



Tales from a
Sisters Naturalist
by Jim Anderson

Boxes, boxes and more boxes

Twenty-one years ago, Don McCartney phoned me and said (to the best of my 90-year-old memory), “Hi Jim, my name is Don McCartney and I have a nesting box I made for small owls and I’m wondering if you have any good ideas of where to place it.”

And that is how I got to meet Don and his lovely wife, Carol, and why I’m still involved helping to keep our native American kestrels from vanishing.

Nesting boxes are replacements for nesting cavities in trees. Over the last 100 years, trees suitable for cavity-nesters have disappeared at an alarming rate. They have been removed from forests and farms for a plethora of reasons: clearing the land for agriculture, fire prevention, firewood for homes, mistaken ideas of “forest health,” forest products, fence posts, landscape architecture, lightning rods, and many, many other reasons.

The result is that

cavity-nesters throughout the U.S. have lost their nesting habitat.

One of the most famous recoveries of a songbird species through the use of nesting boxes is the Eastern bluebird. In the mid-1930s they were on the brink of extinction, about to follow the passenger pigeon — not because they were sold by the millions to restaurants as a delicacy — but because the once-abundant dead and dying trees woodpeckers and other cavity-nesters used were gone.

Today, nesting boxes are primarily used for conservation endeavors or recreational bird-watching.

Don has kestrel nesting boxes all over Central and Eastern Oregon. This nesting season, Ken Hashagen — president of East Cascades Audubon Society and once my sub-bander, but now a Master Bander for the USGS Bird Banding Lab — banded 123 American kestrels, hundreds of Western and mountain bluebirds, along with red-winged and tri-colored blackbirds. I banded another 30 kestrels, so we’ve been busy taking care of the occupants of Dick’s nesting boxes.

Ken has this to say about his kestrel-banding activities and nesting boxes:

“As a former biologist, I appreciate the opportunity to band kestrels and record data which may, in the long run, add to our knowledge of these birds and reverse the population declines the kestrel population is

undergoing nationwide. Don McCartney’s kestrel project is very well managed and has a great group of volunteers. Without the 150+ boxes Don has put up, I’m sure the population in Central Oregon would be in decline as it is throughout the kestrel’s range.”

One of the recipients of Dick’s exquisite nesting boxes is Carter Crouch, wildlife biologist for the Natural Resource Department of the Burns Paiute Tribe, and state coordinator for the American Kestrel Partnership (AKP). He’s put together a nesting box study project that includes the participation of Paiute tribal young people, and is banding birds as a sub-bander on my master permit.

He has this to say about his nest-box project: “After some early success with a pilot nest box project on tribal properties, and studying wintering American kestrels in South Texas, I decided to continue working with them here in Oregon during the breeding season.

“With the help of Don McCartney, we will install bluebird and kestrel boxes built by Dick Tipton at the Malheur River Wildlife Mitigation Site (Jonesboro) and the Logan Valley Wildlife Mitigation Site in Eastern Oregon. All of the data collected using the kestrel nest boxes will be sent to the AKP for use in their large-scale nest-box monitoring program. www.kestrel.peregrinefund.org.



PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

A stack of nesting boxes manufactured by the Master Nest Box Builder, Dick Tipton of Sisters Country.

“On June 25, the Natural Resources Department took the Tu-Wa-Kii Nobi (Kid’s House) to band kestrel nestlings at a box in Burns, and more of these banding days will be held in 2019.”

And, last but not least, two of Don’s kestrel box nesting program’s wonderful volunteers, Nancy and Sach Esperancilla, had this to say about their years of helping the kestrel project:

“Since American kestrels throughout the U.S. are experiencing declining populations, we feel it’s beneficial to have a nationwide project (the American Kestrel Project) backed by the Peregrine Fund which is well known worldwide for their conservation efforts. Since we care deeply about

this loss of such a beautiful bird it’s comforting to know that others all over the U.S. are also helping kestrels by providing much-needed nest boxes.

“We have evicted starlings seven times from a nest box before the kestrels were finally able to nest and fledge. We have put up nest boxes and had to wait patiently for years for kestrels to find it, but sometimes they would find it the first year. Yippee!! It’s wonderful to help out such a beautiful raptor that will always take our breath away.”

If you want a nesting box in your yard, send me an email: jimnaturalist@gmail.com. and I’ll send you the “East Cascades Audubon Society Nesting Box and Feeder Guide.”

Need a *DENT-AL* Check Up?
Repair experts standing by...
Most repairs in under an hour • Free estimates
Mobile service available • Paintless dent removal

Dent Craft Mike Cmelik
541-588-2299

SISTERS SALOON
RANCH GRILL

DINING & TAKE-OUT
until midnight every night
Menu at SistersSaloon.net
541-549-RIBS
★ 190 E. Cascade Ave. ★

SISTERS COFFEE

OPEN 6AM-6PM COFFEE ROASTED DAILY
541.549.0527 273 W HOOD AVE. SISTERS, OR

AT SISTERS DRUG
Not just your pharmacy, but your friends!
Hosting Free Tai Chi Balance Classes
First & Last Thursday of the Month, 11 a.m.

Now located inside Ray’s Food Place
Mon-Fri 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Sat 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Closed Sunday
541-549-6221 • 635 N. Arrowleaf Trail, Sisters

Core Carpet Cleaning
Your Carpet Cleaning Solutions

- Residential
- Commercial
- Upholstery
- Hard Surfaces
- Carpet Repair

541-588-6232
whatlivinginyourcarpets.com

Customers are the CORE of our business!

- Quality local service at affordable prices.
- Quick, convenient, and hassle-free service.
- Carpet cleaning – specialize in pet stain removal, carpet repair or stretching, and upholstery cleaning!

FREE IN-HOME ESTIMATE

We cover Central Oregon all the way to the coast!

MENTION THIS AD FOR 20% OFF PREMIUM SERVICES