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## Western Tanager

Western Tanager wakes up to a bitter fall morning and feels the warm sun up against her dark yellow feathers. She looks at crisp, frosty Lake Tahoe. As the Western Tanager flies out of her nest to get her first yummy insect meal of the day, she sees that she has been spotted by a Red Tailed Hawk. Western Tanager dives down to seek protection, but the Red Tailed Hawk is fast and dives down after her. She is soaring through each tree trying to evade the Red Tailed Hawk. After giving chase the Red Tailed Hawk is gone as she dives into a group of trees. Western Tanager is lucky that she got away.

While Western Tanager was calming herself down, Western realized that she was in an insect paradise. In the forest around her were beetles, dragonflies, grubs, cicadas, grasshoppers, caterpillars, spiders and more. She had to gather many bugs for she would be mating soon and would have hatchlings to feed. Western Tanager got to her nest of twigs and grass and put down her food, she was sure to have enough food until lunch.

A few hours later, the curious Western Tanager heard a mating call. She flew to where the mating call was coming from. She saw a beautiful nest made out of twigs, stems, grasses, roots, horse hair, cow hair, moss, bark, pine needles, and even some

brightly colored feathers. A black, red, and yellow feathered male saw the female observing his nest, and tried to be on his best behavior. Both Western Tanagers decided to mate.

Thirteen days later the Western Tanager woke up right at dusk and noticed that she had three light blue small round eggs right underneath her. She looked over and alerted the male to be on watch for predators as she went to get food. Both of the Western Tanagers were worried and on watch for the Red Hawk as the female got food. Red Hawk was waiting above the eggs, ready to.

A couple minutes later the Red Hawk struck at the eggs, the male Western Tanager saw the Red Hawk and dove in before he got to the eggs. It was a violent battle, the birds fought with their sharp claws and beaks as sharp as knives, and in the end, when the female got back she saw her eggs and the male. A few days later she woke up to the cold frosty morning, and felt the warm feathers of her hatchlings. The female Western Tanager was starving, she had not eaten for the past couple of days because she did not want to risk her hatchlings becoming food for the Red Hawk.

It was only a matter of time before the Red Hawk would come back to strike again at the newborn hatchlings. The female Western Tanager would not leave the nest until her hatchlings could fly, then she would show them how to catch their prey. For the time being, every brisk morning, the male Western Tanager would fly out of the quiet

nest to fetch some insects. When the male returned, he would give the anxious and demanding hatchlings the food, then the adventurous hatchlings tried to flap their wings and fly.

The summer turned into fall, and the hatchlings were ready for their first day of flying. But Western Tanagers woke up to hearing the lashing rain downpour, rain collected ground creating giant puddles of water. All of the hatchlings were curious and tried to soar through the rain, but both female and male stopped the hatchlings before they fell into the deep puddles. The next day it was bright out and the female decided to take the hatchlings hunting. She brought them to a small pond where there were all sorts of bugs and insects. The mother spotted a dragonfly and dove into the air at it; dragonfly swung to the left and missed her by a feather. The hatchlings watched as their mother soared and swooped at the dragonfly, and finally she darted at the dragonfly and pierced her beak into it. The hatchlings chirped and were ready for lunch. They opened their beaks up wide, but did not taste the the gooey, crunchy dragonfly. They heard their mother telling them that they needed to get their own lunch. They were all so dependent on their mother that they did not expect to, but each of them did. They caught beetles, spiders, and even some caterpillars.

It had been a year, and all of the hatchlings had grown up. Time for the young Western Tanagers to fly away and go make their own nest, get their own food, find a mate and start the life cycle all over again. Once the birds had left the nest, the female

and male Western Tanager left their nest to join a small group for migrating seas on. The Western Tanagers stayed in the big group, until they died.

The End

## Western Tanager Piranga Ludoviciana

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**Identification:** The Western Tanagers identification is; a yellow body, with black wings, and a bright red and orange blending together.

**Size:** A Western Tanager grows up to 18 cm long.

**Habitat:** Western Tanager are seen in conifers forests, but during migration season they are mostly at lowland woodlands. But they can show up in any habitat including desert or grassland.

**Feeding:** During the winter the Western Tanager eats fruits, and in the summer/breeding season they eat mostly insects such as, beetles, dragonflies, grubs, grasshoppers, ants, caterpillars, and spiders.

**Physical Adaptations:** Some physical adaptations of a Western Tanager are feathers, beak, bright colors, talans, and more.

**Behavioral Adaptations:** During migration season Western Tanagers occasionally travel in small packs. The males are aggressive against predators to defend themselves and there mate.

The red face on the Western Tanager is caused from rhodoxanthin, something rarely found in birds. The Western Tanager gets rhodoxanthin from it's insect diet. During the winter Western Tanagers sometimes join Ruby throated hummingbirds and others in Mexico, and Central America.

Western Tanager  
brave, careful  
flying, looking, feeding  
Clever in bad situations  
Bird