

Tales from a  
**Sisters Naturalist**

by Jim Anderson

**Eagles, eagles, everywhere**

Eagles have been a love of my life from the time I arrived in Oregon — where I discovered them being killed from 1080 poison put out by government trappers killing coyotes back in the early '50s. Eagles are still with me today as Sue and I help to conduct a statewide survey with the Oregon Eagle Foundation.

Like all birders who have a special bird they enjoy and see all the time in their subconscious, I too see the shape and movement of eagles automatically; while driving down the road, canoeing on a lake or hiking—the shape and movements of eagles are always there.

A trip to Minnesota last week awakened those senses more than once. I met my son Reuben at the MSL airport

and we had a Uber van drive us to a little town just west of the airport. We picked up a four-wheel pop-up camper and headed for his home in Brainerd, Minnesota.

Bright and early the next morning, I headed west. At the crossing of the Mississippi River, I met my first eagle. First, I saw the name of the river on the roadside sign, the bridge ahead, and suddenly right above it a huge, beautiful, female bald eagle coming toward me about 20 feet above the bridge. “Wow!” I thought, “What a wonderful way to start the trip!”

And that was the beginning of meeting up with eagles as I headed west. The adult male bald eagle I saw while crossing the Missouri River in Montana appeared on my right and went right over the rig while I was in the middle of the bridge.

Sprinkled among the eagles on other nearby waterways were osprey of all ages, inland gulls, a white pelican or two and over the fields, a few migrating Swainson hawks headed south, which added even more to the trip.

The Toyota developed a serious overheating problem as we approached Billings, Montana, and I had to depart the freeway. I took the first

exit immediately, and lo and behold there was a firehall with two guys working on some equipment out in the yard. When I pulled up they immediately checked me to be sure I was OK, then they saw my engine problem.

While waiting for everything to cool down, I checked for external leaks and found everything tight as it should be, and when all was cooled off the fireman gave me water to recharge everything and I drove into Billings to spend the night.

There were no water puddles under the rig in the morning, so I fired it up and got onto the freeway again, heading west. About 40 miles east of Billings the temperature gauge began climbing, and by the time I arrived at the exit to the little town of Columbus I had to make a choice.

I chose to go back to Billings, as Columbus didn't look as though it would have a shop that would solve my problem. I took the exit and when traffic allowed I took the left turn under the freeway and was about to turn left back onto the freeway, when out of the corner of my eye I thought I saw an eagle — and as a result, missed the turn back onto the freeway.

Honest!  
Having no other choice

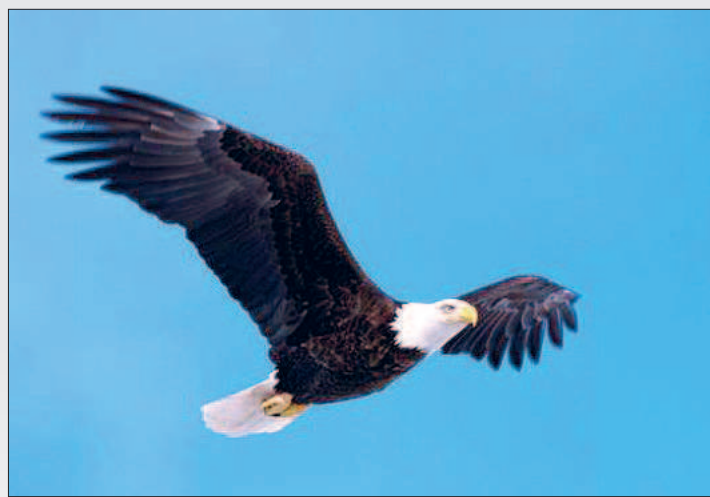


PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

Adult bald eagle looking over the countryside.

but to continue into Columbus I began looking for a shop. That little adventure turned out to be even more fun when the mechanic discovered the water-pump belt (which could only be observed from under the vehicle) was nothing but black pieces of spaghetti.

A fix at a reasonable price later, I was rolling back onto

the freeway.

