

# slant

• The prevailing of democracy, the shattering of a glass ceiling, the calls for unity from the same stage where the last president called for, and later incited, carnage — in so many ways **the inauguration of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris was a balm to the wounds of the nation.** Biden is a leader who is remarkable in his capacity for emotion, and his tone and speech reflected that, as well as his focus on uniting a divided people during racial unrest and a global pandemic. The words of Amanda Gorman, the 22-year-old national youth poet laureate, who recited her poem “The Hill We Climb” — updated after the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol — reminded us: “But while democracy can be periodically delayed / It can never be permanently defeated.”

• From shutting down the Legislature for security reasons to hastening the distribution of the COVID vaccine for life and death reasons, **Gov. Kate Brown is doing a fine job.** The angrier the right-wing anti-maskers and extremists get about her, the more it's clear she's trying to make good choices for the well-being of all, not just a few. We applaud her and continue to wonder where she will go in 2022 when her term ends. Hopefully, to the Biden administration, if that is what she wants to do.

• **What we're eating:** country loaf from the Camas Mill Bakery north of Eugene off Highway 99. This is so good that a friend ate nearly a whole loaf for his dinner. Is it better than Hideaway Bakery's or Metropol's best dark loaf? Those are fighting words! You decide and let us know.

• **He was, of course, the worst of us, and we may never outlive the cruelty and angst that former President Donald Trump spread throughout this country these past four years.** The ooze has seeped down to ordinary citizens and forced neighbors and friends to turn their backs on each other. Now he's gone, and we can take a breath. The coming years will not be easy, but the competence and empathy that President Joe Biden demonstrates by the day at least offers hope.

SLANT INCLUDES SHORT OPINION PIECES, OBSERVATIONS AND RUMOR-CHASING NOTES COMPILED BY THE EW EDITORIAL BOARD. HEARD ANY GOOD RUMORS LATELY? CONTACT EDITOR@EUGENEWEEKLY.COM

## It's About Time

by David Wagner



SETOPHAGA TOWNSENDI - TOWNSEND'S WARBLER

Along the trail to Trestle Creek Falls, above Brice Creek in southern Lane County, I found a solitary, ancient rock sword fern (*Polystichum imbricans*). It is a relictual plant, one that has survived from the time when this site was an open, rocky ridge. That's the sunny habitat this species prefers. Over the last centuries a towering forest has closed in and this species is no longer reproducing here. These relictual oldsters are not hard to find because our regional forests have an average 500-year cycle of fire replacement.

Western sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*) is one of only two or three forest understory species that survive total stand replacing fires in the forests on the west side of the Cascade Range. It means sword ferns are often older than old growth trees above them. Some of the monster ferns are certainly hundreds of years old.

Appreciating the time scale of old sword ferns can be contrasted with current bird populations in urban areas. In north Eugene our feeders have been swarmed by about five times the normal visits. Great variation from year to year is not unusual, but this rush began early, right after the Labor Day fires started. We see crowds of a dozen or more different birds every day. The Holiday Farm Fire has devastated one of our most treasured environments up river. It is not unreasonable to propose that the birds we have been enjoying for three months are a consequence of their fleeing the burning forests.

David Wagner is a botanist who has worked in Eugene for more than 40 years. He teaches moss classes, leads nature walks and publishes the Oregon Nature Calendar. For information about getting the 2021 Oregon Nature Calendar, contact him directly at fernzenmosses@me.com.



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FOLLOW THE FOUR

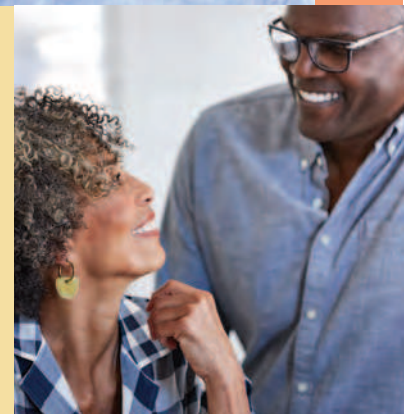
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ITD

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## Get your flu shot.



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Oregon Health Authority