



Tales from a Sisters Naturalist
by Jim Anderson

The robin with no tail

Ken Hashagen and I often get together to discuss bluebirds, kestrels, great gray owls, eagles. Ken is the president of East Cascades Audubon Society of Bend.

“Discuss” is a polite word for it. Just a few minutes in, we’re waving our arms about and I can feel my blood pressure building up as we get into it about the latest sighting we’ve had on this or that raptor! He sent me that great image of one he saw while driving down the road.

We both band birds, Ken’s now a Master Bander, but was under my permit for a while, and I have been at it for over 60 years. Like me — and many, many birders — he too drives with one eye on the road ahead and the other scanning the tops of the trees we drive past, looking for raptors and a pygmy owl.

You just have to get your lead foot off the gas pedal to do that, especially if one of your kids shouts, “Dad! Look! There’s a robin with no tail in the top of that tree!”

If you’re going like blue-blooded-blazes down the road at 65 mph, concentrating on not hitting a bicyclist, pedestrian, mule deer or 18-wheeler, it’s difficult to spot a pygmy owl in the top of a juniper.

The rewards for suddenly coming upon one,

and having the time and intelligence to pull over slowly and safely are well worth it. I was going over the McKenzie Pass to Springfield one day not too many summers ago and had to dodge a pygmy owl dragging a fresh-dead pine squirrel across the road.

As I came to a stop a few feet beyond the little owl and started scrambling for my camera, I could hear him already scolding me, and — drat it all — by the time I got my camera he’d made it to the other side of the road into a thicket, and vanished in the underbrush.

A pygmy owl is noted for its pugnacious attitude and the ability to kill and devour birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians way bigger than it is.

If you see one and want to get a closeup photo like Ken’s, all you have to do is become a pygmy owl. That’s done by staying in your car, opening the window and whistling in short bursts with a trill at the end. The owl, especially if it’s a male, will quickly react to the territorial sound and usually come looking for it (a possible intruder). This website has the call: www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Pygmy-Owl/sounds.

The owl has no idea it’s you making the fake call, but concentrates all its searching abilities trying to see that other owl calling. If you keep it up and get the little guy to fly, he’ll be in your car, or on the top of your head if you let him.

A pygmy owl in the top of a tree alongside the road is really a common sight throughout Central Oregon in winter. Not so during nesting season, but around November they begin showing up and peak in December and January. And the big thrill comes when the owl turns its head



PHOTO BY KEN HASHAGEN

The robin with no tail; an adult Northern Pygmy Owl.

(which they can do in the blink of an eye).

The feather pattern on the back of the owl’s head resembles two eyes looking right at you! Both male and female have “eyes” in the back of their heads. Come to think of it, both my mom and dad had similar physical features, but — more often than I care to remember — I discovered they were for real!

While wood-cutting a couple of years back, my sons and I were in a location that had a resident pygmy owl. Obviously, we had no idea it was there, but after about 10 minutes of cutting wood with my trusty Skil® saw I shut it down to refuel and we heard the sharp whistle of a pygmy yelling at us: “Shut that stupid thing off and get out of here! This my home!” So we did, but not before I put up the small owl nesting box I always carry with me when out woodcutting.

I know someone reading this column will see one next winter, so please give me a call (541-480-3728). I’ll make an effort to live-catch the little guy and band

him with a USGS bird band. This will give us the opportunity to keep track of him or her as it travels about the Northwest, and especially learn of how long it may live, or when it dies, why, how and when.

I make it a habit to stop for all birds I see lying on the shoulder or in the roadway. Very few are banded, but when I find one that is it’s always a thrill. As soon as I get back home I go to my ancient MacBook, open the Bird Banding Lab website (<https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/>) and follow the links to reporting a banded bird.

Have fun, and please: keep off that cell phone when you’re driving, you can’t see pygmy owls when you’re talking on your cell phone.

Lawmakers push to protect pot users’ info from feds

By Kristena Hansen
Associated Press

SALEM (AP) — Oregon lawmakers worried about a nationwide crackdown on legalized marijuana under the Trump administration are rushing to protect the personal information of pot customers.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers is taking one of the first direct state actions in response to White House spokesman Sean Spicer suggesting a boost in enforcement of federal anti-marijuana laws.

Legislation would require pot businesses to destroy internal logs of their customers’ names, addresses and birth dates within 48 hours.

Four states have shops that sell the drug and are required to check IDs to verify that customers are at least 21. But many in Oregon take it further, logging and retaining personal details for marketing purposes.

Colorado and Alaska prohibit keeping that private information. It’s also frowned upon, although not illegal, in Washington state.

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Construction of the roundabout at the intersection of US 20 and Barclay Drive/McKinney Butte Rd. is underway.

In order to complete the Barclay side of the roundabout, Barclay Drive is closed for an approximate 4-5 week period.

The majority of work will occur Monday through Saturday during daytime hours. Traffic on US 20 will remain open, and work will not provide significant delays for traffic except for the detour of Barclay Drive. Travelers trying to access Barclay Drive should follow signed detour routes using Pine Street. Additional information about closures and detours will be posted when applicable.

Oregon Department of Transportation