

# Sisters Country birds

By Douglas Beall  
Correspondent

The cheerful trill of the house wren [*Troglodytes aedon*] begins before sunup. Named for its proclivity to nest around our houses, they are comical to observe constructing their nests as they bring sticks that are too long to fit in the nest hole and it may take numerous attempts until they place the stick in the nest.

Grasses and feathers are used to line the stick nest, which also contains spider sacks that help control mites that are harmful to the nestlings. The males may build as many as 12 nesting sites to attract females and are known to destroy other birds' eggs and nestlings in order to protect their territory.

The house wren lays 3-10

white to pink-splotted eggs which take 9-16 days to incubate and then the fledglings emerge in 14-16 days.

The number of beetles, spiders, grasshoppers, and other insects that are gathered to feed these chicks is staggering. From my short observation the two adult house wrens each brought an insect to the nest every 4-5 minutes or less from 5:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. for an approximate total of 400-500 bugs per day plus whatever the adults ate themselves.

Their breeding range extends from upper Canada down to the southern tip of South America. A collection of wrens is called a "herd" or a "chime."

For more house wren photos visit <http://abirdsingsbecauseithasasong.com/recent-journeys>.



PHOTO BY DOUGLAS BEALL

House wren.

# Former spokeswoman sues over firing

By Steven Dubois  
Associated Press

PORTLAND (AP) — A spokeswoman fired months before former Gov. John Kitzhaber's resignation has filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against him and others, saying she was let go because she spoke out regarding a matter of public concern.

The lawsuit filed Friday afternoon in Eugene reasserts claims Nkenge Harmon Johnson made after her 2014 firing — that she was dismissed because she offended Kitzhaber's fiancé, Cylvia Hayes, at a staff meeting and complained that the governor's office was blurring the line between state interest and the re-election campaign.

"(Harmon Johnson) witnessed what she reasonably believed to be myriad improprieties involving the governor's re-election campaign team and his official staff, including, but not limited

to, directing or permitting of political activities by public employees while on the job," the lawsuit states.

Kitzhaber's attorney, Janet Hoffman, did not immediately return a message Sunday. When Harmon Johnson initially went public with her concerns, the governor's office said she was let go for performance issues.

Kitzhaber resigned in February 2015, weeks into his fourth term, amid suspicions that Hayes used her relationship with him to land contracts for her green-energy consulting business. The couple has denied wrongdoing amid an ongoing investigation that has yet to result in any charges.

Harmon Johnson, now president and CEO of the Urban League of Portland, seeks an unspecified amount of money for economic losses and emotional distress.

Hayes is also named as a defendant in the lawsuit, and so are Kitzhaber's

former chief of staff and an investigator with the Oregon Department of Justice.

The lawsuit contends the investigator had Harmon Johnson's husband, Erious Johnson, targeted for a "threat assessment" in part because he knew the former spokeswoman planned to take legal action against the governor's office.

Erious Johnson, the attorney in charge of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, expressed support last year for the Black Lives Matter movement on his public Twitter page. The investigator told his supervisors he believed the tweets posed a potential threat to police and was given permission to compile a written report on his colleague.

The action led Erious Johnson to file a civil rights complaint with the state labor department. The Oregon Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is handling that investigation.

# Motorcycle fatalities on pace with deadly 2015

PORTLAND (AP) — Last year was the deadliest in decades for Oregon motorcyclists, and the death toll for 2016 is matching that pace.

*The Oregonian/OregonLive* reports 31 motorcyclists died on Oregon

roads through July 7, putting the state on pace to match the 60 deaths from last year.

Older riders comprise a growing share of motorcyclists in fatal crashes. In 2004, 18 percent of riders killed were 55 or older, but that increased to 39 percent

in 2014.

A spokesman for a motorcycle training program based at Oregon State University says that's partly a demographic shift. Patrick Hahn says fewer young people are riding and baby boomers aren't giving it up.

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