The many crossings of the Clark Fork in Montana were also eagle moments. The first time I crossed it — now that eagle sightings were in my subconscious — things were different, I actually slowed down expecting an eagle to appear.

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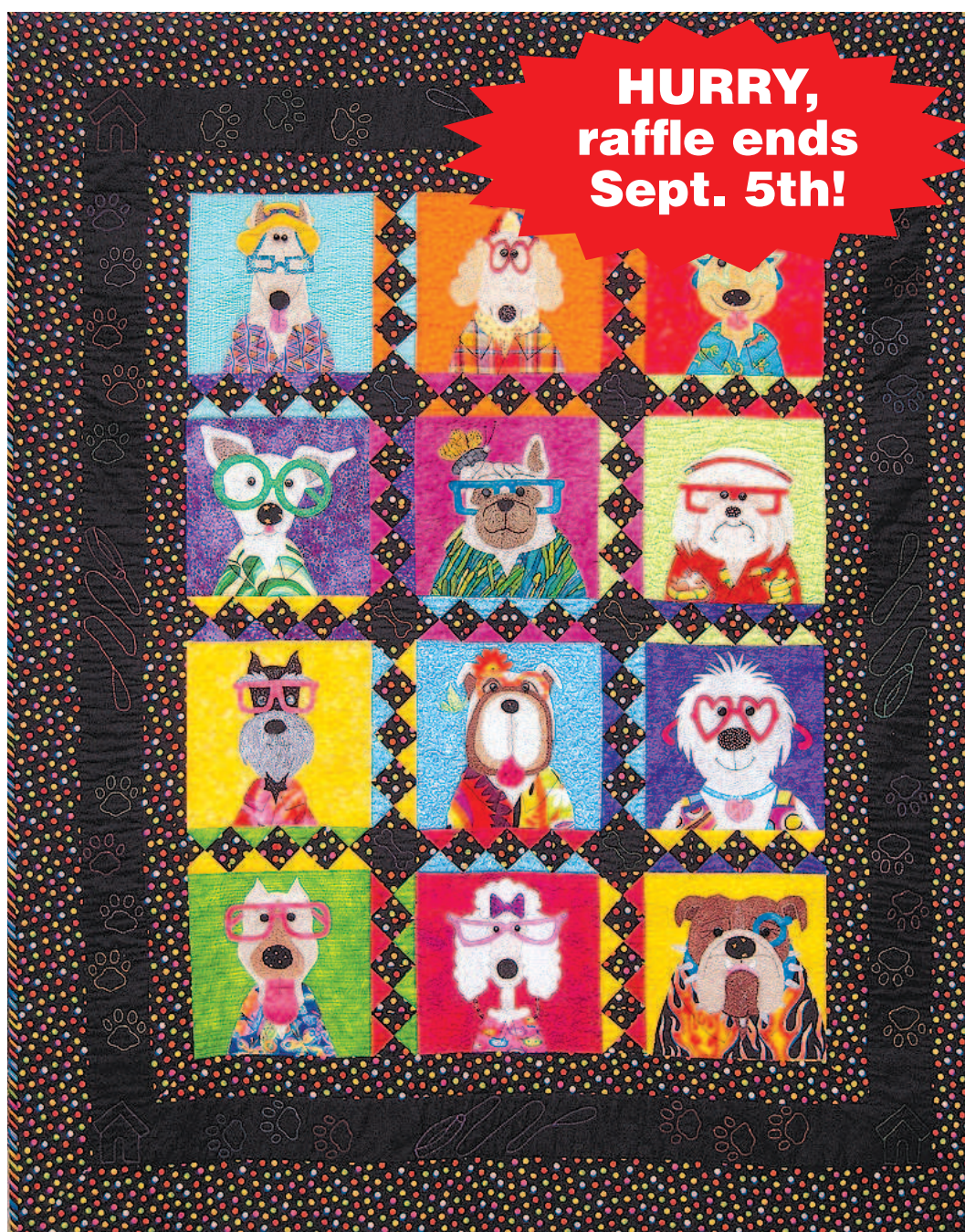
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“Friends of Furry Friends” - by Valerie Fercho-Tillery (46" w x 59" h)