



Tales from a
Sisters Naturalist
by Jim Anderson

Changing bird populations

At my bird-feeder in the front yard of my domicile I have a mystery going on. Without an acceptable reason, house finches and house sparrows have taken a nosedive in populations, along with my white-crowned sparrows.

In previous years, white-crowned sparrows have been in good numbers, feeding alongside the juncos and quail (with a now-and-then desert cottontail and at least a chipmunk or two getting in their way).

Even the rufous-sided towhees appear to be among the missing, but the presence of the all-too-obnoxious scrub jays hasn't dropped. In fact, I've gained one more nesting in my back yard; and the unspeakable Eurasian doves have increased three-fold!

Having the jay move in makes all the songbirds nervous as a pregnant fox in a forest fire. Jays make a living by eating baby birds — even bluebirds that jays can snatch out of a nesting box.

Lola Knox, who lives out in Tollgate, is also seeing fewer white-crowned

sparrows than she has in past springtimes.

I've been looking for the usual feral (or neighbor's) cat that will cause a great stir upon the behavior of feeder birds, but aside from a very big black one that shows up occasionally, there haven't been any others at my feeder.

Oh, sure, an accipiter can also raise holy-cats-let's-get-outta'-here with the feeder birds, but usually when the sharp-shinned or stealthy Cooper's hawk go off to higher forests to nest about now, and song birds settle down and numbers return to normal.

Well, that may be a loose statement. I had one female Cooper's who was really good at what accipiters like to do: kill and eat song birds. This one learned a new strategy when she moved in, or it may have got on to it at its past residence. When it first showed up, about six months ago, it would sneak into the big juniper next to the feeder without putting the Fear of God (literally) into everyone

on the feeder and/or ground under it.

But when the birds spotted her, the quail would explode from under the feeder and vanish into the sagebrush and juniper trees like a bunch of F-16s on a stealthy mission. The juncos would scamper under the long walkway I have between the driveway and porch.

At first the juncos thought that was a safe refuge — but not from that ruthless, hungry Cooper's it wasn't. That sneaky little accipiter would watch them run under the walkway and then, giving the juncos time to think they were safe, she'd go after them.

Just about the time her shape appeared the juncos came busting out of the hide-away like feathered rockets. So the Cooper's gave up that strategy. So did the juncos. Then the juncos thought that running for cover in the twisted branches of the bitterbrush was the way to stay safe. Nope, that didn't work either....

That sneaky Cooper's



PHOTO BY LOLA KNOX

White-crowned Sparrow. How many did you see last fall, and this spring?

would just fold those short rounded wings in and go right after them, using her velocity to keep going like a bullet, and steering with that long tail. She got about six juncos that way before the survivors caught on.

Now she doesn't bother to chase them. She just comes to the feeders like a rocket, sends everyone scattering and watches for the one that hits my window. Then she makes a beautiful Immelmann fighter plane turn (named after a German World War

I ace) and grabs the stunned junco, dove, house finch or house sparrow.

Another that I haven't seen at my feeder in ages are the evening grosbeak families. They'd appear in flocks of 20 or so when we first moved into Sun Mountain, but they, too, have been very scarce over the last few years.

Please send me a note if you have also seen things happening with your bird populations that are somewhat askew: jimnaturalist@gmail.com.



PRODUCTION FACILITY
265 E. Barclay Dr., Sisters
Jun. 2nd ~ Sep. 23rd
Fri-Sat ~ 3-7 p.m.



BLAZE YOUR TRAIL
threecreeksbrewing.com



TASTING ROOM OPENING





hair | massage | nails
facials | makeup
541-549-1784
161-C N. Elm St.

Offering Aveda™ Skin & Body Care!

AVEDA

the art and science of pure flower and plant essences

Quality Truck-mounted CARPET CLEANING
Quality Cleaning 16 years in Sisters!
Reasonable Prices
— Credit Cards Accepted —

 **ENVIROTECH**
541-771-5048
Licensed • Bonded • Insured • CCB#181062
RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL

Doctor & "Health Detective"

- Allergies
- Insomnia
- Adrenal/Thyroid

FREE CONSULTATIONS


MEANINGFUL MEDICINE

Kim Hapke, Naturopath
971-409-0908
Sisters Art Works Building

Contractors continue construction of the roundabout at the intersection of US 20 and Barclay Drive/McKinney Butte Road.

In order to complete the McKinney Butte side of the roundabout, McKinney Butte Road will be closed through Memorial Day, beginning the end of April.

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 McKinney Butte Road. **Travelers trying to access McKinney Butte should follow signed detour routes using Hood Avenue.**

Additional information about closures and detours will be posted when applicable.



EXPERIENCE YOU CAN TRUST

NATIONAL SOLAR
SHINE WITH US™



\$0 DOWN
2.99%* OAC
FOR UP TO 20 YEARS

YOUR OREGON SOLAR EXPERTS

Our team of professional electricians and installation specialists have helped thousands of families and local businesses to reach their clean energy goals. Our company is known for quality and dedicated customer service and our goal is your complete satisfaction. We custom design and build sustainable energy solutions that fit your needs, your budget, and your long-term goals, providing comprehensive support at every stage of the process.

STATE OF OREGON TAX CREDIT EXPIRES IN 2017 [ACT NOW!]

FOR A FREE NO OBLIGATION QUOTE CONTACT
1-800-808-1955
NationalSolarUSA.com

* This card must be present at time of in-person consultation to redeem discount. Conditions may apply. OR CCB: 186224 National Solar, Inc., is a licensed Contractor and Energy Trust of OR Trade Ally.