

For the Birds: Salmonella and irrupting finches

By **Elise Wolf**
Correspondent

Across the country, small, striped brown birds with flashy hints of yellow are swarming bird feeders. These delightful birds are pine siskins. Since October of 2020, the tiny finches have streamed south by the thousands in a record-breaking migration event. In one sighting, birders counted a cloud of over 5,000 in October in Cape May, New Jersey.

The pine siskins are not alone; evening grosbeaks, common redpoll, Cassin's finch, red crossbill, and even red-breasted nuthatch have abandoned the north because the cone crop is lacking. Mass movements like these, called "irruptions," explain why one year you might find just a few of a species at the feeder, and the next a

barrage. These finches target the seeds, cones, and buds of the mountain and boreal forests that cross Alaska and Canada. They're currently amassing in forests throughout the country and on urban cone-bearing trees and bird feeders, even making surprise appearances in the Gulf states and Bermuda.

Unfortunately, some are falling ill with bacterial infections from a potent salmonella strain, *S. Typhimurium*. Originally from agricultural poultry farms, salmonella is now a world traveler, affecting birds as remote as Antarctic penguins. The finch family of birds is all particularly vulnerable to this intestinal squatter. Pine siskins are getting hit hard with it.

Salmonella is a survivalist; it can last weeks to months in the environment, enduring freezing and hot

temperatures. The longer a pathogen lives, the more it accumulates. Anywhere fecal matter can contaminate food or water is a danger zone; sadly, that is some of our most popular feeders. A bird sitting in a tray of food can be spreading disease.

Michelle Dennehy of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) explains that, "Salmonella, e. coli, and other bacteria along with viruses, parasites, and fungal diseases can be passed at feeders that don't get cleaned regularly." Stress is also a launching pad for disease. Pine siskins swarmed south due to a lack of food. That hunger, along with cold weather, creates a lot of stress.

In pine siskins, salmonella is often lethal. The bacteria affect the intestinal tract, preventing food digestion,

and then invade the organs and brain. Ill birds appear tired and lethargic, sitting for long periods at the feeder or perhaps acting tame when approached. You may find them deceased.

The good news is that we can fight disease at the feeder by being good stewards.

"When you feed birds, be sure to start with clean feeders and to disinfect feeders," says Dr. Colin Gillin, ODFW State Wildlife Veterinarian. Here are a few key tips:

- If birds are dying at your feeder, remove the finch feeders for a couple of weeks.
- Remove any feeder that lets a bird get their rear over the food.
- Wash feeders once a week if you have large numbers and/or sick birds.
- Thoroughly disinfect feeders: take apart, scrub, wash, soak in 10 percent

bleach bath, wash with soap and water, rinse, dry thoroughly.

- Wash birdbaths. Use bleach if you can without getting it in the environment.
- Feed individual seeds in feeders, so seeds are not tossed to the ground.
- Avoid wood, flat, or seed-catching type feeders.
- Mesh and hoppers work great (Sisters Feed Store has a nice hopper and is stocked up on seed).
- Clean and remove debris from under the feeder.
- Spread the feeders out rather than congregating them.

For more information go to www.nativebirdcare.org/blog. You can call ODFW at 866-968-2600 or email Wildlife.Health@state.or.us.

Text Native Bird Care at 541-728-8208 if you see sick birds.



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sisters Arts Association Annual Meeting

The Sisters Arts Association (SAA) is holding its annual member meeting via Zoom on Tuesday, January 26 at 10 a.m. To register, go to www.sistersartsassociation.org, click on "Events/Annual Meeting" and fill out the form. Those who do will receive an invitation by email to join the meeting. Sign-up deadline is Sunday, January 24 at 10 a.m. SAA will review its accomplishments during 2020, despite the pandemic. During this Zoom meeting, participants will be able to meet the board, learn about plans for 2021, and how they can participate. Stick with the meeting and at the end a name will be drawn to receive a complimentary membership for 2021, worth \$50.

Let's Talk! Building Trust

Citizens4Community invites Sisters Country to ring in the new year with a robust, online Let's Talk! panel discussion from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on Monday, January 18. Panelists and attendees will share their thoughts about building trust, relationships and effective collaboration in Sisters, even during times punctuated by strong disagreement and COVID stress. Diverse perspectives are welcome. Panelists will include Nugget Editor Jim Cornelius and City Manager Cory Misley. Let's Talk! is free and spotlights a different local topic each third Monday of the month. To RSVP/receive the Zoom link, email: citizens4community@gmail.com. Read more at Citizens4Community.com.

