

Harry the terrier talks turkey

Henry Miller Special to the Statesman Journal

Most dogs aspire to be pack leader. On the other hand, Harry, our mostly Jack Russell terrier, has been aspiring to become flock leader.

We were out for our daily morning constitutional a couple of days ago and took one of his favored routes through Salem Tennis & Swim Club, down the road past the pool and indoor courts and out through the gate in the chain-link fence.

Harry, being a fan of green spaces rather than hardscapes, likes it when we cut across the expanse of lawn between the outdoor courts and the homes on the south side of the road.

Scratching and pecking in the accumulated needles and other detritus under the row of evergreens on the lawn were seven wild turkeys, two toms (males) — one of them fairly substantial — and five hens.

For the uninitiated, you can tell the sexes by a small tuft of stringy filaments poking out of the breast feathers on the males, although occasionally females will have beards.

Think gobblers in a carnival side show.

Anyway, Harry was rapt.

Up until that point, the only birds that he had seen that were as large as himself were geese.

As long as they were slow-walking, scratching and pecking, the turkeys didn't trigger Harry's predator-alert button.

And Harry has the biggest button.

Believe me.

Anyway, I figured that we'd leave the turkeys to their morning routine and circled around them about 10 feet away.

Things were going according to plan until the aroused Harry started emitting a high-pitched keening noise, a sort of squeaky whine that he does when he's



We went back twice with a camera looking for the Salem Tennis & Swim Club turkey flock, and Harry, as you can see, was on total predator alert, but without success. HENRY MILLER/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

excited or nervous.

I didn't think it sounded turk-ish at all, but it definitely piqued the interest of the animated butterballs.

So as we were easing down the road, a rearward glance (by me, a hard stare by Harry) showed that the turkeys were following us at a discreet distance.

Which caused the canine in question to whine more loudly.

Which resulted in the turkeys in our wake picking up the pace and closing the gap between us.

Harry momentarily had become the

Pied Piper of Meleagris gallopavo, a canine zen master of turkey-calling.

Until it got to be too much and he snapped and barked.

And the turkeys broke into a trot — yes, there really is such a thing — and passed us with a wide berth, slowing down when they put about 50 feet between us.

Which resulted in two vehicles pulling over, with the drivers whipping out their cell phones to capture the action on video as the birds strolled across the street and ambled over several lawns.

Henry was unarmed. My phone was sitting at home on the charger.

Heading north on Alderbrook Avenue SE, the turkeys picked up speed as Harry began straining at the leash and barking frantically.

The fleeing fowl finally had pushed his predator button.

Hard.

I looked at Harry.

"You blew it, big guy," I said about the rapidly disappearing collection of turkey butts.

Which reminds me on a separate but related note, Oregon's spring wild-turkey hunting season opens on April 15.

Need a mnemonic device to remember?

Nothing's more certain than taxes and turkeys.

The flock at Salem Tennis & Swim Club is well-protected, since it's illegal to discharge firearms within the city limits, much less a well-populated neighborhood.

But as evinced by the migration of seven of the big birds through our South Salem neighborhood, turkeys are pretty much ubiquitous in much of the Willamette Valley, much to the grief of those who acclimatize them to human contact.

The birds can be messy and destructive, not to mention aggressive during the slap-and-tickle, make that slap-and-gobble, mating season.

So I'll be heading out into the country this spring in search of a truly wild bird to bag.

I'm going to be leaving Harry at home, though.

His audition for flock leader was a major fail.

Henry Miller is a retired Statesman Journal columnist and outdoor writer. He can be reached via email at Henry-MillerSJ@gmail.com.

Prevent garden disease with smart shopping

Carol Savonen Special to Salem Statesman Journal USA TODAY NETWORK

Question: I have been gardening in the same space for many years. Last year, I had a lot of disease problems in

my vegetables and in some flowers. I had early blight on my tomatoes, rust on my garlic, sooty mold on my strawberries, powdery mildew on flowers and summer squash. You get the idea. Can you talk about how to figure out what to plant in terms of disease-resistant veg-

etables and flowers?

