amazing at quizzing me while glean-ing all the information she could. A skill I assumed she honed from many years on the bench. It was an amazing back-and-forth dialogue,

both pointed and direct. She got a great deal of information from me in a short amount of time. Thankfully I was able to answer all her questions.

When it came time for the presentation I realized my assumption that she would read from my remarks was entirely incorrect. While my remarks gave pertinent information she added a depth of emotion and understanding about just who Yuri Schmidt was and what he stood for. Her passion for human rights advocacy came through very clearly. She added a depth I could only imagine. She spoke from the heart, her heart.

We then walked out of the room for the coffee break of the session. I went to get her coffee and when I returned she was standing next to Justice Antonin Scalia. He had also attended the justices' conference. I felt a little speechless but it did not matter. They both carried on and included me.

They allowed me to bask in the moment and I did. Sometimes you can tell in a brief encounter if people are friends. They certainly were. Some lucky and talented people have a facility for making everyone feel comfortable regardless of a person's station in life. They certainly did.

As I get older I am, frankly, hard to impress. Justice Ginsburg certainly impressed me in so many ways. She was a cut above — a large cut above — the rest of us.

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