



Tales from a
Sisters Naturalist
by Jim Anderson

Don't step on the eggs!

There are two ground-nesting birds common to Central Oregon who need help when it comes to surviving during nesting time — the killdeer and common night hawk. Both lay eggs (almost always four) that you really cannot see because they look like the pebbles surrounding them, and often get mashed by people, cattle, wildlife and whatever, because they are all but invisible.

The other day, while leaving Sisters Gallery & Frame Shop where I had a great discussion with Helen Schmidling over some rare raptor paintings, I was headed for The Pony Express for some printer ink when Kerry and Barb Bott of Sisters said hello and launched into a tale about

killdeer nesting.

Seems a small herd of deer were curious about what was going in a field nearby the Botts' backyard and started a killdeer shouting match that got attention.

When they went to see what all the hollering was about, lo and behold, there were five or so mule deer heading over to give the killdeer eggs a look-see. Curious people and dogs, killdeer can pretty much handle. Mom goes into the old "broken wing act" that includes a lot of yelling and screeching that most dogs find very annoying and they tend to leave the scene as rapidly as possible. (I have a hunch killdeer learned that trick a long time ago dealing with wolves, coyotes, badgers, saber-tooth cats and other pestiferous critters.)

But for some unknown reason, the mule deer heading for momma killdeer's space were not shushed off, and two other killdeer, perhaps recognizing a call for help from the upset mom killdeer, came over and joined her in scaring off the mule deer — and it worked.

Stay away from ground nesters — and all nesters, for that matter. Killdeer are not the best nest-makers in the world, just scraping a few pebbles or sticks into a

small pile and laying their four eggs inside the pile. Causing a killdeer to leave her nest sets back the developing time for the young, as the eggs cool down quickly.

So, if you're out walking your dog and it scares up a killdeer, please leave that area as rapidly as possible and take Rover with you. Then the next time you're on a walk in the general area, please keep his honor on a leash, or avoid the area all together.

The killdeer is really a plover and enjoys the genus name, Charadrius, which goes way back to ancient classical Greek and Latin. The species name, vociferous — which, as anyone who has been near a killdeer nest knows — speaks for itself.

I've often said, and it's almost true, that a killdeer chick hatches running. They are perhaps the most precocial of any of the ground-nesting birds, up and running — looking for insect prey — just as soon as they dry out.

As soon as individual killdeer young are flying they join others of their kind and begin their long trek southward to spend winter in a warmer environment; not all at once, mind you, but just begin wandering in bigger



PHOTO BY KERRY AND BARB BOTT

Killdeer on her eggs.

and bigger family units in kind of a southern direction. By the time we're shaking and shuddering in the cold winds of fall, killdeer are already getting close to their wintering grounds throughout South America.

As much as I do not like to disturb a killdeer on the nest, the display the female

puts on is quite remarkable to witness. As she "falls off the nest," she seems to drag herself away from her eggs with what appears to be an obvious broken wing, giving off a pitiful call as though she's dying.

She'll drag herself away

See **KILLDEER** on page 28



Metamorphosis

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



187
TO CHOOSE FROM

You deserve the

BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE



ROCKING RECLINING LOVESEAT
\$1049



SOFA & LOVESEAT
6 Fabric Choices
\$1099



POWER RECLINING SOFA
\$1099



SOFA & LOVESEAT
4 Fabric Choices
\$1199



SOFA
Over 500 Fabric Choices
\$1299



OVERSIZED SOFA & LOVESEAT
6 Fabric Choices
\$1599

FREE DELIVERY*

* See store for details

WILSONS of Redmond

Still The Oldest & Largest Furniture Store in Central Oregon!

SPECIAL FINANCING AVAILABLE*

*Subject to credit approval. See store for details.

2071 S Hwy 97, Redmond • 541-548-2066

Apply for Credit online at www.wilsonsofredmond.net