

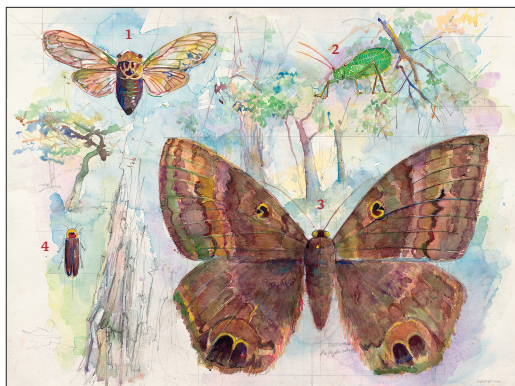
PLATE XXI

Summer Evening Insects

ARTIST'S NOTE: Painting cicadas is a pleasure. They have clear form and pattern: the body provides sections that indicate shape and structure. Whenever there are transverse lines that describe the roundness of your subjects, consider them gifts, exaggerate them, and use them to further explain form.



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1 Dog-day cicada

Order Hemiptera, family Cicadidae,
Tibicen canicularis

This species' common name refers to the period when it is active and singing—the steamy dog days of late summer. That's also the time when the Dog Star, Sirius, is visible in the night sky. Even the species name, *canicularis*, means “little dog.” You can hear the smooth whining buzz of cicadas all day and into the early evening, especially on very hot nights. These annual cicadas are fairly common throughout the eastern United States. Nymphs develop underground, feeding on roots. When grown, the nymphs crawl out and climb up plants or buildings. The exoskeleton splits along the back and the adult pulls itself out. The distinctive calls of the males—always reminiscent of summer—are meant to attract females. Although the average life cycle takes three years from egg to nymph to adult, some adults emerge each year.

2 Common true katydid

Order Orthoptera, family Tettigoniidae,
Pterophylla camellifolia

The early evening is one of the best times to hear singing insects because cicadas and katydids overlap in song. Unlike grasshoppers and crickets, both male and female katydids make sound. Their loud two-part *katy-DID* song is made by rubbing their forewings together. Usually katydids are heard but not seen because they live in the crowns of deciduous trees in forests, woodlots, and yards. Breeding season is in late summer and early fall. Females will lay eggs on stems, where they will hatch the following spring.

PLATE XXVII

American Goldfinch and Eastern Bluebird

ARTIST'S NOTE: I did most of this painting outside at the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe, Illinois. Painting outside, en plein air, requires a different set of skills than working from a photo. When outside, you have too much to include; it becomes the artist's job to choose which pieces of what lies before him or her that will best tell the story. I latch onto specifics that catch my eye and then build from there. I went to this spot because I had seen American Goldfinches playing there, and the Eastern Bluebirds just showed up. When you are sitting still while painting, you become part of the habitat.



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1 American Goldfinch

Order Passeriformes, family Fringillidae,
Carduelis tristis

In spring, these active, bright yellow birds love open, weedy fields, where they cling to stems, balance on the seed heads of thistles and asters, and even hang upside down in trees and shrubs to find food. They eat primarily seeds, only occasionally swallowing an insect. As a result they are late nesters, waiting until thistles and other plants produce seeds they can feed to their young: they may be incubating eggs into late August. In breeding months, males are bright yellow with a black cap and forehead, while females are a duller yellow green. They live year around in Illinois and across the central United States, forming flocks in the nonbreeding season. (See also plate XXXIX.)

2 Eastern Bluebird

Order Passeriformes, family Turdidae,
Sialia sialis

These eye-catching beauties have been making a comeback in the Midwest. They declined for several decades as their nest sites—tree cavities—were taken over by introduced House Sparrows and European Starlings. People have aided their recovery by putting up nest boxes, specifically sized and placed to attract Eastern Bluebirds. They are now seen fairly often perched on fences or electrical wires in meadows, open woodlands, orchards, and golf courses. From February to November, this bluebird makes its home across eastern North America from Saskatchewan to Nova Scotia and south to Texas and Nicaragua. In winter northern birds migrate to the southern parts of its range. Bluebirds sometimes stay around the Great Lakes in winter, flocking in areas where there are berries to eat.