Career Funds Available

Applications are available for the Sisters Kiwanis Career Opportunity Fund to help adult residents of Sisters establish an occupational path. Pick up forms at the Kiwanis House, corner of Oak and Main, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursdays, and during regular hours from the Sisters Habitat for Humanity office. For more information, call 541-719-1254.

Furry Friends Has Moved!

The Furry Friends office is now located at 412 E. Main Ave., Ste. 4 behind The Nugget office. Though the office is closed to the public, the pet food bank is still open for no contact porch pick ups. For more information or to schedule pick up, call or text 541-797-4023.

Weekly Food Pantry

Wellhouse Church has a weekly food pantry on Thursdays. Food will be distributed drive-through style from 12:30 until all food is picked up at the Wellhouse Market building, 222 N. Trinity Way. People in need of food may pick up a bag of food for their household. Other Sisters-area churches are joining with Wellhouse Church to contribute both financially and with volunteers to help sustain the program. Info: 541-549-4184.

Sponsor an Impoverished Child from Uganda

Hope Africa International, based in Sisters, has many children awaiting sponsorship! For info go to hopeafricakids.org or call Katie at 541-719-8727.

Free Weekly Grab-N-Go Lunches For Seniors

The Council on Aging of Central Oregon is serving seniors (60+) free Grab-N-Go lunches on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays each week. The lunches are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis drive-through style from 12 to 12:30 p.m. at the Sisters Community Church, 1300 W. McKenzie Hwy. Seniors may drive through the parking lot and pick up a meal each day of service. Come on by, no need to make a reservation. For more info please call 541-678-5483.

PET OF THE WEEK

Humane Society of Central Oregon
541-382-3537



Meet **PRINCE**, a regal 10-month-old rabbit who is eager to meet his forever family! This mellow man loves a good cuddle and has grown accustomed to a rather pampered lifestyle! Prince would prefer to be the only rabbit in the home so that he can be the center of attention and spoiled silly like a prince should be! If you are looking for a clever rabbit who loves to cuddle then Prince is the bunny for you!

SPONSORED BY

Black Butte Veterinary Clinic

541-549-1837

Please call the church before attending to verify current status of services as restrictions are adjusted.

SISTERS-AREA CHURCHES

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church (ELCA)

386 N. Fir Street • 541-549-5831
10 a.m. Sunday Worship
shepherdofthehillslutheranchurch.com

Sisters Community Church (Nondenominational)

1300 W. McKenzie Hwy. • 541-549-1201
10 a.m. Sunday Worship (with signing)
sisterschurch.com | info@sisterschurch.com

St. Edward the Martyr Roman Catholic Church

123 Trinity Way • 541-549-9391
5:30 p.m. Saturday Vigil Mass
9 a.m. Sunday Mass
8 a.m. Monday-Friday Mass

Calvary Church (NW Baptist Convention)

484 W. Washington St., Ste. C & D • 541-588-6288
10 a.m. Sunday Worship | ccsisters.org

The Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration

68825 Brooks Camp Rd. • 541-549-7087
8:30 a.m. Ecumenical Sunday Worship (Sunday school, childcare) 10:15 a.m. Episcopal Sunday Worship (Sunday school, childcare)

Chapel in the Pines

Camp Sherman • 541-549-9971
10 a.m. Sunday Worship

Sisters Church of the Nazarene

67130 Harrington Loop Rd. • 541-389-8960 | sistersnaz.org
10:45 a.m. Sunday Worship | 2sistersnaz@gmail.com

Wellhouse Church

442 Trinity Way • 541-549-4184 | wellhousechurch.churchcenter.com
10 a.m. Sunday Worship (Indoor & Outdoor Venues available)

Vast Church (Nondenominational)

541-719-0587 • 5 and 6:30 p.m. Wednesday Worship at 442 Trinity Way (Wellhouse building). See vastchurch.com for details.

Seventh-Day Adventist Church

386 N. Fir St. • 541-595-6770, 541-306-8303
11 a.m. Saturday Worship

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

452 Trinity Way • Branch President, 541-420-5670;
10 a.m. Sunday Sacrament Meeting

Baha'i Faith Meetings

Devotional Gatherings, Study Classes and Discussion Groups. Call for location and times • 541-647-9826