



Tales from a **Sisters Naturalist**  
by Jim Anderson

**Oregon legislative busy work**

In 1927, when L.L. Patterson was our governor, the western meadowlark [*Sturnella neglecta*] was chosen as the state bird by Oregon's school children in a poll sponsored by the Oregon Audubon Society.

It's a familiar songbird of open country across the western two-thirds of the North American continent, and it lives in Oregon on both the dry and wet sides of the Cascades, all the way south to California, east to Idaho and north to Washington state. And yes, it's also the State Bird of Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana and North Dakota. But so what — that shows other Westerners also know a sweet song when they hear it.

Governor Patterson,

following President Coolidge's inspiration governing the state in a financially conservative manner, he streamlined agencies and vetoed legislation which would threaten balancing the state's finances.

By 1920, our state balanced its budget for the first time in its history! Patterson's administration notably continued improving state roads and highways, established the state's system of higher education and still balanced the budget. He was a popular and well-respected figure by rivals and supporters alike, but he died in office of pneumonia December 21, 1929.

It's really too bad our current legislators can't follow Governor Patterson's lead and quit wasting time unnecessarily changing our state bird, and get to funding outdoor education instead. The politicians who decided to take on the time- and money-wasting chore of changing our state bird are a perfect examples of those people who can't see the trees for the forest.

Here we are without enough money in the budget to cover education for the young people of our state and we have a bunch of legislators that think

changing the state bird is of vital importance. Like we need the osprey — a water bird — instead.

The western meadowlark was picked as our state bird because it's found everywhere in the state; osprey are not. There is nothing more beautiful to suddenly come bursting into one's ears at the crack-of-dawn then the song of the western meadowlark, whether you're on the Oregon Coast or waking up in the wild country of Oregon's outback.

The osprey is a water bird, the meadowlark is not, therefore you have to be near a body of water large enough to support fish to find osprey, the meadowlark's habitat is all the fence-post country of our magnificent state.

There is nothing musical about the call of the osprey, unless you're tone-deaf. The meadowlark sings its melodious song to tell us it's a beautiful day (especially if it's raining), while the osprey is usually complaining about something when it lets out its whistling screech.

Come on, legislators, get back on track, get to work solving our financial problems and forget about the



PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

Oregon State Bird: Western Meadowlark. Please leave it that way!

sudden "busy work" necessity of changing our state bird. If you really want to get immersed in the nature of Oregon, find a way to fund the outdoor school programs most everyone voted so positively for. Give our

young people the opportunity to spend a week at outdoor school, and I'll bet they'll hear, recognize, and see a lot more meadowlarks than osprey — and the folks in Salem will be doing something more positive.

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