Answer: Professional plant people who grow commercial starts and breed, select and sell seed have to be very careful to avoid spreading plant diseases around the country — or they would be out of business. Below is some advice gleaned from my Oregon State University plant pathologist friend Jennifer Parke, who advises the nursery industry on plant disease prevention, and from seed producer Frank Morton of Wild Garden Seed in Philomath, who sells his organic vegetable seed to growers all over the country.

First, get into the habit of reading seed package labels and plant tags. Look for disease resistance codes. To see a long list of many of the codes you may see on labels, look at Johnny's Seeds website, johnnyseeds.com/growers-library/disease-resistance-codes.html.

Consider tomatoes for instance. When choosing what varieties of tomatoes to grow, the seed packages and plant tags often come marked with the letters V, N, T or F. The "V" signifies a resistance to Verticillium, a fungal disease causing premature wilt. N stands for a nematode-resistant variety. Nematodes are small wormlike pests that puncture root cells. T means a variety has resistance to tobacco mosaic virus, which causes mottled leaves. F stands for Fusarium, another fungal disease that causes wilt.

Many other kinds of vegetables also have disease-resistant or disease-tolerant varieties, including green beans, broccoli, peas, cucumbers, peppers, squash and spinach. A seed envelope or plant transplant tag from a reputable producer will indicate any disease resistance info.

Buy certified disease-free strawberries and other fruits from a good nursery. The PNW Plant Disease website offers a list of disease susceptibility for strawberry varieties in the Pacific Northwest.

Buy locally if you can. Seeds and transplants produced locally may have been bred and selected for disease resistance in our climate. To learn more



The ideal defense for verticillium wilt is choosing disease-resistant varieties. PHOTO PROVIDED BY DICK CRUM

about this, I recommend reading local Wild Garden Seed's producer Frank Morton's essay: wildgardenseed.com/articles/an-organic-system-of-seed.

The fungal diseases rust, powdery mildew and blackspot are especially prevalent in Pacific Northwest flower beds. PNW Extension publishes a list of disease-resistant roses every year at <https://pnwhandbooks.org/plantdisease/cultivar-tables/rose-cultivar-resistance>. Rose plant tags often have codes for disease resistance as well. The "Proven Winner" brand perennials are developed for disease resistance (provenwinners.com/learn/plant-trials).

Inspect the overall vigor of all plants closely before you purchase them. Warning to old farts like me: Wear your glasses when plant shopping. Look for signs of mildew, aphids and the like before you buy.

Avoid getting your plants from exchanges and other gardeners' plant fairs. Plant exchanges and garden fairs where volunteers bring in starts from their own gardens are a veritable orgy of diseases and plant pathologist's nightmares.

NEXT WEEK, I'll talk about what you can do once you get your disease-free plants to keep them healthy.

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Swimming

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little time in in the fall. Obviously, it paid off for him along the way. I'm very excited for him."

Silverton's swimmers mowed down school records all season.

With 88 swimmers on the team — they all crowd into Silverton's relatively small YMCA pool for practices — the program's strength is in its depth.

Swimmers like Marie Tolmachoff, Maggie Kelley, Maddie Broyhill, Samantha Zurcher, Breanna Castell, Jayla Toland and Andrea Fitch may not be big names in the high school swimming

world, but they did amazing things this season.

Silverton's swimmers broke five of the six school records in the relays this season — including four at the Mid-Willamette district meet — and a couple more were broken at the 5A state meet.

To established high school swimming powers, Silverton's state meet accomplishments might not seem like much, but it's a big deal to the growing Silverton fanbase.

"It's like our boys 200 relay won a heat yesterday," Rogers said. "Our crowd reacted like they won a gold medal. For us winning the heat, it's never happened in school history. It's big to us."

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