

Nifty Tidbits

By CHUCK RIGBY

A few weeks ago, I was having a quiet, peaceful early morning walk around the town. On coming to a corner, I noticed a couple of scrub jays squawking and flying at an object on the ground by the side of the road.

As I walked closer to see what was so interesting, the object on the road opened one wing and tried to fly away. The wing was very long for such a small bird, and it had a very noticeable white band of feathers on the inside surface. As I approached even closer, I saw a huge gaping mouth that didn't seem to belong to anything other than a shark. It looked like the pictures I'd seen of baby robins in a nest that seem to be all mouth.

After gently picking up the bird, and after contacting a valley veterinarian, I was directed to Wildlife Images in Grants Pass. There I was told that the bird was a Poorwill. They said they would do what they could to help the bird.

On returning home I checked my bird books more thoroughly. I am convinced that the injured bird was a Common Nighthawk. They are more widespread in our area, while Poorwills are more common in Eastern Oregon and on farther east. The narrow, tapered, falcon-like wing and the white band also are characteristic of nighthawks.

Common Nighthawks, Poorwills, and Whip-poor-wills are all classified in the family Caprimulgidae. This family, along with the swifts, are usually listed in bird books behind the owls and in front of the hummingbirds and are commonly called the Goatsuckers. This term is based on the wide, gaping mouth, as well as their habit of nesting on the ground, but no proof has been found for their feeding ability among goats.

"Capri" is Latin for goat, such as Capricorn the Goat. It also means "the smell under the armpits." I am not sure which meaning was used for naming the Isle of Capri, but I did find that "capricious" has a French derivation and is not based on the two Latin meanings. "Mulg" is Latin for milking, so the family name actually means goat milker.

Common Nighthawks are often seen in Illinois Valley in the early evening, swooping high over the trees in search of insects. They are often mistaken for swifts, which are much smaller; and swallows, which also are smaller and more rapid in their erratic flight patterns. All of these are working diligently to remove flying insects from the evening sky. The nighthawk call is also distinctive and noticeable if you are away from the city noises. It's described as a nasal or rasping "peent," with the "t" sound at the end not always audible.

Nighthawks roost on the ground or on low branches, but they sit parallel with a branch, rather than at right angles as most birds. This is probably because their toes do not have the gripping ability that is present in most bird feet. The nighthawk also nests directly on the ground with no nest other than a slight depression or scrape in the soil.

Two eggs is usual in a clutch with an incubation period of approximately 19 days. They have been seen to nest on flat-topped, gravel-roofed buildings and even on top of tree stumps. They are a migratory species and will shortly be leaving our area for Southern California and Mexico. But while they remain, they are welcome for insect control and a pleasant experience in the evening, even though they seldom stay in the same area for long.

Hunters given fire warning

Hunters are reminded that fire season still is in effect, and that campfires, smoking tobacco, and off-road vehicle use are prohibited in many areas.

So said Oregon Dept. of Forestry (ODF). It added that hunters should ascertain restrictions in effect on state, county, private and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land protected by ODF, depending on where they hunt.

For restriction information on state, county, private and BLM land pro-

tested by ODF, phone 664-3328 or 474-3152.

For restriction information on national forest land protected by the U.S. Forest Service, phone 858-2200 or 471-6500.

"The fact that we've made it this far into fire season with little lightning, and only one major human-caused fire is exceptional," said Dennis Turco, ODF prevention specialist.

"But," he said, "until fire season ends, we'll need everyone's help in continuing that trend."



FREE DOCUMENTARY - 'Hijacking Catastrophe: 9/11, Fear & the Selling of American Empire,' was shown in Selma Oct. 2. Katherine Austin was a program sponsor.

W. Nile found in Jackson

A Jackson County blood donor is the second person in Oregon to test positive for West Nile virus, according to public health and American Red Cross officials.

"The test indicates this person, who was not ill, was infected with West Nile virus," said Emilio DeBess, epidemiologist in the Oregon Dept. of Human Services (DHS).

"This person's blood donation will not be used," said DeBess. "The test was done as part of routine Red Cross screening of blood donations. The nation's blood supply has been tested for West Nile since July 2003."

The supply is routinely tested for West Nile virus because recipients of blood and blood products can acquire the illness from an infected donor.

"This shows that the processes in place to assure safety of the nation's blood supply are working," said Dr. Mel Kohn, state epidemiologist. "It does

not in any way signify there is a risk of acquiring West Nile from giving blood.

"We continue to advise people to give blood, as there is always a need for it."

Any blood that tests positive is eliminated from the supply, said Kohn.

Dr. Jim Shames, Jackson County health officer, advises that precautions to reduce exposure are just as important this time of year:

*Wear long sleeves and pants, especially during dusk.

*Use mosquito repellent, preferably one that contains DEET, while outdoors. Follow label instructions when applying repellent.

*Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.

*Eliminate mosquito-breeding sites by removing old tires, cans and other containers that may store water around your home.

(Photo provided)

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Saturday, October 9 - 8 p.m. to midnight
Timber Room Lounge (Junction Inn)
\$5 cover charge

Family & Community Education
Fund-raiser

Spaghetti Feed

Friday, Oct. 8, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.
at the I.V. Senior Center
520 E. River St.

Adults \$5 - Children under 12 \$3

The Proceeds from this and several other projects F.C.E. has planned will go to help with some of the many worthy Christmas programs in the valley.

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Sat., Oct. 9,
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and 99 percent perspiration.**
- Thomas A. Edison -

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Lutheran Women's
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Lutheran Church
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(across from I.V. High School)