

Animal abuse is a crime

A Sisters woman posted on Facebook last week that she had witnessed young children beating and killing animals — mostly chipmunks — at Scout Lake. The woman said that the mothers of the children were aware of and encouraged the behavior.

The Nugget attempted to directly contact the woman who reported the incident without success.

It is worth noting that such behavior falls under the legal category of animal abuse and it is a criminal act. ORS 167.320 states that “A person commits the crime of animal abuse in the first degree if, except as otherwise authorized by law, the person intentionally, knowingly or recklessly:

- (a) Causes serious physical injury to an animal; or
- (b) Cruelly causes the death of an animal...

Animal abuse in the first degree is a Class A misdemeanor and can be a Class C felony if committed in the immediate presence of a minor child.

If you witness suspected animal abuse in Deschutes County, call the non-emergency dispatch number, 541-693-6911, to report it.

Songbird diseases strike in Central Oregon

By Jim Anderson
Correspondent

As if the outbreak of COVID-19 weren't enough for us to contend with, now there is a chance that salmonella (or something worse) has begun to spread through the passerine birds of Central Oregon.

Back in the end of June, Bob Hertzler, of Sisters, discovered several dead red crossbills under his feeders in his back yard. Other reports also came in about dead local songbirds. Last Thursday, Bunny and Mark Thompson, also of Sisters, found several dead red crossbills under their feeder.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist, Corey Heath presumed it was salmonella when contacted. He added, “There have been several cases of it lately around Bend and, unfortunately, there will probably be more.”

Salmonella, especially salmonella enterica, is commonly found in the intestines of wild birds. Birds exposed to a contaminated environment may become infected accidentally, such as with domestic pigeons and some waterbirds, which then gets passed on.

The most significant outbreaks of wild bird salmonellosis occur in songbirds that gather in large numbers at

bird feeders. But even then, these birds have an immune system that keeps the virus from killing them — usually. However, according to retiring local songbird rehabber, Elise Wolf, pine siskins fall victim to salmonella all too quickly, which in turn may spread to other birds.

Salmonella may not be the only disease killing songbirds, however. Wolf has seen many dead songbirds in her career and has noted that one thing may kills finches, or siskins and something else may kill crossbills.

In that light, she is suggesting a different approach to looking into dead songbirds, including window strikes. A bird hitting the window is pretty obvious; but why the bird hit the window could be due to a myriad of reasons — one of which could be the bird was momentarily disoriented because it was sick.

So, like with humans and the COVID-19 virus, there are actions that must be taken to ensure the bird's salmonella infection doesn't spread and then keep going to infect humans, although that risk is minimal.

According to a Deschutes Public Health spokesperson, any dead bird must be removed immediately. Do not touch them without proper protection. Also, if an outdoor cat comes into

the house with a dead songbird, quickly put on throw-away gloves, wrap the cat in a towel, isolate it in a comfortable place and watch it. Then, place the dead bird in a disposable sack along with the gloves. The final resting place for the contaminated materials is in a container headed for the Knott Landfill.

The growth of the bird-feeding business, which has promoted bird watching, bird loving, and general interest in wild birds all over the U.S., is also contributing to bird diseases. If not cleaned frequently, bird feeders can become contaminated with feces that allow bacteria and virus contamination to grow to life-threatening levels.

Wolf suggests, “To solve bacteria outbreaks like salmonella at our feeders, it is critical that everyone does a thorough cleaning on the feeders from time or time or when they discover sick birds. Wash, then soak for 10 minutes in five- to 10-percent bleach solution, wash again, then rinse. I like to put feeders back up after washing in order to support ill birds that might be able to fight off the infection if given food. This

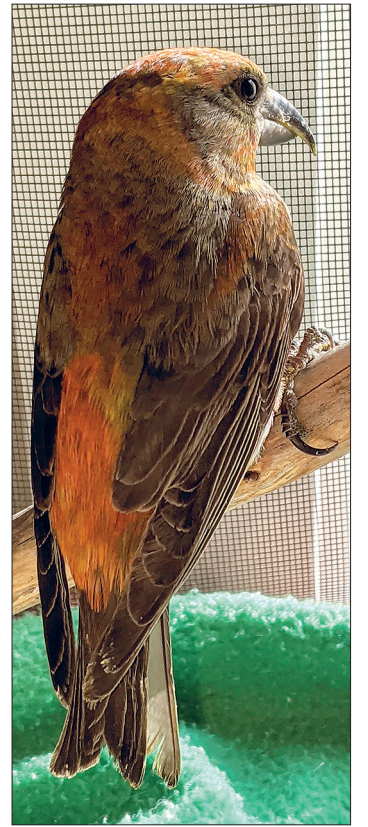


PHOTO BY ELISE WOLF

Rehabbing a red crossbill, victim of a wild salmonella virus or some other disease.

does, however, mean frequent feeder cleanings.”

If you come upon a dead songbird in your yard, your neighbor's yard, the city park, or underfoot anywhere, contact Wolf at ewolf97@gmail.com.

Sisters salutes...

Cloverdale Rural Fire Protection District was unable to hold their annual awards banquet due to coronavirus restrictions — but their volunteers and staff still deserve a salute:

- EMS of the Year — Kyle Wattenburg
- Rookie of the Year — Steven Lord
- Student of the Year — Charles Hert
- Firefighter of the Year — Capt. Rex Parks
- Volunteer of the Year — Joel Stutzman
- Deputy John Thomas Award — Capt. Jeremy Hall
- Outstanding Service Award (Don A Johnson Award) — Michelle Stutzman.



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